

**PARENTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION:  
BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS TODAY AND STRONG  
FAMILIES TOMORROW**

**SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

*Parents Under Construction (which will frequently be referred to in this document by its previous name, Primary Prevention) has been extensively evaluated in fifteen separate, independently conducted research studies and found effective in 1) teaching children parenting skills, and 2) positively impacting children's attitudes regarding the use of mentally healthy discipline techniques. The most recent studies indicate: 1) knowledge gains remain at one-year follow-up; 2) some students report greater empathic capacity after participating in the program; 3) teachers implementing the program note improved student behavior; and 4) parents participating in parent/child program activities overwhelmingly approve of the Parents Under Construction Program. The following is an overview of research conducted to date.*



**1991-92: INITIAL PILOT STUDY**  
*conducted by the Houston Independent School District Office of Research and  
Evaluation*

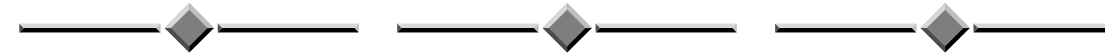
**Subjects:** 148 6th - 12th grade students attending schools in the Houston Independent School District.

**Methodology:** Pre- and posttest questionnaires developed to test knowledge of the *Primary Prevention Program* curriculum. Posttest also contained open-ended subjective questions concerning students' opinions of the program and subject matter.

**Analysis:** Pre-test: 35% of students answered less than 50% of the questions correctly. Posttest: 8% scored less than 50%. Fourteen percent of the students answered more than 75% of the questions correctly on the pre-test, while 59% scored greater than 75% on the posttest. Limited analysis due to inconsistencies in teacher administration of questionnaires; as a result, all subsequent studies used research associates to administer questionnaires.

**Results/Conclusions:** *The Primary Prevention Program* was effective in teaching secondary students knowledge about the effects of parenting practices on the mental

health of children. Units addressing parenting styles and discipline techniques made the greatest impression on the students. Analysis of comments made in response to the posttest open-ended questions indicated the students not only enjoyed the program but also learned from it.



**1994-95: Teaching Children To Be Parents: An Evaluation of The Primary  
Prevention Program**  
*conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph.D., P.C. and Associates*

**Subjects:** 340 4-6th graders and 350 7-12th grade students. Ethnic breakdown for 4-6th grade participants: 54% Hispanic, 41% Black, 4% White, 1% Other. 76% were eligible for the state's free lunch program.

Ethnic breakdown for 7-12th grade students: 52% Hispanic, 26% Black, 20% White, 2% Other.

**Methodology:** A pre-post-test control group design with 2-3 month follow-up. Separate questionnaires were developed for 7-12th graders and 4-6th graders. Each test contained two sections: one to measure knowledge gain and another to measure attitude change.

**Analysis:**

4-6th grade: No significant correlation between scores and demographic variables. Students in the program group scored significantly higher at posttest (mean score = 5.12) than the control group (mean score = 3.64,  $p < .001$ ). No decline in program group's follow-up test scores compared to the post-test (5.07 versus 5.12, respectively). Program group significantly decreased endorsement of corporal punishment as a discipline technique. Teachers were found to be more effective than counselors, nurses, or volunteers in presenting the program to younger children.

7-12th grade: Significant increase in knowledge items related to discipline techniques for program group. Significant correlation between knowledge score and mentally healthier attitudes. Follow-up data not analyzed due to student attrition (moved, drop-out, course changes, etc.). No significant changes in attitude from pre-test to posttest.

**Results/Discussion:** *Primary Prevention* was very effective in educating 4-6th grade students about parenting practices and children's mental health. There was no decrement in that knowledge after two months. Fourth - Sixth grade students' perception of corporal punishment changed as a result of *The Primary Prevention Program*. They were less likely after exposure to the program to agree with the belief in corporal punishment as a means of disciplining children.

Seventh - Twelfth grade students made significant gains in parenting knowledge and were receptive to positive parenting strategies. Attitude changes regarding corporal punishment were not significantly altered by the program. (See p.4, 1996-97: *7-12th Grade Primary Prevention Program Re-Evaluation Study*, and p. 7, 1999: *An Evaluation of The Primary Prevention Program and Its Relation to Empathy and Pro-social Behavior* for different results.)



**1995-96: Teaching Children To Be Parents: An Evaluation of the Primary Prevention Program For Grades Kindergarten Through Three conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph.D., P.C. and Associates**

**PART 1: KINDERGARTEN - THIRD GRADE STUDENTS**

**Subjects:** 263 students; average age = 7.3 years. Ethnic breakdown included 51% Black, 37% Hispanic, 10% White, and 3% Other. Approximately 72% were eligible for the state's free lunch program.

**Methodology:** A posttest only control group design with 2-3 month follow-up. A questionnaire developed specifically for the study was administered during each testing session and was divided into two parts: knowledge acquisition and attitude toward discipline.

**Analysis:** Students in the program group scored significantly higher in knowledge acquisition (72% correct) than the control group (63% correct). Students in the program group scored significantly higher than the control group regarding changing toward a less favorable attitude toward corporal punishment. There was a significant correlation between knowledge score and a lack of support for the use of corporal punishment as a discipline technique ( $r = .37$ ,  $N = 263$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Follow-up scores indicate the students retained parenting knowledge but attitude change was not as stable.

**Results/Discussion:** Significant knowledge gains and attitude change at posttest and follow-up. K-3rd grade children were able to identify parenting styles, positive discipline techniques, and the techniques that would likely improve self-esteem. *Primary Prevention* was very effective in educating children about the relationship between parenting practices and a child's mental health and changing children's attitudes about corporal punishment.

**PART 2: INSTRUCTOR TRAINING**

**Subjects:** 82 teachers, counselors, nurses who attended Primary Prevention Program training. Instructors were primarily female (91%) and the majority were teachers (64%). Ethnic breakdown was 40% White, 46% Black, 12% Hispanic, and 1% Asian.

**Methodology:** The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) was administered prior to and after the training program. The AAPI assesses parenting and childrearing attitudes, particularly parenting practices associated with abusive and neglectful parenting styles.

**Analysis:** Analysis of variance demonstrated that post-training scores were significantly higher than pre-training scores ( $p < .001$ ). Instructors' parenting attitudes were more appropriate and less "abusive" following training.

**Results/Discussion:** The data indicated that the Primary Prevention Program training had a significant impact on instructors' parenting attitudes. Parenting attitudes changed especially in the areas of a) reduced belief in the use of corporal punishment and b) more appropriate attitudes about the developmental expectations of children. The training was successful in changing parenting attitudes while teaching positive parenting concepts.



**1996-97: 7-12th Grade Primary Prevention Program Re-Evaluation Study  
conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph. D., P.C. and Associates**

**Subjects:** 116 7-12th grade students. Mean age = 15.3 years.

**Methodology:** Pre/post-test design using program and control groups. Same questionnaire utilized in 1994-95 study.

**Analysis:** Program students' knowledge scores significantly improved by 15% from pre-test to post-test (paired  $t$ -test =5.69,  $p < .001$ ). Program student attitude scores significantly improved by 10% from pre-test to post-test (paired  $t$ -test =2.28,  $p < .01$ ). Results limited by data collection (only 25 students completed both pre-test and post-test; only 19 of these were valid for analysis and all 19 were in the program group).

**Results/Discussion:** Students between 7-12th grade gained knowledge about positive parenting techniques and were less likely to believe in the use of corporal punishment as a result of participating in *The Primary Prevention Program*.

The Primary Prevention Program was highly effective in teaching 7-12th grade students about the program concepts. This was true for both knowledge and attitude dimensions. Unlike the 1995-96 evaluation of this age group, middle and high school

students learned prevention concepts and improved their attitudes about corporal punishment. Generalization of this study is limited, however, due to small sample size.



**1997: Spanish Primary Prevention Program Fall 1997 Study  
conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph.D., P.C. and Associates**

**Subjects:** 172 Kindergarten - 3rd grade Spanish-speaking students. The mean age was 7.5 years.

**Methodology:** Pre-test/posttest control group design. The questionnaire used in the 1995-96 study was translated for use in this study.

**Analysis:** Children in the program group (mean Summary score = 8.17) scored significantly higher than children in the control group (7.24), an 18.9% increase. Attitude scores for the program group increased for all grades except second graders. Program group kindergartners scored as well in attitude change as third graders (.86 at pre-test to 1.48 at posttest for kindergartners versus .85 to 1.50 for third graders).

**Results/Discussion:** Primary Prevention was highly effective in teaching Spanish-speaking children about parenting practices, positive discipline techniques, and altering attitudes toward less belief in the use of corporal punishment.



**1998: Results From Pilot Testing of Primary Prevention Program Preschool Curriculum  
conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph.D., P.C. and Associates**

**Subjects:** 17 preschool-aged children; four were 4-year-olds and 13 were 5-year-olds. Nine were girls and 8 were boys. All children were attending a preschool class in a public school and were either eligible for free lunch or came from a home where English was not the primary language spoken.

**Methodology:** A pre-posttest one-on-one interview format using a modified version of the K-3 questionnaire developed for the 1995-96 study described above. No control group.

**Analysis:** Post-test scores increased 39% over pre-test scores; this increase was statistically significant. No differences were found between boys and girls. Five-year-olds scored higher on knowledge both at pre- and post-test; however, the age differences are not generalizable due to small four-year-old sample. There was no change in attitude from pre-test to post-test.

**Results/Discussion:** Children learned the Primary Prevention Program material presented. Their attitudes were not influenced by the program. Results are qualified due to small sample size, lack of a control group, and methodology.



**1998: Program Evaluation of the 4-6th Grade  
Spanish Primary Prevention Program  
conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph.D., P.C. and Associates**

**Subjects:** 120 Spanish-speaking students attending four HISD schools. Thirteen % were fourth graders, 64% were fifth-grade students, and 23% sixth grade. Mean age = 11.2 years.

**Methodology:** A pre-test/posttest control group design; no 4th grade control group due to lack of a volunteer class. The original 4-6th grade Primary Prevention questionnaire (1994-95) translated into Spanish, as well as an empathy questionnaire developed by Bryant (1982), were utilized.

**Analysis:**

**Knowledge:** Control group (mean score = 4.67) had significantly higher pretest scores than the program group (mean score = 3.63) but both groups scored similarly by posttest (mean scores were 5.27 and 5.30, respectively). The reason for the difference between groups at pre-test was unknown.

Independent t-test analysis demonstrated a significant difference between program and control groups ( $t = 3.57$ ,  $N = 90$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The program group change in score (+1.60, or 17.8%) significantly increased compared to the control group (+.39). Results indicated significant learning for the program group but no significant change for the control group.

**Attitude:** A difference score was calculated and analyzed by independent t-test. Results showed that change scores for the program group (+2.02, or 5.6%) was significantly higher ( $t = 3.02$ ,  $N = 90$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than the control group (-.31). The results indicated a significant attitude change towards less belief in corporal punishment for the program group with no significant change for the control group.

**Empathy:** An analysis of covariance demonstrated a significant increase in empathy score ( $F = 5.12$ ,  $N = 59$ ,  $p < .05$ ) for the program group compared to the control group.

**Results:** Primary Prevention was effective in teaching Spanish-speaking 4-6th grade students about program concepts (knowledge). Students also shifted their attitudes toward less belief in corporal punishment and reported greater empathic capacity after participating in the program. Empathy has proven to be an important antecedent to pro-social behavior in the child development literature and thus the Primary Prevention Program's positive influence on empathy has important implications for the program's effect on children's behavior. Generalizability of findings are limited due to sampling issues (i.e., lack of 4th grade control group).



**1999: An Evaluation of The Primary Prevention Program and Its Relation to  
Empathy and Pro-social Behavior**  
*conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph.D., P.C. and Associates*

**PART 1: STUDENTS**

**Subjects:**

4-6<sup>th</sup> grade: 67 students. Thirty-eight (57%) were male, with an average age of 10.9 years. Ethnic breakdown: 53% Hispanic, 47% African American. Twenty-one percent were 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Fifty-four percent of the sample constituted the program group.

7-12<sup>th</sup> grade: 215 students. Average age = 14.3 years with an age range between 12 and 18. Approximately 58% were male. Ethnic composition: 48% Hispanic, 47% African American, 2% White, 1% Other. Grade breakdown: 40% 7<sup>th</sup> grade, 26% 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 32% 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 2% 11<sup>th</sup> grade. Fifty-eight percent of the sample constituted the program group.

**Methodology:** A pre-posttest control group design with follow-up. Three student questionnaires were used: the previous *Primary Prevention Program* questionnaires developed by Peraino (1994-95); The Emotional Empathy Scale (Mehrabian and Epstein, 1972); and a scale developed by Peraino (1999) tapping pro-social and anti-social behaviors.

**Analysis (4-6<sup>th</sup> grade):**

Knowledge: Program condition significantly affected posttest scores ( $\bar{E} = 10.22$ ,  $N = 47$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Students in the program group scored significantly higher (mean score = 10.20) than the control group (mean score = 7.94).

Attitudes: Program students demonstrated significantly lower belief in corporal punishment than did control group students ( $\bar{E} = 4.26$ ,  $N = 47$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Mean posttest score for the program group was 21.13 while for the control group the mean score was 18.89.

Empathy: Mean scores for program and control groups were 3.90 and 2.47, respectively. Differences did not reach significance. Girls scored higher than boys at posttest.

Pro-social behavior: Analysis of variance demonstrated a significant trend for pro-social behavior to increase and anti-social behaviors to decrease for the program vs. control group ( $F = 2.85$ ,  $N = 47$ ,  $p < .10$ ).

### **Analysis (7-12<sup>th</sup> grade):**

Knowledge: Results demonstrated a highly significant difference between program and control groups on knowledge ( $F = 11.87$ ,  $N = 133$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Students in the program group scored higher on the posttest knowledge questionnaire than students in the control group (average number correct = 13.06 and 11.40 for program and control groups, respectively). There was a significant correlation between grade and knowledge scores. Students in the higher grades attained higher knowledge scores ( $r = .53$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Attitudes: Analyses demonstrated a highly significant difference between groups on posttest attitudes ( $F = 21.98$ ,  $N = 133$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Higher posttest scores were attained by the program group (mean score = 24.22) than the control group (20.81) indicating less belief in corporal punishment and less belief in spoiling babies for the program group students.

Empathy and Pro-social behavior: There was no significant difference between the program and control groups on the emotional empathy scale or the pro-social behavior scale. The mean empathy scores for program and control groups were 8.82 and 10.98, respectively. The mean pro-social scores were 12.01 and 11.65, respectively. Girls scored higher than boys at pre-test but both genders scored equally at posttest.

Other findings: Change scores were calculated and correlated for those students who had pre- and posttest scores ( $N = 54$ ). One significant finding showed that changes in knowledge were correlated with changes in attitude ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In addition, higher posttest knowledge was associated with a higher positive change in attitude ( $r = .41$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and higher posttest attitude was associated with a higher positive change in knowledge ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and empathy ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Another finding showed that younger students had significantly higher positive change scores on knowledge ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and attitude ( $r = .34$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Results/Discussion:** This study found a significant increase in knowledge and mentally healthier attitudes for the program group versus control group. This result was found for both 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade and 7-12<sup>th</sup> grade curricula. Better attitude at posttest was also correlated with greater change in empathy. No clear relationship of pro-social behavior with knowledge or attitude was found, and only for younger students was pro-social behavior associated with empathy. However, teachers reported improved classroom behavior after students participated in the program (see Part 2 below).

## **PART 2: TEACHERS**

**Subjects:** 12 teachers.

**Methodology:** Pre- and posttest questionnaire given before and after teachers implemented the *Primary Prevention* curriculum. The questionnaire contained six items designed to measure certain student behaviors such as helpfulness, arguing, empathy, physical altercations, verbal abuse, and positive communication techniques. No control group.

**Analysis:** Because of the low number of teachers participating in the study, statistical analyses were not performed. Tallies and averages demonstrated that teachers perceived improvement in the following areas: fewer arguments and verbally abusive behavior such as calling names, teasing and insulting; increased empathy among students; and an increase in the number of positive communication/discipline techniques. Eleven of the twelve teachers reported their skills were positively affected by the program and would like to teach the program again.

**Results/Discussion:** Teachers reported positive feedback about *The Primary Prevention Program*. They noted improved classroom behavior and felt the program positively affected their skills as an instructor.



<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1999: Program Evaluation Results of the Pre-Kindergarten Primary Prevention Program</b> <i>conducted by Joseph M. Peraino, Ph.D., P.C. and Associates</i></p>
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**PART 1: STUDENTS**

**Subjects:** 63 students from three preschools, 2 public and one private. The students were primarily male (53%) and from four ethnic groups: 35% Anglo, 14% African American, 46% Hispanic, and 2% Other (3% did not provide their ethnicity). Ages ranged from 53 months to 74 months with a mean of 60 months (5 years).

**Methodology:** The study included program and control groups. A posttest only control group design with randomization was incorporated as the methodological design. Students were randomly assigned to program or (wait-list) control groups. All students were administered both pre- and posttests but for statistical analyses, the program group's posttest was compared to the control group's pre-test scores. The control group's pre-test scores essentially served as their posttest. The rationale for this methodological and statistical design was to ensure that these young students would not be upset if classmates received the *Primary Prevention Program* presentations and they did not. As a test of the equivalency of the group samples, pre-test scores were compared for control and program groups. No significant difference was found.

The questionnaire included 12 items assessing concepts taught in *The Primary Prevention Preschool/Parent* curriculum. Students were asked to point to pictures indicating their responses, as well as use dolls and props to answer questions.

**Analysis:** Age significantly correlated with posttest score ( $p < .05$ ). Older students scored significantly higher than younger students. Children in the program group (mean summary score = 7.93,  $N = 28$ ) scored slightly but not significantly higher than children in the control group (7.09,  $N=23$ ). Detailed analysis, however, demonstrated a significant group condition by school interaction effect ( $F = 3.40$ ,  $N = 51$ ,  $p < .05$ ). That is, depending on the school, there were significant differences between program and control groups.

Since all students eventually completed both pre- and posttests, an analysis was conducted to determine whether scores improved from pre- to posttest. For those students who completed both pre- and posttests ( $N = 51$ ), the average score at pre-test was 7.00. At post-test, the average score was 7.75, a gain of .75 points (6.25%). This difference was statistically significant ( $t = 2.81$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The increased change score was primarily due to one of the public school classes.

**Results/Conclusions:** The findings from this study demonstrated some promising results. Two different analyses revealed that the students improved slightly overall (approximately 6%) in their grasp of concepts regarding raising babies. In one of the three schools, significant improvement was noted when compared to a control group. Results may not be generalizable due to small sample size, a newly developed questionnaire, and a lack of internal evaluation to determine if all concepts were taught by all teachers.

## **PART 2: PARENT SURVEY**

**Subjects:** Parents of children participating in the program were invited to attend *Primary Prevention Program* parent activity sessions with their children. Thirty-eight (38) parents completed surveys.

**Methodology:** A survey containing 8 items was developed to assess parents' reaction and comments about the program. The items were administered on a 4-point Likert-type scale. Additionally, a parent attendance roster was kept.

**Analysis:** Survey results indicated that parents responded favorably. On all items (except for item 4 in which one parent disagreed), 100% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed to the mission of *The Primary Prevention Program* or reported their child benefited from it. Parents felt that parent training was important (item 1), their child benefited from the program (item 2), they were glad their child participated in the program (item 3) their child learned a lot about raising children (item 4), thought other children should receive the program (item 5), enjoyed the activities shared with their child (item 6), felt it was worth their time to attend parent sessions (item 7), and learned new parenting techniques (item 8).

Correlations between the student's posttest scores and parent attendance and number of parent sessions attended were computed. Students scored marginally significantly higher at posttest if their parents attended at least one parent session ( $r = .24$ ,  $N = 51$ ,  $p < .10$ ).

**Results/Conclusions:** Parents overwhelmingly approved of *The Primary Prevention Program*. There was a slight tendency for children to do well if their parents attended at least one of the parent sessions.



**2000: Teaching Children and Their Parents Parenting Skills  
A Preliminary Evaluation of the Parents Under Construction Program  
K-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Parent/Child Curriculum  
Conducted by Jacqueline Hawkins, Ed.D. & Andrea Backscheider, Ph.D.  
University of Houston, Department of Educational Psychology**

**Subjects:**

**Students:** 44 second grade students at an elementary school in HISD. Twenty-one (48%) were in the control group and 23 (53%) in the program group. Average age of students was 7.98, ranging from 7 to 10 years old. Twenty-one females, 23 males. Ethnic distribution: 15% African American, 45% Hispanic, 31% Anglo, 7% Asian. Fifty-two percent of the students were economically disadvantaged, 36% Limited English proficient. Majority of these students were enrolled in an accelerated academic curriculum; half of the students had participated in the Parents Under Construction program in Kindergarten.

**Parents:** Thirty-one parents participated in some component of the study. For final analysis, there were 8 matched pre-post tests for the control group and 1 matched pre-post test for the program group.

**Methodology:** A pre-posttest control group design. Questionnaires for both children and parents were used in previous Parents Under Construction studies.

**Analysis:**

**Students:** Students improved their knowledge/attitude base over time regardless of group assignment, but program group participants had significantly higher mean scores at both pretest ( $t_{41} = 3.57$ ) and at posttest ( $t_{40} = 4.67$ ).

**Parents:** No significant change from pre- to post test in the control group ( $t_6 = 0.87$ ). Treatment group parents who attended the Parents Under Construction sessions with their child generally agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed sharing activities with their child during the program. They all agreed that they learned some new information and parenting techniques at the sessions and also agreed that the program had positively affected their skills as parents.

**Results/Discussion:** Students who participated in the study increased their knowledge/attitudes in positive parenting skills. The program group had higher scores at both pre- and post test. Data indicates that there is parental interest in the program as a high proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire (both program and control). Parents in the program group reported they enjoyed sharing activities with their child during the program, learned new information and parenting techniques, and felt that their skills as a parent had been positively affected by the program. Since many parents completed one of the testing instruments but few completed all instruments, analyses were limited to descriptions of the groups.

Anecdotal information from the teachers identifies the importance of the parent participation component to the students, as they were very excited about their parents coming to the school to learn.



**2000: Teaching Children Parenting Skills**  
**An Interim Evaluation of the Parents Under Construction Program**  
**4-6<sup>th</sup> Grade and 7-12<sup>th</sup> Grade At One Year**  
**Conducted by Jacqueline Hawkins, Ed.D. & Andrea Backscheider, Ph.D.**  
**University of Houston, Department of Educational Psychology**

**Subjects:**

**Fourth – Sixth Grade:** A total of 366 students in the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> grades in elementary and middle schools in a large Houston-area urban school district. Program group: 59% female and 41% male; control group: 47% female, 53% male. Average age of students in program group: 11.99 years; control group - 12.37 years. Program group ethnic breakdown: 41% African American, 2% Caucasian, 55% Hispanic, 1% other. Control group ethnic breakdown: 59% African American, 39% Hispanic, .9% other.

**Seventh – Twelfth Grade:** A total of 346 students in the 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grades in middle and high schools in a large Houston-area urban school district. Program group: 70% female and 20% male; control group: 92% female, 8% male. (This distribution resulted because two of the participating teachers taught all-female gym classes.) Average age of students in program group: 14.90 years; control group = 13.60 years. Program group ethnic breakdown: 22% African American, 21% Caucasian, 50% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 3% other. Control group ethnic breakdown: 37% African American, 9% Caucasian, 52% Hispanic, 1% other.

**Teachers:** Nineteen teachers participated in the study: 10 program, 7 control, and 2 who taught both program and control group.

**Methodology:** A pre-posttest control group design was used for students in both the program and control groups. Questionnaires for both children and teachers were used in previous Parents Under Construction studies (see Peraino, 1999).

**Analysis:**

**Fourth – Sixth Grade:** A significant effect of gender ( $F(1,200) = 4.22, p < .05$ ) and a significant time by group interaction ( $F(1,200) = 42.05, p < .001$ ) were found. Overall, girls scored higher than boys at both pre- and posttest. Knowledge scores of the control group did not change significantly, and knowledge scores of the program group increased significantly from pre-and posttest. Attitude scores of the program group increased significantly from pre-test to post test ( $F(1,200) = 14.29, p < .001$ ).

Children’s posttest knowledge scores were correlated with their posttest attitude scores ( $r = 0.39, p < .001$ ). Children’s posttest attitude scores were associated with their empathy scores ( $r = 0.146, p < .05$ ). Children with higher attitude scores tended to have higher empathy scores. Finally, children’s empathy scores were also associated with their pro-social behavior scores ( $r = 0.38, p < .001$ ). Children who showed higher empathy levels also showed more pro-social behaviors.

**Seventh – Twelfth Grade:** A significant effect of condition ( $F(1,186) = 5.49, p < .05$ ), ethnicity ( $F(4,186) = 2.57, p < .05$ ), and time by group interaction ( $F(1,186) = 8.25, p < .005$ ) were found. Overall, Caucasian students scored higher than African American and Hispanic students at pretest, and higher than Hispanics at posttest. Knowledge scores of the control group did not change significantly, whereas the knowledge scores of the program group increased significantly from pretest to posttest. Attitude scores of the program group increased significantly more than the control group ( $F(1,186), p < .05$ ). Higher knowledge scores were associated with higher attitude, empathy ( $r = 0.16, p < .01$ ), and positive parenting behaviors ( $r = .28, p < .001$ ).

**Teachers:** Teachers in the program group rated the Primary Prevention Program 3.8 on a scale of 4 for training, enhancement of knowledge regarding positive discipline techniques, and user-friendliness. Program group teachers rated their students significantly higher on the pro-social behavior scale than did the control group (Mean = 2.51)( $t(19) = 2.66, p < .05$ ).

**Results/Discussion:** Students participating in the program increased their knowledge and attitudes regarding positive parenting skills. Students who scored higher on the knowledge questionnaire had higher scores on the attitude, empathy, and pro-social tests. Teachers participating in the program reported significantly more pro-social behaviors from students than did the control group teachers, were enthusiastic about the lessons in the program, and felt the program positively affected their skills as instructors and parents.



**2001: Teaching Children and Their Parents Parenting Skills  
A Continuing Evaluation of the Parents Under Construction Program  
K-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Parent/Child Curriculum (English and Spanish)  
Conducted by Jacqueline Hawkins, Ed.D. & Andrea Backscheider, Ph.D.  
University of Houston, Department of Educational Psychology**

**Subjects:**

Students: Study participants were students in the primary grades in elementary schools in a large urban school district in the Houston area. A total of 80 English-speaking and 98 Spanish-speaking students participated in some component of the study. English: 44% of participants were female, 56% male. 53% were in the control group; 47% in the program group. Average age of control group participant: 7.06 years; average age of program group participant: 6.88 years. Spanish: 59% female, 41% male. 60% control, 40% program. Average age of control group participant: 7.45; program group: 6.94.

Parents: 103 parents participated in some component of the study. 31 parents were in the control group; 71 parents in the program group. 59 parents responded to the pre-test; 8 responded to the posttest.

**Methodology:** A pre-posttest control group design. Questionnaires for both children and parents were used in previous Parents Under Construction studies (see Hawkins and Backscheider, 2000).

**Analysis:**

English-speaking students: Students in the program group scored higher on knowledge variables ( $t_{37} = 5.38$ ;  $p < .01$ ) than control group students.

Spanish-speaking students: Students in the program group scored higher on knowledge variables ( $t_{49} = 2.22$ ;  $p = .031$ ) than control group students.

Parents: Treatment group parents completing both questionnaires ( $N = 8$ ) or parents in the treatment group completing only a posttest generally agreed ( $n = 10$ ) or strongly agreed ( $n = 17$ ) that they enjoyed sharing activities with their child during the program. They generally agreed ( $n = 13$ ) or strongly agreed ( $n = 12$ ) that they learned some new information and parenting techniques at the sessions and that their parenting skills had been positively affected by the program ( $n = 13$  strongly agree, 12 agree). Some parents agreed ( $n = 4$ ) or strongly agreed ( $n = 8$ ) that it was worth their time to come to the parent sessions; however, 4 parents disagreed and 7 parents strongly disagreed.

**Results/Discussion:** Both English and Spanish-speaking students in the program groups increased their knowledge and attitudes regarding positive parenting skills. Although interest was high among parents, the size of the final parent sample was problematic for analysis.



**2001: Teaching Children and Their Parents Parenting Skills  
A Preliminary Evaluation of the Parents Under Construction Program  
4-6<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent/Child Curriculum  
Conducted by Jacqueline Hawkins, Ed.D. & Andrea Backscheider, Ph.D.**

**Subjects:**

**Students:** Study participants were students in elementary schools of a large urban Houston-area school district. A total of 51 students participated in some component of the study. 42% were female, 58% male. 55% were in the control group, 45% in the program group. Average age of control group students: 10.89; program group students = 10.61. The majority of the students were Caucasian (35%) and 19% were African-American. Race was undetermined in the remainder of the sample as many students did not answer this question. A majority of students in both groups may have been exposed to the *Parents Under Construction* Program in previous grades.

**Parents:** Few parents participated in the study and no parents completed both pre- and posttest evaluation instruments.

**Methodology:** A pre-posttest control group design. Questionnaires for both children and parents were used in previous *Parents Under Construction* studies (see Hawkins and Backscheider, 2000).

**Analysis:** There was a significant group difference at pre-testing ( $t_{44} = 2.712$ ;  $p < .01$ ) but not at post-testing ( $t_{45} = 0.832$ ;  $p > .05$ ), which indicates that students in the program group had significantly lower knowledge scores than the control group before the program. However, at posttest, students in the program group had higher scores than the control group.

**Results/Discussion:** Knowledge scores for the program group increased. Attitude and pro-social behavior increased for both groups. Results may be skewed due to previous possible exposure for both groups to the *Parents Under Construction* curriculum. Parent data was not available.



**2001: Teaching Children Parenting Skills  
A Final Evaluation of the Parents Under Construction Program  
4-6<sup>th</sup> Grade and 7-12<sup>th</sup> Grade At One Year  
Conducted by Jacqueline Hawkins, Ed.D. & Andrea Backscheider, Ph.D.  
University of Houston, Department of Educational Psychology**

**Subjects:**

**4-6<sup>th</sup> Grade:** 107 students in the program group and 99 students in the control group at the time *Parents Under Construction* was administered in Spring, 2000. At follow-up (Spring, 2001), 55 students remained in the control group and 50 remained in the program group.

7-12<sup>th</sup> Grade: 67 students in the program group and 132 students in the control group at the time *Parents Under Construction* was administered in Spring, 2000. At follow-up (Spring, 2001), 24 students remained in the program group and 67 remained in the control group. (Please refer to 2000 Interim Evaluation for complete demographic data.)

**Methodology:** Pre-test/post-test/follow-up control group design. The same questionnaires (see 2000 Interim study) were used for pre, post, and follow-up and administered to both program and control groups.

**Analysis:** Follow-up testing one year after program completion demonstrated a significant change in student knowledge over time in the program group at both the 4-6 and 7-12 grade levels and a change in attitude at the level of a trend at both grade levels. Students' self-reported empathy and pro-social behavior scores did not change at post or follow-up, in contrast to program group teacher's reports of improved student pro-social behavior at posttest.

4-6<sup>th</sup> grade: At one-year follow-up, knowledge and attitude scores of the program group were still improved from their scores at pretest (N = 50, p's < .05), although students did not maintain the full gains evident at posttest (N = 5-, p's < .01). In contrast, control group scores at follow-up were not different from their pretest scores (N = 55, p's > .10).

7-12<sup>th</sup> grade: Students in the program group showed a stronger pattern of results on the knowledge test. Students in the program group maintained their gains from posttest to follow-up (N =24, p < .01); students in the control group showed no change from pretest to follow-up (N = 64, p > .10). On the attitude questionnaire, there was a trend for program group students to score better than they had at pre-test (N = 24, p < .10); however, the follow-up scores dropped significantly from post-test scores (N = 24, p < .05, one-tailed).

**Results/Discussion:** Results indicate that at both the 4-6 and 7-12 grade levels, the *Parents Under Construction* Program is effective at increasing student's knowledge regarding positive parenting practices, mental health, and self-esteem and that these knowledge gains are still evident a year after program completion. Moreover, there is some evidence that attitude shifts are present a year after program completion. This suggests *Parents Under Construction* may have the potential to promote positive parenting practices in the long term. Continued study is needed with larger samples.



**2002: Teaching Children Parenting Skills**  
**A Final Evaluation of the Parents Under Construction Program**  
**7-12 Curriculum and Parent Intervention Component**  
**Conducted by Jacqueline Hawkins, Ed.D. & Andrea Backscheider, Ph.D.**  
**University of Houston, Department of Educational Psychology**

**Subjects:**

7-12<sup>th</sup> Grade: Study participants were students in 6-12<sup>th</sup> grade at a middle school and high school of a large urban Houston-area school district. Forty-two (42) students were in the program group and 16 students in the control group. In the program group, 36% were female, 50% male (some students did not report gender). In the control group, 63% were female and 29% were male (one student did not report gender). Average age of control group students: 16.75; program group students = 14.62. The majority of students in the program group were Hispanic (55%) and African-American (33%); in the control group, 69% were Hispanic and 19% African American. Some students were 18-20 years old and receiving special education services.

Parents: Thirty-five (35) parents completed the pretest and 7 parents completed the posttest. Five of the parents who completed both instruments had students assigned to the program group; the other two parents had students assigned to the control group. No demographic data were available for the parents.

**Methodology:** Pre-posttest control group design. Previously designed questionnaires (see Peraino, 1999) were used for pre and posttesting for the students, and parent questionnaires involved items that had been used on student and parent instruments in previous studies (see Hawkins and Backscheider, 2000 and 2001 studies). Parent questionnaires were completed at home and returned by the students to the school.

**Analysis:**

7-12<sup>th</sup> grade: At pretest, students in the program group tended to score lower than students in the control group. Whereas knowledge scores of the control group did not change significantly from pre- to posttest ( $t$ 's (15) < 1.08,  $p$ 's > .10), posttest scores of the program group were significantly greater than the pretest scores ( $t$ 's (41) > 5.15,  $p$ 's < .001). For each of the 4 dependent variables (knowledge, attitude, empathy, and prosocial behavior), change scores were computed from pretest and posttest scores. Knowledge and attitude were significantly correlated (Pearson  $r$ =0.40;  $p$ < .01). The same pattern held for both program ( $r$ =0.42) and control ( $r$ =0.46) groups. The relation was significant for the program group but not the control.

Parents: In the program group (5), 10 out of 12 responses demonstrated mean values in the direction of the program. In the control group (2), means were evenly split at posttest. A qualitative analysis was done for the student/parent activities, and results indicated students "learned a great deal" from the interactions with their parents.

**Results/Discussion:** Students who participated in the study increased their knowledge in the content area over the course of study. Investigation of the relations among

students' knowledge, attitudes, empathy, and prosocial behavior indicated that students' knowledge about parenting was positively associated with attitudes, higher attitude scores were associated with higher empathy scores and a greater likelihood of exhibiting positive parenting behaviors. Thus, as in a previous study (Bacscheider and Hawkins, 2001), there is evidence that children's knowledge about parenting is related to their attitudes and level of empathy.

The parents in the program group generally shifted their views towards greater agreement with the program concepts. Generalizability of the study has limitations due to sampling problems, low return rates for parent posttests and parent/student activity sheets, shortened delivery of the program in the last month of school, and evaluation instruments (the prosocial, empathy, and attitude scales) that are in need of modification.



**2005: Teaching Children Parenting Skills:  
May 2005 Follow-up Study of Students Receiving the  
Parents Under Construction Program in 2000-2001  
Conducted by Ralph E. Culler, Ph.D.  
Research and Evaluation Services of Texas**

**Subjects:** Study participants were students in a large urban Houston-area school district who had received *Parents Under Construction* program instruction in the 2000 – 2001 school year. A total of 25 students participated in the study. Fourteen were girls, 11 boys; all were in high school and either African American or Hispanic.

**Methodology:** Two measures were used in the evaluation: a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire, consisting of items adapted from the *Parents Under Construction* 4-6<sup>th</sup> grade instrument, was completed by students prior to the interview. Students were then interviewed either individually or in groups. Interview questions assessed the students' memory of the *Parents Under Construction* program and how they have used what was learned.

**Analysis:**

**Knowledge:** Mean score (59%) was only slightly lower than the average post-test scores (64%) from evaluations conducted immediately after program delivery in 2000-2001. Forty percent of the 2005 sample scored 70% or higher.

**Attitude:** Mean score (69%) was slightly higher than average post-test scores (66%) from evaluations conducted immediately after program delivery in 2000-2001. Almost half (48%) of the 2005 sample scored 70% or higher.

**Interview:** Students indicated the topics they remembered most included punishment/discipline, self-esteem, spanking, and crying babies. In response to a question about correcting a child for misbehavior, students suggested the use of positive discipline techniques rather than corporal punishment.

Methodology: This study was conducted as a pilot for a future, larger scale longitudinal evaluation of the *Parents Under Construction* program. Methodological areas examined included consent process, incentives, questionnaire format, and interview format.

Results/Discussion: Knowledge and attitude scores, as well as interview results, indicate the students retained much of what they learned from *Parents Under Construction* instruction four-five years prior. Some students indicated they applied program knowledge and skills to interactions with friends, teachers, and children of friends and relatives. Suggestions for future evaluations include: careful planning and allocation of sufficient time to track subjects for study; use of engaging incentives; questionnaire streamlining; and utilization of individual, rather than group interviews.



***For a copy of any complete evaluation, please call Janet Pozmantier at 713/400-1155 or write to:***

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