A BROADENED VIEW OF PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTIONS

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The Program: GRS

The Getting Ready for School (GRS) Program

- Interactive, play-based activities
- Coordinated home and preschool components
- Preschool: Add-on lessons can be used with any curriculum
- Parent: Can be implemented alone
- Targets all three school readiness domains: Math, literacy, & self-regulation

Figure 1. The GRS Logic Model & Parent Engagement

Participants

- 42 parents of preschoolers (24 boys, 18 girls), recruited from 4 Head Start programs in New York City that participate in the GRS program
- Parents were divided into 3 groups using school-based forms of engagement: No Participation (10%), Low Engagers (30%), and High Engagers (60%)

Table 1. Demographics for Parents Participating in Focus Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Kindergarten</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3/11</td>
<td>2/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>7/11</td>
<td>5/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methods

- Participants were recruited via flyers left in all cubbies, and sign-up sheets in each classroom. Targeted efforts were made to recruit parents who were not attending GRS events.
- Focus groups were held at the centers, usually after school
- Separate groups for English-speaking (6) and Spanish-speaking (4) participants
- $10 gift card as a thank you for participation
- Separate groups for English-speaking (6) and Spanish-speaking (4) participants

Results

- Parents described barriers and facilitators that affect parents' ability to engage with the GRS program.
- We do not directly measure cognitive resources; rather, we use parents' own perspectives to identify "bandwidth barriers and facilitators" that affect parents' ability to engage with the program.

Conclusions & Next Steps

- Parents identified many typical barriers to their engagement with GRS that are documented in prior research.
- Our work also uncovered new information about parent barriers and facilitators that appears to fit with hypotheses regarding cognitive bandwidth emerging from the behavioral economics framework.
- Barriers and facilitators were similar across language groups and engagement levels.
- The insights from this work are being used to design and experimentally test behavioral economic enhancements to GRS and assess impact on parent participation, children’s time spent on GRS activities outside of the classroom, and children’s developmental outcomes.