

## Summary of the Sure Start Program Evaluation

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The validity or effectiveness of *The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood* model was examined in a research study conducted by the U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity. The U.S. Department of Defense Education Activity contracted with Quality Assist, Inc. to conduct an independent, third party evaluation of its Sure Start program for preschool children. The Sure Start Effectiveness Study: Final Report (Abbott-Shim, 2000) provides the results of this research effort.

Sure Start serves the needs of primarily low income military and civilian dependents' preschool children and their families living overseas. The Sure Start program uses *The Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood* as its adopted curriculum. All teaching staff (both teachers and their assistants) and their supervisors receive annual training on *The Creative Curriculum* to ensure consistency in implementation of the model. Programs are monitored and additional onsite training in regard to the curriculum model is provided throughout the school year.

Ten Sure Start classrooms were randomly selected for participation in the research study during the 1999-2000 school year. Trained data collectors administered classroom observations, child assessments and parent questionnaires. The research study utilized a pretest/post-test design to address the gains in child outcomes during the Sure Start school year.

The Sure Start children made statistically significant gains on all of the measures from the Fall to the Spring of the school year. The *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - Third Edition* (Dunn & Dunn, 1997) was completed by 89 children with over a 5 point gain in the mean standard score from 87.54 to 93.07. The *Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery Revised - Applied Problems* sub-test (Woodcock & Johnson, 1989) was completed by 96 children with nearly a 25 point gain in the mean W Score from 403.08 to 427.83. The *Language Assessment Scale - PreLAS 2000 Oral Language Component* (Duncan & DeAvila, 1998) was completed by 88 children with approximately 15 point gain in the mean scale score from 58.08 to 73.23. The *Metropolitan Early Childhood Assessment Program – MKIDS Preliteracy Inventory*, Print Concepts scale (Nurss, 1995), was completed by 90 children with over a 9 point gain in the mean scale score from 10.00 to 19.37. The Sure Start teachers completed the *Adaptive Social Behavior Inventory* (Hogan, Scott, & Bauer, 1992) rating scale for 127 children with gains in positive social behaviors on the Express (4 point gain) and Comply (3 point gain) scales and diminishing negative behavior as shown by the decrease (1 point) in the Disrupt scale score.

The quality of classroom teaching practices and procedures was assessed using the *Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs: Research Edition II* (Abbott-Shim, 1998) during the first and last months of the school year. In comparing the two assessments, higher quality teaching practices were observed at the end of the school year on the Learning Environment, Scheduling, Curriculum, and Individualizing scales of the *Assessment Profile*. The Interacting scale scores were almost equivalent for the two assessments. In addition, the sample of parents reported that they are highly involved in their children's home learning experiences. They also reported high satisfaction with the Sure Start program.

The Sure Start Effectiveness Study provides significant evidence that *The Creative Curriculum® for Early Childhood*, when implemented as intended and supported by ongoing staff development, is a curriculum model that ensures positive child outcomes, effective teaching practices, and high parent satisfaction.