

Last reviewed: March 2017

Intervention website: <https://supportingfatherinvolvementsfi.com/>

GUIDEBOOK INTERVENTION INFORMATION SHEET

Schoolchildren and their Families

Please note that in the ‘Intervention Summary’ table below ‘child age’, ‘level of need’, and ‘race and ethnicities information is **as evaluated in studies**. Information in other fields describes the intervention as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.

Intervention summary	
Description	Schoolchildren and their Families is a parenting intervention for families with a child entering primary school. Male and female co-facilitators deliver the intervention to groups of six couples through 16 two-hour sessions. During the sessions, the couple learns strategies for supporting their children and each other as co-parents.
Evidence rating	3
Cost rating	None reported
Child outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved emotional wellbeing • Enhancing school achievement & employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved school achievement • Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved behaviour
Child age (population characteristic)	4 to 5 years
Level of need (population characteristic)	Universal

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Intervention summary	
Race and ethnicities (population characteristic)	White
Type (model characteristic)	Group
Setting (model characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early years setting• Primary School• Community centre• Out-patient setting.
Workforce (model characteristic)	Two practitioners, mental health professionals – psychologists, social workers, or marriage and family counsellors
UK available?	Yes
UK tested?	No

Model description

Schoolchildren and their Families is a parenting intervention for all families with a child entering primary school. It is based on the as the Parents as Partners/Supporting Father Involvement (SFI) model, but delivered at an important transition in child development when family support is likely to be particularly needed.

Like Parents as Partners/Supporting Father Involvement, groups of couples attend 16 weekly two-hour sessions delivered by male and female co-practitioners. A primary aim of the intervention is to support the partnership between parents as they raise their children. Parents therefore do not need to be married or co-habiting to attend the sessions. A fathers only version of the intervention is available.

After the first introductory meeting with the parents, co-leaders begin each subsequent session with a half-hour check-in during which couples are invited to bring issues that arose during the week or through ‘homework’ that may have been assigned. The remaining time in each two-hour session focuses on a topic related to one of the five family domains:

1. Parents’ individual adaptation

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2. Couple relationship quality
3. Relationship quality in parents' families of origin
4. Quality of parents' relationship with the child and effective strategies for managing child behaviour
5. Balance between life stressors and social supports.

Participants engage in discussions and activities that invite them to reflect on their current behaviours and practices, understand what is working or not working for them, and collaborate with their parenting partner to create the positive changes they are seeking.

Two of the 16-week sessions are delivered to fathers and mothers separately; fathers meet with the male co-leader and bring their youngest child for a play session, to highlight the men's parenting without the women present. At the same time, mothers/parenting partners meet with the female co-leader to share their experience of encouraging fathers' parenting while honoring their own parenting ideas.

Parent learning is supported through a mix of creative activities, video clips and discussions, input from the group leaders, and space to talk about the things that are most important for parents.

The curriculum moves between the domains: individual, couple/co-parenting, parenting, intergenerational, and recognising stress and building social supports, with each week building upon the previous ones. The groups are not prescriptive; parents are supported in applying the knowledge they gain and the social support they develop within the group to their own situation, deciding what they want to change and how they think it best to do so.

Target population

Age of child	4 to 5 years old (Preschool)
Target population	Low risk, middle class, couple parents of a child transitioning to school (4 to 5 years old).

Please note that the information in this section on target population is as **offered/supported by the intervention provider**.



Theory of change

Why		Who		How		What
Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Science-based assumption	Intervention	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transition to primary school is an important milestone in child development • The ease with which children adapt to the school environment is predictive of their school engagement and future academic success. 	<p>Parental support during the transition to school (as well as in school more generally), increases the likelihood that children will have a successful transition into school.</p>	<p>Parents are better able to support their child's transition into school when they work effectively together as co-parents.</p>	<p>Parents engage in activities aimed at improving the quality of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The co-parenting relationship • The relationship with their child/children • Their own wellbeing • Their relationship with their family of origin, their child's school and the wider community • Family work/life balance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are better able to support each other as co-parents • Fathers are more involved in their child's life • Increased satisfaction with parenting and the parent-child relationship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are more emotionally secure • Children are better able to regulate their own behaviour • Children make a positive transition into school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are more engaged at school • Children achieve greater academic success • Children are less likely to have behavioural or emotional problems as they develop.



Implementation requirements

Who is eligible?	It is an intervention for couples with a child who is transitioning to school, preschool age.
How is it delivered?	Schoolchildren and their Families is delivered in 16 sessions of two hours' duration each by two clinically trained, male and female, practitioners, to groups of six families.
What happens during the intervention?	<p>Parents learn strategies for managing their child's behaviour and improving their co-parenting practices through joint activities and group discussions involving the couples.</p> <p>Two sessions are dedicated to observing fathers interact with their child with the aim of increasing father involvement.</p>
Who can deliver it?	Two practitioners (male/female) deliver this intervention. Both are Schoolchildren and their Families' Group Leaders who are usually licensed mental health professionals – psychologists, social workers, or marriage and family counsellors.
What are the training requirements?	The practitioners have 24 hours of intervention training. Booster training of practitioners is recommended.
How are practitioners supervised?	It is recommended that practitioners are supervised by one intervention developer supervisor with an advanced degree in psychology or social work.
What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?	<p>Intervention fidelity is maintained through the following processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training manual • Other printed materials • Face-to-face training • Supervision • Accreditation • Booster training • Fidelity monitoring.
Is there a licensing requirement?	Yes



Implementation requirements (cont.)

<p>*Contact details</p>	<p>Contact person: Philip Cowan</p> <p>Email address: pcowan@berkeley.edu</p> <p>Websites: https://supportingfatherinvolvementsfi.com/ https://tavistockrelationships.org/counselling-psychotherapy/family-parenting?view=article&id=700:parents-as-partners&catid=29:special</p> <p>*Please note that this information may not be up to date. In this case, please visit the listed intervention website for up to date contact details.</p>
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Evidence summary

Schoolchildren and their Families' most rigorous evidence comes from a single RCT conducted in the United States consistent with Foundations' Level 3 evidence strength criteria.

This study observed Schoolchildren and their Families children scoring significantly higher on a standardised academic achievement test immediately after study completion compared to children who did not receive the intervention. Additionally, Schoolchildren and their Families children were rated by their teachers as having significantly fewer behavioural and emotional problems compared to children who did not receive the intervention at a two-year follow-up assessment.

Schoolchildren and their Families parents were also significantly more likely to report reduced couple conflict after the intervention in comparison to parents who did not receive the intervention. Additionally, Schoolchildren and their Families parents expressed significantly less negative emotion, greater warmth (fathers only) and greater structure (mothers only) during a communication task, in comparison to parents not receiving the intervention.

At a 10-year follow-up assessment, Schoolchildren and their Families parents continued to engage more positively with each other and mothers reported increased marital adjustment and satisfaction in comparison to couples who did not receive the intervention.

Schoolchildren and their Families can be described as evidence-based: it has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted RCT or QED demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome.



Child outcomes			
Outcome	Improvement index	Interpretation	Study
Reduced internalising symptoms	+27	Improvement on the Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory (teacher report) two years after intervention.	1a
Improved academic achievement	+27	Improvement on the Peabody Individual Achievement Test-Revised post-intervention.	1a
Reduced externalising symptoms	+41	Improvement on the Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory (teacher report) two years after intervention.	1a

Search and review

	Number of studies
Identified in search	1
Studies reviewed	1
Meeting the L2 threshold	0
Meeting the L3 threshold	1
Contributing to the L4 threshold	0
Ineligible	0



Individual study summary: Study 1

Study 1	
Study design	RCT
Country	United States
Sample characteristics	192 two-parent families whose first child was aged 4 to 5 years old and entering kindergarten
Race, ethnicities, and nationalities	84% European American
Population risk factors	The sample was considered 'low-risk' and exclusively contained two-parent families, most with middle to upper incomes
Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-intervention • Post-intervention (Kindergarten) • Two-year follow-up in 1st Grade • Six-year follow-up in 4th Grade • 10-year follow-up in 9th Grade.
Child outcomes	<p><i>Post intervention (Study 1a)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved scores on academic achievement (school assessment). <p><i>Two-year follow-up (Study 1b)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced internalising behaviours (teacher report) • Reduced externalising behaviours (teacher report).
Other outcomes	<p><i>Post intervention (Study 1a)</i></p> <p>Marital focused:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced couple conflict (parent report) • Reduced parental negative emotion (researcher observation). <p>Parental focused:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased in father warmth and responsive behaviours (researcher observation) • Increase in mothers providing structure (researcher observation). <p><i>10-year follow-up (Study 1b)</i></p> <p>Marital focused:</p>



Study 1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved marital adjustment and satisfaction (mother report) Improved positive couple communication (researcher observation) Reduced negative couple communication (researcher observation).
Study Rating	3
Citations	<p>Study 1a: Cowan, C. P. et al. (2005). Two variations of a preventive intervention for couples: Effects on parents and children during the transition to elementary school. In Cowan, P. A. et al. (ed.) <i>The family context of parenting in children's adaptation to elementary school</i>.</p> <p>Study 1b: Cowan, C. P., Cowan, P. A. & Barry, J. (2011) 'Couples' groups for parents of preschoolers: Ten-year outcomes of a randomized trial. <i>Journal of Family Psychology</i>. 25 (2), 240–250.</p>

Brief summary

Population characteristics

This study involved 192 families living in the US, with a first child aged 4 to 5 years old. The sample exclusively contained two-parent families with children about to enter kindergarten. Most parents were European American (84%), with middle to upper incomes. They were recruited over three years (1990–1992).

Study design

Families were randomly allocated to one of three intervention conditions: (1) a couples group with a parenting focus; (2) a couples group with a marital focus; (3) a brief consultation condition (control group), in which both parents were offered the opportunity to consult once a year for three years with the co-leader staff couple. Parents had not been told about the offer of the interventions when recruited to the study. Of the 192 couples who participated in the baseline interview, 39 were randomly allocated to the low-dose control condition, of which 26 agreed to participate; 153 couples were randomly offered the chance to participate in a couples group, and 61 accepted, with 28 having been randomised to the marital-focused intervention, 27 to the parenting-focused intervention, and 6 not continuing further with assessment. 19 couples continued with assessment but did not want to participate in a group, as part of an intent-to-treat analysis. The initial sample at baseline therefore included 100 couples. There were no statistically significant differences between the groups on any of the baseline questionnaires or observation measures.

Measurement

Assessment took place at baseline, post-intervention (when the child was in kindergarten), 2-year follow up (1st Grade), 6-year follow-up (4th Grade), and 10-year follow-up (9th Grade).



At baseline:

- **Parent report** measures included the Short Marital Adjustment Test
- **Researcher-led** assessment included the Block and Block task for parenting style, and expert observation of couple communication.

At post-intervention:

- **Parent report** measures included the Short Marital Adjustment Test
- **Child report** measures included the Berkeley Puppet Interview
- **Researcher-led** assessment included the Peabody Individual Achievement test, the Block and Block task for parenting style, and expert observation of couple communication
- **Teacher report** measures included the Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory.

At two-year follow-up:

- **Parent report** measures included the Short Marital Adjustment Test
- **Child report** measures included the Berkeley Puppet Interview
- **Researcher-led** assessment included the Peabody Individual Achievement test, and the Block and Block task for parenting style
- **Teacher report** measures included the Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory.

At six-year and 10-year follow-up

- **Parent report** measures included the Short Marital Adjustment Test
- **Researcher-led** assessment included expert observation of couple communication
- **Teacher report** measures included the Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory.

Study retention

Post-intervention

First grade follow-up

45% (N=86) participants were retained in the intent-to-treat analysis at 2-year follow-up, first grade. This represents 86% of the sample of 100 couples with baseline measurements. No differential attrition based on observed parenting or marital interaction measures, or self-report measures was evident at 1st Grade.

10-year follow-up

42% (N=81) of the sample were retained at the final long-term follow-up point (9th Grade) – 10-year follow-up. This represents 81% of the sample of 100 couples with baseline measurements.

Results

Data-analytic strategy

Latent variable structural equation models were employed to examine pathways linking family functioning to different latent variables measuring children's adaptation in kindergarten and first



grade: internalising behaviours, externalising behaviours, academic achievement, and children's perceptions of their adjustment to school. Intent-to-treat and per-protocol analyses were conducted. To evaluate the overall impact of the interventions, the study calculated R^2 (% variance explained) in the kindergarten and 1st Grade outcome variables that were accounted for by the latent variables measured pre- and post-intervention. The R^2 change comparing regressions with and without interventions provides a measure of effect size.

Per-protocol multiple regression tests replicated the major results of the structural equation models and tested for direct effects of child self-perceived adaptation and teacher reported outcomes of the intervention at 1st Grade. Per-protocol multiple regression analysis assessed direct effects of the intervention on parenting and marital outcomes.

Growth curve analyses assessed parent and child outcomes until 9th Grade at 10-year follow-up with Bonferroni correction for multiple comparison. Both intent-to-treat and per-protocol analyses were conducted.

Findings

The study observed positive effects of the intervention on children's academic achievement post-intervention at kindergarten, and children's internalising and externalising behaviour at 2-year follow-up in 1st Grade (measure change from kindergarten).

Per-protocol analyses (considering only those who took part in the interventions), children's self-perceptions of adjustment at post-intervention at kindergarten were also significant. Per-protocol analyses had greater effect sizes for children's academic achievement and internalising behaviour. No difference in effect size was evident between per-protocol and intent-to-treat analyses for children's externalising behaviour.

Per-protocol analyses found significant direct effects of the parental-focused intervention on parent and child outcomes:

- Intervention fathers observed an increase in warmth and responsive behaviours and mothers provided more structure than control parents post-intervention
- Intervention children were less socially withdrawn and isolated, and less depressed and anxious in 1st Grade assessments than children in the control group.

At the final 10-year follow-up point (9th Grade), improved positive couple communication was observed in the marital focused group, but not in the parenting-focus group.

At the final 10-year follow-up point (9th Grade), improved marital adjustment and satisfaction (on mother reports, but not father reports) were observed in the marital focused group, but not in the parenting-focus group.

There was no difference between intervention and control groups on child externalising behaviours at this point.

Limitations

While the study the requirements for Foundations' Level 3 rating, it should be noted that the analyses it presented combined both the marital-focused and the parenting-focused versions of the



intervention for child outcomes, some of the analyses were not intent-to-treat, and reporting around retention lacked clarity.

Study 1: Outcomes table

Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Child outcomes					
Children's academic achievement	Peabody Individual Achievement test (reading, math, and spelling scales) (researcher-led direct assessment)	$R^2 = 0.10$	Yes	86	Post-intervention (kindergarten)
Children's self-perception of school adjustment	Berkeley Puppet Interview	$R^2 = 0.02$	No	86	Post-intervention (kindergarten)
Children's internalising behaviours	Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory – internalising problems (teacher report)	$R^2 = 0.02$	No	86	Post-intervention (kindergarten)
Children's externalising behaviours	Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory – externalising problems (teacher report)	$R^2 = 0.02$	No	86	Post-intervention (kindergarten)
Children's academic achievement	Peabody Individual Achievement test (reading, math, and spelling scales) (researcher-led direct assessment)	$R^2 = 0.01$	No	86	2-year follow-up (1st grade)



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Children's self-perception of school adjustment	Berkeley Puppet Interview	$R^2 = 0.00$	No	86	2-year follow-up (1st grade)
Children's internalising behaviours	Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory – internalising problems (teacher report)	$R^2 = 0.07$	Yes	86	2-year follow-up (1st grade)
Children's externalising behaviours	Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory – externalising problems (teacher report)	$R^2 = 0.31$	Yes	86	2-year follow-up (1st grade)
Hyperactivity	Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory – externalising problems (teacher report)	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)
Aggression	Child Adaptive Behaviour Inventory – externalising problems (teacher report)	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Parent outcomes*					
Marital Group					
Negative emotion	Observation	nr	Yes	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Marital conflict	Observation	nr	Yes	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Warmth & respect for child's autonomy	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Non-responsive	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Structure	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Limit-setting	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Mother's marital satisfaction	Short Marital Adjustment Test	nr	Yes	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)
Father's marital satisfaction	Short Marital Adjustment Test	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)
Positive Couple Communication	Observation	nr	Yes	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Negative Couple Communication	Observation	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)
Parenting group					
Negative emotion	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Marital conflict	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Father Warmth & respect for child's autonomy	Observation	nr	Yes	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Non-responsive	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Mother Structure	Observation	nr	Yes	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Limit-setting	Observation	nr	No	66	Post-intervention (Kindergarten)
Mother's marital satisfaction	Short Marital Adjustment Test	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)
Father's marital satisfaction	Short Marital Adjustment Test	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)
Positive Couple Communication	Observation	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)



Outcome	Measure	Effect size	Statistical significance	Number of participants	Measurement time point
Negative Couple Communication	Observation	nr	No	Not reported	10-year follow-up (9th grade)
* Parent outcomes are based on per-protocol analyses.					

Other studies

No other studies were identified for this intervention.

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Note on provider involvement: This provider has agreed to Foundations' terms of reference (or the Early Intervention Foundation's terms of reference), and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the intervention provider.