

# Research Briefs

## KEY FINDINGS

- Parents expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the centers staff and operations.
- Parents felt that the curriculum offered as part of the CCAMPIS program was useful to them and their children.
- Parents believed that their children were "more advanced" due to participation in the program.
- Students expressed an interest in expanding availability of program to include Fridays and Summer.
- Students credit CCAMPIS program as a motivator to maintain a good GPA.
- Parents felt participation in program was central to their participation in higher education.

## IMPLICATIONS

### For Practice:

- Feasibility of expanding program to Fridays and Summer should be examined.
- If not already implemented, quality control benchmark of staff/child ratio should be established.

### For Policy:

- Continue to apply for future funding from CCAMPIS and look into expanding program to other campuses.

### For Research:

- Qualitative studies will be on going on a semester-by-semester basis to meet requirements of grant program and to report on parent satisfaction.

## Mid-Valley Campus Child Development Center Focus Group

Fall 2008

In an effort to examine parent's attitudes towards services provided by the South Texas College Mid-Valley Campus Child Development Center (MVC-CDC) as part of the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant a focus group was conducted with parents who utilized the program throughout the Fall 2009 semester. This study showed that parents had a high level of satisfaction with the services provided to them and their children by the MVC-CDC as part of the grant. Only a few suggestions were made in regards to improving the program

### Background

As part of the effort to improve access to education for low-income parents the federal government created the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) grant as part of the Higher Education Act (HEA). This type of grant provides funds that are "used to support or establish campus-based child care programs primarily serving the needs of low-income students enrolled in IHEs" (U.S. Department of Education).

The vision of the Mid-Valley Campus Child Development Center (MVC-CDC) is to provide a better quality of life for our children, family and community. Furthermore, the MVC-CDC's mission states that the center will provide an educational program for children of students pursuing their education.

As part of its funding requirements as well as its efforts to continually provide quality services to families who utilize the MVC-CDC, center staff has

decided to conduct focus groups each semester to examine the satisfaction level of parents who receive assistance with child care at the MVC-CDC through the CCAMPIS grant.

### Purpose of Study

This study seeks to examine satisfaction levels of STC students who utilize the MVC-CDC as part of the CCAMPIS program as well as to identify areas for improvement. In addition to this being a necessary aspect of the grant that is received, information provided as part of this study could be used to meet the mission set forth by the MVC-CDC.

This particular study seeks to uncover levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the center and the program so that MVC-CDC staff can use the data collected for quality control purposes as well as to gauge where and if there is room for improvement in the services offered.

### Methodology

Due to scheduling difficulties as a result of a new individual taking the position of Qualitative Re-

searcher for STC, the focus group for the Fall 2008 semester occurred in early Spring 2009. Focus group members (n=11) were recruited by Cecilia G. Villagran, Childcare Services Developer, from the group of students at the STC Mid-Valley Campus who utilized the MVC-CDC during Fall 2008 semester and received funding for child-care via the CCAMPIS program. In exchange for their participation subjects received a coupon for a free lunch special plus a drink at any STC Cafeteria.

The focus group was conducted by Research and Analytical Services at a time that was found to be most convenient for the majority of CCAMPIS parent participants.

### Research Questions

Students were asked a number of questions regarding their opinions of different aspects of the CCAMPIS program, the effect that the program has had on both their personal and academic lives, as well as the child-care center in general. These questions were meant to gather



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feedback regarding the childcare center and the CCAMPIS program.

### Key Findings

Participants indicated an overall satisfaction with various aspects of the MVC-CDC and specifically the CCAMPIS program. All indicated that they were grateful for the program and appreciated the opportunities afforded by the CCAMPIS grant.

#### *MVC-CDC Staff*

Focus group participants stated an overall satisfaction with MVC-CDC staff. Several individuals expressed how they were “comfortable” with the staff members and felt that they were approachable. They found the staff to be “experienced” in childcare and education of pre-school children.

At least two students expressed interest in having a lower student to staff ratio, indicating that they would like their child to have more one-on-one access to staff. This particular view was not expressed by the majority of the group who felt the staff to student ratio was right on target for the particular needs of their children.

#### *Children's Education*

Participants felt that their children were receiving more than just childcare and that the MVC-CDC was providing educational opportunities for their children which is serving as a “leg-up” when compared to other children of their age groups who receive childcare services from other entities. Several indicated that they actually felt more comfortable plac-

ing their children within the MVC-CDC than in familial care due to the educational opportunities afforded to their children as part of the program.

Participants mentioned how their children are learning basic pre-school academics, but that other social skills, such as nutrition, grooming, and interaction with other individuals, is part of the curriculum that makes them feel that their children are “more advanced.” For example, one parent stated that “the kids become more social...and learn to interact with other kids better.” Several parents indicated that they wish they had been given the opportunity to utilize the program for their older children, moreover, they expressed a desire to enroll other, younger children or any future children they might have in the program.

#### *Parents' Education*

There seemed to be a general consensus among the focus group participants that participation in the CCAMPIS program provided through the MVC-CDC was central to their participation in postsecondary education.

A number of participants indicated that they would only be enrolled at STC on a part-time basis if not for the MVC-CDC while the rest of the focus group felt that they would not be enrolled at all if not for the program. It is apparent that this program is central to a number of students' success and entry into the college. The MVC-CDC is obviously helping STC meet its mission of providing “services in response to the needs of the region” and making sure that “student and community success are paramount.”

ommendations for improvement in the area of helping them become more successful in their academic endeavors involved providing extended service hours on Fridays and extending the childcare program to include summer semesters. It was suggested that this could contribute to their success at the postsecondary level by allowing them more time for study outside of the classroom environment and to take more courses and finish their programs sooner. One parent stated that limitations in child care availability meant that “there is no time to study in the library or lab.”

CCAMPIS grant guidelines regarding requirement of a minimum number of enrollment hours and a minimum GPA seemed to be a great motivator for participants to succeed in their academic pursuits. One student stated: “It makes you pass! It makes you even more willing to make that B.”

Students also felt that the education that they were receiving in terms of parenting courses required as part of the CCAMPIS program were helpful in providing them with the type of education that they could utilize in their daily home lives.



The program is so successful in this aspect that study participants only rec-

