



Mothers' Club
Family Learning Center

Phase 1 Evaluation Report

Submitted By:



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	Page 3
INTRODUCTION	Page 6
PURPOSE, POPULATION, AND FRAMEWORK	Page 8
EVALUATION DESIGN	Page 12
RESEARCH METHODS	Page 15
FINDINGS	Page 22
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	Page 61
APPENDICES	Page 69

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study undertaken by the Institute at Indian Hill (IIH) on behalf of Mothers' Club Family Learning Center (MC) was designed to initiate a comprehensive two-phase evaluation of Mothers' Club's award-winning education programs, Phase 1 of which was designed to assess the effectiveness of MC's morning program – its approaches, outcomes, and data use strategies – and to submit recommendations towards its refinement and expansion. The Phase 2 evaluation was to build on Phase 1 findings through pursuit of grant funding to support a larger impact study utilizing` quasi-experimental, longitudinal design.

Mothers' Club implements a three-pronged strategic plan, adopted in 2009, to support its vision of excellent service and continuous growth, as follows: To strengthen the existing core morning program, to expand programs for families with children ages 0 to 5, and to become an active model for other providers and programs in the field. The Phase 1 evaluation focused on strengthening Mothers' Club's morning program as aligned with this strategic vision. MC's morning program operates Monday-Friday from 8:30am – 12pm for 11 months out of the year. The program consists of five early childhood education classrooms (for infants, toddlers, two's, preschoolers and pre-kindergarteners) and a comprehensive adult/parent education curriculum which operates concurrently with the children's program. The program requires that the child's primary caretaker, most often the mother, participates daily in the adult curriculum.

Phase 1 took place during Fall, 2010, and Spring, 2011, and consisted of the following evaluation activities: 1) data mapping of the rich data sources available at MC and development of recommendations for strengthening its data systems to monitor progress along program success indicators and outcomes; 2) analyses of outcome data related to each of the three core morning program strands (Early Childhood Education, Parent Education, and Adult Education), assessment of program effectiveness, and development of specific recommendations to improve each program strand; and 3) collection of primary qualitative data through on-site observations and focus group

interviews, data analysis, triangulation of data with quantitative findings, and development of overall recommendations for program improvement and expansion.

The evaluation activities yielded strong and clear findings about Mothers' Club's two-pronged approach of educating both mother and child. Namely, a robust picture emerged of a program that fosters academic, linguistic, and social learning in a supportive and nurturing environment, resulting in stronger parent-child dynamics that facilitate the success of both parent and child and address the needs of the family and the individuals within it. Mothers' Club children achieve or exceed developmental milestones for their age, despite demographic factors that would predict otherwise. Children are well-prepared for success in school when they reach kindergarten. Children's vocabulary development in English and in their home language progress together. Parents gain important skills in parenting, which they use in support of their children, especially in awareness of children's developmental stages, as well as, literacy promotion, communication, stress management, and advocacy in the community for one's children. A Family Literacy class helps parents learn to make reading a customary part of home routines and teaches parents how to read to their children and to build on the learning that come from stories and other educational materials. Evaluation findings indicate that, over time, the amount of time spent in reading and the number of books in the home nearly double for MC participants.

Daily adult education classes in English as a Second Language also form a vital part of the program, since the great majority of parents are young Hispanic mothers and come to MC with limited or no English ability. Parents are required to volunteer in the child education classes three and a half hours per week, serving as teacher-helpers, utilizing the understandings and skills learned in the parent and adult education classes, and gaining a greater awareness and involvement in the education of their own children. Teachers in adult, parent, and child education classes collaborate to set monthly themes in all classes to create even greater integration in what children and their parents are learning.

Findings indicate that through their Mothers' Club class activities, utilization of the many resources available at Mothers' Club, and personal goal-setting, which is a systematic part of their MC education, parents gain confidence and self-awareness, increasingly engage in leadership and service activities at MC, and actively take part in a highly valued network of parents who are mutually supportive. In addition, many parents report that their home lives and relations with other family members are positively impacted by the skills and understandings gained through activities at Mothers' Club. Husbands and grandparents, particularly, are influenced, and in some cases are themselves drawn into activities at MC. It was noted that older siblings also benefit from the more advanced, focused, and disciplined communication skills, developmental awareness and understanding, and parenting skills that their parents gain at MC with the younger siblings of the family.

Phase 2 of the project will be comprised of a mixed-methods, quasi-experimental and longitudinal evaluation study to establish the effectiveness and impact of the program on a larger scale and to build on findings and learning from Phase 1. In conjunction with Phase 2, publication activities are planned for dissemination of process, outcome, and impact evaluation findings to relevant audiences, presenting Mothers' Club as an active model for like-minded professionals and agencies with similar goals. Conference presentations, publications, and networking form vehicles for dissemination of findings and expansion of program impact.