

# ParentCorps helps children do better in school

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Researchers at the NYU Child Study Center demonstrated that a brief program for families of Pre-Kindergarten students attending schools in disadvantaged urban communities improved children's behavior at school. The study, called "Promoting effective parenting practices and preventing child behavior problems in school among ethnically diverse families from underserved, urban communities," was published in the February 2011 issue of *Child Development*.

Dr. Laurie Miller Brotman and her colleagues spent several years developing ParentCorps, a program for families of young children as they transition to school. ParentCorps includes a series of 13 group sessions for [parents](#) and children held at the school during early evening hours, facilitated by trained school staff and mental health professionals. The program is unique by reaching parents through public schools in underserved communities to help them learn a set of parenting strategies. For example, parents can learn ways to establish routines and rules for the family, reinforce positive behavior and provide effective consequences for misbehavior. ParentCorps helps each parent to select from a portfolio of scientifically-proven strategies that will work for them based on their own family goals, values and culture. By bringing families and early childhood educators together to support and learn from each other, the ParentCorps program helps young children succeed.

"Rich or poor, urban or rural, every parent wants their child to succeed " said Laurie Miller Brotman, PhD, the Corzine Family Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Department Child and Adolescent

Psychiatry, NYU Child Study Center. "There are hundreds of studies that show that parenting under stress can lead to negative outcomes for children. Parents who are struggling to make ends meet, parents who experience depression, parents who are raising children on their own – all need extra support in their important role as parent."

Using a rigorous experimental design, where some schools were assigned to receive ParentCorps and some receive school services as usual, the study examined the impact of ParentCorps among 171 children enrolled in Pre-Kindergarten across eight public elementary schools in a large NYC school district, representing an ethnically diverse population.

Despite multiple demands and stressors, parents made the time to come to the 13-session family series to share with and learn from other parents. "We saw great enthusiasm for and commitment to a program that helps young children do well in school, and this was true for parents and teachers from all different backgrounds," said Dr. Esther Calzada, one of the study co-authors.

In schools that offered ParentCorps, parents had improved knowledge of evidence-based parenting strategies, reported using more effective discipline strategies and were observed in the home to be more responsive to their children during play interactions. Most importantly, by the end of the Pre-Kindergarten year, relative to control schools, children in schools with ParentCorps, were rated by their teachers to be better behaved in the classroom and to show more social and emotional competencies, foundational skills for learning.

Based on the very promising findings from this study, Brotman and her team are conducting a second study that examines the long-term benefits on classroom behavior and academic achievement in over 1000 children. "All families deserve to have access to resources and services that will help their [children](#) succeed," Brotman said.

Provided by New York University School of Medicine

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