

Follow-Up Data on Parents in Even Start Programs in Texas, 2004 and 2005

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Because of concerns for demonstrating accountability in Even Start family literacy programs in Texas, staff in the Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning designed a research project to document how investment of federal funds in Even Start provides returns on that investment. Since Even Start provides basic educational experiences to both parents and children, it was determined to first implement a pilot study to assess the impact of the program on the parents in 2003-2004. Data from the pilot test indicated that a more extensive study should be conducted on Even Start programs in the state. That research is found below.

1. With the assistance of the State Coordinator of Even Start in Texas, the research team acquired a list of all programs that were in their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year of program operations (61).
2. All programs were assigned a number from 1 to 61.
3. Using a table of random numbers, a one-third sample (20 programs) was drawn for the study.
4. In the selected programs, coordinators were asked to identify all families who had departed their Even Start program since it had begun, for whatever reason. Those who had “dropped out” were included as well as those who could be classified as “successful” by meeting their own goals or those of the program. Then, all families were assigned a number from 1 to whatever was the total number.
5. During a state conference, and operating from another table of random numbers, the research team trained each local program coordinator in (1) how to use the table of numbers to select those families who would be in the project from their total list and (2) how to use the telephone survey that had been developed for this project.
6. Once telephone surveys from 30 families had been acquired from each program, they were sent to the research team for analysis.

By May 13, 2005 data were acquired from 516 parents in 20 randomly selected Even Start programs. Nineteen (4%) of the respondents were males and 497 (96%) were females. These parents have been gone from Even Start for an average of 2.59 years.

Education:

(Sample question and responses) How often did you help your children with their learning activities/homework?

	Not at all	1 time/week	2 times/week	4 times/week	5 times/week	N/R
Before ES	20%	20%	13%	5%	20%	22%
After ES (now)	1%	4%	9%	16%	48%	22%

Chi-square analysis of these results showed significance at the .01 level in the increase of the number of times parents help their children with learning activities. It means the likelihood of the increase occurring by chance is less than one time in a hundred, or 1%).

(Sample question and responses) How much did you read to your children?

	Not at all	2 times/week	3 times/week	4 times/week	5 times/week	N/R
Before ES	26%	23%	19%	7%	15%	10%
After ES (now)	1%	5%	11%	24%	49%	10%

Chi-square analysis of these results showed significance at the .01 level in the increase of the number of times parents read to their children.

Out of the 516 respondents, 170 (33%) obtained the GED or completed high school while in Even Start, and 120 (23%) of the respondents had enrolled in further training or education after leaving Even Start. In many cases, these parents were the first in their family to ever enter post-secondary education or training.

Employment:

Ninety-two (18%) respondents indicated that they were employed before enrolling in Even Start. They worked for an average of 28.05 hours per week. The average salary was \$195.53 per week.

Two hundred and sixty-one (51%) were employed by the conclusion of the study. They worked for an average of 32.4 hours per week and the average salary was \$260.79 per week.

	Number of respondents being employed	Average hours of work per week	Average wages per week	Total wages per week
Before ES	92	28.05	195.53	17988.76
After ES (now)	261	32.4	260.79	68066.19
% of increase	184%	16%	33%	278%

The t-test statistic was run on the differences between the means of the hours and wages *before* and *after* their participation in Even Start to determine if significant increases were attained by the parents. Out of 67 respondents who were employed before they enrolled in Even Start and are employed now, statistically significant increases were found in both hours and wages before and after their participation in Even Start.

The standardized gain for number of hours worked *before* and *after* parents' participation in Even Start was 0.5. For amount of wages earned *before* and *after* Even Start it was 1.02. A standardized gain calculation reveals how much of an effect the intervention provided by the program had on the gains made by the participants, i.e., the higher the standardized gain, the bigger the impact of the intervention on the scores gains. The standardized gain is said to be small (.20), medium (.50), or large (.80). Therefore, for this group of parents, Even Start program had a medium effect upon the increases of hours made by the parents and a large effect upon the increases of wages. This cannot be interpreted that participation in Even Start caused this difference, but it can be said that a significant relationship exists between that participation and the change that occurred.

Further Training:

One hundred and twenty (25%) of the respondents enrolled in further training or education after participating in an Even Start program. Thirty-six (30%) of the 120 parents entered community colleges while 15 (13%) enrolled in nursing programs and 13 (11%) enrolled in further training in the area of child care (mostly the CDA - Child Development Associate program).

Public Assistance:

Before enrolling in Even Start, 266 (52%) parents received public assistance, whereas 178 (35%) parents were receiving public assistance at the conclusion of the study. That is a 33% reduction in the number of families receiving public assistance.

Volunteer:

Before enrolling in Even Start, 121 (23%) respondents volunteered in organizations, mostly elementary schools. They volunteered for an average of 3.52 hours per week.

Two hundred and thirty-seven (46%) respondents were volunteering at the conclusion of the study, again mostly at schools. They volunteered for an average of 3.18 hours per week. This means that the number of parents who were volunteering in schools almost doubled after they enrolled in Even Start. Although there is no way to put a monetary value on this participation, the positive impact for schools must have been significant.

There is not another program that produces these kinds of results for the small amount of federal funds that are spent on them.