



Evaluation of The Incredible Years Executive Summary

September 2008 — August 2009

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Invest in Kids
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Background

The mission of Invest in Kids (IIK) is to improve the health and well-being of vulnerable young children and families throughout Colorado. Working in partnership with local communities, it identifies, introduces, implements and ensures the success of research-based, proven programs. To-date, IIK has adopted three such programs: the Nurse-Family Partnership, the Good Behavior Game and The Incredible Years (IY), the latter of which is the focus of this evaluation report.

IIK adopted The Incredible Years as its second major initiative because of the outstanding outcomes IY has produced in over 10 years of rigorous research. IIK works with communities to provide the support needed to implement the program with fidelity to the proven model, and to achieve these positive outcomes for children and families in Colorado.

The Incredible Years is divided into distinct training programs that are designed to enhance social competence and reduce aggression in young children aged three to eight years. The developmentally-appropriate and culturally-sensitive programs (e.g., Webster-Stratton, 2004) are the child social skills and teacher training program, known as the Dina Dinosaur Classroom Curriculum (referred to as the Dinosaur School program throughout this report), and the BASIC Parent Training Program (referred to as the Parent program). Together, the training programs provide a cost-effective, comprehensive approach that supports the healthy development of young children, engages parents in their children's education, and strengthens teachers' skills.

IIK contracted with OMNI Institute, a nonprofit, social science research and technical assistance firm based in Denver, to evaluate The Incredible Years program in Colorado. This is the third annual evaluation. The goals of the evaluation are to assess: (1) the overall effectiveness of The Incredible Years in early childhood care and education settings in Colorado, and (2) the critical implementation factors associated with program success in these settings.

Evaluation Design

The evaluation design included pre-test and post-test measurement, based on surveys completed by teachers and parents, to assess changes in child and parent skills during the time they were involved in The Incredible Years programs. Teacher information and TA needs were measured using a survey at three points in time throughout the course of the program. Fidelity of implementation was assessed throughout the lifespan of the program, based on data collected from surveys completed by teachers and parent group leaders, in addition to observations of teachers and parent group leaders completed by IIK staff. Lastly, parent satisfaction and teacher satisfaction with the programs were assessed using parent and teacher surveys that were completed at the end of the program year, as well as parent weekly evaluation ratings.

Summary of Results

Parent Program

- Children of parents in The Incredible Years parent program showed improvement in social competence in all areas during the program.
- Parents' use of positive parenting practices increased during The Incredible Years parent program.
- Parents' use of harsh and inconsistent discipline decreased during The Incredible Years parent program.
- Parents rated each session of The Incredible Years parent program highly.
- Parents reported a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of The Incredible Years parent program at the end of the program.
- Nearly 97% of parents reported that they would recommend the program to a friend or relative.

Dinosaur School Program

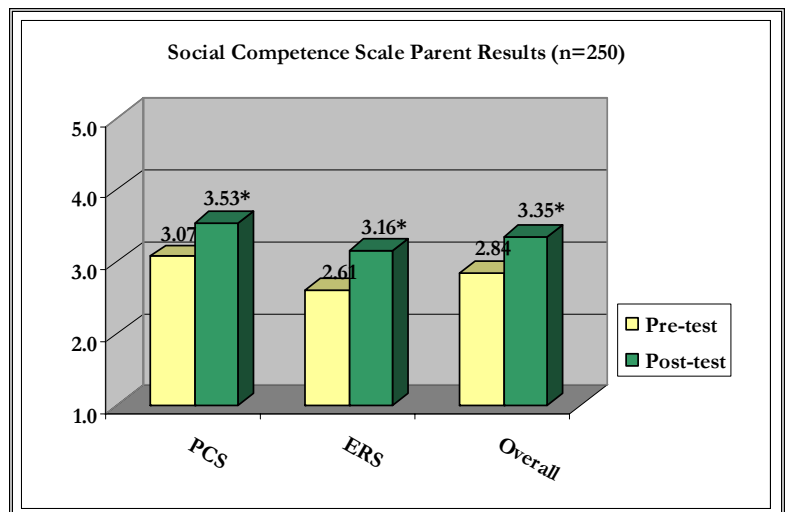
- Children's social competence increased in all areas during The Incredible Years Dinosaur School program.
- Children who started off with the lowest social competence scores showed the greatest improvement during The Incredible Years Dinosaur School.
- The majority of teachers reported the Dinosaur School program was easy to integrate into the regular classroom curriculum and met their goals for child social and emotional development.

BASIC Parent Training Program Results

⇒ *Children of parents in The Incredible Years parent program showed improvement in social competence in all areas during the program.*

The *Social Competence Scale/Parent* is composed of two sub-scales: (1) Prosocial/Communication Skills, or PCS (e.g., "my child works out problems with friends or brothers and sisters on his/her own"), and (2) Emotion Regulation Skills, or ERS (e.g., "my child can calm down by himself/herself when excited or all wound up"). Children are rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 = "not at all," 3 = "moderately well," and 5 = "very well." This measure provides individual scores for each of the two sub-scales; that is, PCS and ERS, as well as an overall score. An increase in the mean score from pre-test to post-test indicates an overall increase in children's social competence.

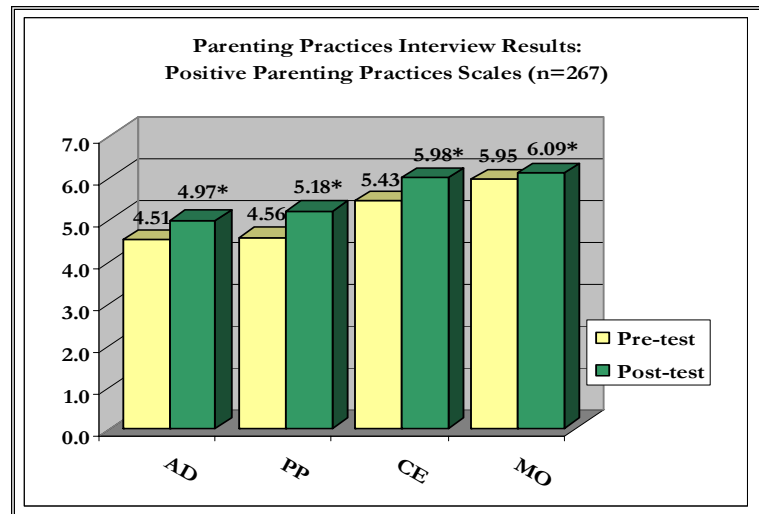
The increase in the mean from pre-test to post-test for both scales (shown right) was significant as was the increase in the mean overall ($p < .05$).



⇒ ***Parents' use of positive parenting practices increased during The Incredible Years parent program.***

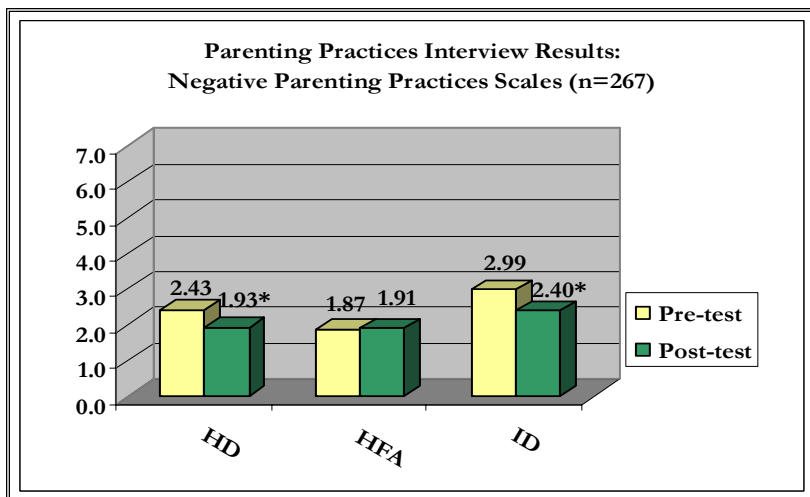
The Parenting Practices Interview measure is composed of two scales: Positive Parenting and Negative Parenting. Each scale is further divided into a number of sub-scales. For Positive Parenting Practices, the four sub-scales are: (1) Appropriate Discipline, or AD (e.g., “when your child misbehaves, how often do you give your child a brief time out away from family?”), (2) Positive Parenting, or PP (e.g., “when your child behaves well, how often do you praise or complement your child?”), (3) Clear Expectations, or CE (e.g., “when your child goes to bed or gets up on time, how likely are you to praise or reward your child?”), and (4) Monitoring, or MO (e.g., “what percentage of your child’s friends do you know well?”). All items are rated on a 7-point scale. For each sub-scale, an increase in the mean from pre-test to post-test indicates that parents are using more positive parenting techniques with their children.

There was a significant mean increase ($p < .05$) from pre-test to post-test (shown right) for all four of the positive parenting sub-scales.



⇒ ***Parents' use of harsh and inconsistent discipline decreased during The Incredible Years parent program.***

For negative parenting practices, the three sub-scales are: (1) Harsh Discipline, or HD (e.g., “when your child misbehaves, how often do you give your child a spanking?”), (2) Harsh for Age, or HFA (e.g., “when your child misbehaves, how often do you send child to room for at least 60 minutes?”), and (3) Inconsistent Discipline, or ID (e.g., “if you ask your child to do something and she does not do it, how often do you give up trying to get him/her to do it?”). All items are rated on a 7-point scale, and a decrease in the mean from pre-test to post-test indicates that parents are using less negative parenting techniques with their children.



Results indicate that there was a decrease ($p < .05$) in harsh discipline and inconsistent discipline from pre-test to post-test (shown left). There was essentially no change from pre-test to post-test in the use of discipline that was harsh for age.

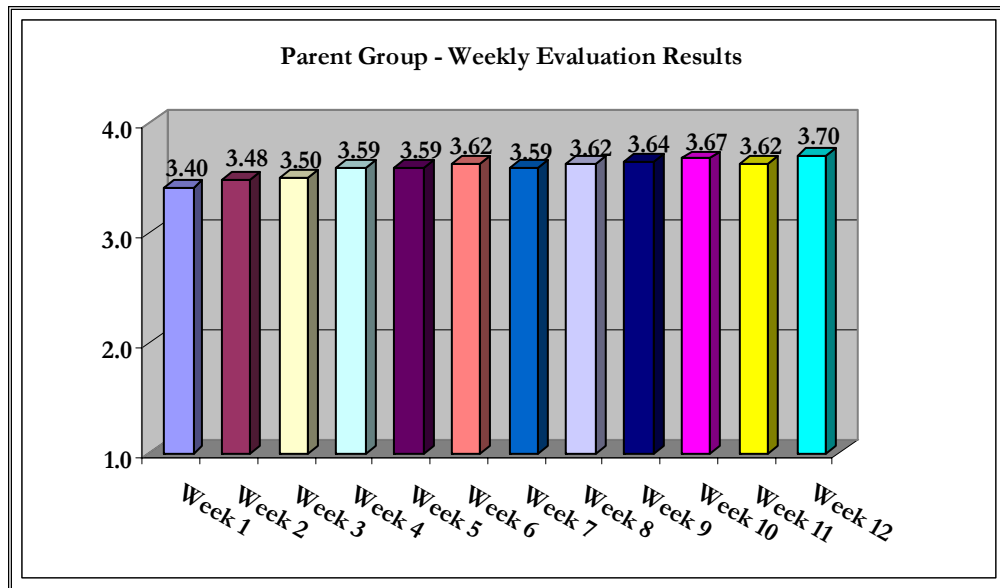
Results indicate that there was a decrease ($p < .05$) in harsh discipline and inconsistent discipline from pre-test to post-test (shown left). There was essentially no change from pre-test to post-test in the use of discipline that was harsh for age.

⇒ *Parent group leaders reported completing almost all of the session agenda items and a majority of the vignettes for each parent session.*

In addition to observer ratings, each set of parent group leaders completed a checklist at the end of each session. Thirty-three parent group leaders completed the Leader Checklist. The percentage of session agenda items covered was over 85% for all sessions. The percentage of video vignettes completed was close to 70% for all sessions, and over 80% for close to half of the sessions.

⇒ *Parents rated each session of The Incredible Years parent program as “helpful” to “very helpful.”*

Parents were asked to evaluate the IY program each week. The weekly evaluation asked parents to rank (1) the content of the session, (2) the videotaped examples, (3) the group leaders’ teaching, and (4) the group discussion as either “not helpful”=1, “neutral”=2, “helpful”=3 or “very helpful”=4. Results (shown below) show that parents rated each session highly, with the highest average rating in week 12.



⇒ *Parents reported a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of The Incredible Years parent program at the end of the program.*

In addition to the weekly evaluations, all parents were asked to complete a satisfaction questionnaire at the completion of the program. The Parent Satisfaction Questionnaire is divided into five sub-scales, which ask about parents’ satisfaction with the: (1) overall program, (2) teaching format, (3) specific parenting techniques, (4) parent group leaders, and (5) other parent group members/their parent group itself.

For the Overall Program sub-scale, when asked if the problem(s) that originally prompted the parent to take this program had improved for their child, 85.2% responded “improved” or “greatly improved.” Moreover, almost all (96.1%) responded that they would “recommend” or “strongly recommend” the program to a friend or relative.

With regard to Teaching Format, the majority (93.6%) reported that the content of information was “useful” or “extremely useful.” Almost all also responded “useful” or “extremely useful” when asked about group discussions of parenting skills (94%), practice of play skills at home with their child (86.1%), reading a chapter from the book (78.5%), and weekly handouts (80.8%). In contrast, only 42.6% found “buddy calls” to be useful or extremely useful.

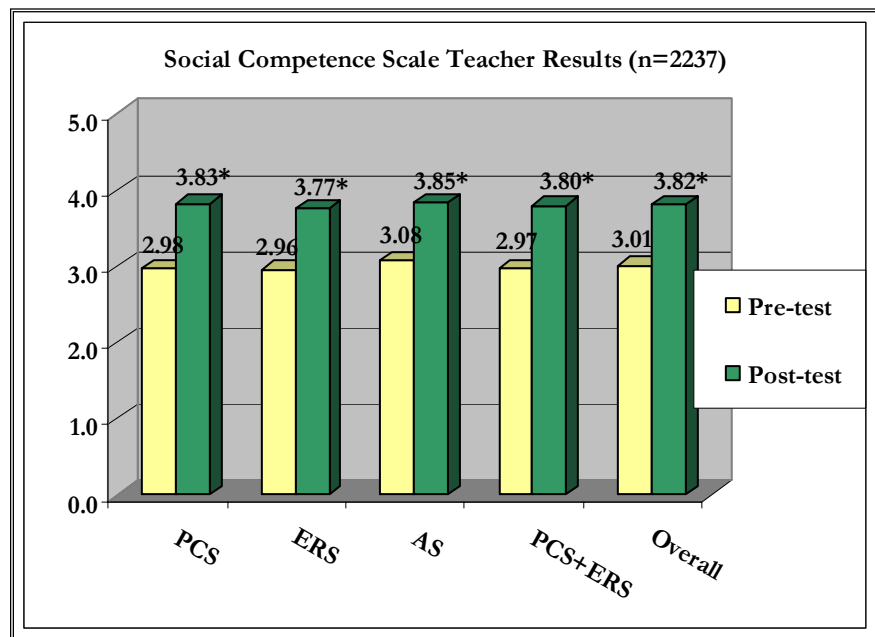
Nearly all parents (93.5%) responded that they found the overall group of specific parenting techniques to be “useful” or “extremely useful.” Ninety-six percent reported that using praise was “useful” or “extremely useful,” and that time out was rated as the least efficient technique, with 79.6% responding that it was “useful” or “extremely useful.”

Dinosaur School Results

⇒ ***Children’s social competence increased in all areas during The Incredible Years Dinosaur School program.***

The *Social Competence Scale/Teacher (SCST)* measure was completed by the primary teacher for each child at the beginning and end of the program year. The SCST is composed of three sub-scales: (1) Prosocial/Communication skills, or PCS (e.g., “resolves peer problems on his/her own”), (2) Emotion Regulation Skills, or ERS (e.g., “accepts legitimate imposed limits”), and (3) Academic Skills, or AS (e.g., “follows teacher’s verbal directions”). Teachers rate each child on a scale from 1-5, with 1 = “not at all” and 5 = “very well.” An increase in the mean score from pre-test to post-test indicates an increase in student social competence.

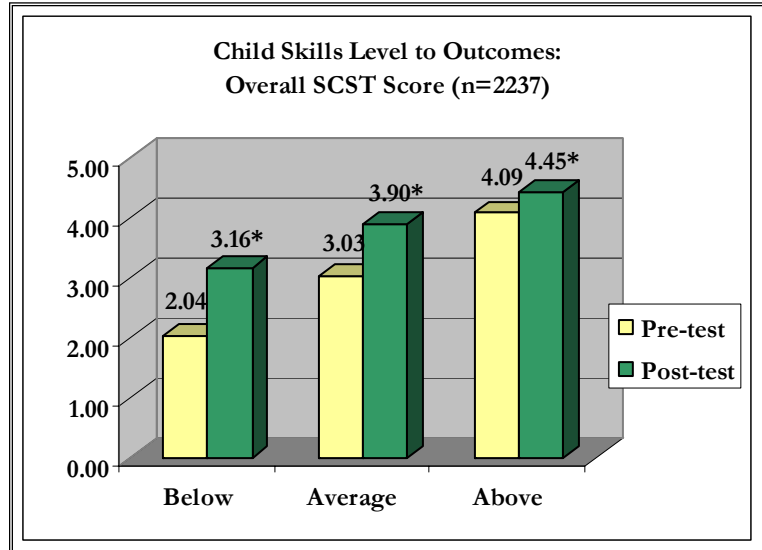
As is illustrated in the graph to the right, there was an overall statistically significant increase ($p < 0.05$) in the mean rating of student skill from pre-test to post-test for each of the five scores reported for this measure.



⇒ ***Children who began the program with the lowest social competence scores showed the greatest improvement during The Incredible Years Dinosaur School.***

For analysis purposes, children were divided into three groups based on their *Social Competence Scale/Teacher* pre-test scores; that is, “below average,” “average,” and “above average.”

There was a statistically significant increase ($p < .05$ matched t-test) from pre-test to post-test in overall social competence for children in all three groups (shown right). The greatest mean difference between pre- and post-test was found for those in the “below average” category (effect size was 1.52).



⇒ **Overall, teachers were rated by observers as “well” with regard to implementation quality.**

In addition to assessing fidelity to the curriculum, the *Teacher Process Rating Scale (TPRS)* also assessed how much TA teachers needed, based on observers’ assessments. The same 9 scales measuring curriculum fidelity also assessed teachers’ TA needs. The level to which the scale construct was completed/the level of TA needed was rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 = “not well/I really need TA in this area,” 2 = “moderately well/some TA would be helpful,” 3 = “well/doing ok but could benefit from some TA,” 4 = “very well/feeling pretty good,” and 5 = “extremely well/I’ve got this!”. As is shown below, observers reported teachers as doing “well” in each of the areas of program fidelity.

Continuous Scales (Observer-report)	Scale	Group Mean
Set Up (SU)	1 = Not Well; 2 = Moderately Well; 3 = Well; 4 = Very Well; 5 = Extremely Well	3.92
Starting Scale (SS)		3.82
Presenting Scale (PS)		3.74
Vignettes Scale (VS)		3.92
Small Group Scale (SG)		3.92
Promoting Scale (PS)		3.62
Review Scale (RS)		3.87
Responses Scale (RES)		3.83
Collaboration Scale (CS)		3.59
Total Mean Score 1-5 Item Scales		3.78

⇒ *Teachers reported a high level of fidelity when administering key components of the IY curriculum.*

On average, across all scales, teachers reported 94% compliance during administering essential curriculum items. Teachers reported out on the measure at three points during the school year. Scores for teachers averaged across all three rounds ranged from 80% compliance on the Review scale to 99% on the Responses scale. It should also be noted that teacher-reported compliance scores generally increased from Round 1 to Round 2 to Round 3, suggesting improvements in compliance as the program year progressed.

"Yes/No" Item Scales	Scale	R1 Group Mean	R2 Group Mean	R3 Group Mean	R 1,2,3 Group Mean
Set Up (SU)	0 = No 1 = Yes	0.97	0.98	1.00	0.98
Starting Scale (SS)		0.95	0.96	0.98	0.96
Presenting Scale (PS)		0.96	0.97	0.99	0.97
Vignettes Scales (VS)		0.90	0.94	0.96	0.93
Small Group Scale (SG)		0.95	0.96	0.96	0.96
Promoting Scale (PS)		0.94	0.97	0.96	0.95
Review Scale (RS)		0.81	0.75	0.83	0.80
Responses Scale (RES)		0.99	1.00	1.00	0.99
Collaboration Scale (CS)		0.86	0.89	0.93	0.89
Total Mean Score for "Yes/No" Item Scales			0.92	0.93	0.96

⇒ *The majority of teachers reported the Dinosaur School program was easy to integrate into the regular classroom curriculum and met their goals for child social and emotional development.*

When asked, “How easy was it to integrate the Dina School Program into your regular classroom curriculum,” 72% of teachers responded “easy” or “very easy.” When asked about how well the program met their goals for child social and emotional development, 89% responded “well” or “very well.” Approximately 75% of teachers responded “mostly” or “definitely” when asked if “the content and activities of the program were developmentally appropriate and individualized as needed.” Moreover, 80% replied that they were “likely” or “very likely” to do small group activities next year.



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