



**October 2012:  
Home Visiting**

**News**

**[Before a Test, a Poverty of Words](#)**

*by Ginia Bellafante for the New York Times*

The idea that low-income children hear far fewer words than their affluent peers is not a new one, but this article about New York City's testing system for entry into elite high schools sheds a new light on it. Bellafante poses the question: in addressing how to increase the numbers of minority students in these high schools, wouldn't it make more sense to start preparing them even before preschool, rather than waiting until late middle school? It's certainly a point that resonates with the tenets of early childhood development.

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**Resources**

**[Home Visitation Yields Big Returns for Families, Taxpayers](#)**

This video from the Pew Center on the States' Home Visiting Campaign outlines the potential benefits for Home Visiting. Other videos in the series offer similar arguments from [Pew leaders](#), [law enforcement](#), [economics](#), and [government](#). Other campaign materials are available [here](#).

**[Webinar: State Initiatives to Expand Early Head Start](#)**

This recent webinar from the Center for Law and Social Policy, Inc. explores where states are finding resources to expand Early Head Start services - particularly through Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grants that are available under the Affordable Care Act. Featured in the webinar are Head Start State Collaboration directors Carolyn Kiefer from Idaho and Gina Ruther from Illinois. CLASP's full report is available [here](#).

**[Home Visitation and Young Children: An Approach Worth Investing In?](#)**

A Social Policy Report from the Society for Research in Child Development, this collection of commentaries was compiled during the early planning for what became the MIECHV grant

program. Various pieces address the history of home visiting, a review of research, and home visiting policy developments.

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## **Research**

### **[Involvement in Early Head Start home visiting services: Demographic predictors and relations to child and parent outcomes](#)**

*by Helen Raikes, Beth L. Green, Jane Atwater, Ellen Kisker, Jill Constantine, Rachel Chazan-Cohen for Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

Using data on 11 home-based sites from the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation study, the authors attempted to understand how quantity of involvement, quality of engagement and visit content contributed differently to child and family outcomes and whether family demographics were ultimately the key predictors of outcomes.

Statistical analysis of the data showed that family characteristics were associated with parent involvement and in some cases outcomes; in particular, maternal vocabulary had a significant association with a range of positive child and parenting outcomes. In addition, children's outcomes were higher when home visiting content included more time on child-focused activity. Generally, demographic variables were stronger than home visiting variables in predicting parenting outcomes, though duration of home visiting predicted parent support for language and literacy and quality of engagement predicted lower parental depression.

In sum, family characteristics were shown to play a significant role in the outcomes of home visiting but quality and content of visits were shown to contribute as well. This research is especially useful as a tool for responding to critics of home visiting who claim home visiting has little to no cognitive effect; based on this work, such findings should simply emphasize the need to present more child-focused content.

### **[Early Head Start Home Visitation: The Role of Implementation in Bolstering Program Benefits](#)**

*by Brenda Jones Harden, Rachel Chazan-Cohen, Helen Raikes, Cheri Vogel for the Journal of Community Psychology*

This study of Early Head Start home visiting used data from the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation study specific to programs that implemented home visiting models to deliver services and examined what the impact of the program was on children and families compared to controls and whether that impact varied between programs based on the degree to which they fully implemented the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Statistical analysis of outcomes when children were 36 months and at kindergarten entry showed

immediate and long-term outcomes for both children and their families, mostly related to social-emotional skills, parenting, and family self-sufficiency. Cognitive and social-emotional gains for children are expected to contribute to readiness. In addition, EHS home visiting contributed to family stability, including increased education/employment activities and family income and decreased mobility.

Compared to controls, participating families showed:

- Child outcomes - At 36 months, higher child engagement with parents during play and higher access to IEP services; at kindergarten entry, fewer social behavior problems, more positive approaches to learning, and higher rates of attendance in formal preschool and pre-K programs.
- Family outcomes - At 36 months, more supportiveness, lower distress and increased self-sufficiency activities; at kindergarten entry, program families had more books in their homes, were more supportive of language and literacy, engaged in more teaching activities and had higher household incomes.

Compared to incompletely implemented programs, fully implemented programs showed:

- Child outcomes - At 36 months, higher cognitive and vocabulary scores compared to controls, as well as lower rates of emergency room visits. At Kindergarten entry, children showed significantly improved social behaviors, approaches to learning, applied math problems, and attendance of formal preschool.
- Family outcomes - At 36 months, parents from fully implemented programs showed decreased physical discipline and lower stress when children were 36 months. At kindergarten entry, these families had more supportive home environments, more teaching activities, more books, higher rates of daily reading, higher incomes and lower mobility than controls.

These findings underscore the need for full implementation of the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the importance of Early Head Start for improving the stability of at-risk families.

**[Building successful home visitor–mother relationships and reaching program goals in two Early Head Start programs: A qualitative look at contributing factors](#)**

*by Sheila J. Brookes, Jean Ann Summers, Kathy R. Thornburg, Jean M. Ispa, Valeri J. Lane for Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

Based on qualitative data gathered at two Early Head Start home visiting sites during the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation study, the authors explored the common patterns of family factors and home visitor factors that contributed to families' success. They used the conceptual model of the "working alliance" as context for their work, which emphasizes the need for

therapists and clients to share goals, responsibility for tasks, and mutual trust and acceptance.

Of the two qualitative studies, one held on-going interviews with nine families and their home visitors over five years and the other gathered data from many sources across a program over five years.

Family factors that contributed to outcomes in both programs included:

- Family stressors - family crises, changes in mothers' employment, additional children, legal issues, and lack of English proficiency
- Parents' social support networks and personal history regarding forming trusting relationships
- Individual characteristics - self-absorption, mental health and coping issues, and attitudes toward the program

Home visitor and program factors that contributed to outcomes in both programs included:

- Conscientiousness, dependability, honesty, and persistence
- Clear presentation of the benefits and requirements of home visiting for parents
- Matches between parents and home visitors in terms of personal history and personality
- Efforts to build program loyalty, particular by ensuring parents were familiar with numerous staff in advance of transitions

Based on their findings, the authors recommended programs make efforts to track mobile families, be conscientious, provide services during flexible hours, be clear about home visiting goals and responsibilities, match staff carefully with families, support parents during staff turnover, engage partners and extended family, and consider that some families may need broader support than home visiting provides.

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## Discussion Questions

*One Research Blast reader to our recent survey suggested we provide discussion questions for staff to discuss after reading the material offered in our Blasts. We appreciate the feedback and will provide questions in the future.*

1. These studies focus on home visiting in Early Head Start - for Head Start providers, what findings also apply to Head Start home visiting and parent-teacher relationships?

2. Dr. Brookes and her colleagues write, "**The distinguishing characteristic of the**

**“successful” families was a clear and concrete understanding from the beginning about the purposes of the home visits and their responsibilities for participation.**” Is this what you have experienced? What strategies do you or could you implement to improve families’ early ‘clear and concrete’ understanding of home visiting?

3. The *New York Times* article emphasizes the need for children to hear a wide range of words during their early years and the Raikes study showed maternal vocabulary having a significant impact on children’s outcomes. Taken together, what do these findings mean for children in your program? How could you design an intervention to improve children’s vocabulary exposure?

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Know of other recent research that may be of interest to the Head Start field? Have other questions, comments or concerns? E-mail Emmalie Dropkin ([edropkin@nhsa.org](mailto:edropkin@nhsa.org)) with feedback.