

A Parenting Skills Programme to Enhance School Readiness of Grade R Learners in South Africa: A Social Work Perspective

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Abstract

Parenting plays a determining role in the development of school readiness. Socio-economic adversity often has a detrimental effect on the quality of parenting, which in turn has a negative impact on the school readiness of children. Intervention research was done to develop and implement a parenting skills programme for parents of Grade R learners in two resource-poor communities in South Africa. The findings indicate that parents can improve in the important areas of parenting, namely, the quality of the parent–child relationship, parent–child interaction, and creating a home-learning environment that could enhance the school readiness of their Grade R children. Social workers are in the ideal position to implement such a parenting skills programme. It will be part of their preventive work to limit later psychosocial problems in clients linked to lack of schooling, behavioural problems and unemployment.

Keywords: school readiness, parenting skills, emotional development, social development

Introduction

With the expansion of the concept of school readiness to include non-cognitive domains of social and emotional skills (Lau, Li, and Rau 2011, 97; UNICEF 2012, 9–10; Van Zyl 2011, 84), the role of parents in the development of school readiness has come increasingly under the spotlight. The current description of school readiness includes skills such as feeling secure enough to separate from the parent, acceptance of adult authority, completing simple tasks, and the ability to converse confidently in the mother tongue (Kentucky Department of Education 2019; Western Cape Department of



Education 2012). These are skills that develop while the child is still predominantly in the care of the parent or primary caregiver. This shift in focus brings into play the role of social workers in the promotion of school readiness. Social workers are in an ideal position to reach the parents of young children and to work with them towards enhancing the school readiness of their children. This article reports on a specific phase of intervention research that was aimed at developing a parenting skills programme to enhance the school readiness of Grade R learners in two resource-poor communities in South Africa. The important role that parents play in the development of school readiness and the contribution that social workers can make will be discussed.

Problem Statement

Over the past decades, early childhood has emerged in literature as a vitally important developmental phase that has a significant impact on children's well-being and functioning in all the successive developmental phases (Efevbera et al. 2017, 99; Lake 2011, 1277). According to the 2011 Census (StatsSA 2014), there were 10.4 million children between the ages of 0 and 9 years in South Africa. Approximately 40 per cent of these children grow up in conditions of extreme poverty and neglect, leading to an increased risk of stunted growth, poor adjustment to school, failing grades and eventually dropping out from school (Department of Education 2001). It is a concern that in 2018, nationally only 40 per cent of the learners who enrolled in Grade 1 in 2007 completed Grade 12 (Seleka 2019). Without adequate schooling, children face a bleak future. There is ample evidence that learners who enter the school system without the required school readiness fall behind their peers from the outset and fail to catch up (Bruwer, Hartell, and Steyn 2014, 27).

The fact that parents influence their children's academic performance is well documented. Research points to parents and various parenting practices as a key element in the development of the different domains of school readiness (Morrison and Cooney 2012, 144–156; Russel et al. 2016, 162; Voinea and Damian 2014, 388; Williams and Berthelsen 2017, 88). The premise of this study was that parents can offer their children the opportunity to have a supportive relationship with an adult and that they have the potential to develop the appropriate parenting behaviours to enhance their children's school readiness.

Research Context

As a social worker for the South African Department of Education, the first author observed that the children in the two resource-poor communities where the study was conducted were exposed to serious psychosocial problems such as poverty, various forms of child abuse, parental substance abuse, domestic and community violence, and gangsterism. Parents in the target communities were often indifferent to programmes presented in schools, especially the parents who needed such programmes the most. There were many possible reasons for this, including these parents' ignorance, their

indifference to the needs of their children, feeling intimidated by services offered or fear of being belittled and criticised (Puckering 2004, 39, 51).

Several authors have described the significant cumulative effect of poverty and the problems associated with poverty on the development of children (Beatty 2013, 71; Mistry et al. 2010, 433; Sharkins, Leger, and Earnest 2017, 493). Such exposure early in life negatively affects a child's brain development; children then enter school with a significant disadvantage compared to other children, which negatively influences their learning ability and behaviour (Beatty 2013, 72; Centre on the Developing Child 2016; Duncan and Murnane 2011, 9). Despite the above-mentioned problems, the ideal is still for all children to complete their early developmental tasks successfully and to thrive in a home and school environment that is conducive to academic progress.

Theoretical Framework

This study was done within the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory that regards human development as the product of proximal processes, consisting of constant and ongoing reciprocal interactions between individuals and the people and things in their immediate environment, and that is also influenced by historical and life events (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2006, 795). In this regard, the role of context in child development is emphasised. The young child is mostly exposed to influences within the micro-environment of the family, where the parents are the key role players. Still, within the microsystem, the authors applied the concept of Vygotsky's "more knowledgeable other" or "competent associate" and the "zone of proximal development". These concepts denote that parents who are more knowledgeable than their children model the activity or skill and offer support and advice to their children, who observe and imitate their parents' behaviour. New skills are then learnt and internalised, and the children's behaviour is regulated accordingly (Shaffer and Kipp 2010, 234).

Aim of the Study

The study aimed to use intervention research to develop a parenting skills programme for enhancing parental skills that contribute to school readiness in Grade R learners in resource-poor communities. This article will focus on the findings of phase 4 of the intervention research process that answered the question: What is the influence of the parenting skills programme on the development of parenting behaviours that enhance the school readiness of Grade R learners in two resource-poor communities?

Research Methodology

The research design was intervention research with the six phases of design and development, as described first by Rothman and Thomas (1994, 31–33), and is still used as a framework for research (Gilgun and Sands 2012, 350). Gilgun (2012, 1) regards

intervention research as the bridge between academic research and practice. The first three phases consisted of the following:

- Phase 1: Problem analysis and project planning.
- Phase 2: Information gathering and synthesis: This phase consisted of a literature study and three focus group discussions with parents and professionals in the target communities. All parents of Grade R learners in three focus schools were invited. Former or present social work clients of the researcher were excluded.
- Phase 3: Three components derived from the information gathered during phase 2, with 12 topics dealing with these components, were identified for the parenting programme. These components are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Components of the programme

Component 1 Parent-child relationship (1 session)	Component 2 Social and emotional development (8 sessions)	Component 3 Building resilience (3 sessions)
The five love languages	Building self-esteem Positive discipline Dealing with feelings Conveying values to my child Developing self-control Social development The value of play Identity development	Teaching children to think positively Humour and fun Parent wellness

The sessions were developed around these twelve topics with a variety of activities for each session that parents and children could participate in together. The following principles guided the development of the programme and had a profound impact on the results:

- Involving parents and Grade R learners together in the programme to give the parents the opportunity of hands-on training and interaction with their Grade R children (Christopher et al. 2013, 776).
- Using a strengths-based approach as described by Condrat (2014, 39) and thereby avoiding using a deficit model where parents will be stigmatised as “at risk” or “vulnerable” (Jackson and Needham 2014, 41).
- Focusing on the parenting role and not trying to make educators of the parents, by empowering parents in the following areas that improve their children’s academic skills as suggested by Waldfogel and Washbrook (as quoted in Mukherji and Dryden 2014, 245): The quality of the parent–child

attachment; the style of parenting that parents adopt; and the learning environment that parents create in their home.

- Providing the opportunity for interaction and enjoyment in a safe environment with the assumption that this would strengthen the bond between parents and their children and that learning would take place (Harman, O'Connor, and Guilfoyle 2014, 132).
- Giving attention to parent wellness: Only when parents are emotionally healthy and feel confident about their parenting abilities, can they function optimally as parents. When the contrary is true, they are less able to give their children quality care (Roberts as quoted in Mukherji and Dryden 2014, 192).

Phase 4 consists of early development and pilot testing. The parenting programme was implemented in three schools in the two target areas. Interviews were conducted with nine parents who had attended most of the sessions. After making minor alterations, the programme was again presented in the one target school the following year. After completion of the programme, another four interviews were conducted with parents who had attended most of the sessions. In total 43 parents together with their children completed the parenting programme by attending eight or more sessions. A profile of the 13 parents who were interviewed is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic information of research group

Participant number	Age	Relationship to Grade R learner	Level of education	Occupation	Marital status	Number of occupants in the house
P1	62	Biological father	Grade 9	Shuttle service (Taxi driver)	Living together	3
P2	27	Biological mother	Grade 12, busy with ECD training	Full-time mother	Married, husband not the biological father of the Grade R learner	3
P3	37	Biological mother	Grade 11	Waitress		6
P4	31	Biological mother	Grade 12, studied 1 year secretarial qualification	Full-time mother	Married	5
P5	35	Biological father	Grade 12	Retrenched	Married	4
P6	48	Biological mother	Grade 12 and nursing	Nursing assistant	Single	2

Participant number	Age	Relationship to Grade R learner	Level of education	Occupation	Marital status	Number of occupants in the house
P7	32	Biological mother	Grade 9	Unemployed	Single, whereabouts of father of children unknown	3
P8	67	Grandmother	Grade 10	Unemployed	Married	9
P9	48	Biological mother	Grade 12	Nursing assistant	Divorced	5
P10	37	Biological mother	Grade 7	Home carer	Separated	8
P11		Biological father	Grade 12 and tertiary qualification	Quantity surveyor	Married	4
P12	24	Biological mother	Grade 9	Factory worker	Unmarried	5
P13		Biological mother	Grade 5	Unemployed, previously a cleaner	Married	4

ECD: early childhood development

Phase 5 consisted of evaluation and advanced development. Purposive sampling was used to select parents (Strydom 2021, 382). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 parents using an interview schedule with open-ended questions according to guidelines provided in the literature (Braun and Clarke 2013, 92). The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent for greater accuracy and data capturing (Braun and Clarke 2013, 79). Coding and a thematic analysis of the transcribed data were done according to Braun and Clarke's (2013, 178) process and themes were identified. The four elements of trustworthiness as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 207), namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability guided the research.

Ethics

Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee of the relevant university (Ethics clearance number NWU-00140-14-A1), and permission for the research was granted by the Western Cape Education Department. The authors also adhered to the ethical code of their profession as social workers. All the participating parents signed informed consent forms to participate in the programme.

Findings

Three themes were identified with regard to parenting behaviours that have a profound impact on the development of children's school readiness, namely, the parent-child

relationship, parents' interaction with their children, and creating a home-learning environment. The fourth theme, parental well-being, will also be referred to since it emerged as an important factor in the parents' experience of the benefits of the programme.

Parental Behaviours that Enhance School Readiness

The literature study and data provided by the parents were analysed to determine whether the programme had contributed to the desired parenting behaviours.

Parent–child relationship

The literature study revealed that a secure attachment played a role in the development of many aspects of school readiness such as cognitive development (Davies 2011, 44; Eshel et al. 2007, 992), emotional and social skills (Gerhardt 2014, 2), emotional development (Davies 2011, 9), moral development (Martorell, Pappalia, and Feldman 2014, 241), approaches to learning (Furrer and Skinner 2003, 158), relationship-building skills (Dowling 2014, 37; Kraemer 2011, 2; Martorell, Pappalia, and Feldman 2014, 232), prosocial skills (Davies 2011, 256; Smith, Cowie, and Blades 2011, 304), self-esteem (Pinto et al. 2015, 592), and self-efficacy (Schunk and Pajares 2002, 4–5). To the question of how the programme had influenced their relationship with their Grade R children, the parents responded as follows:

- Seven parents indicated that their relationship with their child had improved significantly (P4, P6, P9, P11, P12, P13).
- Four parents (P1, P2, P5, P7) said that, although they had had a bond with their children previously, the quality of their relationship had improved and they now laughed and played together (P1), they were sharing more (P2), the Grade R son had opened up and would now ask the mother things (P5), and the Grade R's lone time with the mother had become important to the Grade R child (P7).
- Five parents indicated that, while their children had been closer to another caregiver before, the children had grown closer to them since the programme (P3, P4, P11, P12, P13). Two of these parents were biological fathers. P4 (a mother) described the change as such: "She was her daddy's girl. Never talked to me, never would have listened to me. She would just do what her daddy tells her to do . . . But since the classes we actually laugh together, we play together."
- P5, P6, P11 and P13 mentioned that, for the first time, their children came to ask them things or to talk about things, indicating an important improvement in the relationship. P12 said that her son now brought his educator's message book to her every evening to share with her what the educator had said in class.

In total, 12 of the 13 parents interviewed confirmed that their relationship with their Grade R child had improved. Such warm and caring relationships lay the foundation for the development of school readiness and in the long term improve academic achievement. This can be regarded as a strong outcome of the programme.

Interaction between parents and children

The programme was aimed at promoting interaction between parents and their Grade R children. Positive interaction contributes to cognitive development (Dowling 2014, 35; Jackson and Needham 2014, 39; Mukherji and Dryden 2014, 93; Shaffer and Kipp 2010, 56), literacy and numeracy (Lukie et al. 2014, 257), self-regulation (Davies 2011, 44), prosocial behaviour (Farrant et al. 2012, 183; Nantel-Vivier et al. 2014, 1141), and moral development (Thompson and Twibell 2009, 214).

The data provided by the parents were analysed to determine whether the programme had contributed to improved parent–child interaction. The opportunity to interact with their children in the programme was described by some parents as “amazing” (P1), “the highlight” (P2), “I think we enjoyed it more than the children” (P6), “the best part of it all” (P7), and “together, us alone, quality time” (P11).

Several parents commented that the interaction with their children was the strongest feature of the programme. Here are some of the comments:

And when we got to do the activities, that was the highlight. For every child and every parent, I’m sure. You start to learn who your child is as well going through the activities. (P2)

We were actually thinking about can’t we make it till two o’clock. Because the fun and what you learn there, they’re actually eager to learn more. (P4)

But for you to see how your kid’s face lights up when he does something and he’s proud of it, that’s something that I enjoyed as well. I enjoyed myself to see my son, ‘Daddy, look what I did, daddy, look I did this . . .’ It’s interacting with the kids. (P5)

But the best part of it all is interaction with your child. Just seeing my daughter happy, interacting. (P7)

Although the parents indicated that the interaction during the programme was enjoyable, it was important to determine whether this interaction extended into the homes and lives of the parents and the Grade R learners, otherwise it would have been of little benefit. The following was found:

We did things [in the programme] that we still do every night. (P1 indicated that he and his son still played snakes and ladders every evening and that they sing and dance to music)

Now it's different. I learned that you, even if you are a busy mom, you can give your kids two hours. It makes a difference in your life. Every day if you give them two hours, to be with them, listen to them, play with them, ask them what they want. (P3)

It was about the child, what the parent and child could do together. And then at home we also do it . . . I enjoyed . . . the parent and child being together, those things, singing and sharing with the child, because for me it was about the child. [W] also enjoyed it . . . and he showed the people at home. (P8)

The physical contact that one has with one's child, that was the best. It means a lot to them, because she will still come to me and say, 'Mommy I love you.' (P9)

This mother (P9) mentioned later that she and her Grade R daughter still have regular physical contact, they play hopscotch, and when the daughter takes out the faces chart (depicting emotions), they talk about feelings.

The programme taught me to control my temper and also to spend more time with my children . . . there I realised once again that to spend time with one's children makes things so much better. (P11)

It was evident that all the parents seem much more aware of the importance of positive interaction with their Grade Rs; spending quality time, and doing fun things together.

Home-learning environment

The importance of a home-learning environment to promote the development of school readiness skills was also confirmed in the literature. Such a home-learning environment would be print-rich and include activities such as reading to children, and providing books, drawing materials, songs and games. Creating a home-learning environment promotes various domains of school readiness such as cognitive development (Jackson and Needham 2014, 39), preliteracy (Dove et al. 2015, 174; Ngwaru 2012, 34; Smith, Cowie, and Blades 2011, 421), pre-numeracy (Lukie et al. 2014, 257), self-regulation (Calkins and Williford 2009, 186), approaches to learning (Baker and Rimm-Kaufman 2014, 730), prosocial behaviour (Brownell et al. 2013), and self-efficacy (Schunk and Pajares 2002, 4–5).

The parents who attended the programme do not necessarily have the means to buy books and other educational resources. That is one of the factors that influence school readiness when children are raised in a low socio-economic environment. However, not all the parents had financial constraints, but they needed to be made aware of the importance of a home-learning environment. The following data with regard to providing a home-learning environment were provided by the parents:

We use the dices of the snakes and ladders to teach him to add. (P1)

Now since we had those classes, she liked colouring in. She would not sit with papers before. Many of the copies that you gave us, I made copies of that and now she colours in. Now she calls the friend from next door and they the two of them play 'teacher-teacher' and so she will colour in and talk and try to make a story of the picture. We still use much of the little books and stuff that you gave us. (P4)

Like the drawing. The colouring in. And distinguishing between objects on the papers . . . So I still show him the things. Like the drawings, nature. And then, I read to him . . . I have it in a book. I can take it out anytime. Interesting stuff . . . So I helped him with that reading. (P6)

When they [the Grade R daughter and her friend] sit with books, they sit and they colour, and then she comes and show me, 'Mommy, we did this picture, we did this now,' or she takes some beads and stuff and then they 'sommer' make stuff for them. . . . At home L loves to do the buttons. But she does it in a counting manner. She counts the buttons, or the holes, how many holes are there. (P7)

Yes, I read it to him [the stories], and he sits still, but there's also other children coming here, so I tell them they must sit there on the bed and then I read it to them. And they sit still. (P10)

Playing snakes and ladders and [W] showed his aunties to make masks, but anyway, he [the older brother] will draw pictures and [W] will cut out. We let the grandfather join the library and the aunties read to the children starting with [W] so they read quite a bit. (P8)

Yes, and afterwards . . . she likes cutting. She made herself another mask at home. This mother also helped her daughter with 'homework'. (P9)

At the back of the picture that they have to colour in, then I read to him the picture, I read the message to him, then I help him to colour in. (P12)

I have a book at home for Grade 1, it is for example $1 + 1$ and so, then I copy from the book and ask her to fill in the answers. Then she fills it in . . . I give her more, I go through her books. I took out library books for her . . . And she says I must sing to her before she goes to sleep. (P13)

P2 mentioned that they did all the activities at home and it was easy and fun. She even shared with the ECD class that she attended the activities that she learnt at the programme.

Three parents mentioned that they play music and dance with their children, which also contributes to a home-learning environment. Some of these parents might not be familiar with books, numeracy and literacy, and not all of them seemed to stimulate their Grade Rs intentionally with educational activities. However, it seemed as if the majority of the parents had become more aware of the value of creating reading

opportunities for their children and stimulating their development on a cognitive level. This should make a difference in the Grade R learners' school readiness.

Parental Well-Being

The importance of parents feeling positive about themselves, especially parents who live in challenging circumstances, is sometimes overlooked. Throughout the programme, the researcher remarked that some of the topics were not only for the benefit of the Grade Rs but also for that of the parents, for example dealing with feelings and thinking positively. One session was dedicated to parental wellness and included two short handouts on a healthy lifestyle and positive self-talk. The parents could also watch two short motivational videos. Some parents took the information to heart and applied it to their lives. The following remarks on parental well-being were shared during the interviews:

- P1 said he did a lot of positive talking to himself.
- P3 found value in the session about self-image:

Actually when you were teaching the sections that touched me, actually which really, really made a big impact was the first section, love and self-image . . . Self-image, when you know who you [are] . . . because to me I didn't know who I am also. But when you taught about the self-image you have got the right to say no to this, you have got the right to say yes to this.

- P4 took a holistic view and nurtured herself physically, emotionally and cognitively.
- P5 said:

What have I learnt? Well, you learn a bit of everything. Self-motivation, social development, . . .

- P6 (a nurse) found much value in several topics, especially positive self-talk. She said the following:

When I started applying the self-talk, it helped a lot . . . I cannot go to work without saying to myself that I'm confident enough in my job . . . The self-talk became very important to me after this session. It was easier to teach him [her Grade R son] self-esteem, and then I could apply it to myself as well . . . I have so much more energy. I actually took that for myself more than I applied it to him.

- P9 said:

Yes, I have benefitted. I am a very shy person and now I have more self-confidence. Thank you very much for all that you have done for us. I appreciate it.

- P7 summed it up:

It needs to be included [the wellness topic]. ‘We as parents need to know that we also need . . . [Interviewer: Nurturing?] Yes we do.

Discussion

The data provided by the parents indicated that the parenting skills programme had reached its aim of improving parenting skills to enhance the school readiness of Grade R learners in resource-poor communities. The following emerged from the data:

- Parents can change their parenting behaviour when they are made aware of their children’s developmental needs.
- The principles on which the programme was based, contributed much to the success of the programme. These were, including the parents with their children in the activities, using a strengths-based approach, providing fun activities in the programme and attending to the parents’ emotional needs. These features motivated the parents to complete the parenting skills programme and contributed to their personal growth, which made them better and more confident parents.
- The aspects in which parents improved were not related to school readiness only. These were parenting behaviours that are characteristic of any good parenting that contributes to healthy child development and positive outcomes with regard to all aspects of children’s functioning.
- Any parenting programme for parents who parent under difficult circumstances should include topics and activities to build resilience and provide some fun and relief from the problems that such parents face, such as music and dancing.

The emerging importance of ECD and school readiness has led to the formulation of legislation that provides a strong mandate for social service professionals to render services to the parents of children in need. This includes the National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development in South Africa (DSD 2005), Guidelines for Early Childhood Development Services (DSD 2006), the Department of Education’s White Papers on Early Childhood Development (2001), and the White Paper on Families in South Africa (DSD 2013). These documents call for a commitment to improve service delivery to this age group.

In the light of the high rate of poverty and unemployment in South Africa, the high dropout rate in school and the high prevalence of social problems in so many communities, drastic measures need to be taken to lay the foundation for school readiness and later prosperity. Developmental social welfare emphasises the development of human capital and also that people should be enabled to take part in the economy (Patel 2018, 83). These processes should be proactive rather than reactive and should ideally start when children are still young to enable them to acquire adequate

human and intellectual capital to complete their school education. In this regard, school readiness is a core aspect that should not only be the focus of educators, but also of social workers in their work with parents of young children.

Recommendations

School readiness appears to be an issue of such importance for individuals and also for South Africa's economy and prosperity, that it is imperative to make provision for funds and widespread programmes to promote ECD and school readiness. The widespread poverty in South Africa demands that programmes and resources be allocated to enhance ECD and school readiness. This can be done in the following ways:

- The provisions in section 5.2.1 of the White Paper on Families (DSD 2013) and the mandate given to social workers in the Children's Act (South Africa 2005) have to be utilised to do early intervention with families and to develop innovative ways to reach vulnerable families before they become part of the welfare system out of necessity. It is easier and more cost-effective to focus on early prevention than to try and fix a situation later on. The benefits in terms of economic and human capital of investing in ECD far outweigh the costs (Heckman 2017).
- University curricula need to be adapted to equip social workers in schools and in communities to work intensively with parents in practical ways.
- The extent of the crisis in basic and higher education, poverty and continuous inequality in South Africa demands serious multidisciplinary cooperation to do research and policy development on a large scale to redress deficits in ECD leading to school readiness. Strategic and operational planning needs to take place at both national and local levels, and it should be supported by legislation.
- Parenting skills programmes need to be normalised and separated from the stigma of being welfare clients, and accessible in all communities at schools, clinics, libraries and other neutral venues.
- Proper funding will enable social workers to present well-developed programmes and also to offer incentives for attending.
- Cooperation with other disciplines, including education, psychology, health and occupational therapy must be encouraged to create awareness of the importance of parenting and school readiness in schools, clinics and hospitals.
- Parenting programmes need to focus on the fundamental emotional needs of children that parents are most suited to fulfil through practical activities and resources that parents can easily implement.
- In the context of school readiness, all parenting programmes should aim to support parents to create a home-learning environment. Parents can be

supported to use what their environment offers, to stimulate their children without having to buy expensive resources.

- Awareness programmes presented in facilities such as clinics and hospitals will create awareness with the parents of newborns of the role they play in their children's early development and the developmental milestones that must be reached. This will deal with the fact that child development from before birth plays a role in school readiness.
- With regard to the parenting skills programme, there are many possibilities regarding content and implementation. The content of the topic handouts can be simplified and for illiterate parents, non-verbal teaching materials with drawings to illustrate principles and facts can be developed. In the case of indigenous cultures, some aspects, such as acceptable social norms, need to be adapted to the specific culture of a target population.

Conclusion

The importance of parenting in the development of school readiness as well as the urgency to develop new and innovative ways to deal with the quality of parenting in resource-poor communities emerged from this study. The results of this study suggest that parents, even when parenting in challenging circumstances, have the ability and the willingness to acquire improved parenting skills in various areas crucial to the early development and school readiness of their children. This should serve as an encouragement to build on this work.

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