

Since 1965, ParentChild+ (formerly known as the Parent-Child Home Program or PCHP) has consistently implemented successful replications with diverse and underserved populations in a wide variety of communities. Over the past 50 years, there has been a broad array of research on the model published in peer-review journals and reviewed by federal and state agencies and national and international clearinghouses all demonstrating the program's evidence of effectiveness.

Newest Evidenced-Based Clearinghouse Inclusion – United Kingdom Early Intervention Foundation Rating
<https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programme/parentchildplus>

See for other ratings and recognitions: <https://www.parentchildplus.org/impact/#0>

Below is a summary of current research projects and an overview of earlier ParentChild+ studies.

Current Research Projects

New York University (NYU) Follow-up Study (delayed, no NYC DOE data this year)

Following the randomized controlled trials in two New York City sites (Astuto, Allen, & Medellin, article under review; technical reports at PlaylabNYU, 2018), the NYU research team is continuing to follow the RCT cohorts through kindergarten and into through 3rd and 4th grade, to examine the long-term impact of ParentChild+. Currently, they are in the process of analyzing New York City Department of Education data for program graduates now in kindergarten, 3rd and 4th grade. They are comparing ParentChild+ graduates and the control group in terms of grade promotion, attendance, IEP referral (see page 7 of this overview), and standardized test performance.

Philadelphia Project (ongoing)

Philadelphia ParentChild+ sites reached 235 families and 10 Family Child Care providers in 2019. As part of a four-year expansion initiative launched in 2016, ParentChild+ has been working with external evaluators on a four-year process and outcomes evaluation of the program with funding from the William Penn Foundation and Vanguard's Strong Start for Kids. The evaluation, being conducted by the Public Health Management Corporation's Research and Evaluation Group and Dr. Patti Manz of Lehigh University, will follow program families through kindergarten, examining both changes in parental efficacy and how the children are performing at pre-k entry and kindergarten as compared to a matched comparison group of peers.

This study examines the fidelity of program implementation using a qualitative and quantitative approach, the outcome study includes child outcomes as well as family outcomes. The carefully chosen measures in this study are specifically for home visiting outcomes. Examples of the research questions being addressed in this study include: 1) To what extent can the ParentChild+ model be implemented in Philadelphia with fidelity to the planned intensity/consistency, delivery

quality, and core content and intended focus with a diverse sample of low-income and underserved families? 2) Are there patterns of attrition based on duration of enrollment in the program; what are reasons for leaving? Does attrition differ among communities? 3) Is there a change over time in parents' capacity to support their children's development in terms of self-efficacy, play beliefs, involvement, parent-child interaction. 4) Do ParentChild+ children's pre-k enrollment equal or exceed local/national data? 5) For children who enroll in Philadelphia School District schools, does participation in ParentChild+ and pre-k increase kindergarten readiness according to PSD ratings (e.g., social-emotional development, reading grades, language/literacy skills) compared to a comparison group who did not receive ParentChild+?

UK Randomized Controlled Trials (ongoing)

This study, led by scholars from the University of York and Durham University, aims to assess the effectiveness of ParentChild+ on child language skills, child behavior, school readiness, and parent-child interaction for 2 and 3-year-old children in disadvantaged families in the context of the UK.

NYC Public Prep Project (ongoing)

The Public Prep Project, a collaboration with CUNY/Lehman College and MDRC, focuses on understanding the experience of families with children 2-4 years old transitioning from ParentChild+ to the Public Prep charter network in the South Bronx. It is a mixed-method design study. The qualitative portion includes exploring families' experience of transition from ParentChild+ to Public Prep from multiple perspectives. The quantitative part includes descriptive data on school outcomes of ParentChild+ graduates in Public Prep in comparison to their peers who had not had ParentChild+. The project is funded by the Louis Calder Foundation.

UPenn Randomized Controlled Trial (delayed pending return to in-person and/or HHS criteria for virtual adaptations)

This study entitled "Evaluating the impact of ParentChild+ on neurocognitive development and well-being" is in collaboration with the Changing Brain Lab at the University of Pennsylvania. This two-year project is funded by the William Penn Foundation. It is a randomized controlled trial to be conducted in Philadelphia to evaluate the impact of ParentChild+ on family well-being and child development. There are two main aims of this project: 1) To evaluate whether ParentChild+ causes improvements in parent well-being, child well-being, and family functioning, as well as in parent-child interactions observed in the home. Specifically, we will assess impacts on the following criteria for efficacy: maternal health, positive parenting practices, child development and school readiness, child health, and linkages and referrals to resources and supports; 2) A subset of families will be assessed by the Changing Brain Lab to test whether ParentChild+ has an impact on detailed measures of children's psychological and brain development.

Previous Studies

Cognitive and Language Development Outcomes (Including Dual-Language Learners)

The early ParentChild+ outcome research studies focused on the program's effect on children's cognitive development. The first pilot study was conducted in 1968 comparing the verbal IQs of two matched groups of disadvantaged young children at baseline and after a 4-month

ParentChild+ intervention. The preliminary results showed a statistically significant increase in the verbal IQ of the children in the intervention group compared to the control group (Levenstein & Sunley, 1968). Following the encouraging results, a more controlled experiment was carried out in three federally supported low-income housing developments in three different communities. Families were randomly assigned to one year of ParentChild+ or one of the two control conditions. It was found that the ParentChild+ group had significant gains on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test scores after the program while the IQ scores of the combined control group remained stable, and this significant difference in results was also found on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Levenstein, 1970).

Consistent with these results, numerous replication studies at various ParentChild+ sites have found significant IQ gains at the end of program comparing with the comparison groups (DeVito & Karon, 1990; Ginandes & Roth, 1973; Levenstein, 1969; Levenstein, 1972; Levenstein, 1975; Slaughter, 1983).

Furthermore, the results of several longitudinal studies demonstrated the lasting cognitive effects of the program. It was found that following ParentChild+, low-income children up to age 10, were able to maintain their cognitive edge and IQ scores long after the program had ended in comparison to the controls (Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Madden, Levenstein & Levenstein, 1976). Two full-scale subject randomized controlled trials were also made to further examine the effect on IQs (Madden, O'Hara & Levenstein, 1984; Scarr & McCartney, 1988). The results showed that there were initial IQ gains at the end of program. At the follow-up stage, however, results indicated that both ParentChild+ children and children from control groups had above-average IQs with no significant difference.

While the IQ research was popular in the 1970s and 80s, language development and cognitive outcomes has been a main focus of ParentChild+ studies in recent decades, particularly because a majority of ParentChild+ families now are non-English speakers or dual language learners. Indeed, in recent years, there has been a dramatic demographic shift in the population with whom ParentChild+ works. According to our most recent national report, 71% of caregivers were born outside of the US and across all the families, 52 home languages were spoken. So far existing research evidence has supported the ParentChild+ approach of home visiting using families' home languages and the program's impact on these families have been significant.

An independent longitudinal evaluation in King County, WA (ORS Impact, 2016), in which 78% of program children were classified as dual language learners, found that the majority of ParentChild+ graduates outperformed a comparison group on English proficiency upon entry into kindergarten, measured by the Washington English Language Proficiency Assessment (WELPA) Placement Test (47.5% vs 36.4%). The difference was strongest in the Productive Skills area (a combination of the speaking and writing skills areas); 20% more ParentChild+ graduates scored above the "advanced" threshold for English language proficiency. When compared to the statewide average, ParentChild+ graduates met or outperformed state averages in all aspects except for the Oral Skills area (ORS impact, 2016).

Another important language development study, conducted by University of California - Irvine, examined the five-year outcomes of economically and educationally disadvantaged Latino families (Mann, Sandoval, Garcia, & Calderon, 2014). The study showed a significant effect in each program year on the expressive and receptive language of ParentChild+ children versus the comparison group using the Spanish version of Preschool Language Scale – 3 (PLS-3). In the follow-up, a subsample of ParentChild+ graduates were found to have significantly higher scores on both the Spanish PLS-3 and English PLS-4, and demonstrated better phonological awareness than the comparison group that did not receive the intervention (Mann, Sandoval, Garcia, & Calderon, 2014).

Similar language outcomes were also found in a quasi-experimental study conducted by Lehigh University. This study compared ParentChild+ children with children from similar neighborhoods, and similar socioeconomic status and age (Manz, Bracaliello, Pressimone, Eisenberg, Gernhart, Fu & Zuniga, 2015). The results indicated that ParentChild+ children showed significantly higher levels of performance on the Expressive One-Word Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised at the end of the first program year, reflecting the benefits of one-year of home visiting. In particular, the effect sizes for English and Spanish speaking subsamples on the expressive vocabulary skills showed that Spanish-speaking children experienced the greatest growth (Manz et al, 2015).

Importantly, studies have also shown that ParentChild+ children from disadvantaged and predominantly immigrant families performed as well as their less disadvantaged and mainly native English-speaking classmates on most achievement measures in kindergarten (Allen, Sethi, & Astuto, 2007). An NYU study in Nassau and Suffolk County, New York, found that despite the challenges of limited English proficiency, low education, immigrant status, and poverty faced by the families, according to teachers' reports and standardized tests administered by the research staff, there were no distinguishable differences between program children and their peers on early language and literacy as well as social-emotional development (Allen, Sethi, & Astuto, 2007).

In the NYU randomized controlled trial conducted in Queens, NY in which 100% of the parents reported as Latino and were born outside of the US, the program children were found to have higher average language scores and were better able to listen and use their words, when compared to children in the control group. Furthermore, boys who participated in ParentChild+ demonstrated greater social-emotional gains. Parents of ParentChild+ boys reported fewer problem behaviors when compared to boys in the control group (Astuto & Allen, 2018).

School Readiness and Later School Outcomes

One of the primary goals of ParentChild+ is to address the achievement gap by providing disconnected, low-income families with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to build school readiness as early as two-years old. School readiness includes not only children's cognitive readiness, but also other indicators such as social-emotional development and competence reported by teachers and parents. Aligning with the achievement outcomes, evaluation and research studies have been extensively focused on children's ability to cope with actual school tasks and their academic performance after the program intervention. Overall, research

evidence has consistently demonstrated that from kindergarten through high school ParentChild+ children bested the performance of at-risk control or comparison groups and often closed the achievement gap with middle-class children.

Internal Measures for School Readiness

“Parent and Child Together” (PACT) and “Child Behavior Traits” (CBT) are the two standard ParentChild+ measures that have long been used across all sites as required assessment measures. Both observational measures were designed to examine the degree of children’s school readiness over the time as well as to ensure that replication sites are implementing the program according to the national standards and norms. The PACT measures positive caregiver-child interaction. Increased PACT scores indicate enhanced interactions outcomes between caregivers and children, that include showing more affection, increased use of consistent and responsive parenting behaviors, and verbal interaction. The CBT measures child behaviors that relate to the child’s social-emotional development, self-regulation, and pre-literacy skills. Increased CBT scores indicate that children are showing more positive behavioral characteristics, independence, social cooperation, task orientation, cognitive ability, and emotional stability.

In the ParentChild+ evaluation model, exhibiting positive behaviors on the PACT and CBT indicates that the child is school ready. Over the years, individual site reports and ParentChild+ annual reports have consistently reflected the quality of the intervention and its impact on children’s school readiness behaviors (all these reports are available upon request). For example, when first grade teachers rated their students blindly, it was found that ParentChild+ children had higher scores on social-emotional development or competence than the location-randomized controls. Moreover, each subscale of the CBT was proven to relate to the parent’s earlier verbal interaction at home (Levenstein, 1979).

Kindergarten Readiness

In addition to the PACT and CBT internal indicators, a number of replication sites have used other external measures to illustrate the school readiness of ParentChild+ children. In the 2005 Report by Pittsfield, Massachusetts, it was found that ParentChild+ kindergarteners outscored not only other Title I-eligible children but also district children as a whole on the Daberon screening for school readiness. Also, in a 2005 report from Buffalo, New York, ParentChild+ graduates were found to have higher Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) scores than their kindergarten classmates, surpassing national norms.

Even more significantly, kindergarten readiness outcomes have also been found by independent evaluators. The Nassau and Suffolk County, New York NYU study, comparing ParentChild+ children with randomly selected non-program children from the same kindergarten classroom (Allen, Sethi, & Astuto, 2007), found that despite the challenges of limited English proficiency, low education, immigrant status and poverty faced by the families, there were no distinguishable differences between program children and their peers in early language and literacy as well as social-emotional development. The study showed, according to teacher reports and standardized tests administered by the research staff, that ParentChild+ children from disadvantaged and predominantly immigrant families performed as well as their less

disadvantaged and mainly native English-speaking classmates on most achievement measures in kindergarten (Allen, Sethi, & Astuto, 2007).

In 2016, an independent matched comparison group evaluation conducted in King County, WA (ORS Impact, 2016) found that significantly more ParentChild+ graduates were ready for kindergarten than the comparison group children (44.6% vs 29.6%) as measured by the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (All six domains: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, and Mathematics). The difference was the strongest in the Social-Emotional domain, where an additional 10% more ParentChild+ graduates were considered kindergarten ready (ORS Impact, 2016).

Elementary, Middle School and High School Graduation Outcomes

In elementary school, ParentChild+ children continue to show success in terms of school achievement and social-emotional development. In a study of South Carolina first graders, who had been referred to ParentChild+ by social workers or teachers of older siblings as high-risk toddlers, were found to have overcome their predicted disadvantage and performed as well as the statewide averages for all students. The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery indicating school readiness was achieved by 92% of ParentChild+ (excluding 7 children with severe developmental delays) as compared with 82% of statewide first-graders and 74% of free lunch eligible students (Levenstein, Levenstein & Oliver, 2002).

At third grade, a number of studies continue to show that ParentChild+ children close the achievement gap or even outperform their peers (Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Levenstein, O'Hara, & Madden, 1983; Madden et al., 1976; ORS impact, 2016). For instance, King County, WA ParentChild+ graduates scored significantly higher on third grade WA reading and math achievement tests, performing above the state average in Math (ORS Impact, 2016). The results are consistent with positive effects found on reading scores from a previous multi-site, location-randomized study (Lazar & Darlington, 1982). What is more impressive is that the gains held up through fifth grade, and statistical adjustment showed that attrition, maternal education, and baseline IQ did not account for the effect. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant reduction in the need for special education for ParentChild+ children compared to controls (Lazar & Darlington, 1982).

The most extensive examination of the longitudinal school outcomes of ParentChild+ has been conducted by the Pittsfield, MA Public Schools. Pittsfield ParentChild+ graduates were found to meet or exceed national achievement norms and generally outperform comparison groups. The lasting cognitive gains after the program have been consistently reported by independent evaluators (Bradshaw-McNulty & Delaney, 1979; DeVito & Karon, 1984, 1990). In kindergarten, ParentChild+ children's scores were close to the national norms and in third grade, program children outperformed other third graders of comparably low socio-economic status on the total California Achievement Test (Bradshaw-McNulty, Delaney, 1979). DeVito & Karon (1984) also found that program graduates surpassed the national averages on the California Achievement Test in elementary and middle school, and outperformed the comparison group (Title I group). In a follow-up, 67% of program children had graduated from high school and 72% of these high

school graduates had gone on to higher education, and fewer than 30% had dropped out (DeVito & Karon, 1990).

A subsequent subject-randomized controlled trial in Pittsfield found that ParentChild+ significantly improved high school graduation rates. 84.1% of low-income children who completed two years of the program went on to graduate from high school, the rate of non-disadvantaged, middle-income children nationally, 20% higher than their socio-economic peers nationally and 30% higher than the control group in the community. Even when students who had completed only one year of the program were included, the gains over controls remained statistically significant (Levenstein, Levenstein, Shiminski, & Stolzberg, 1998). In 2005, the site reported follow-up information on 104 ParentChild+ graduates who had remained in the school system through high school (55.9% of the original 186). Only 13.5% of the children had dropped out compared with the Pittsfield citywide dropout rate of 31% in 2004. Of those who completed the full two-year program, only 8.5% had dropped out, and the high school graduation rate was 83.9%, with 69.9% of them accepted to college (Shiminski, 2005).

Overall, ParentChild+ participants perform comparably throughout their schooling to national normative groups, surpassing both disadvantaged comparison and control groups. There is good evidence that a disadvantaged child's chance of graduating from high school is improved by the program to equal that of a middle-class student. ParentChild+, therefore, is fulfilling one of its primary goals, closing the academic gap associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

Special Education

According to the results from several follow-up studies, ParentChild+ participants are less likely to require placement in special education, less likely to be left back, and less likely to require further Title I services than comparison groups (Darlington, Royce, Snipper, Murray, & Lazar 1980; DeVito & Karon, 1990; Royce, Darlington, & Murray, 1983; Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Levenstein, Levenstein & Oliver, 2002; Madden, Levenstein & Levenstein, 1976). Children who received two full years of the program do not appear to be laboring under cognitive disadvantages (Madden, Levenstein & Levenstein, 1976). Similar results were also found in a South Carolina study of ParentChild+ children in their first grade.

In terms of special education, low-income children who participated in ParentChild+ were found in a multi-site, location-randomized, longitudinal evaluation study (Lazar & Darlington, 1982) to have a statistically significant reduction in the need for special education classes as of third grade as compared to control groups (14% vs 39%). This result is consistent with the results from a larger scale long-term follow-up study that examined model early intervention programs including ParentChild+ (Darlington, Royce, Snipper, Murray, & Lazar 1980; Royce, Darlington, & Murray, 1983). The study tracked graduates of 11 early intervention programs and found that in the third grade as well as in seventh grade, program graduates were less likely to have failed to meet school requirements by being placed in special education classes or retained in grade than the controls. Most recently, in an RCT follow-up at kindergarten age in Queens, NY, the NYU Steinhardt Play Lab found that children who received ParentChild+ were over three times less likely to have an IEP referral in kindergarten (Astuto, 2020).

In addition to the reduction of special education referrals post-ParentChild+, fewer Program children were also reported to require other previously expected services. For instance, in the Pittsfield study, it was found that fewer students than expected had required Title 1 (previously Chapter I) services (DeVito & Karon, 1990). All program children in South Carolina had been considered likely to be eligible for the district's remedial services, but after the program, fewer than half actually required such services as assessed by the DIAL-R (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning–Revised) (Springs, 1990).

Positive Parenting and Family Outcomes

ParentChild+ is a relationship-based home-visiting program that encourages positive parenting skills and self-efficacy in order to support children's cognitive and social-emotional development. By facilitating positive interactions in the home environment, early learning specialists focus on building parental responsiveness and sensitivity by strengthening parent-child bonds and play to support learning. Parents discover the joy and value of regular reading, conversation, and play with their children and engage in more frequent positive interaction, supporting their children's language acquisition and social-emotional development. It is rich, robust, positive, and consistent parent-child interaction that strengthens the parent-child bond and develops the language and social-emotional skills children need to succeed in school and in life.

The standardized ParentChild+ assessments (PACT and CBT) consistently illustrate the growth of positive parent-child interactions and children's social and behavioral competencies. In the internal evaluations, the PACT is used as an observation tool to measure parents' responsiveness, affection, consistency, and communication in relation to the child. Over the past decades, ParentChild+ sites have reported significant and consistent growth in PACT scores by the end of the program. As previously demonstrated, the PACT scores not only correlate strongly with CBT scores, but also with child IQ scores at the end of the intervention (Levenstein, 1979; Levenstein, 1986).

Consistent results have also been found in studies examining parent-child interaction. Program parents are more likely to reply to children, verbalize their actions, ask for information, and were less likely to ignore children's verbal or nonverbal cues for attention (Madden, O'Hara, & Levenstein, 1984; Rafoth & Knickelbein, 2005). Parents' verbal interaction with their children showed a lasting superiority over that of the control group, and parent-child interaction correlated with children's first grade cognitive and social-emotional skills (Madden, O'Hara, & Levenstein, 1984). Positive interactions were also shown to predict children's first-grade cognitive skills, school performance, and emotional stability (Levenstein, 1986; Levenstein & O'Hara, 1983).

In addition to the impact on parent-child interaction, there is also evidence that the program also benefits parents themselves. According to program staff, families they work with are often observed to improve their self-image, display motivation for improving literacy skills, and be involved in their children's education for many years after the home visits have ended. ParentChild+ can also specifically enhance parents' communication with teachers (Allen et al, 2007). In a study of immigrant program families, parental engagement matched the engagement

of their more privileged peers and the frequency of communication with teachers was equal in both groups of parents, despite the fact that comparison group parents were better educated, were less likely to be Latino, and worked for pay more hours per week (Allen et al, 2007).

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