

Fostering parent-teacher communication and supporting the transition to Kindergarten: How one program can make all the difference

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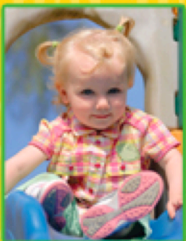
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Parent-Teacher Connection Program (P-TCP)

A collaboration between Gesell Institute (a New Haven-based non-profit) and the New Haven Public Schools:

- Fostering the adaptation of 4-year-olds in preschool/Head Start settings
- Promoting communication between home and school
- Supporting the transition to Kindergarten
- Improving school success



Home-School Connection Program (H-SCP)



- The model on which the New Haven P-TCP is based
- A collaborative effort between Tufts University and the Somerville Public Schools in Massachusetts
- Directed by Dr. Martha Garcia-Sellers at Tufts from 1994-2006



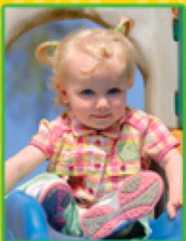
General Program Goals

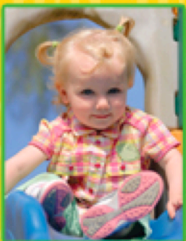
- Improving the school adaptation of immigrant elementary school children
- Promoting home-school communication
- Involving parents, children, and teachers
- Discovering & accentuating commonalities
- Improving school success

Responding to Community Needs

Somerville, MA in 1994:

- Increased numbers of immigrant children in public schools
- Changes in the educational options for bilingual education
- Unfamiliarity on the part of teachers with non-English speaking students
- Differing expectations about children's schooling on the part of parents and teachers





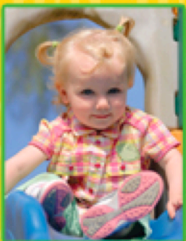
Reported Problems

- Low academic performance
- Adaptation concerns
- Teacher frustration with slow progress
- School desire for more family support
- Parental concerns about children's academic success
- Uncertainty about how parents could support school effort

Understanding the Challenges

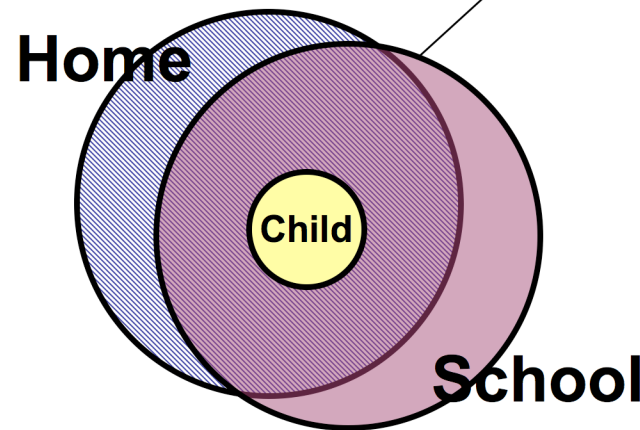


- Little or no communication between parents and teachers
- Promotion of different behavior and varying expectations
- Different values or the same values but with different meanings
- Different perceptions of the child
- Unfamiliarity with school requirements



Conceptual Model

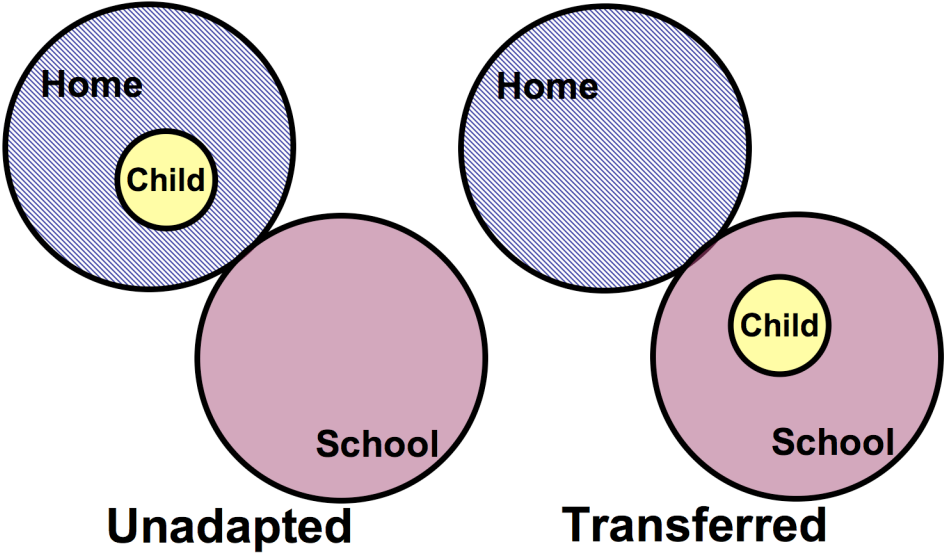
(Garcia-Sellers, 1999)



In the modal U.S. family, there is a large overlap between home and school culture that facilitates the child's adaptation to school.

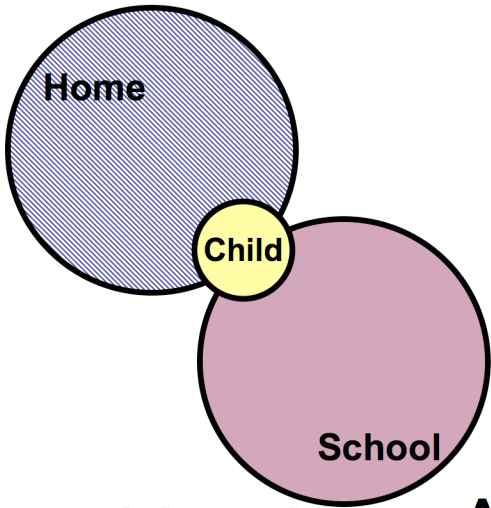
For immigrant families there is little or no overlap, thus requiring significant adjustment by the child in order to adapt.





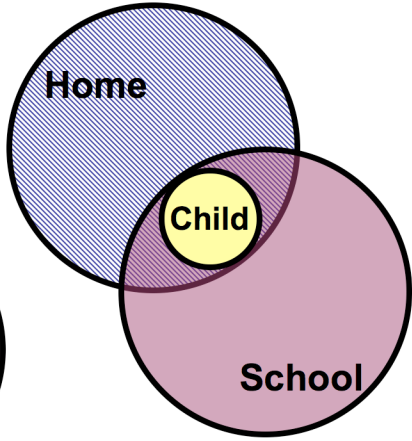
Child's home and school environment are separate; the child remains within the family's influence and has difficulties adapting to school.

Child eventually makes the transition to the school environment, but loses or rejects much of his or her parents' cultural heritage in the process.



Adapted

The child learns to manage and reconcile the subcultures of both his or her home and school environments.

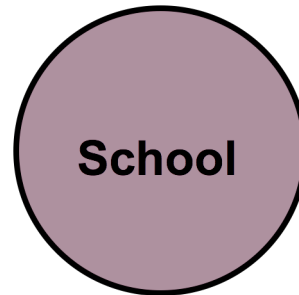
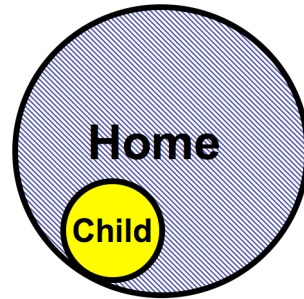


Adapted with Support

Communication between the home and school provides continuity between the two subcultures facilitating the child's school transition.

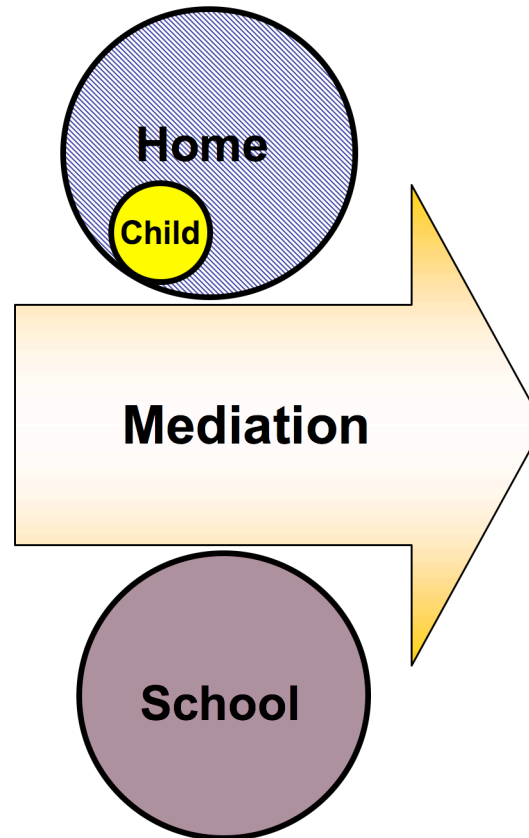


Program Impact



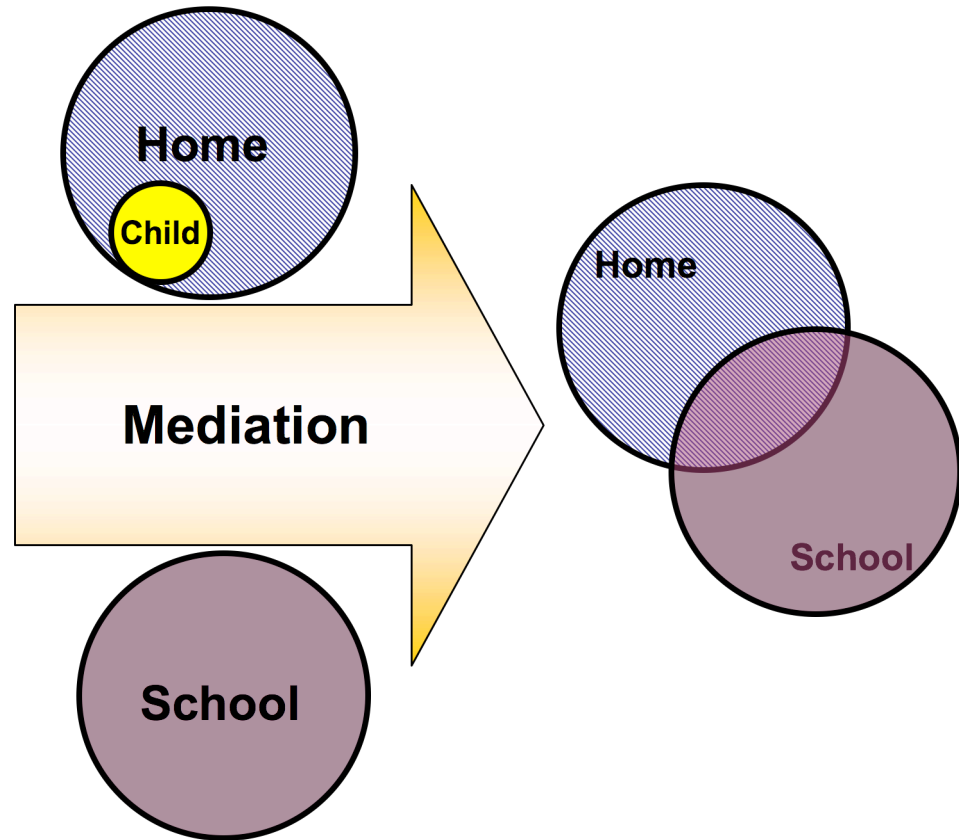


Program Impact



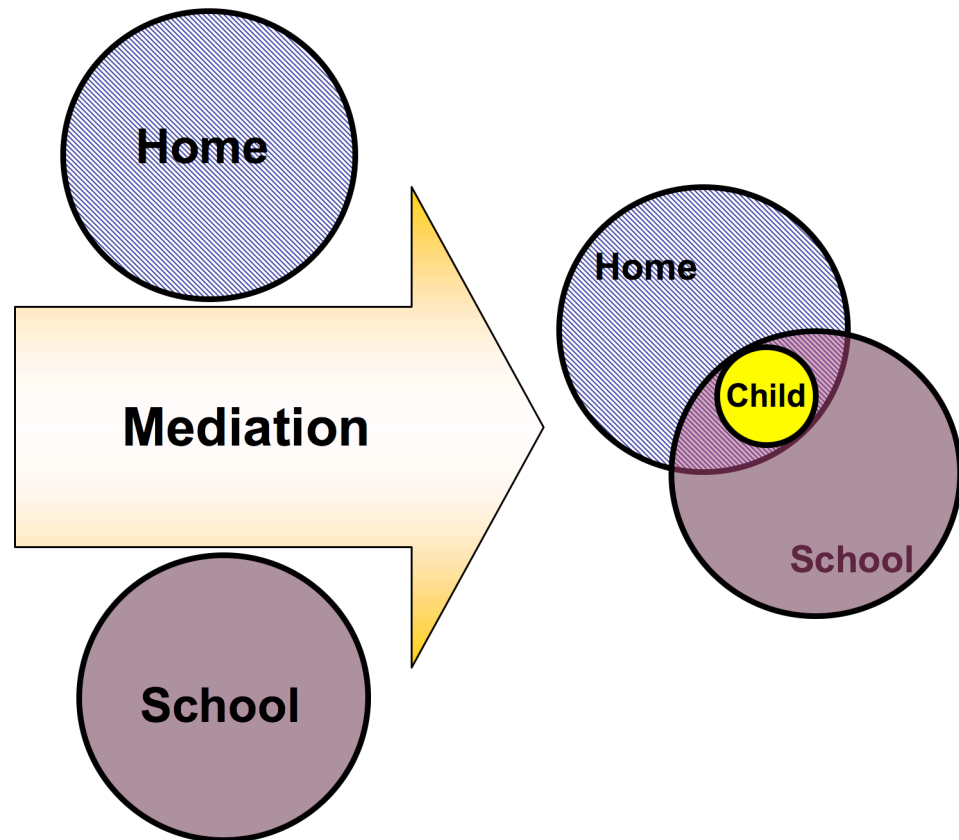


Program Impact





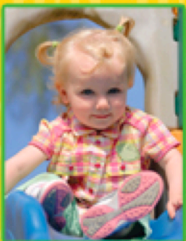
Program Impact



New Haven Public Schools



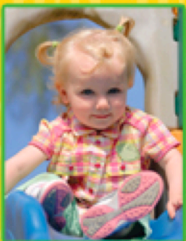
- Increased numbers of immigrant children and families
- Racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse population
- Growing concerns about parent involvement and understanding of school expectations
- Increased awareness and focus on Kindergarten transition



P-TCP Pilot Recruitment

Of 57 families attempted in Spring '08:

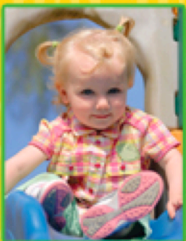
- 10 were enrolled
- 6 scheduled but cancelled
- 2 asked to be called in the summer
- 6 refused
- 33 resulted in no response or were unable to be reached



Pilot Recruitment

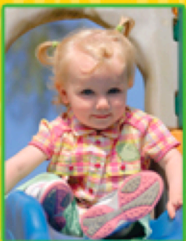
Of 95 attempted in Summer '08:

- 30 were enrolled
- 5 scheduled but cancelled
- 6 refused
- 49 resulted in no response or were unable to be reached



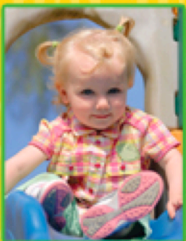
Pilot Participants

- Interviewee relationship to child:
 - 85% mother
 - 7.5% father
 - 5% grandparent
- Marital status:
 - 50% single parent
 - 42.5% married or living with other parent
 - 7.5% living w/ significant other/non-parent



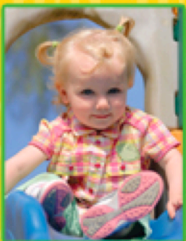
Native Language

- Parent's native language
 - 70% Spanish
 - 22.5% English
 - 2.5% French
- Language spoken in the home
 - 72.5% speak non-English native language
 - 27.5% speak only English



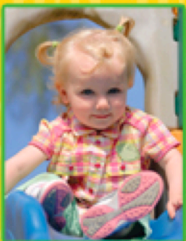
Program Type and Previous Experience

- 62.5% enrolled in bilingual setting
- 17.5% receive Special Education services
- 67.5% had no previous preschool or daycare experience
- 15% were enrolled in daycare previously
- 7.5% another preschool program
- 5% Early Head Start



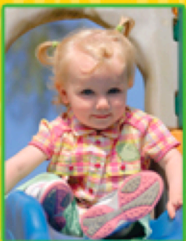
P-TCP General Protocol

- At school: interview teachers to obtain their understanding
- At home: Interview parents to learn about their expectations
- At home and school: Observe children's behavior



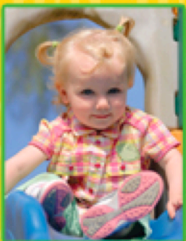
General Procedures

- Initial classroom visits: conduct general observations using the Preschool Mental Health Climate Scale (PMHCS, Gilliam)
- Home visits: obtain consent and conduct parent/family interviews & child activities
- Child specific classroom visits: conduct observation, child interview, and screening using the K-SEALS
- Teacher meetings: provide feedback and collect child-specific forms
- Feedback and mediation meetings with parents and teachers as needed



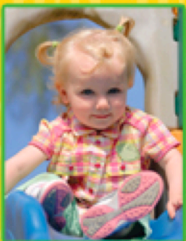
2008 Pilot Data

- Number of adults in the household
 - 17.5% reported only one adult in household
 - 35% reported two adults
 - 27% reported three adults
 - 15% reported four or more adults
- Number of children in the household
 - 37.5% have only one child
 - 27.5% have two children
 - 15% have three children
 - 10% have four or more children



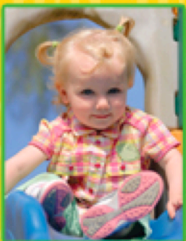
Communication and Participation

- 95% reported almost always being comfortable approaching their child's teacher when needed, but only 40% reported a desire to communicate with the teacher
- 57.5% reported going to the classroom daily, but but only 17.5% expressed a desire to do so, the majority preferring a weekly visit or less
- 22.5% expressed an interest in attending open houses or other school-sponsored events
- 20% expressed either being unsure how to participate or being insecure about becoming involved with the classroom



Expectations

- 65% reported that it is important to help get their child ready for Kindergarten, while only 5% expressed enjoying it
- 67.5% expect that their children will learn the alphabet in preschool
- 75% expect that their children will learn how to spell their name
- 72.5% expect that they will be taught to count
- 60% expect that they will be taught numbers
- 60% expect that they will be taught to write

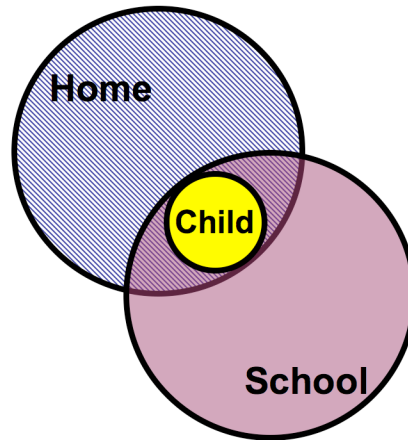


Incoming Data

- Teacher ratings
- Child academic skills
- Attendance data
- Parent and teacher views
- Parental involvement
- Changes in behaviors and expectations for a sub-sample of children from the pilot who remain engaged in the program and at the participating preschool sites

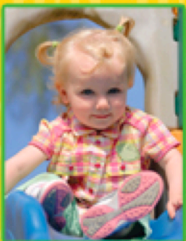


Program Objectives



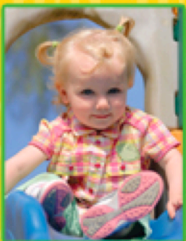
Adapted with Support

- Improve communication
- Support children's adaptation to school
- Promote common understanding and expectations
- Support the transition to Kindergarten
- Promote school success



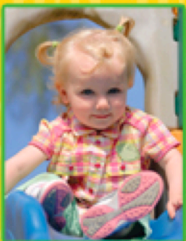
Connecting Through Common Values

- Recognizing differences and finding common purpose
- Acknowledging that there is no “one way” to understand differences
- Focusing on common goals and transcending differences between parents and teachers
- Nurturing and understanding the child’s development
- Supporting the transition to Kindergarten and overall school success



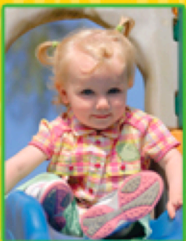
Anticipated Outcomes

- Increased parent involvement
- Improved student attendance
- Collaboration and agreement on decisions surround child issues
- Empowered parents who can better advocate for their children
- Supported teachers who are better able to generate strategies to communicate effectively with parents



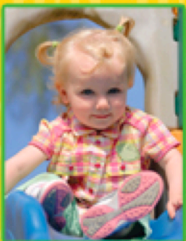
On-going Efforts

- Year two is now underway
- We are recruiting from four early childhood locations and 200 families
- We are refining our measures and our protocol
- Pilot data is being entered for initial analysis
- Parent events and seminars are being planned for Winter and Spring '09



Citations

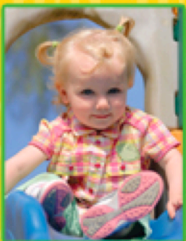
- Brizuela, B. and Garcia-Sellers, M.J., 1999. *School Adaptation: A Triangular Process*, American Educational Research Journal.
- Garcia-Sellers, M.J., 1995. *La Adaptacion Escolar*. Revista do Psicopedagogia, Abordajes, Buenos Aires, Argentina, Ano 1, No. 1.



Acknowledgments

The Parent-Teacher Connection Program would not be possible without...

- A Head Start LINK grant from the Connecticut Department of Education
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- Program liaisons Rebecca Boulos, Maria Fonseca, Stefanie Foster, Gwendolyn Gilchrist, & Elizabeth Santy
- Program advisor Martha Garcia-Sellers, PhD, who created the model on which the P-TCP is based for the Home-School Connection Program in Massachusetts



Contact Information

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Promoting communication between parents and teachers.

