



Winter 2011

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From the Playroom

Best Practices

A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to success. A best practice is a methodology or way of doing something that through experience and/or research has proven to reliably lead to a desired result. Best Practices are the principles that guide everything a program does and lay the foundation for how work should be done.

In our travels across the country to successful Primary Project programs, we find extremely strong, consistent relationships between the level of endorsement of best practices and how effective the team felt their programs were. In this edition of From the Playroom, we revisit the best practices of Primary Project. We also are given the opportunity to peek inside the experiences of one school district as they implement these best practice principles.

“Children will not remember you for the material things you provided, but for the feeling that you cherished them.”

—Richard L. Evans



Primary Project Best Practices (K-3rd Grade)

Evaluation suggests the following “best practices” regarding the program and evaluation procedures.

Provide the program to young children: Children in grade three and younger tend to make more gains in Primary Project.

Limit a child’s participation in program to one to two cycles: Children who make the most gains typically are seen for one cycle rather than multiple cycles or years. While variations occur for some children, this holds true for the majority of children served. Children may need other school services if they continuously seem to bubble to the surface after one or two cycles.

Generally see children once a week for 30 minutes: No significant differences have been found for children seen more frequently, or for longer sessions.

Choose high quality child associates: High quality child associates, specifically selected to work in Primary Project, are essential to programming success.

Commit to training and supervision: Ongoing training and supervision must be provided to support both the child associate and the supervisor.

Conduct ongoing evaluation: Evaluation of both outcomes and process help programs continually improve and refine implementation. Local evaluations also support programs during times of budget restrictions and the ongoing need to show accountability for continuous funding.

Adapted from Johnson, D.B., Demanchick, S.P., & Peabody, M.A. (2006). Primary project program development manual. Rochester, NY: Children’s Institute.



Back to Basics with Fidelity



As June 2010 came to a close in Syracuse, NY, playrooms were emptied by Child Associates and files were examined by site supervisors. The overall Primary Project program was closely examined. Budgets tightened and the harsh reality set in that some programs may not survive and those that did were going to have to learn to do more with less. However, with two Syracuse City Schools (Franklin Magnet and Salem Hyde) being granted National Certification, excitement was in the air. So the focus became how to improve delivery of Primary Project. The answer was simple. It’s back to the basics with fidelity.

Children’s Institute has a certification rubric which is used to assess the extent to which a school is meeting standards of a quality program. The rubric highlights Primary Project structural core components, standards, and best practices. It’s used by the certification endorser to rate a program during the certification process. However, it is a tool that can be used locally by a school to assess itself. This is the best way for schools to identify program strengths and areas with opportunity for growth.

Any evidence-based/best practice program is only successful when implemented and maintained with fidelity. Combined with monthly meetings, monthly building site-visits, and weekly email and telephone contact, the rubric is used to help each school set goals for its Primary Project program. Streamlining workflow so that each of the twelve schools in Syracuse City School District has the same process for everything was also important.

We are off to a great start and looking forward to celebrating our fidelity success in June 2011.

*—Gina Rivers, Program Coordinator
Contact Community Services, Syracuse, NY*

Best Practices in Action



Meet Arlene Bobin, Primary Project National Certification Coordinator at Children's Institute. Arlene a unique background as well as a broad perspective to our team. Here are some of her thoughts:

How long have you worked in Primary Project and in what different capacities? I have worked in Primary Project for eleven years in different capacities. I was a child associate in West Irondequoit, New York, when the district offered the program. For a time, I assisted Deborah Johnson, our Primary Project National Director. Currently, I am the Certification Coordinator and Certification Endorser, as well as the contact person for the New York State Request for Proposal funding.

What is your favorite part of working in Primary Project? I love to watch individual Primary Project team members grow in their skills, which strengthens their programs, which results in better outcomes for children. Its fun to watch adults play, so that they can learn the skills they need to help children grow.

What is your favorite way to "play?" I enjoy using my membership at the Strong National Museum of Play to play with my grandchildren and to watch them play as well.

What are your thoughts regarding Primary Project best practices? Evidence-based programs, such as Primary Project, deliver good outcomes for children when they are implemented with fidelity. That is why fidelity to program standards and the use of best practices is so important. For Primary Project, national certification is how we measure fidelity and best practices.

As Certification Coordinator, I have the happy job of managing the certification process. Visit www.childrens institute.net/programs/primary-project for best practice and certification resources. I am available to assist schools, as needed, throughout the process. I hope to hear from you!



The Cardinal Sings

Many years ago, I played tennis (note: *many* years ago!). I even took lessons and played in tournaments. I played well enough to get a couple of trophies (that was in the day when you didn't get a trophy just for playing) and felt fairly confident. I continued dabbling in the sport for a few years, but that was pre-Title IX (ask your mother!) and it seemed that I hit a plateau.

You see, serving was never my forte. While it had gotten me to a certain point in the city league, it wouldn't take me further. My coach assured me that holding the racquet differently would give me more accuracy and options for serves.

Using the more comfortable serve gave me some wins, but as competition became greater, the outcomes of wins soon turned to more losses. I was a decent player, but never seemed to reach my potential.

I became stuck doing what was comfortable, not employing best practices. I listened to my coach, when he was around. When he wasn't around, I slipped back to old practices.

I could still win and was a decent recreational player, but my game really never improved.

You see, there were the "intermittent reinforcements" of wins, the feeling that I knew what I was doing worked. The reality was, I didn't take the time to work on my skills and utilize best practices for the best results.

It's that way with Primary Project. We know the best practices, but sometimes it's easier to do it the same way as before because we "know" (think) it works.

Make this year the year you work on moving toward best practices. Download the rubric from our website and as a team determine areas for improvement. Make a plan. Work with a coach. Have fun. Learn and grow!

**—Deborah Johnson
Primary Project, National Director**



Bringing the Lessons Home

Best standard of care for children

In just a few short years, Kyle (who is 21 months old) will enter his first formal school experience. Like any parent, I hope that he enters with enthusiasm for learning, engaged in his school day, makes friends easily, and is liked by peers as well as adults. We know for many children that sometimes this is not the case. That is why children in districts and schools that offer Primary Project are fortunate in that additional school adjustment support is there if needed.

As a parent, it is important to me how services are being delivered to my child. Just like a visit to the pediatrician's office, I want to know that my child receives an excellent standard of care and at times beyond. This is similar to services provided in a school setting. As parents we want to know that our children receive the best "standard of care" possible. In Primary Project, there are "best practices" that guide programs to maintain, and at times, exceed standard practices.

My message is two fold. First, Primary Project teams can share their best practices with parents so they understand that the standard of care is high. Secondly, we can encourage schools that currently do not have Primary Project to consider implementing the program, ensuring that all children receive a supportive early boost.

For more information on starting Project Project, and potential start up funding within New York state, visit www.childrensinstitute.net/programs/primary-project.

*—Lynn Smith
Primary Project, Social Worker*

Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.

As parents we want to know that our children receive the best "standard of care" possible.

Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

Los mejores estándares de servicios a los niños

En unos pocos años, Kyle (que tiene 21 meses de edad) entrará a su primera experiencia formal de escuela. Al igual que cualquier padre, yo espero que él entre con entusiasmo para aprender, participar en su día en la escuela, hacer amistades fácilmente y ser aceptado por sus compañeros así como por los adultos. Nosotros sabemos que esto no sucede con todos los niños. Por esto los niños en los distritos y escuelas que ofrecen el Primary Project son afortunados porque encontrarán ahí apoyo adicional de ser necesario.

Como padre, para mí es importante saber cómo se prestan servicios a mi niño(a). Así como una visita a la oficina del pediatra, deseo saber que mi niño(a) recibe una calidad excelente de servicio y hasta más. Esto es similar a los servicios ofrecidos en las escuelas. Como padres queremos saber que nuestros niños reciben la mejor "calidad de servicio" posible. En el Primary Project, existen las "prácticas mejores" que guían a los programas para mantener y, a veces, exceder los estándares de práctica.

Mi mensaje tiene dos partes. Primera, los equipos del Primary Project pueden compartir sus prácticas mejores con los padres de modo que ellos entiendan que la calidad del servicio es alta. La segunda es que nosotros podemos alentar a las escuelas que actualmente no tienen el Primary Project para que consideren implantar el programa, para asegurar que todos los niños reciben un empuje apoyador temprano.

Para obtener más información acerca de cómo empezar un Primary Project, y posible financiamiento en el estado de Nueva York para empezarlo, visite www.childrensinstitute.net/programs/primary-project

*—Lynn Smith
Primary Project, Social Worker*

Siéntase en libertad de copiar esta página y compartirla con los padres del Primary Project.



Como padres queremos saber que nuestros niños reciben la mejor "calidad de servicio" posible.



Blogger

www.primaryproject.blogspot.com

Follow the Primary Project blog and share your thoughts and experiences regarding the program and the wonderful things happening for children around the world.

[www.childrensinstitute.net/
programs/primary-project](http://www.childrensinstitute.net/programs/primary-project)

Visit our website for Primary Project informational materials including:

- Best Practices
- Rubric
- Standards
- Past issues of *From the Playroom*



“Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.”

–Elizabeth Stone

children's institute



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Children's Institute is affiliated with the University of Rochester



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