

Harlem Children's Zone GRADS Early Head Start Program

2013-2014 Annual Report



THE NEED



Extensive research around the country has shown that the black-white academic achievement gap often manifests itself in the very first years of the lives of children in low-income families. As an organization committed to changing the odds for poor children and one that believes the parent is the child’s first teacher, the Harlem Children’s Zone carefully constructed the GRADS Early Head Start program.

We designed the GRADS (Guardians Responding and Developing Strategies) Early Head Start program to give parents the tools necessary to ensure that their children have an optimal start in their education. It is a multi-faceted program that addresses the education, health and social needs for children from 0-3 as well as their guardians.

The GRADS Early Head Start program builds on the family relationships that we start during The Baby College® and continue until children graduate from college. We believe creating a long-term relationship with children and families is critical to their success. By building trust, we are able to provide a series of support services that optimize a child’s development at each stage of their life.

THE MODEL



GRADS Early Head Start works with income-eligible families, primarily in the District 10 area, that have children 0-3 years of age, meeting with them both at home and at our new location on East 124th Street.

HOME VISITS

GRADS Early Head Start is a home-based program: Harlem Children's Zone staff make weekly visits to the 110 enrolled families.

During the home visits, staff review and reinforce some of the parenting techniques that were discussed during the socializations. The visiting family worker will also make sure the parent is getting what they and their children need.

SOCIALIZATIONS



A mainstay of the GRADS Early Head Start program are the bimonthly “socializations” at our Singleton Child Center where children and their family members meet to play, interact and learn how to make the best use of these early years so babies’ growing brains are best readied for life-long learning.

In addition to being great opportunities for families to bond, the socialization meetings provide a safe space for children to learn how to get along with their peers and for parents to build social networks in the neighborhood. In low-income, high-crime neighborhoods such as Central Harlem, parents have scant places to gather and often - in part for safety’s sake - spend a lot of their days behind locked doors.

At the socialization meetings, families will gather, talk and play with a focus on a particular topic such as dental care or nutrition. They may read, sing and share a meal together.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

To deepen the parents' engagement in the program, we encourage them to volunteer to work with the GRADS Early Head Start program for 20 hours each year. Parents receive a monthly calendar and can choose among a variety of activities for which they can volunteer. They can help in the planning of classroom activities or trips made by the group – or they can accompany the group on field trips and outings.

TRAINING PARENTS



GRADS has a Policy Council, which is composed of parents and community representatives. The Council helps develop procedures and reviews the program's grant proposal.

To build their skills, we give the caregivers the opportunity to receive training. Some of the training is aimed to teach parents to assist in the classroom. GRADS Early Head Start also works with several neighborhood organizations so we can provide helpful workshops on a variety of topics, such as financial management, healthy eating, anger management and positive discipline techniques.

THE GOALS



The GRADS Early Head Start program has a multi-faceted program to ensure that children are ready for school. We have sets of goals for the five essential domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework:

- Social and Emotional Development
- Language Development and Literacy
- Approaches Toward Learning
- Cognition and General Knowledge
- Physical Development and Health.

THE CURRICULUM



While the Harlem Children’s Zone model takes a long-term view of a child’s growth, the GRADS Early Head Start program seeks to optimize children’s development in the years that they are with us. The program is designed to be welcoming, stimulating and supportive for children and their parents. We develop deep, trusting relationships with our children and families, which allows us to engage them as partners in making sure they are academically successful, physically and mentally healthy and self-sustaining. Towards that end, GRADS Early Head Start draws on several curricula to cultivate children’s growth in several areas.

GRADS Early Head Start uses the Creative Curriculum to help children to develop their curiosity and help them become enthusiastic learners. The curriculum, in part, uses learning games during home visits to foster children’s social and emotional development as well as their physical, cognitive and language development.

The Creative Curriculum has four parts: social/emotional development; physical development; cognitive development and language/literary development.

GRADS Early Head Start also uses the PALS (Play and Learning Strategies) curriculum, which uses videos to allow parents to see and discuss parenting techniques. Staff videotape families during home visits as a learning tool so the parents can see how they themselves are interacting with their children.

ASSESSMENT

GRADS Early Head Start staff also assess the progress of each child using the Brigance Early Childhood Developmental Inventory, which gives coaches an ongoing assessment of a child's school readiness and teachers the information they need to plan targeted, developmentally appropriate lessons.

Our own Evaluation Department assesses the program and found the following encouraging signs of parental engagement:

- Year-to-year parent retention was 94.1%
- 100% of the enrolled families were graduates of our Baby College program, indicating a growing bond between families and the organization
- As a result of staff educating parents in regard to home safety, 98.6% parents had smoke detectors, 97.8% had window gates and 99.3% had CO2 detectors
- 100% of pregnant women received prenatal care and information on benefits of breastfeeding

HEALTHY HARLEM

Our agencywide Healthy Harlem program promotes child and family wellness through exercise and nutrition education. GRADS Early Head Start encourages the consumption of healthy foods and beverages. We provide snacks and meals that are healthy and we discourage bringing in outside foods and beverages. Healthy Harlem staff regularly visit socializations, make snacks and meals and teach families about serving healthy foods for their children.

Adults enrolled in our GRADS Early Head Start program can participate in discounted Weight Watchers classes and free HCZ-run exercise classes at the 143rd Street Armory or at PS 149. Families can also receive up to 15 pounds of free produce at monthly farmers markets that HCZ organizes at the St. Nicholas Houses.

FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUES		EHS Grant	Total EHS Program
	Total Revenues	\$772,305	\$772,305
EXPENSES		EHS Grant	Total EHS Program
	Personnel Services	\$527,322	\$653,056
	FICA	\$39,122	\$48,522
	Medical	\$127,538	\$128,920
	Contractual/Consultants		\$21,251
	Occupancy (Rent)	\$63,024	\$114,899
	Real Estate Taxes		\$10,780
	Utilities	\$8,381	\$19,317
	Maintenance		\$16,749
	Supplies	\$6,919	\$12,379
	Equipment Rental		\$6,392
	Cable/Internet		\$2,145
	Telephone		\$2,785
	Special Client Services		\$10,147
	Food		\$3,556
	Credit Card Purchases (Staff Travel)		\$1,500
	Total Expenses:	\$772,305	\$1,052,397

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