

What is the community challenge?

Families residing in Southwest Detroit face many challenges in the areas of education, basic needs, and acculturation due to the low English proficiency rate and lack of formal education. These deficiencies combined with a lack of early childhood education services, and even basic services such as food, health care and housing make it very difficult for children to be ready for school and to have a successful academic career.

What is the promising solution?

ACCESS to school is a program designed to meet the large needs of the Detroit immigrant population by providing the following four pronged approach:

- Culturally adapted parenting education
- Parent and Child Interactive Learning Activities (PCIL)
- Comprehensive case-management for families
- Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction

Program At-a-Glance

CNCS Program: Social Innovation Fund

Intervention: ACCESS to School

Subgrantee: ACCESS

Intermediary: United Way of Southeastern Michigan

Focus Area: Early Childhood School Readiness

Focus Population: Parents of Children ages 0-5 and Children ages 0-5

Community Served: 42809 and 48210 zipcodes in Detroit, Michigan.

What was the purpose of evaluation?

The evaluation of United Way for Southeastern Michigan and ACCESS's ACCESS to School program by MPHI began in 2012 and finished reporting 2018. It set out to show whether the ACCESS to School program provides better school readiness for children by improving many parent and child factors through parenting education, PCIL, case management and ESL instruction. A quasi-experimental design with groups formed by matching on race and balanced using entropy weighting techniques sought to address issues of internal validity. Multiple mixed linear regression with repeated measures was used to evaluate change in outcomes in the program group compared to changes in the comparison group. A sample size of 85 was used for the intervention parent group, with a sample size of 54 for the children's intervention group. The comparison parent group sample size was 78 and the comparison children group was 50.

What did the evaluation find?

As a subgrantee of United Way of Southeastern Michigan, ACCESS engaged an independent evaluator to evaluate ACCESS to School. Some promising findings are:

- Parents who participated in ACCESS to School had considerably less negative attitudes and significantly lowered parental stress compared with the comparison group. This is important because when parents are more positive about their role in educating their children and are less stressed in that process, they are better able to be their children's first teachers and prepare them well for school.

- Children of parents who received ACCESS to School had significantly improved School Readiness Composite scores (which measured understanding of colors, letters, numbers, sizes, shapes). This is important because these skills are some of the basic literacy and numeracy skills needed for school readiness.
- The Case Management component of ACCESS to School was found to reduce family vulnerability with regard to Employment, Income, Healthcare, Transportation, Spoken English Language proficiency, and Social Connections.

Notes on the evaluation

This study achieved a moderate level of evidence using propensity score matching to determine that the intervention and comparison groups had adequate overlap. Entropy weighting ensured groups were balanced on observable baseline characteristics and addressed unobserved differences in the groups.

How is ACCESS using the evaluation findings to improve?

Findings from this study have resulted in the continuation of the ACCESS to School Program. In addition, a book has been published describing the program so that it may be replicated in other communities. With evidence of effectiveness and efforts to scale the program, ACCESS to School has the potential to reach even more families.

Evaluation At-a-Glance

Evaluation Design: Quasi-experimental design with Entropy Weighting

Study Population: Immigrant families from Spanish and Arabic speaking countries with Children ages 0-5 and their parents.

Independent Evaluator: Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI)

This Evaluation's Level of Evidence*: Moderate

*SIF and AmeriCorps currently use different definitions of levels of evidence.

The content of this brief was drawn from the full evaluation report submitted to CNCS by the grantee/subgrantee. The section of the brief that discusses evaluation use includes contribution of the grantee/subgrantee. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

To access the full evaluation report and learn more about CNCS, please visit <http://www.nationalservice.gov/research>.

The Social Innovation Fund (SIF), a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), combines public and private resources to grow the impact of innovative, community-based solutions that have compelling evidence of improving the lives of people in low-income communities throughout the U.S. The SIF invests in three priority areas: economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.