

# The Harlem Children's Zone GRADS Early Head Start 2015 Annual Report



## THE NEED

It has become clear that the earliest years of a child's life are critical in their future academic and developmental success. Scientific research has confirmed that the academic achievement often starts during these early years when parents with little education themselves do not do the simple "serve and response" that is so important for fostering brain development.



Because the Harlem Children's Zone unique and ground-breaking model begins at or before birth and the organization's mission is to ensure its children reach their potential, one of our priorities is to make sure parents give their children the best start possible.

The organization began its GRADS (Guardians Responding and Developing Strategies) Early Head Start program in 2010 as a continuation and deepening of our successful and popular Baby College® program. The multi-faceted GRADS Early Head Start program addresses the education, health and social needs for children from 0-3, as well as supporting their guardians.

The GRADS Early Head Start is an important link in our cradle-to-career pipeline, ensuring children's optimal development and building a trusting relationship between our organization and its families.

## THE MODEL

**G**RADS Early Head Start works with income-eligible families, primarily in the Manhattan Community Board 10 area, that have children 0-3 years of age. We do both home visits with the families as well as meet with them at our Singleton Center on West 124th Street.

## SOCIALIZATIONS



An important component of the GRADS Early Head Start program are the bimonthly “socializations” at the Singleton Early Childhood Center where family members and their children come together with our staff for an informal, but intentional play group. We have reconfigured the socialization groups this past year so that the families are grouped by the age of their youngest child. While the children undertake engaging, enriching activities and learn to interact with peers, the guardians bond and learn about age-appropriate parenting.

The socializations provide a unique and important opportunity for the parents to form social networks. In low-income, high-crime neighborhoods such as Harlem, residents often become isolated because of fear and a lack of recreational places for them to gather. The result is that children often spend much of their waking hours behind locked doors. The socializations give them an opportunity to play in a safe environment and for the guardians to meet so they can also gather for playdates during the week.

At the socializations, the families gather to talk and play, often around a specific activity or a particular topic such as nutrition or dental care. During the socializations, the family members sing, read and share meals together.



## HOME VISITS



**T**he GRADS Early Head Start program is home-based, with Harlem Children’s Zone staff making weekly visits to the 110 enrolled families.

During the home visits, staff members discuss the parenting techniques that were discussed during the center-based group meetings, called “socializations.” The staff members also make sure that the new parents are getting what they and their children need.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

**T**o foster the ongoing, long-term relationship with our families, GRADS Early Head Start encourages caregivers to do 20 hours of volunteer work each year with the program. We publish and distribute a calendar of activities each month and highlight the opportunities for volunteering. Caregivers can help plan classroom activities or the group trips – or they can accompany families on local field trips.

## TRAINING CAREGIVERS



**G**RADS Early Head Start created a Policy Council composed of parents and community representatives to make sure the program is responding to neighborhood and family needs. The Council reviews the program's grant proposals and helps formulate procedures.

Participants in the program are given opportunities to receive varied trainings to build their skills. Some of the training modules are aimed at preparing family members for assisting staff and children during program meetings and socializations. GRADS Early Head Start also works with other organizations in the surrounding neighborhood to provide useful workshops for caregivers on topics such as financial management, healthy eating, anger management and positive-discipline techniques.

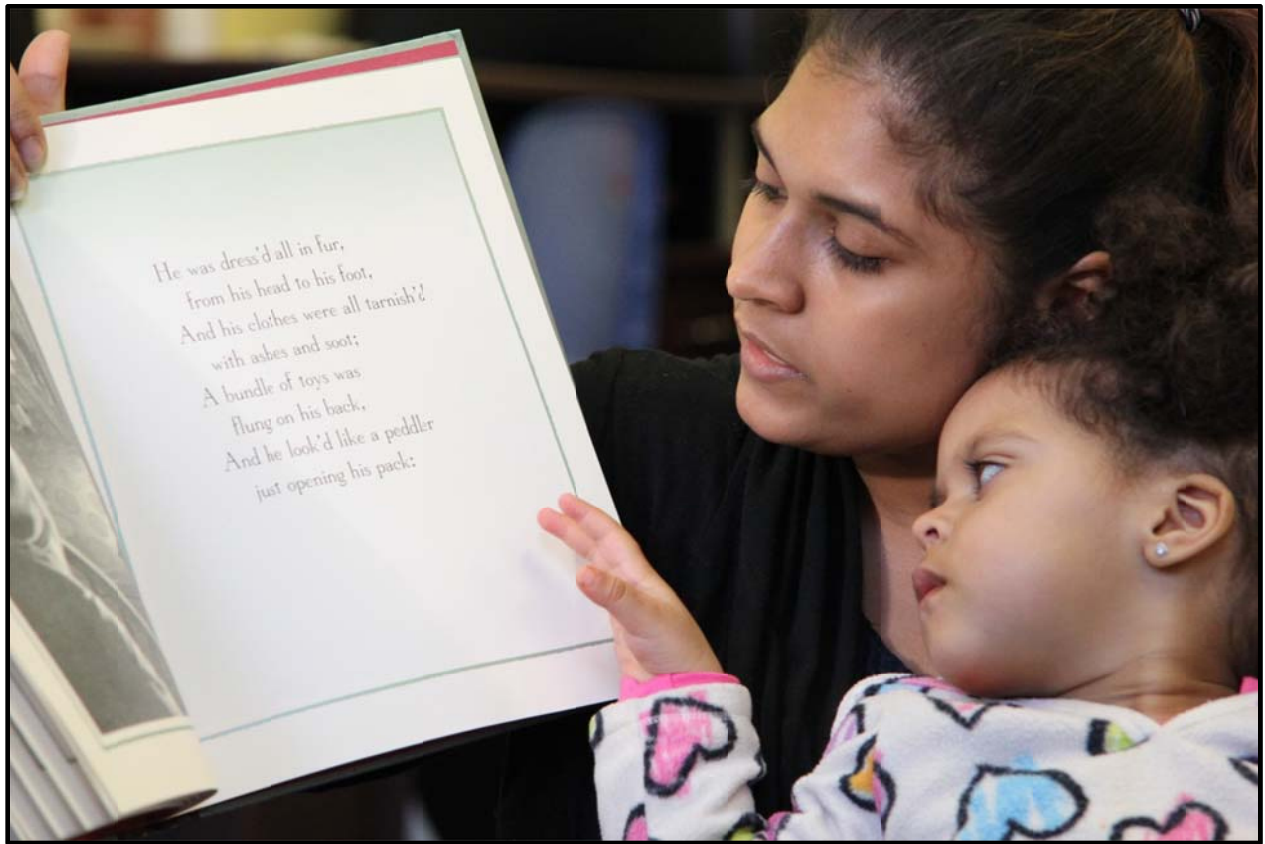
## THE GOALS



**T**he GRADS Early Head Start program has diverse offerings to make sure children are ready for their eventual entry into school. We have sets of goals for the five 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



One of the fundamental organizing principles of the Harlem Children's Model is to work with children and families over the long term. As a critical component, the GRADS Early Head Start program focuses on optimizing the children's development in their all-important first years. The program is intentionally designed to be welcoming, stimulating and supportive for children and their parents. In their time with us, children and families develop a trusting relationship with our staff and our organization. This partnership allows us to make sure children are academically successful, as well as physically and mentally healthy and, ultimately, self-sustaining. To guide us along that path, GRADS Early Head Start uses several curricula to cultivate children's growth.

GRADS Early Head Start uses the Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers, and Twos to help children to develop their curiosity and help them grow into becoming enthusiastic learners. The curriculum directs staff to use 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.



## ASSESSMENT



**T**o assess each child's progress, the GRADS Early Head Start staff use the Brigance Early Childhood Developmental Inventory, which gives coaches an ongoing assessment of school readiness as well as giving teachers the information they need to plan targeted, developmentally appropriate lessons.

The Evaluation Department of the Harlem Children's Zone assesses the program regularly and found the following encouraging signs of parental engagement:

- Year-to-year parental retention was 75%.
- 98% of the enrolled families were graduates of The Baby College program, indicating a growing bond between families and the overall organization.
- As a result of the education efforts of GRADS staff in regard to home safety, 100% of parents had smoke detectors in their homes, all had window gates and 100% had CO2 detectors.
- 100% of pregnant women received prenatal care and information on the benefits of breastfeeding.



## HEALTHY HARLEM



**T**he third year of our agencywide Healthy Harlem program has continued to successfully promote child and family wellness through physical exercise and nutrition education.

GRADS Early Head Start encourages families to eat more healthy foods and drinks. At events and the bi-weekly socializations, we provide healthy snacks, meals and beverages and discourage bringing in outside beverages. Staff from the Healthy Harlem program visit the socializations regularly and teach families through group cooking projects.

GRADS Early Head Start caregivers are given the opportunity to take Weight Watchers classes at a subsidized discount and free exercise classes at the HCZ-run 143rd Street Armory or PS 149. Families also can receive up to 15 pounds of free vegetables and fruits at monthly farmers markets that HCZ organizes at the St. Nicholas public housing development.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUES	Total EHS Grant	Total Cost EHS Program
Total Revenues	\$883,722	\$883,722
EXPENSES	EHS Grant	Total EHS Program
Salaries	\$571,370	\$653,754
Benefits	\$245,655	\$277,078
Cable/Internet	\$0	\$1,796
Client Travel	\$0	\$9,351
Contractual/Consultants	\$25,428	\$25,428
Credit Card Purchases (Staff Travel)	\$7,312	\$7,312
Equipment Rental	\$0	\$4,744
Food	\$0	\$3,775
Maintenance	\$0	\$5,299
Memberships/Publications	\$0	\$425
Miscellaneous	\$0	\$3,484
Occupancy (Rent)	\$30,527	\$126,238
Payroll Processing	\$0	\$102
Real Estate Taxes	\$0	\$2,278
Security	\$0	\$1,034
Software	\$0	\$2,257
Space Rental	\$0	\$2,303
Special Client Services	\$0	\$864
Staff Training	\$3,430	\$4,171
Supplies	\$0	\$16,091
Telephone	\$0	\$4,752
Utilities	\$0	\$13,451
Dollars Matched	\$282,265	\$0
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$1,165,987</b>	<b>\$1,165,987</b>

**Harlem Children's Zone**  
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