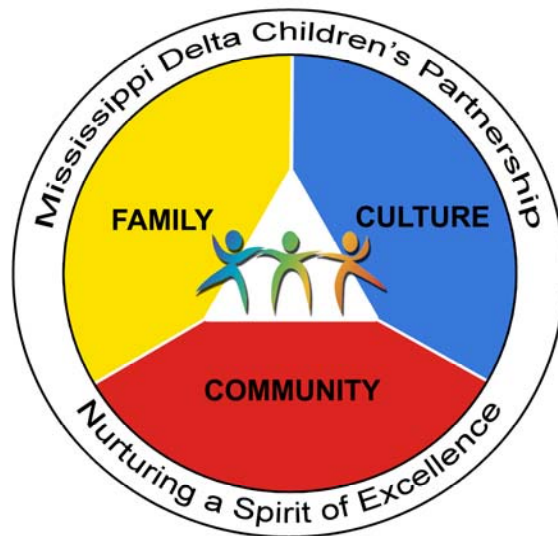


Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership



Evaluation Report 2006

MISSISSIPPI DELTA
CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP

2006 EVALUATION REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

After School programs have the potential to impact children in ways that no academic institution can alone. After school programs provide an environment that supports the social and interpersonal dimensions of a child's development by responding to the interests and concerns of participants (Halpern, 2004). A well designed after school program can positively impact children's academic, social, and emotional lives. Halpern (2004) reported that such programs fill gaps in communities. He believes that they complement the institutions of family and school by providing opportunities and resources that these other institutions are unable to provide. For those children whose personal circumstances put them at higher risk of

school failure, after school programs can be very beneficial. Research supports the notion that regular participation can promote more positive feelings toward learning and that this confidence can often translate into better performance in school (Massachusetts 2020, 2004).

The evidence further confirm that out-of-school opportunities complement environments created by schools and families and provide important "nutrients" that deter failure and promote success – and yield observable and measurable outcomes (Forum for Youth Investment, 2003). The Transition to Success Pilot Project, a collaborative evaluation which aimed to strengthen academic and social development by providing after school programming to at-risk children, found that those who participated in the after school programs were more likely to be promoted to the next grade than those who only received tutoring (National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2006). Also, the project found those who were enrolled in after school programs passed English, Language and Math classes at a higher rates and were absent from school fewer days than those who only received some type of tutoring (Massachusetts 2020, 2004). Moreover,

a meta-analysis was conducted of 56 studies of out-of-school time programs. Researchers concluded that the out-of-school time approach can have positive effects on the achievement of lower-achieving or at-risk students in reading and mathematics and that out-of-school time strategies need not focus solely on academic activities to have positive effects on student achievement. (Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Apthorp, Snow, and Martin-Glenn, (2003). Furthermore, research suggests that what students do during their out-of-school time hours has as much bearing on their success as what they do during the school day (National School Board Association, 2005).

For the state of Mississippi, there is an alarming need for programs for children after school. According to AfterschoolAlliance.org, there are 570,823 school-age children in Mississippi. Statistics show that:

- Only 13% of Mississippi's K-12 youth participate in after-school programs.
- 16% of children, are unsupervised after school
- 40% of all children not in after-school would be likely to participate if an after school program were available in the community, regardless of their current care arrangements.

(www.afterschoolalliance.org)

The aforementioned statistics are disturbing. However, these statistics may be even worse in the Mississippi Delta. Because of the lack of resources and the geographic location of the Delta, it can be surmised that the children from this region have very limited, if any, opportunities for after school programming. Therefore, the purpose of the Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership (MDCP) is to respond the grave need for after school programming for children in this impoverished region.

The basic precept of this child-focused community change initiative is that quality early education leads to positive outcomes for children, families and communities. A range of activities are offered, based on the local needs, including reading, math, homework assistance and cultural enrichment. The undergirding premise of the MDCP Children's Villages is that through structured activities outside of school time, children in the Delta will positively improve their academic performance and motivation. The programmatic strategy for this change is to focus on the early development, preschool to middle school of children in Anguilla, Cary, Mayersville/Glen Allan, Quitman, and Tallahatchie, Mississippi. The mechanism for the delivery of the child-focused component of the initiative is after-school

and summer enrichment programs called Children's Village.

The Children's Village is a community-based site which is an inspirational and supportive learning environment for children to realize and develop their unique abilities. Each of the five sites has an independently designed child- focused project that addresses the four determinants derived from the literature review during the conceptual process (language development, cognitive and social development and self and ethnic group efficacy). It is a highly structured comprehensive enrichment program which includes critical thinking, cultural, and academic enrichment. Further, there is a close collaboration between the local kindergartens, elementary and middle schools. This takes the form of the exchange of instructional information that assures that the needs of the child that are being addressed at school are also reinforced by the after school/summer program.

This report presents the evaluative findings from the first year of the Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership.

METHODOLOGY

The fundamental hypothesis of the MDCP Children's Villages is that through structured out-of-school time activities

and cultural enrichment the children in the Delta will positively improve their academic performance and motivation. The first report will serve as a baseline, and specifically addresses two major research questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the MDCP children?
2. Do the Leap Track activities increase children's reading and math proficiency?

Demographic Data

The Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership enrollment application was used to collect demographic data on the child and family. Some of the data categories for participants included information such as age, grade, health insurance, and residence. Also, family data such as parents' employment status, education level, and household income were obtained from the application.

Reading and Math Proficiency

Reading and Math Proficiency were measured using the Leap Track Assessment and Instruction System. Leap Track provides a formative assessment and outlines an individualized path of instruction. While Leap Track assesses students in several core areas, for purposes of evaluation, the analysis will be limited to reading and math.

Therefore, it was hypothesized that children's mean reading and math scores between the pre and post assessments will increase, thus indicating an increase in reading and math proficiency or $X_1 < X_2$.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was uniform across the sites. Each MDCP Children's Village Coordinator was responsible for obtaining and completing the enrollment applications for all participants of the program. Furthermore, the lead teachers at these sites were responsible for administering the Leap Track pre and post assessments. Administration of the Leap Track assessment was contingent upon the date of enrollment for each participant. More specifically, a protocol was followed which consisted of conducting a pre-assessment of each Children's Village participant within 15 days of enrollment. The post assessment was completed 15 days before the program ended in August.

Data Analysis

Information from MDCP enrollment applications was purged, coded, and computerized using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 12.0. Descriptive analysis

was performed on demographic information. Paired T-Test analysis was conducted on Leap Track pre and post test mean scores to examine if there were any statistical significance between the mean scores at each point of observation for MDCP overall and/or at each Children's Village site.

LIMITATIONS

The Support System Contractor, Professional Associates, Inc. has diligently worked with MDCP Children's Villages to ensure that information that was collected from all children and their parents was accurate and completed. In this endeavor, PAI recognized some anomalies that occurred at different Children Village sites including inconsistent use of the Leap Track system, completeness of MDCP enrollment, academic and attendance forms, and timeliness of submitting information to PAI. However, most of these issues were addressed but may account for some of the limitations. The protocol has been refined to address these issues.

FINDINGS

The findings presented in this report reflect data collected from January 2006 to August 2006 from all five Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership

sites and includes:

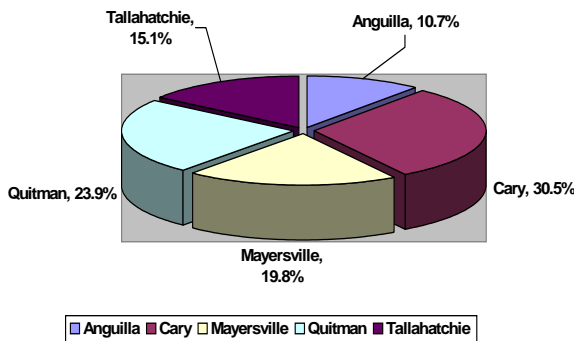
1. Descriptive statistics on demographic information
2. Leap Track pre and post assessment mean scores

Demographic Data

Participants' Data

A total of 364 students were enrolled in the 2006 Spring and/or Summer program at the five Children's Villages. Chart 1 delineates the percentage of enrollment by each MDCP Children's Village. Cary Children's Village accounts for 30.5% of the total enrollment of MDCP. Quitman Children's Village is 23.9%, while

Figure 1: 2006 MDCP Percentage of Enrollment by Site



Mayersville/Glen Alan is 19.8%, Tallahatchie is 15.1%, and Anguilla Children's Village account for 10.7% of the total enrollment for MDCP for the January-August 2006 evaluation period.

The MDCP Children's Village participants' ages are illustrated in Chart 1. Children ages 5-7 years old account for 40.8% of the participants. Next, children ages 8-10 years old account for 35.8%, while 13.3% of the children are eleven years old or older. Only 10.1% of the children are between the ages of one and four years old.

Chart 1: 2006 MDCP Participants' Age (n=338)

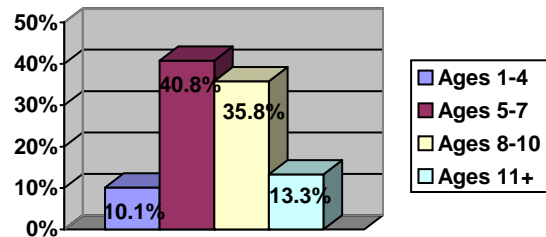
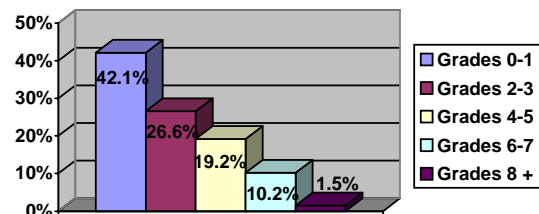


Chart 2 shows the grade level of the participants of MDCP. Children who are in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade account for 42.1% of the participants; 26.6% are in grades 2 and 3. Children who are in grades four and five account for 19.2% of the participants, while grades 6-7 and grades 8 and above account for 10.2% and 1.5%, respectively.

Chart 2: 2006 MDCP Participants Current Grade (n=323)



Numerous demographic questions were asked on the enrollment application about the child. Parents responded either yes or no to some of these questions. The question, “Does the child have siblings in the program,” 47.5% responded yes. Next, when asked, “Was the child promoted in school from the previous year,” 90.4% responded yes to that question. Furthermore, 95.4% responded that their child receives free or reduced lunch at school and 85.3% reported that their child will attend the same school next year. The percentages of responses to these questions are outlined in Table 1 below.

Chart 3 details with whom the MDCP participants resides. The majority of the children live with the mother only

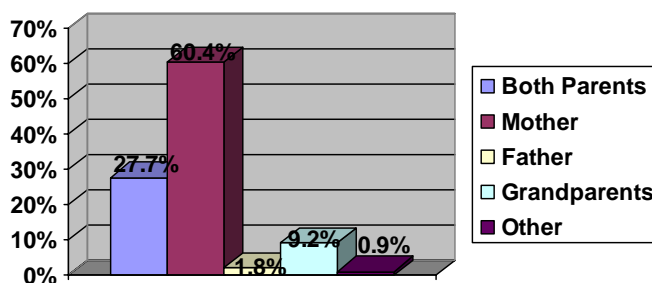
Table 1: Select Enrollment Data

Questions	% Responded Yes	% Responded No
Siblings in Program	47.5%	52.5%
Child Promoted	90.4%	9.6%
Free or Reduced Lunch	95.4%	4.6%
Attended School Next Year	85.3%	14.7%

(60.4%) and 27.7% of the participants live with the mother and father. Children who live with their grandparents account for 9.2%, while 1.8% of the participants are living with their father only. Less than

1% of the MDCP participants live with a guardian or other family member.

Chart 3: Parents' Household Structure (n=336)



The yearly household income was also addressed on the enrollment form (Chart 4). Almost half of the children live in a household with income of less than \$9,999 at 47.1%. Moreover, 28.8% of the children live in a household that makes \$10,000-\$19,999 a year and 14.7% of the children live in a household with income of \$20,000-\$29,999. Lastly, only 9.2% of the children reside in a household where the income is \$30,000 or more.

Chart 4: Yearly Household Income by Percent (n=312)

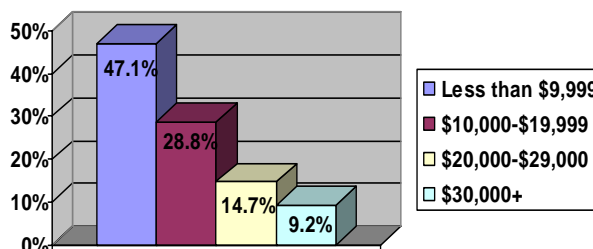
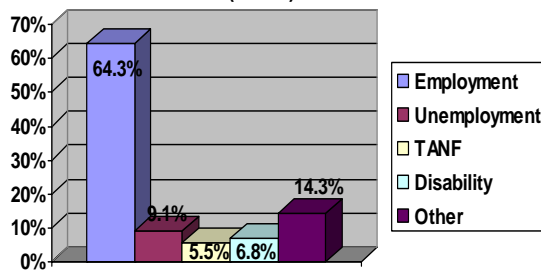


Chart 5 delineates the primary source

of income by percent for the participants' household; 64.3% indicated the primary source of income is employment. However, 14.3% indicated their income comes from other sources such as child support and retirement. Unemployment accounts for 9.1% of the household income, while disability and the state supported TANF program account for 6.8% and 5.5%, respectively.

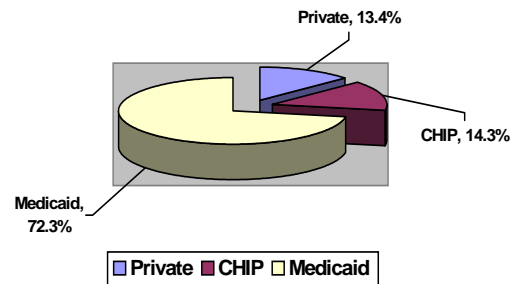
Chart 5: Primary Source of Income by Percent (n=308)



The enrollment data included inquiry regarding health insurance for the child participant. The preponderance of the responses indicated "yes" to having health insurance coverage (86.8%). In addition, the question was asked about the type of health insurance coverage. As delineated in Figure 2, Medicaid is the main health insurance for the MDCP participants. Also, the Mississippi state supported Children Health Insurance Program (CHIP) accounts for 14.3% of health coverage, while 13.4% of the

children are covered by private insurance policies.

Figure 2: Type of Health Insurance Coverage by Percent (n=314)



Parents Education Level and Employment Status

Information about the education level and employment status of the participants' parents was collected as a part of enrollment. For mothers, 32.2% have completed high school. Further, 32.2% also have had some college experience. Also, 20.6% completed the 9th-11th grade, while 2.2% have only 8th grade or less. Mothers who have obtained a college degree or higher comprise 12.8% of the respondents, as shown in Chart 6.

Chart 6: Mother's Educational Level (n=311)

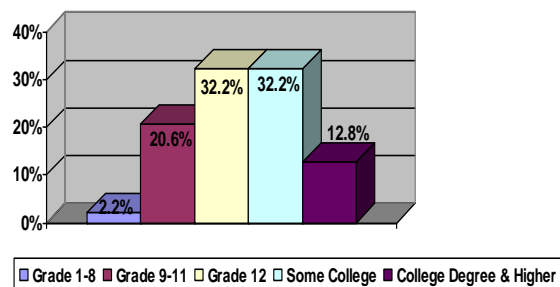
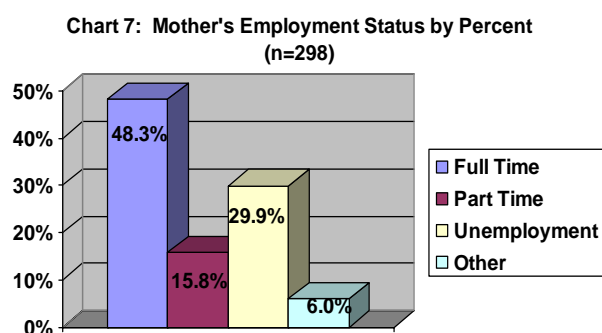
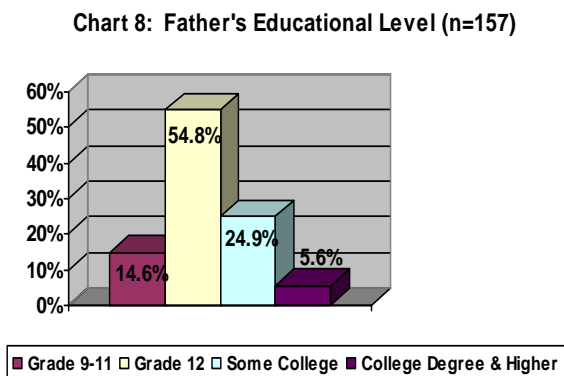


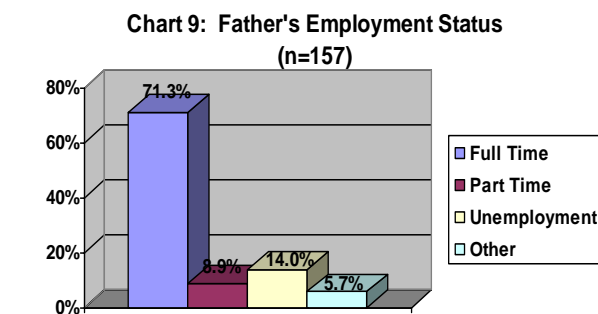
Chart 7 details the MDCP participants' mother's employment status. Nearly half (48.3%) of the mothers are employed full-time in some capacity. However, nearly a third (29.9%) is unemployed. Mothers who are employed part-time account for 15.8%.



For fathers, over half (54.8%) have completed 12th grade and 24.9% have experienced some college. Only 5.6% of the fathers have a college degree or higher, but 14.6% have only 9th-11th grade education level. Chart 8 illustrates these findings.



The father's employment status is outlined in Chart 9. Fathers with full-time employment account for 71.3%; 14% of the fathers reported that they are unemployed, while 8.9% having part-time employment.



Leap Track Analysis

MDCP Children's Village participants were administered the Leap Track pre and post tests that measured reading and math proficiency. As stated previously, SPSS was used to ascertain pre and post test means for MDCP Children's Villages overall and for each of the sites. Table 2 provides the Leap Track reading pre and post assessment mean scores for individual sites and MDCP as a whole. Except for Mayersville/Glen Allan, the pre test mean scores were lower than post test mean scores, which indicate that there was some change in reading ability for the participants. Further analysis was conducted to determine if these changes were statistically significant. T-test analysis determined that there was

significant improvement between the pre and the post test. More explicitly, for the MDCP Children's Villages overall, Leap Track reading mean scores were statistically significant ($p < .000$, $t = -5.118$, $SD = 20.704$). Also, Cary's Children's Village reading mean scores were statistically significant ($p < .000$, $t = -8.091$, $SD = 17.774$) and Tallahatchie's Children's Village reading mean scores were statistically significant ($p < .034$, $t = -2.545$, $SD = 20.433$).

Table 2: 2006 Leap Track Reading Mean Scores

Children's Village Site	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score
Anguilla	61.45	69.00
Cary*	68.49	85.71
Mayersville/GA	65.00	65.09
Quitman	74.26	82.38
Tallahatchie*	67.95	77.67
Total*	68.21 (n=205)	76.17 (n=124)

*Statistically significant

Table 3 provides the Leap Track math pre and post assessment mean scores for individual sites and MDCP as a whole. The pre test mean scores were lower than post test mean scores, which shows that there was some change in math proficiency for the participants. Further analysis was conducted to determine if these changes were statistically significant. T-test analysis confirmed that there was significant improvement between the pre and the post test. That is to say

that for the MDCP Children's Villages overall, Leap Track math mean scores were statistically significant ($p < .000$, $t = -4.398$, $SD = 22.695$). Furthermore, Cary's Children's Village math mean scores were statistically significant ($p < .000$, $t = -4.548$, $SD = 16.668$).

Table 3: 2006 Leap Track Math Mean Scores

Children's Village Site	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score
Anguilla	66.73	72.80
Cary*	77.23	88.50
Mayersville/GA	64.27	73.80
Quitman	74.19	85.69
Tallahatchie	63.53	72.86
Total*	70.33 (n=185)	79.80 (n=116)

*Statistically significant

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following is a summary of the major findings from the 2006 evaluation of the Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership.

Demographics-Children

A total of 364 students were enrolled in the 2006 Spring and/or Summer program at the five Children's Villages. Children ages 5-7 years old account for 37.8% of the participants.

Children who are in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade account for 37.4% of the participants. Moreover, listed below are the other

demographic findings of this report:

- ◆ 47.5% of participants have siblings in the program, (n=326).
- ◆ 86.8% of participants have health coverage, (n=341), 74.8% of which is state assistance, (n=314).
- ◆ 95.4% of the children participate in the free lunch at school, (n=325).
- ◆ 60.4% of participants live with their mother only, while 27.7% live with both mother and father, (n=336).

Demographics-Parents

Limited parental demographic information was collected; select findings are listed below:

- ◆ 64.3% of parents report employment as primary source of income, (n=308).
- ◆ 47.1% of households have a yearly income of less than \$9,999, (n=312).
- ◆ For mothers, 32.2% have completed high school only. Further, 32.2% also have had some college experience.
- ◆ Nearly half (48.3%) of the mothers are employed full-time in some capacity.
- ◆ For fathers, over half (54.8%) have completed 12th grade and 24.9%

have experienced some college.

- ◆ 71.3% of the fathers reported full-time employment

Leap Track Reading and Math Scores

All participants of the MDCP Children's Villages are exposed to the Leap Track reading and math program to aide in increasing the children's reading and math proficiency. Results of statistical testing yielded significant improvements between the pre and the post test scores for the MDCP participants. More explicitly:

- ◆ MDCP children overall showed significant improvement in reading and math.
- ◆ Cary Children's Village children demonstrated significant improvement in reading and math.
- ◆ Tallahatchie Children's Village children showed significant improvement in reading.

DISCUSSION

The children participating in the MDCP can be characterized as kindergarten and elementary school students; 70% are between the ages of 1-10 years old. Correspondingly, 60% are third grade or lower. Socio-economically, MDCP

children are representative of the African American children in the region. Participation in the free and reduced lunch program is frequently used as a proxy measure of socioeconomic status. The following is a comparison of the percentage of students in the county school districts and MDCP program who participate in the free and reduced lunch program.

Table 5: Comparison Between MDCP Participants and County School District Students who Receive Reduced/Free Lunch

Children's Village Name	% on Reduced or Free Lunch	MS School District	% on Reduced or Free Lunch
Anguilla	97.3%	South Delta	100%
Cary	94.3%	South Delta	100%
Mayersville/Glen Allan	96.9%	South Delta	100%
Quitman	94.7%	Quitman County	100%
Tallahatchie	95.2%	Tallahatchie	96.5%

**County School District report from Mississippi Department of Education

The majority of MDCP children (60%) live with their mother, only. Almost half, 47.1% of the children live in a household with a yearly income of less than \$10,000 a year. While the overwhelming majority of these children live in poverty, over half, 64% are from homes where the primary source of income is from employment. More explicitly, the parents of these children are the working poor. This may also explain why only 13% of MDCP children have private insurance.

Because of the lack of income, the parents simply cannot afford health insurance coverage for the family.

The education level reported by the MDCP parents presents somewhat of a conundrum. For mothers, 32.2% have high school diplomas only. However, 45% have some college and/or college degree or higher. That means almost half of these mothers have some college education. However, the yearly household incomes of the majority of children are less than \$10,000. Then can it be postulated that education does not bring about successful employment with incomes above the poverty level? This lack of congruence between education and income may be a reflection of the lack of economic development and specifically, employment opportunities in the Mississippi Delta. In other words, because of the lack of resources and employment opportunities, parents may be unable to find substantial employment which results in reliance on menial jobs and/or public assistance, despite modest educational attainment.

Participant fathers' demographic information was difficult to retrieve

from parents. Not surprisingly, over half of the participants' enrollment applications had missing data from the father's section of the application. MDCP Coordinators made tremendous efforts to obtain this information including, telephone calls and face-to-face discussions. However, according to the available data, over half (54.8%) of the fathers have obtained a high school diploma only and the other 30.5% have had some college and/or college degree and higher. Concomitantly, over 70% of the fathers have full-time employment. Again, this is not reflected in the household income of the children. This is likely attributable to the high rate of absent fathers as well as the absence of meaningful employment opportunities.

Leap Track serves as the child-outcome measure for the academic enrichment component of the Children's Villages. Despite the challenges of the initial administration of Leap Track, it is apparent that MDCP participants overall, increased their reading and math proficiency. Furthermore, Cary Children's Village demonstrated the most success in proficiency for both reading and math. So what might account for this? It appears to be the amount of intervention dosage. During the beginning of the MDCP Partnership, all

Children's Villages were using the Leap Track program. However, there were differences in the number of times during the week that children were exposed to Leap Track activities. Therefore, it is believed that Cary Children's Village scores were higher because they reported more weekly usage of Leap Track.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation of the Mississippi Delta Children's Partnership is a critical component of this Initiative. This first year represents a piloting of the evaluation protocol. As a result of this pilot, the following protocol refinements will strengthen the evaluative process of MDCP.

1. In an effort to ensure that all MDCP sites are collecting the same information at the same time, it is imperative that the following outline continue to be used by all MDCP sites. The outline provides details of what, where, when, and by whom the data is to be collected (Table 4).

Table 4: Evaluation Protocol

MDCP Children				
Collect What?	What Instrument/Method?	When?	By Whom?	How?
Demographic Data	Enrollment Application	Child's Entrance in the Program	Site Coordinators	Individually at enrollment
Reading/Math Proficiency	Leap Track	Beginning of Fall and End of the Spring academic year.	Evaluator	Individually
Student School Grades	Report Cards	First nine weeks & Last Grades of the school year	Site Coordinators	Individually
Social Functioning	School Attendance and Behavior on report cards	First nine weeks & Last Grades of the school year	Site Coordinators	Individually
Cultural Heritage	Student Racial Identity Inventory MIBI-5 th Version	At enrollment and the end of the school year (last two weeks before the summer)	Lead Teachers	Group-5 th grade and higher only
Qualitative insight	**Focus Groups- Each site- Random sample of 6-8 children in each group (5 GROUPS)	Begin February/March 2007	Staff & Consultant	Group
Parents				
Parent Knowledge & Practices	Parent Survey	Fall 2006 & Summer 2007	Site Coordinator	Group (Family Circle)
Social Capital	Social Capital Survey- Random sample of parents	Beginning 2006 & the end of each subsequent year	Site Coordinator	Individually
Qualitative insight	**Focus Groups-Each site to have 8-10 parents randomly selected (5 GROUPS)	Begin February/March 2007	Staff and Consultant	Group
MDCP Partnership				
Partnership Outlook Data	Partnership Survey	Early 2007	Site Coordinator and Consultant	Group or Individually

- Effective January 2007, the evaluator will be responsible for administering the Leap Track assessments for all MDCP sites at three intervals, Fall (August), Spring (May), and Summer (July).
- All MDCP teachers and teen mentors should receive additional training with the Leap Track Assessment and Instructional System.
- In order to expand MDCP to be more research intensive, the development of a quasi-experimental design using a comparison group is recommended. Using two observation points, at the beginning of the school year (the end of the first nine-week grade period) and at the end of the school year, MDCP participants and non-participant students' grades in the core subjects should be recorded and analyzed. Also, Mississippi Curriculum Test (MCT) scores for MDCP Children's Village participants and non-participants in the same geographic area should be compared.
- To increase the accuracy of data entry, electronic forms of some of the instruments used to collect data should be implemented.
- Focus groups for MDCP children and parents should begin in early 2007. These groups will provide qualitative insight on experiences with MDCP as well as their perspective on life in the Mississippi Delta.

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