

Head Start Parent Ambassador Individual Development Account (IDA) Project Evaluation Report

Final Project Report

9/30/2014



Evaluation Report prepared by:



Head Start Parent Ambassador Individual Development Account (IDA) Project Evaluation Report September 30, 2014 Executive Summary

The Parent Ambassador Individual Development Account (IDA) Project demonstrated the integration of advocacy and leadership training, financial literacy, and financial coaching with a matched savings program for 24 participating Head Start/Early Head Start and ECEAP parents in Washington State. The project was a collaboration of the Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP (WSA), Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD), Washington State Department of Commerce, Faith Finance Center for the Financial Educator/Trainer, The Prosperity Agenda for the Project Evaluator, and an independent asset building consultant.

The program provided intense contact and support to the parent participants. Parents received group financial education, individual financial coaching, task encouragement and support from parent coordinators and the Program Director, access to multi-media financial information and resources, and financial consultation with the experienced financial education trainer. The combination of the components including financial coaching, financial literacy, personalized support, access to financial literacy resources, and the accelerated savings contributed to the successes experienced by the parents in their asset building, financial goal setting, and family financial well-being. The high quality of the financial education that was developed specifically to meet the needs and interests of the parents led to the parents' changing their financial habits.

There was a pattern of very high participation evident in 85 percent of the parents attending the financial education sessions, the monthly financial topic phone calls, and the monthly financial coaching. All parents who could participate in the IDA program set goals for purchasing assets for employment, education completion, transportation, or investing in small businesses. The participants required some reminding as well as some planning and problem solving with the Program Director, but all parents met their goals for IDA savings deposits. The parents completed up to 12 months of IDA deposits in January through April 2014 and purchased assets beginning in June 2014.

At project end, the participants achieved these outcomes by developing a positive savings outlook, changing their spending attitudes, and acquiring new skills including tracking their spending.

- The project parents acquired financial capability by increasing their financial knowledge, connecting to financial institutions and products by accessing a savings account, and gaining confidence and financial self-efficacy.
- Participants reported they improved their quality of life through developing financial resilience, keeping emergency savings accounts, and managing family finances.

- The financial literacy training provided parents with the knowledge and skills to begin building assets to become financially secure. Participants purchased assets and began creating a future for their children along with helping their children to develop healthy money habits.
- Parents took on the role to teach their children about money with the intention of disrupting the patterns that they had experienced in their own families when no one spoke about money and their families had been low-income and lacked assets.
- The empowerment model fostered the parents' confidence and several parent representatives spoke out about saving programs that affect low-income families with children.
- Many parents in Head Start/ECEAP communities have increased their awareness of financial products and services through the outreach and information dissemination provided by the Parent Ambassadors in their home programs.
- The parents started making positive decisions to move closer to financial stability through their accelerated savings in their individual development accounts. While some parents were able to save higher amounts and save more consistently than others, all of the parents who opted to save for an asset completed the purchase of at least one asset.
- Collectively, the parents purchased 26 assets with some parents purchasing two assets such as a computer and a tuition payment. Five parents purchased or made repairs on a vehicle that was essential for their employment or travel to school. Fifteen parents paid for college expenses, computers, software, or business equipment.
- The matched amount exceeded \$51,000 which combined with personal savings contributed to parents' advancing their education, investing in family business to secure their futures, or increasing the well-being of their children and families through improving their financial situations.

One suggestion is to incorporate more administrative support for implementing and monitoring the participants' progress in saving in their Individual Development Accounts. This project introduced the accelerated savings mechanism to nearly all of the financial institutions where the participants were saving. In the selected communities where the participants did their banking, this project brought attention to the needs of low-income families which started a process of increasing understanding of financial products and services for individuals with low-incomes who are working to leave asset poverty. If the project is sustained, a suggestion is to reduce the number of different financial institutions through developing relationships with supportive banking partners that become informed about accelerated savings programs.

This IDA project blended into the Parent Ambassador program showed promising results in empowering parents to set and meet family financial goals to build their financial security. The continuation of the project with the accelerated savings component could lead to more selected participants developing their skills and knowledge to leap forward toward self-sufficiency.

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Project Overview

Twenty-one parents of young children in Head Start, Early Head Start (EHS), and Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs (ECEAP) from different counties and regions in Washington State were accepted to be in the year-long Parent Ambassador Program.¹ Since 2009, the Parent Ambassador program has been preparing parent leaders to be speakers and advocates for the issues that affect families and to serve as a conduit of information to parents in their local programs. The Parent Ambassador program is a well-established leadership and advocacy training program that engages parents in understanding government through attending hearings, contacting legislators, organizing parents, and sharing information in local parent activities. This year, one of the Parent Ambassadors shared her Head Start experience at Senator Murray's press conference and two Parent Ambassadors spoke at the Stop the Cuts to Head Start rally in Washington, DC.²

In 2013, the additional component of financial literacy and an Individual Development Account was integrated in the Parent Ambassador program for the first time. The Parent Ambassador Individual Development Account (IDA) Project integrated advocacy and leadership training, financial literacy, and financial coaching with a matched savings program for participating Head Start/ Early Head Start and ECEAP parents.³ This collaborative Head Start Parent Ambassador IDA project guided parents to plan and set short-term and long-term financial goals, save to purchase assets, and save for emergencies. The project implemented the accelerated savings program with high-intensity participant contact through multiple means:

- Five in-person financial education sessions delivered by a professional trainer
- Personal financial coaching in monthly phone calls with each parent engaging with the Program Director or a project coordinator who completed Financial Coaching for Prosperity training
- Monthly group financial topic-focused conference calls with the professional trainer
- Individual consultation and personal coaching available with the financial education trainer via email, phone and in-person
- Access to printed materials and online resources including recorded sessions and additional references on financial topics at the project website
- Monthly advocacy and leadership training calls

¹ In addition to the 21 first year Parent Ambassadors, three parent coordinators who had earlier been a Parent Ambassador also participated in the IDA program including attendance at educational sessions and the monthly financial topic-focused phone calls.

² The speeches given by the two Parent Ambassadors at the rally and an article citing one parent's testimony are linked here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWkrNgC3Bko>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=crDBdnZTE98>
http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-10-02/local/42604065_1_early-head-start-budget-cuts-early-education-program

³ When the term Head Start parents is used alone in describing the group of parents it is inclusive of the participants who may have a child in an Early Head Start program or ECEAP.

Report overview

This report focuses on the evaluation of the implementation of the IDA project so the advocacy efforts that are part of the Parent Ambassador program are only included as a secondary focus. The Parent Ambassador IDA project results are presented in four parts:

- (1) The parents' financial behaviors including how they acquired financial knowledge, skills, and access to products to achieve financial capability,
- (2) The parents savings behavior leading to their asset purchases,
- (3) Influences of the IDA project on the families including the experiences of a small group of parents who shared their stories of the changes in their lives, and
- (4) Conclusions based on the evaluation findings.

Project Background

Build assets to overcome poverty and move toward financial security

The population of Head Start parents with young children is a logical target audience for introducing financial asset building. An adequate level of financial security is essential for Head Start children and their families to thrive and succeed, as it is for all families. Research has affirmed that when infants, toddlers, and young children live in households with low financial stress the children are more likely to achieve developmental goals. Head Start programs have provided family-focused services to support parents to become financially self-sufficient based on the understanding that children are more likely to thrive if their family environment is economically stable. Head Start programs have endorsed and implemented services to assist families to develop skills in household and family budgeting and tracking expenses.

Accumulating financial assets, and not just increasing income, has been identified as a necessary element for low and moderate-income families to move forward economically. The accelerated savings program of an Individual Development Account is one strategy that has been supported for boosting low-income families' savings behavior, stimulating their asset accumulation, and strengthening families. The Corporation for Financial Enterprise Development (CFED)⁴ study on Head Start family financial security identified that developing financial assets improves the families' future orientation, creates an opportunity for their children, and improves the potential of a future generation.

Approaches for collecting and analyzing project data

The outcomes for the Parent Ambassadors who participated in the IDA project are reported here in several areas: changes financial behaviors, increased knowledge, and sharing information with their families and Head Start communities. The results and outcomes that are summarized in this report were collected using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Parents completed a pre and post

⁴ Tivol,L. and Brooks,J. Getting a Head Start on Financial Security. Corporation for Financial Enterprise Development. Accessed online http://cfed.org/assets/head_start-final.pdf

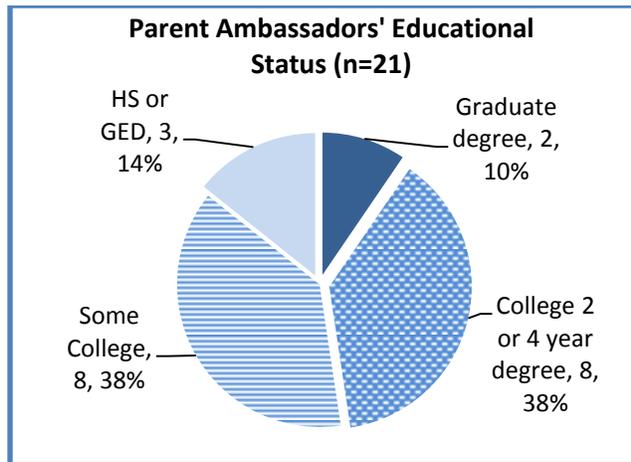
assessment of questions on their financial attitudes, knowledge, and behavior. At each of the in-person financial education sessions the parents also completed a questionnaire to measure changes in their knowledge, attitudes, or intention to change financial behavior. At the project mid-point in June, parents also participated in one of three focus groups when they responded to questions about their perceptions of the IDA project, satisfaction with the services and financial information, use of the information received, intention to develop or maintain savings behavior and other financial behaviors. Individual and group interviews were also completed with the Program Director who coached parents and with the Parent Coordinators who supported parents by clarifying information, answering parents' questions, and reiterating the IDA project logistics and requirements.

An additional source of data was the monthly logs of the parents' engagement in coaching that included their progress in setting goals and saving to purchase assets. Data were also collected through asking the parents, the Program Director, and the Program Coordinators to report on the informal and formal parent teach-back sessions that were conducted by the Parent Ambassadors at their home Early Head Start, Head Start programs or ECEAP.

In addition, a small group of parents were asked through a series of in-person and telephone interviews to share their experiences and describe what difference the IDA project was making in their lives and in the lives of their children. The emphasis was on understanding the reactions and the responses of some of the Parent Ambassadors who acquired new knowledge and financial skills and who were working to change their lives. The focus was not on the breadth of data collection from all participants but on the in-depth understanding of what might be life-changing experiences for a small number of participants. The initial approach was to build rapport so the parent felt comfortable in explaining personal values, beliefs, and responses related to savings, feelings about money, experiences trying to save money, and the meaning that the IDA project had in their lives. All of the program participants were also invited to a final focus group held in September 2014 to discuss if the IDA program had led to changes in their family financial situations, if the parents were continuing to build family assets through saving, and if the parents were interacting with their children to develop money habits.

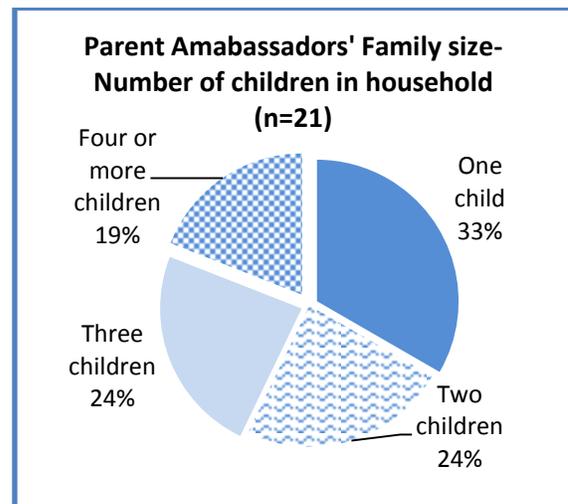
The responses from all sources of data including pre and post surveys, session feedback forms, individual and group interviews, focus groups, financial coaching logs, and teachback reports have been analyzed and compiled and are presented here as the supporting evidence for the parent outcomes. The quantitative results from survey responses and session evaluations were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results are reported here for the number of respondents who answered the surveys or completed the session evaluation forms at each of the points of data collection. The numbers of respondents was often less than the total number of Parent Ambassadors owing to a parent being unable to attend a session or failing to complete the data collection tool if the parent left a session early. The qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups were analyzed using content analysis to identify the themes and the patterns in the data. The themes that were extracted from the data were confirmed with the parents in a process of asking the parents if their comments were being correctly understood. Parents participating in interviews also gave their consent that descriptions of their experiences could be shared to promote the IDA project and the financial literacy component.

IDA Project Participant Profile



The Parent Ambassadors were a well-educated group in that 86 percent had completed some college credits or graduated with a two or four year degree or they had a graduate degree. There was an equal percent of parents who had some college credits as there were parents who had graduated with a two or four year college degree.

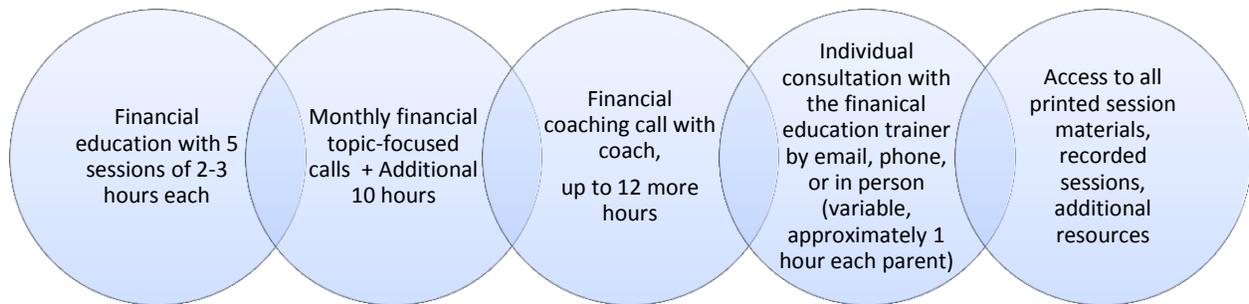
The project demographic data were collected from 18 women and three men in the group of Parent Ambassadors. A fourth man attended very irregularly due to a family situation that took him out of state and he was not included in the data collection. Parents represented Head Start, Early Head Start or ECEAP in different regions across the state including King, Kitsap, Pierce, Thurston, Yakima, Spokane, Kittitas, Whatcom, and Cowlitz Counties. The participants ranged in age from mid-20s to late 40s. One third of the participants had one child. At least three parents had one or more young adult children in their household in addition to a younger child.



Patterns of engagement and participation

The Parent Ambassador Program Director and Coordinators spent a great deal of time and effort to ensure that parents attended the five in-person Parent Ambassador training sessions held in different locations in February, March, April, June, October 2013. These in-person sessions were 2-3 days long and the financial education component was approximately a 2-3 hour presentation during the training when time was also spent discussing advocacy, leadership, parent engagement, and education. The pattern of participation was consistently very high with more than 85 percent of the Parent Ambassadors engaged in each of the financial education sessions. Parents who missed attending due to family caregiving responsibilities, illness, or work schedules could access the written materials or the recorded financial education presentation from the Parent Ambassador IDA Project website.

Each parent could have had approximately 12 financial education class hours, 10-12 financial topic phone discussion hours, 10-12 financial coaching hours, an additional consultation hour or more with the financial education trainer, and variable time accessing the financial resources available in the session handouts and on the Parent Ambassador IDA project website.



The monthly financial-topic focused calls led by the financial education trainer typically extended the topics covered during the in-person sessions and also addressed new topics and questions raised by the parents. The pattern of participation was very high with an average of 21 parents on the call each month along with their spouses, partners, and older children who also became participants in the monthly calls (see the outcome section on information sharing with family members). The parents were also able to ask questions of the financial trainer initially by submitting questions via e-mail, and in the latter half of the IDA project the trainer was available by telephone and also met with the parents individually during the training sessions held for the Parent Ambassadors. On average, each parent received an hour of individual financial information and consultation through requesting help from the trainer that was beyond the time spent in the group sessions and monthly group phone calls.

Contribution of the IDA project components to the participants' goal setting and progress

The parents were also expected to engage in a monthly coaching call with the Program Director or Coordinator who had completed the Financial Coaching for Prosperity training. These calls were a time for the parent to identify steps toward saving, problem-solve any challenges to regularly saving in the IDA, set new budgeting and spending goals, and reduce any barriers to saving such as meeting unexpected household expenses. Nearly all of the parents were engaging in the calls with the coach each month, but the amount of amount of time which each parent spent on resolving barriers to savings or identifying additional ways to cut expenses or setting new goals, was highly variable. The Program Director extended special efforts to make the repeated monthly contact with approximately one fourth of the parents who had work schedule conflicts, family responsibilities, or who placed a lower priority on keeping financial coaching appointments.

The financial coaching was intended to support each parent to move forward and overcome any personal challenges in applying the financial information acquired through the group sessions and calls. During financial coaching the parent would be setting goals and then identifying and completing the steps to reach those goals, such as getting a credit report, contacting creditors, or identifying ways to

increase income and reduce family expenses. The parents moved at different paces as evident in three different patterns in the parents' participation in financial coaching:

- Minimal engager- Four parents were typically hard to reach to schedule a monthly coaching call. They made little progress in setting and making a goal for spending and during most months required reminding to make the minimal IDA savings deposit.
- Slow uptaker- There were another four parents who took 2-3 months to focus on an asset that they would purchase with their matched funds and this slowed their interest in regularly saving in their IDA. Some of these parents felt that their low monthly incomes were a barrier to being able to save consistently. Some of these parents selected one asset and later changed their focus to purchase a different asset. Their financial progress could be described as moderate.
- Motivated saver- Fifteen of the parents selected which asset they wanted to purchase and stayed focused on that asset. These parents were also much more likely to engage in coaching on a very consistent basis each month. In at least 6 of 12 months, this sub-group of parents made progress on two or more goals every month, specifically, tracking expenses, reducing spending, starting emergency savings, improving credit, or reducing debt. Most often the parents were successful in tracking expenses and reducing spending and they willingly reported their progress monthly. This subgroup of savers also made the most progress on reducing debt by following steps of identifying their sources of debt and deciding which bills could be paid.

When asked, all of the parents found the financial coaching calls to be helpful in clarifying the IDA project expectations and requirements. In the first three months of the IDA project, the parents made repeated requests to get information about assets that they could purchase and the minimum amount to save each month, well after these expectations had been explained and reiterated and shared in a participant handbook. The coaching calls were often the time when the parents were reminded again about the participant expectations. The participants' repeated requests for clarification were very likely due to the newness of the total experience of budgeting, saving money, and setting savings goals. Many of the participants acknowledged during the focus groups that they had not been successful in earlier efforts to save, had never kept a budget, and did not know how to control spending.

Part 1. Project outcomes: Parent Ambassadors' have changed their financial behaviors

The majority of parents have developed and maintained savings habits.

- 84 percent of the parents who responded in a post-session survey indicated they had a savings account in addition to the IDA savings account. The proportion of savers increased over time in the program when more exposure to financial information occurred. This was evident in June 2013 when 67 percent of parents reported saving regularly or occasionally and in October 2013 84 percent of parents reported savings in addition to their IDA savings account.
- Three months after completing their asset purchases which also closed their IDA accounts, the parents participating in the focus group were continuing to regularly save and the majority were trying to save the same amount they had saved during the IDA project.
- The capacity to save money was a new experience for many of the parents who revealed that in their past they had set savings goals but not met them. The proportion of parents who had saved before the program was only 40 percent, half of the 84 percent who were saving at the end of the IDA project.
- At some time before the project, 67 percent of the parents had tried to set a savings goal.
- 48 percent of the parents had felt successful in meeting their goal to save money when they had tried to save money in the past.
- 79 percent of these parents were usually or always satisfied with how their families are saving money for their future. One of the parents who was faced with having to pay for the unexpected costs of a required trip out of state explained that as a result of having learned the importance of savings, he had saved sufficient money that he could meet his expenses and it would not impose a hardship on his family.
- Five percent of the parents who responded in the post-session survey were not satisfied with how their families were saving. One of these parents explained that too often the family has to use whatever savings they have accumulated for necessities including car repairs, health care expenses, or housing maintenance.

I also find that I am able to save up some money monthly which seemed to be an impossible thing for me to do in the past and I feel confident that I can continue this.

- Head Start Parent

Nearly all of the parents increased overall financial behavior, such as improved budgeting and reduced spending.

- 90 percent of the parents responding in the post-survey question indicated that they now felt in control of their spending.
- 62 percent of the parents were keeping a

“Through the resources the trainer has

written budget of what they spent on utilities, rent, and food.

- 95 percent of the parents felt confident about managing their money.

provided, I have been able to successfully create and adhere to a budget that fits my income and needs. I have been able to identify expense drains as well as make the money I do spend stretch to get the best deals available.”

- Early Head Start Parent

During the IDA project, one-third of the parents started an emergency savings account and worked toward saving three months of expenses. The importance of budgeting in order to have money to set aside in savings became a reality for many of the parents:

“When I started the Parent Ambassador Program I did not understand the importance of budgeting for my family. Now we have a strict budget in place which has allowed my family to save three months of emergency funds. . . The most important lesson learned was that you can live within your means no matter what your income is, as long as you make smart choices and budget.”

Parents increased their understanding of financial topics which led to changes in behavior.

The financial education sessions informed parents about financial topics including: mainstream financial institutions, alternative or predatory financial services, improving credit, reducing debt, understanding behavioral economics, and developing savings habits.

Topics in the Five Financial Education sessions	Agenda for the sessions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IDA Success Formula – Laying the Foundation Core 2. Avoiding Predatory Financial Services 3. The Impact of Debt and Credit in Your Asset Building Plan 4. Your Mind on Your Money – Introduction to Behavioral Economics 5. A Lifetime of Asset Building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic overview • Core Competencies – Specific skills participants will learn or master from this module • Content Delivery • Group Activity/Exercise • Questions and Answers

- 67 percent of the parents felt they had a very large increase in their abilities to avoid rent-to-own contracts, check a lender’s business record with the Better Business Bureau, and avoid any predatory financial services, and financial scams.
- 14 percent of the parents reported that they had used an alternative lending source (payday lender, check casher) at the start of the financial education classes. This same percent of parents also indicated less frequent uses at the end of the financial education sessions.

Parents increased their understanding of using credit and reducing accumulated debt.

- 82 percent of the parents who responded to post-session questions indicated that they learned specific topics including: best source for a free credit report, how to correct an error on a credit report, what is not in a credit score, three ways to get out of debt and options to pay down accumulated debt.
- 95 percent of the parents reported paying down some amount of their debt such as school loans, back rent, or collections. One family reported paying off their credit cards, and another family reported paying off medical debt, and two families reported increasing their credit score.
- All of the parents who responded to post-session questions about credit indicated that they understood how to improve their credit. They acknowledged what they had learned in the group sessions about learning to use credit wisely to make necessary purchases.

Project outcomes: Parents gained information that was shared with family members

Parents maximized their learning when they could share the information with partners, spouses, or adult children.

A very high proportion of the parents, 84 percent or an average 21 parents, participated in the monthly topic-focused financial calls. During these call, not only were the Parent Ambassadors hearing the financial information and having a chance to ask questions of the trainer, but the partners, spouses, and older children of at least half of the parents also participated.

During the focus groups in June, the parents stated that the information heard on these calls which included answers to questions submitted by the parents always contributed to their financial learning. The parents in two-parent households acknowledged that when their partners or spouses could hear the financial topics at the same time this contributed to the parents more readily making decisions about setting a priority to save, agreeing to reduce spending, or setting a goal to pay down debt.

- 12 percent of the parents also had adolescent or young adult children with whom they shared the information. One parent said the information received through the financial education classes motivated their family to save for their child's college education and helped two young adult children to take steps to start paying off credit card debt. After the project concluded, one parent reported that her 18 year old had followed what she learned and purchased a car. In another family a 19 year old paid down accumulated debt applying what she heard in the financial education monthly phone sessions.

"I have been able to share my knowledge with other people (including my young adult daughter) about how they can be financially savvy and clean up their credit report."

Head Start Parent

Parents learned how to talk to their children about money.

During the focus groups and in individual interviews, parents referred to the knowledge they had gained and to their new understanding as “life-changing.” The parents expressed their gratitude to the financial education trainer for imparting so much information on credit, resolving debt issues, setting goals, dealing with creditors, and other topics. The parents overwhelmingly attributed their new knowledge and increasing confidence to the trainer who had consistently presented information in a way that they could understand and use the information.

The parents acknowledged that the trainer had prepared them to teach their children about money as indicated by these parents who state what they could do at the end of the class:

“How to be a responsible adult with money and I am able to teach my children so they do not end up where I am.”

“I want to budget, teach my children, and get to a spot where I can provide an accessible house for my son and a vehicle for him.”

Most of the parents described that the financial education trainer had offered ideas about how to talk with children about saving and spending money and about identifying priorities. Several parents described that they had learned knowledge and skills they could impart to their children with an expectation that their children would not accumulate debt, or overspend, or end up with the financial burdens that they had. One parent gave an especially poignant statement of her intention to teach her daughter so her daughter would be wise in understanding money:

“I am going to teach her everything that I have learned. I want her to know that having money does not define you. I want her to know what it takes to save money and to use money for what you have to have. I want her to always have enough money that she never has to go hungry. I want her to never have to ask for money. I will teach her to not give into want. There is a difference between want and needs. I will teach her to consider want and need. I will teach her the difference of priorities.”

The parents demonstrated several approaches to achieve their desired goals that their children would not end up as they saw themselves which was having limited incomes, accumulated debt, and low credit scores. One parent who was experiencing success in being able to save money each month started a savings incentive with his three children. He used monopoly money so that each child could earn play money for completing chores. The children then had to use their earned monopoly money to buy treats such as cookies or buy television viewing time. The children were learning the value of earning money, learning that they would be provided with what they needed but not everything they wanted, spending within their means, and saving money to make special purchases. Another parent wanted to instill in his child who was in Head Start that money was not always to be spent, but that money was also to be saved. To help his young child become familiar with saving, this parent took his child to the bank every time that he deposited his IDA savings. He

had a savings bank for his daughter at home, so she could place change in her bank on the same days that the father deposited money in his IDA.

Project Outcomes: Parent Ambassadors have shared financial information with Head Start communities

The Parent Ambassador model has effectively increased the awareness and engagement of the Head Start parents with many of the legislative issues that affected low-income families and the provision of Head Start services. The integration of the financial education training and the IDA program into the Parent Ambassador model led to parents in some Head Start communities increasing their awareness of financial processes, products, and services through the parent ambassadors' information dissemination. The Parent Ambassadors have used a parent teachback model, or small group information sharing, that contributes to the Parent Ambassadors being empowered as peer teachers and advocates for the policies and legislation affecting low-income families. The Parent Ambassadors have demonstrated leadership in their home communities by sharing information about payday lenders, ways to save money or decrease debt, and other financial services.

The Parent Ambassadors varied in the number of times that they presented to other Head Start/ECEAP parents and the number of parents with whom they interacted in each of these teaching situations. The estimated number of parents who received financial information through the Parent Ambassadors informal sharing or a planned group presentation / teachback was 200.

- One Parent Ambassador informally shared information on avoiding predatory lending practices, loans, credit, and reducing debt by talking individually to parents. She estimated that she talked to at least ten parents.
- At least three other parents presented content on a financial topic at the monthly Policy Council meetings which were part of the ongoing Head Start services in their home programs. Each of these Parent Ambassadors was reaching 5-10 parents at every meeting.
- Other parents copied handouts from the financial education sessions and shared these in presentations at a scheduled meeting of parents or as a resource when other group socializations were held for Head Start/ECEAP families.
- One Parent Ambassador spoke on financial topics with a domestic violence support group having prepared a PowerPoint presentation focused on addressing the participants' needs.
- Parent Ambassadors proudly stated during the focus groups that they were identified as being financial resource people at their local programs and there were other Head Start parents who were seeking some financial information who were referred by the informal parent- to- parent networks to talk to the Parent Ambassadors. One Parent Ambassador has reached at least 30

parents doing small group teaching sessions on credit, debt, and savings. A subgroup of the parents who started sharing their new financial information after one or two financial sessions were very enthusiastic in stating that they found the information had been presented in a way that made it easy for them to understand so they turned around and shared it with parents in a similar manner.

Not only did the Parent Ambassadors share information individually with their peers, but the Parent Ambassador program also invited a large audience of other Head Start parents to receive financial information. The second face to face financial training session was attended by a larger group of Head Start parents who were in a training held in Olympia which was concurrent with the Parent Ambassador financial education session. There was a standing room only crowd of Head Start parents who benefited from the content presented by the financial education trainer on predatory lenders, consumer scams, loans, and alternative financial services.

Project Outcomes: Parents increased their self-efficacy and financial self-efficacy.

Parents have increased financial self-efficacy which is associated with developing financial capability.

The financial education topics included a session on behavioral economics which helped the parents to understand the conditions and contexts that influence their own decisions related to spending and saving money. Research has confirmed that focusing on financial education alone is not sufficient and understanding the context of financial decision making, such as buying on impulse, is essential toward guiding individuals to start building assets. Individual financial behavior is the product of many factors including personality, psychology and cognition, family history, and environmental influences. Related to this concept of understanding personal financial behavior is the idea that behavior is influenced or determined by feelings of self-efficacy which is defined as “having the confidence in one’s ability to deal with a situation without being overwhelmed.”⁵

Assessing for changes in general self-efficacy- The concept of self-efficacy has been adapted into a set of questions which can be assigned scores. A set of self-efficacy questions were asked of the parents in this IDA program evaluation to identify if the parents increased in their self-efficacy at the end of the series of classes compared to their responses when they first started the program.

⁵ Hira, T. (2010, September). *The NEFE quarter century project: Implications for researchers, educators, and policy makers from a quarter century of financial education*. Denver: National Endowment for Financial Education. Retrieved from <http://www.nefe.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=A2P8jPulqkw%3d&tabid=934>

- The results were that 75 percent of the parents increased their scores on general self-efficacy in the post session questions compared to their pre-session responses. In the IDA evaluation, the pre-session mean for 16 respondents was 16.9 and the post evaluation mean was 18.2.⁶
- Parents were also asked about their ability to remain calm when faced with difficulties. Nearly one-third of the parents felt they were more able to remain calm when faced with difficulties at the end of the financial education sessions compared to their earlier responses. If this finding is applied to financial situations, this would mean that the parents felt calmer and less in crisis-mode when faced with financial challenges.

Assessing for changes in financial self-efficacy - The concept of financial self-efficacy is relatively new and has been developed from the concept of general self-efficacy which has been described as the belief that one can achieve and succeed at a given task based on having self-confidence, motivation, optimism, and the belief that one can cope with a variety of life's challenges ⁷ In this IDA evaluation, the concept of financial self-efficacy was used as a variable to assess if the process of receiving financial education including a session on behavioral economics would contribute to the parent's financial self-efficacy. The available research supports the thinking that individuals with higher financial self-efficacy would be expected to make sound financial decisions toward building assets and becoming financially self-sufficient. Continuing this thinking, it would be desirable for program participants to increase their financial self-efficacy as preparation for acquiring assets and gaining financial security.

Parents were asked six financial self-efficacy questions to complete at the project mid-point after four financial education sessions and at the end of the project. The questions were adapted from the Financial Self-sufficiency scale that was developed and tested by Lown ⁸ derived from the General Self-sufficiency Scale, work by Bandura, and the Transtheoretical Model developed by Prochaska. The questions covered sticking to a spending plan, finding a solution for money problems, making progress on savings goals, feeling confident in dealing with events and in reaching a goal.

- More than three-quarters of the parents felt that it was hard to stick to a spending plan when unexpected expenses arise.
- Half of the parents felt that it was hard to make progress toward financial goals.
- The majority of the participants also felt they were more able to identify a solution for a money issue compared to where they had been before being in the IDA program.
- Half of the participants indicated that they are growing in their confidence in their ability to manage personal finances. The parents were also evenly split in that about half of them worried

⁶ There was a total of 16 respondents who had answered the financial self-sufficiency scale questions at both the pre and the post data collection points. Other respondents had missing or incomplete responses from either the pre or post surveys.

⁷ Bandura, A. (2006). Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales. In T. Urdan & F. Pajares (Eds.). *Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (pp. 307-337). Charlotte, NC:Information Age Publishing.

⁸ Lown, J.M. (2011) Outstanding AFCPE® Conference Paper: Development and Validation of a Financial Self-Efficacy Scale. *Journal of Financial Counseling and Planning*, 22 (2):54-63.

about running out of money to meet family expenses and about half of the parents were not worried.

The results indicate that the parents developed their financial-self-efficacy and general self-efficacy as they progressed through the months of the financial education sessions and the financial coaching. The extent of general self-efficacy was more evident in the responses of the parents on the last day of the classes than had been reported in financial self-efficacy at the program mid-point. This finding suggests that acquiring financial and general self-efficacy is a developmental process that occurs over nearly a year and is not as evident in six months.

Part 2. Parent outcomes: Parents successfully met savings goals and purchased assets

The parents set goals of saving \$50 a month hoping to meet a total of \$500 to receive a match of \$2500. Most of the 22 parents benefited from some flexibility allowed in extending the total savings period over 10-12 months. If a family saved less than the total amount in one month they could make up that amount in the next month. One parent saved a total of \$350 during the project and 21 achieved the goal of \$500 in savings. Two parents who participated in other project components including the financial education and coaching did not enroll in the Individual Development Account due to their unique financial situations which would have been complicated by being in an IDA.

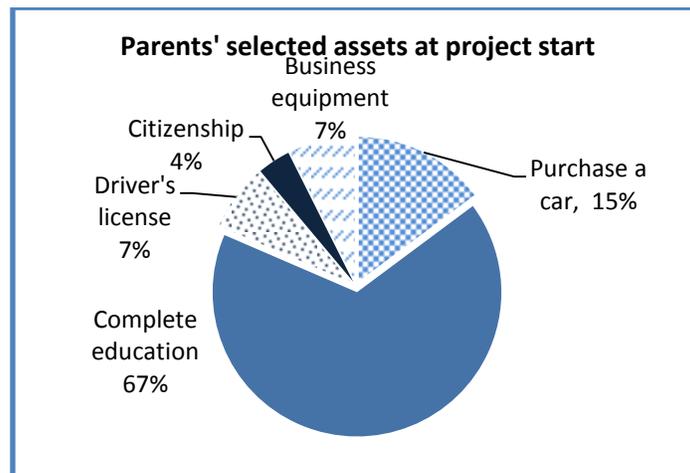
Challenges in the logistics of building assets

At the planned start of the savings component of the project, there were delays to make the specific arrangements for each of the parents to make monthly deposits into an Individual Development Account. The 22 bank managers where the parents were planning to do their deposits were generally receptive to the concept of IDAs but were not all familiar with the mechanics of a matched savings account. They were not all readily prepared to provide a monthly savings statement, facilitate the parents to be able to bank by mail, issue multiple checks for asset purchases, or to close the IDAs and open new savings accounts to encourage the parents' ongoing banking at the end of the project. There have previously been agencies or programs that have provided Individual Development Accounts in selected communities across Washington State. There are currently 14 IDA programs primarily only in communities in western Washington that serve selected groups of eligible clients so this limited availability contributed to the lack of community information about IDAs in some regions.

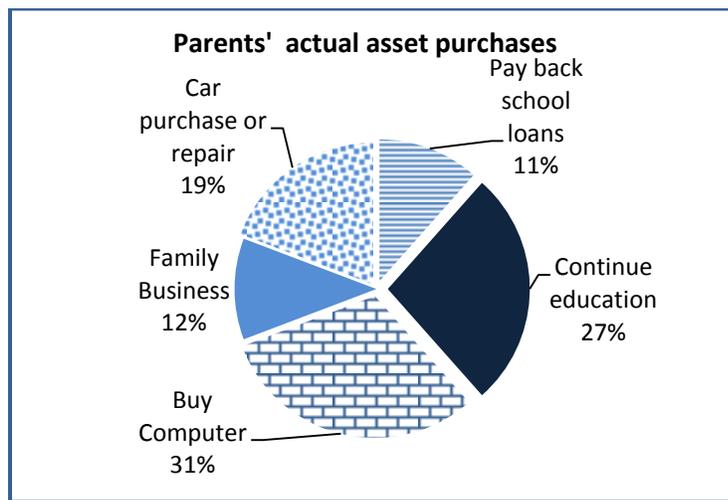
A partnership with the Washington Asset Building Coalition was discontinued early in the project which led to the Program Director assuming the tasks of building relationships with the financial institutions and providing the asset specific financial education prior to the parents purchasing assets. The Program Director worked diligently in interfacing with the banks to develop, maintain, and complete the project communication with the parents' bank managers. Requesting monthly bank statements and monitoring the parents' consistent progress in saving toward their goals was a very time consuming but necessary element to ensure the success of the IDA component. At the time that the parents wished to purchase their assets in early 2014, the large vendors of computer equipment and other electronics refused to take the bank issued checks for the parents' savings amounts or the WSA checks for the matched amounts. This necessitated a new approach of the WSA making purchases by credit card for computers, software, and business-related equipment and the parents were required to provide bank checks to WSA equal to their saved amounts in order to complete their asset purchases. There were simpler processes in place for the WSA to issue checks to the educational institutions that were attended by the parents. The colleges credited tuition payments to the students' accounts along with the amounts paid directly by the parents.

Asset purchases led to education completion and business investments

The project coordinators reminded parents to make their monthly deposits and the Program Director coached the parents in problem solving and identifying ways to budget to be prepared to make their monthly deposits. At the program onset, parents were given options to save for their education, business equipment, invest in their small business, vehicle purchase, driver's education for a driver's license, or citizenship application fees. Some parents set and kept the same priorities for their assets throughout the project but approximately half of the parents adjusted their plans for their assets during the time they were acquiring more financial education. Early in the project, the parents selected assets that they planned to save to purchase which included saving for citizenship fees or a driver's license as shown in the chart below.



Some parents revised their asset planning and over time they realized that their saved and matched funds could assist them to pay for school tuition and for a computer, so four parents made more than one type of asset purchase. Eight parents purchased computers including a parent who also purchased software and now runs a self-publishing book company. The parents' actual asset purchases that were made at the end of the project are summarized in the chart below.



The total amount saved by the parents was \$10,850 and the matched amount exceeded \$51,000. Since some parents purchased products including software and books the final amounts received by the parents were in a few situations slightly less than an even amount of \$2500.

Life-changing dimensions of participation in an Individual Development Account

The parents' explained that the opportunity to benefit from IDA enrollment changed their lives as well as the lives of their children. The present success experienced by the parents and their potential for future accomplishments was very evident when the project concluded. One mother is enrolled in a four year degree program with hopes of becoming an advocate for other parents. Another mother of a young child is enrolled in law school with a goal to work on behalf of families. Three families have invested in their family businesses with the hopes of generating a source of income to move their families toward financial security. One father who had initially been somewhat hesitant to believe that the opportunity to enroll in an IDA was not too good to be true was overwhelmingly positive about how he and his young children had grown and benefited through the project:

"My children benefited in so many ways. At first my wife and I explained it to them so they knew we were saving for something big. . . Being in this IDA was not just about having an opportunity to get some additional money. This money has allowed me to grow my business that my children are a part of, I can give this to them, this is giving me a legacy that I can pass to my children and that is more than I could have dreamed of."

The parents shared in each other's successes and in their promising futures as evident in the mother who is developing a book publishing business who informed other parents that she anticipates scheduling more projects. Parents congratulated her on making progress toward financial stability for her family. Another mother explained that the asset purchases she made have fulfilled her long held goals to more competently meet the needs of her three young children and to develop a small business to increase her income to provide for her family's essential needs.

One of the parents who repaired the family vehicle with the saved and matched funds explained that this investment has given her the security to transport her family safely. Her asset purchase significantly reduced the stress of worrying about transporting her children and meeting her work obligations. Reducing the household stress related to financial instability and creating a home environment that is more conducive to positive interactions between parents and children will help the children to develop and experience well-being. The potential benefits for the children may be evident in the years to come when their parents continue to create and maintain their family assets and the children are developing their own skills and capabilities in a home that is becoming more financially stable.

A very encouraging finding was that the majority of the parents were continuing to consistently save monthly when interviewed three months after purchasing assets. Parents were committed to keeping their savings habits started during the IDA project. Research by the Center for Social Development (CSD) indicates that, regardless of income, children from families with as little as \$3,000 in savings had greater odds of graduating from high school than children in families without savings.⁹ By building up their family savings, these Head Start parents will hopefully be creating positive futures for their children.

⁹ Zhan, Min and Sherraden, Michael (2011). Assets and Liabilities, Educational Expectations, and Children's College Degree Attainment, *Children and Youth Services Review* 33, no. 6: 846-854.

Part 3. Parents' Experiences in the IDA project that are influencing their families

To better understand the influence that the IDA project had in the parents' lives and the lives of their children, several parents agreed to participate in a series of interviews. The parents were asked questions about their memories of their own families' savings and spending behavior, their current practices related to money, credit, and budgeting, and their hopes and dreams for their children. The themes that emerged in the analysis of the content of those interviews are summarized in this section. In addition, this section also includes some of the final responses made by a larger group of the project parents three months after they had made their asset purchases.

Childhood memories of learning about money

One young parent had moved between the homes of her extended family members growing up as a child. When asked if she could recall being told any messages about money or later as an older child seeing her family members saving or spending money, she explained her experiences:

"I don't think that anyone ever told me about saving money or trying to save for the future. I think money was a taboo subject. I just don't think that we had money. When I was much older and I finally had some money that I could spend, I used it to move out of the house."

Another parent recalled his experiences as a child growing up in an extended family where many topics were often discussed and there were many family activities but there were very few conversations about money. If money was discussed, the children were not included in any of these conversations:

"No one talked to me about money as a boy. I know I heard lots of things but none of it was about saving money or keeping money. The first that I really learned about money was when I was 18 and I was working full-time and I got a big paycheck. I did like anyone does and I went out and spent it."

For these parents, the lack of financial examples and demonstrations from their own parents contributed to some of their own financial behavior and decision making as young adults and parents. Research has shown that parent savings and educational behaviors are highly correlated with similar behaviors in their children. Both of these Head Start parents and some of their peers were very ready to make a change in their financial habits. The certainty of these parents' recollections of not learning any messages about money and not having any lessons passed down to them as older children, contributed to their readiness to learn about their financial situation when they were adults. Both parents were eager to engage into financial education when given the opportunity to participate in the IDA program with financial education and financial coaching.

Teaching their families about money

The parents were motivated to disrupt the pattern of silence surrounding money which had prevailed in their own childhoods. While many young adults turn to their parents for financial education, other parents do not think it is their responsibility to teach finances to their children and that had been the project parents' experience.¹⁰ The Head Start IDA project stopped that practice from continuing, because each of the Parent Ambassadors talked about their current actions or their intentions to pass along financial information to their children from the time they were very young through their becoming adults. The feelings of the majority of the parents were summed up in one mother's recollection of her family:

"My mom was always broke. She overspent all the time. I remember that. Through the classes I learned not to do that. So I broke the cycle with my kids. I'm telling them to save and not overspend."

The parents enthusiastically talked about providing financial information to their children either demonstrating savings behavior, having the children save their own money, or sharing information with their adolescent and young adult children. The young children's decision making about whether or not to spend or save money was undeniably stated in concrete terms in one family:

"My nine year old son told his six year old sister that she had to save her money for college. When she said what's college, he said it's where you go so you can be a vet (veterinarian) so don't spend your money. You have to pay money to go to college."

Teaching delayed gratification - Another parent explained that her two children are earning small amounts of money and when they were told they would have to use their own money to buy something, they each deferred and saved their money for a larger purchase.

Distinguishing between need and want -Several parents agreed that one of the most important lessons they conveyed to their children was a difference between having what you really *need* and acquiring other things that you *want*. A mother with school aged children stated:

"The kids are going to the bank with me. They can make their own deposits and they can get a stamp. If you get enough stamps you get a prize. So it instilled in them that they want to save so they get a prize. It made my 12 year old realize the value of saving. I'm teaching my family that saving now can benefit them later."

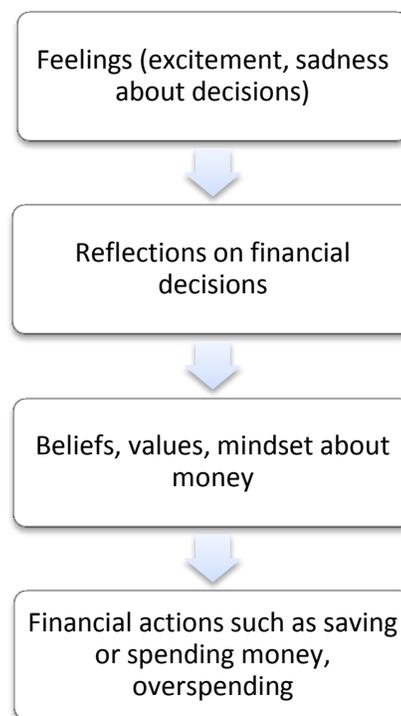
¹⁰ Jorgensen, B. and Jyoti, S. (2010) Financial Literacy of Young Adults: The importance of Parent Socialization. Family Relations 59:465-478.

Parents' processed their reactions about money, spending, budgeting, managing credit

The Parent Ambassadors engaged into a series of financial education sessions which focused on their knowledge of financial concepts and also explored their feelings about spending and saving money. Parents described that the session on behavioral economics which prompted them to identify why they have made some of the financial decisions that they have in the past, also positioned them to look at their reactions to their current spending and their future ideas about spending money. One of the parents explained that the most useful message she took away from the classes was learning the difference between wants and needs. She now knows that her decisions to buy what she *wanted* had led her into debt, but she would now think about spending priorities for what she needs. She thinks that this change in her thinking will help her to avoid overspending and will help her to balance her income with her expenses.

The parents referred to going through a number of reactions as they learned more about what they did with their money, and why they spent money and saved money as they did. The parents described thinking about their past financial actions much more than they had anticipated when they were completing the financial education sessions and monthly calls. The parents reflected on their past spending decisions and mistakes leading to many of the parents deciding to not repeat the past. One of the parents stated:

"The value of this project wasn't just the IDA part but the financial education and all of what Devin taught us is really making the difference in my family and that's really what was so valuable because I am not going to do the same thing again."



What parents plan for their children – teaching skills and giving them tools to succeed

One of the parents described her plans to teach her young preschool child how to be an adult who could be in control of money and not ever have to depend on someone else for money. For this parent, her experiences as a young adult when she relied on friends for support and also experienced homelessness shaped her feelings as a parent:

"I don't want my daughter to have to ever go hungry. I want her to know how to afford what she needs and to have a place to live and I want her to have all of what she needs. I don't want her to ever have to beg."

This mother's comments convey that she intends to impart knowledge and skills for her child to be financially self-sufficient or at least independent in handling personal finances. This parent was very clear in listing what she wants her young daughter to learn:

"I don't want her to live in asset poverty. I will show her that living paycheck to paycheck is not the only way. I want her to know how to avoid it at all costs."

A Head Start father explained how he planned to teach his children many lessons about money. He had started teaching them ways to understand that they have to earn money. His comments suggest that he's following a plan to teach them what is age-appropriate for them now and that he intends to pass along more financial information as they grow older.

"I use monopoly money and when they do chores they can earn money. So if they clean their rooms and make their beds and dry the dishes and keep the living room clean then they can get their allowance. They can use their allowance to buy the time to watch TV or to get treat. They can get fruit for free but if they want chips or cookies that costs \$10. So that way they don't get too much of that sweet stuff."

For both of these parents, the emotions that they conveyed when they talked about their goals to teach and show their children new financial habits, were deep and overflowing with their reactions of having had to live through very unhappy and poor times in their lives. The theme from these parents and from some other parents in the focus group was that they had learned from their adverse life experiences which they had no intention of repeating.

Parents' expectations for their children's savings

A parent who had graduated from high school and not attended college explained that he has learned the importance of a college education for each of his children. He had always hoped that his children would go to college if they wanted to, but what he learned was that he could help to pay for their education through his participation in the IDA project.

"We always ask them what they want to do, and my daughter wants to be a vet (veterinarian). She would have to go to college and she says "I know that." I didn't think that I could save money for her but I started to save and we have some money if an emergency comes up. What I told her is that she has to start her own savings and she is all ready to do that."

This parent went on to explain that each of his children has decided to save their money, so for now they save the play money that they earn. He continued to explain that each of the children also receives some "real" money for their birthdays and holidays and the children are saving that money in banks that they keep at home for now. This parent would like them to start accounts at a bank. He would save money for each of them so they had a college fund.

This parent said that each of the children is saving for college and he encourages the children to talk about going to college. At this time, they are not saying where they plan to go to school but they talk about college as something to do in the future which is what they think everyone is doing. Listening to this parent's aspirations that his children attend college made it clear that he hopes for a different future for them than the past situation he has experienced. Research has shown that when families are saving for their young children this increases their future aspirations for their children especially with regard to college. This parent and his spouse have beliefs that will likely have a powerful influence on their children's goals and academic achievements. By their actions of promoting college for each of their children and frequently referring to college graduation as a goal, the research supports that their children will be more likely to have higher grade-point averages and to graduate from high school.¹¹

Parents' personal educational goals- the link between education and economic security

An Early Head Start parent explained that the entire experience of being in the IDA program with the focus on financial education and the emphasis on practicing her advocacy speaking had given her the push to complete her own college education. She has her personal aspirations to finish a four year degree and get involved with local government where she "can have a voice for other parents who have low-incomes or no incomes at all and have to raise their children."

This parent expressed a reaction that several other parents shared which was that they hoped to be role models for their children by going to school and completing a college degree. These Head Start parents who plan to increase their level of educational attainment are likely to increase their economic security since higher education is associated with higher income levels.¹² The parents who talked about wanting to complete their own college education to show their children the importance of attending college may become a motivating force for their children, which has been supported by research.¹³ Parents have identified that the Parent Ambassadors IDA Project has given them the confidence to be an advocate for their families and the financial education training has given them the means to start saving and getting control of their spending.

Parents' skills which will prepare them for the future

One of the parents has described that a benefit of having completed the financial education in the IDA program is that it has prepared her to search for financial information and to read and review the sources that she finds. She feels confident that she will understand what she reads because of having completed the financial education component in the program. As a parent she feels that knowing how to find and use financial information is essential to help her child so she will be financially secure.

¹¹ Sherraden, Michael and Zhan, M. (2003) Assets, Expectations, and Children's Educational Achievement in Female headed Households, *Social Service Review* 77, 2: 191-211.

¹² Hertz, T. (2006). Understanding Mobility in America. Center for American Progress. Available at: http://www.americanprogress.org/kf/hertz_mobility_analysis.pdf.

¹³ Sommer, T. et al. (2011). Early Childhood Education centers and Mothers' Postsecondary Attainment. A New Conceptual Framework for a Dual-Generation Education Intervention. Teachers College Record

Part 4. Conclusions & Implications

Based on the findings that have been presented in the preceding sections, there are several conclusions that can be drawn along with listing some implications for future projects.

The combination of the program components, including financial education, coaching, and the IDA project contributed to the participants' perceptions of success

The parents attributed their changes in financial behavior to the combined components of the financial education sessions, financial coaching, and access to review the financial education resources. Some of the parents were requesting individualized financial education and financial coaching from the financial education trainer so they blended the educational component with the financial coaching component. The parents were also receiving monthly financial coaching calls with the Program Director or another coach and parents identified this as coaching but also talked about these calls as progress calls or check-in calls as being very necessary to help keep them on track with saving for their assets.

The parents appreciated the monthly financial coaching calls which reminded them to deposit their monthly savings in their IDA. These consistent calls encouraged the parents which contributed to their regular savings behavior. In a research project involving Head Start parents, when the program coordinators worked with the families and provided the high touch contacts, there were larger proportions of the parents, 72 percent and 64 percent who regularly saved in their accounts.¹⁴ In this evaluation of the IDA project, 86 percent of the parents were regularly saving which indicates the value of the financial coaching calls.

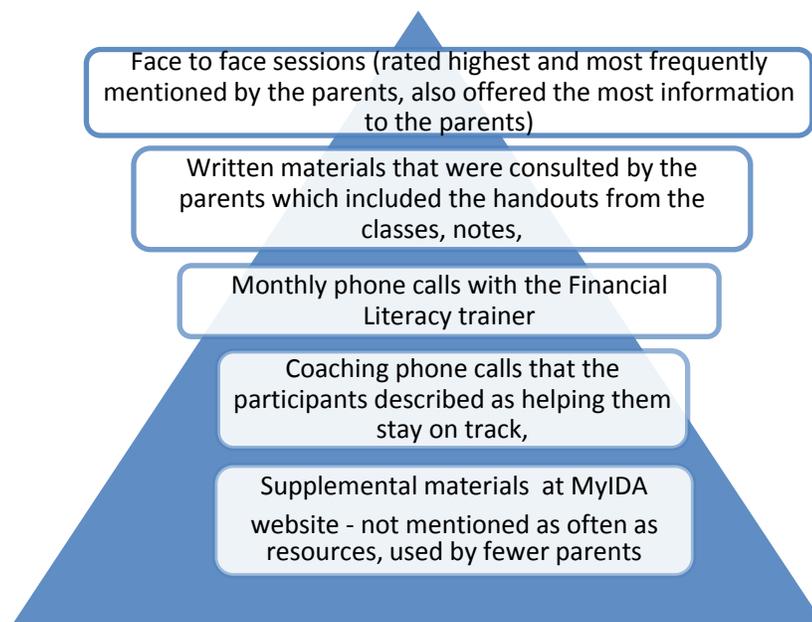
The contribution of the financial education trainer was high - The parents were most enthusiastic in talking about how the financial education sessions, topic-focused calls, and the additional access to the financial education trainer were leading them to make changes in their lives. The rapport established by the financial education trainer with the participants was very high and the parents repeatedly acknowledged the trainer for being able to explain things to them, not talk down to them, make them feel intelligent, and teach them about credit and banking services when they had never understood these topics.

One of the parents stated that the access to the trainer's specialized knowledge was worth a lot of money and the trainer's professional services would have cost the parents more than they could afford. This positive endorsement of the trainer's expertise was quickly reinforced by all of the focus group participants. In the three separate focus groups, including the group with Spanish speaking participants, some of the parents stated that they had sought and received personal financial information from the trainer which was very satisfying to them and supported them in reaching their goals.

The parents were asked to identify which of the financial educational components including written and online resources as well as organizing tools including a file and journal were contributing to their

¹⁴ Beverly, S.G. and Barton, J. (2006) *Barriers to Asset Accumulation for Families in the SEED Pre-School Demonstration and Impact Assessment* (Lawrence: University of Kansas School of Social Welfare), 1-15.

financial competencies. At the project mid-point and toward the end of the financial education sessions, the parents similarly identified that the content presented in the sessions accompanied by written materials including worksheets were most relevant to increasing their financial learning.



The Parent Ambassador IDA project has been a successful model for incorporating matched savings programs into existing Head Start leadership and advocacy programs.

- Parent Ambassadors are helping their children to develop healthy money habits through passing along information to their older children and role-modeling savings behavior with younger children. Young children are also engaging in starting to save and earning the value of money.
- The Parent Ambassador IDA Project has integrated the matching funds with participants' goals, education, and financial coaching to increase asset building for low-income families.
- Participants have reported that they have improved their quality of life through developing financial resilience, financial understanding, and managing family finances.
- The parents who were developing leadership and advocacy skills through the Parent Ambassador program have also increased their financial capability which benefits their families. The Parent Ambassadors have also become peer resources for other low-income parents to help those parents to increase their financial understanding.
- The Parent Ambassador IDA project led to the financial capability of the parent participants by increasing their financial knowledge, connecting them with mainstream financial institutions in the form of a savings account, and by increasing the parents' financial self-efficacy.¹⁵

¹⁵ Financial capability is discussed in Johnson, E. and Sherraden, Margaret S., (2007) From Financial Literacy to Financial Capability among Youth, *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 34, 3: 119-145.

Lessons learned from the implementation of the Parent Ambassador IDA Project

- The logistics of arranging for a local bank to open a savings account for each of the Parent Ambassadors was very time consuming and challenging. The banking institutions varied in their awareness of an IDA project and did not all have the commitment to facilitate the new accounts for the parents. In the future, identifying cooperative banking partners who will commit to the project and who can also make banking by mail deposits available for the parents will improve the savings deposit process. Other suggestions are to reduce the number of bank partners, get agreements on monthly statements being issued, and include more administrative time for monitoring parent progress.
- Perhaps because of the newness of the experience of saving money and banking, the parents asked for repeated clarification of the project rules. This could be anticipated to occur again so oral, written, and online materials that present the project description and rules would help to keep all parents informed.
- The financial education trainer was extremely well received by the parents and they expressed their gratitude for his commitment to their learning. His availability and willingness to assist families in applying what they were learning to their family finances was greatly appreciated by the families and contributed to their successes.
- The integration of the financial education and coaching with the established Parent Ambassador leadership model shows promise as a means of increasing the financial self-efficacy and financial capability of Head Start parents. The emerging results of the project suggest that the accelerated savings program succeeds in starting the parents to work toward financial security.
- Many of the parents were very cooperative in the evaluation process, but the rate of return for all surveys could be increased with added attention to asking the parents to complete surveys and to also consistently collect surveys.
- One program element that could be enhanced in new iterations of the IDA project would be directing the parents to access any available community resources to acquire more information before making specific asset purchases. The parents did thorough comparison shopping and they felt they were well prepared on understanding contracts from their financial education classes. They did present their preparation to the Program Director before making asset purchases. But, there are some asset specific resources such as financial aid counselors at colleges, or the local community action programs that might offer classes such as know before you buy for first time car buyers. A new element would be to require that participants demonstrate they accessed asset-specific financial education prior to making asset purchases. This addition would increase the capacity of the parents to be informed consumers who are familiar with community sources of information they can access after the project.

Attachments

Attachment 1

Financial Education Session Evaluation Summaries for Sessions 1-5 held February- October 2013

Attachment 2

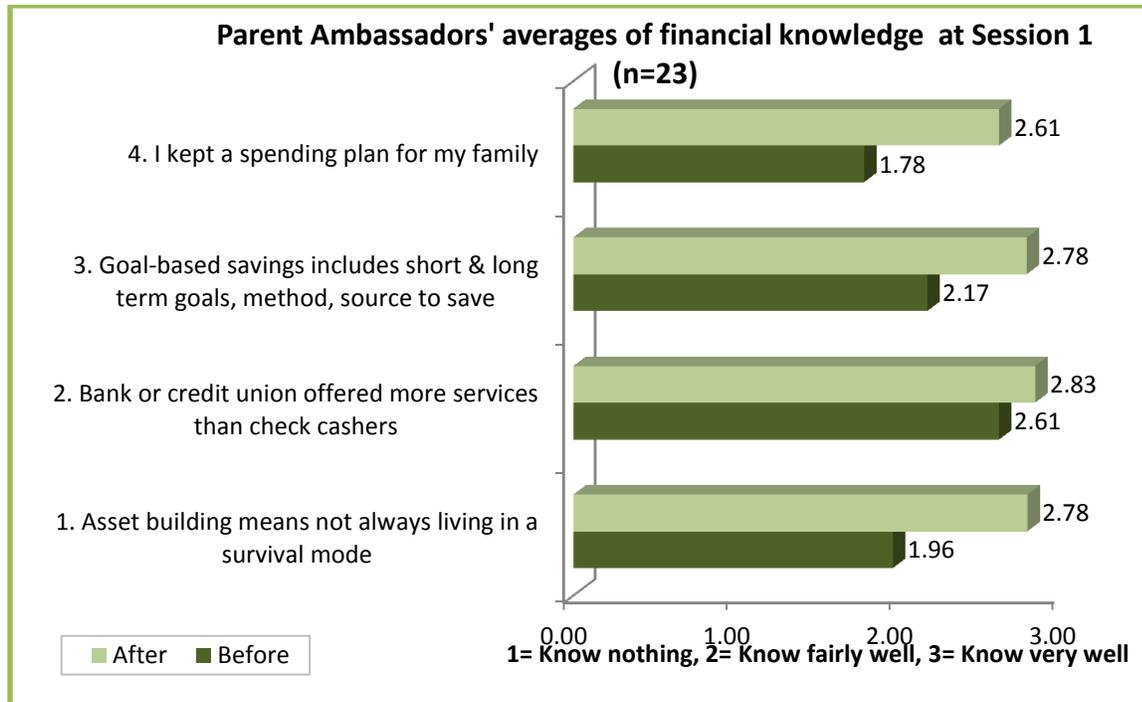
**Summary of Focus groups held June 24-25, 2013 with additional information about
monthly coaching calls**

ATTACHMENT 1
Head Start Parent Ambassador IDA Project
Evaluation Summary from Session 1 Introduction to Financial Literacy

Session 1 – Self-reports of knowledge before and after the financial literacy session

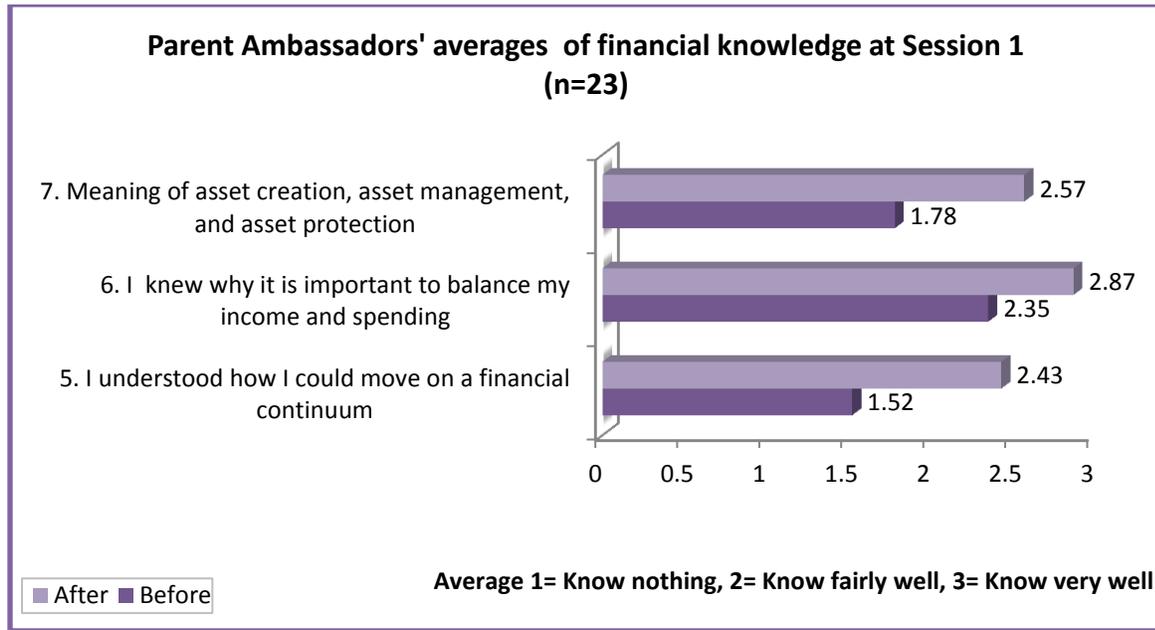
The Parent Ambassadors reported how well they understood seven financial topics before the first face to face financial literacy session and how well they understood the concepts after the session. The results are reported in this brief summary. The parents responded on a three point scale where 1 corresponded to knowing very little about a topic, 2 referred to having some knowledge of a topic, and 3 corresponded to knowing a topic well. The average of all of the parents responses are reported in the charts below. The average pre-session scores ranged from 1.52 to 2.61. After the financial literacy session, the average of the parents’ self- reported knowledge ranged from 2.43-2.87

The parents indicated an increase in their understanding of each of the seven topics following the session. Two topics where parents reported large increases in knowledge were in knowing how to keep a spending plan for their families and in understanding that asset building means not always living in a survival mode.



The parents were already fairly well aware that banks and credit unions offered more services than check cashers so the increase in knowledge about this topic was a very small increase after the session. The group of parents had also indicated a very low use of any alternative lenders or check cashers as only 14 percent of the parents had responded they ever used any of those services.

The topic where the group of parents had the highest increase in knowledge was about the financial continuum along with understanding how they could progress along this continuum. The financial continuum is a multi-level tool where a client can identify where he or she is in relation to being in a crisis situation or moving through several steps of becoming more financially stable toward achieving financial resilience. A related topic where the parents indicated a large increase in knowledge was in gaining an understanding of the financial trio of asset creation, management, and protection.



Parents intentions to change financial behavior

In addition to responding to questions about their increases in knowledge of specific topics, the parents were also asked about their intentions to use the accordion file and financial journal they were given. Several parents responded they were still processing the information and were not yet sure but there were several other parents who responded with a high level of readiness to track “every single receipt and document transactions,” or “keep track of monthly, yearly spending.” At the third parent session after the parents have had time to adopt new financial behaviors or to modify their current behaviors, we can ask whether or not parents are using these organizing tools to track spending.

The parents were also asked what their formula for their IDA success was, which was based on content in the class where the formula for success was given using the words to track, consider, stop the financial drain, set goals, and spend. Only one parent responded with the formula as stated in class. All of the other parents responded with variations of their formulas for success. Two parents identified a specific amount to save each month while six parents referred to implementing a spending plan or keeping a spending plan as the components for their formula for success. Four parents referred to reducing spending or stopping impulse buying as part of their formulas for their IDA success and four parents were still processing the information but indicated their intent to try to use information including working and saving or communicating with their partner about money.

**Head Start Parent Ambassador IDA Project
Evaluation Summary for Session 2 on Understanding Predatory Financial Services**

March 11-12, 2013

Summary of Participants' responses to session evaluation

The 19 Parent Ambassadors completed a post- financial session questionnaire to assess their knowledge and their decisions regarding predatory financial services. The questions assessed what the participants had learned about the topics that were covered in the training and also asked their readiness to take actions. The content included contracts, risks of using alternative lenders, and various consumer scams.



Increased knowledge on financial services

All of the parent Ambassadors responded correctly that they learned about the high price of a rent-to-own contract, the high annual interest rate for a payday loan, what predatory lending means, and the risks of consumer scams.

Readiness to make choices and take action

The participants also responded to questions if they had increased in their abilities to make positive financial choices and take actions to protect their assets.

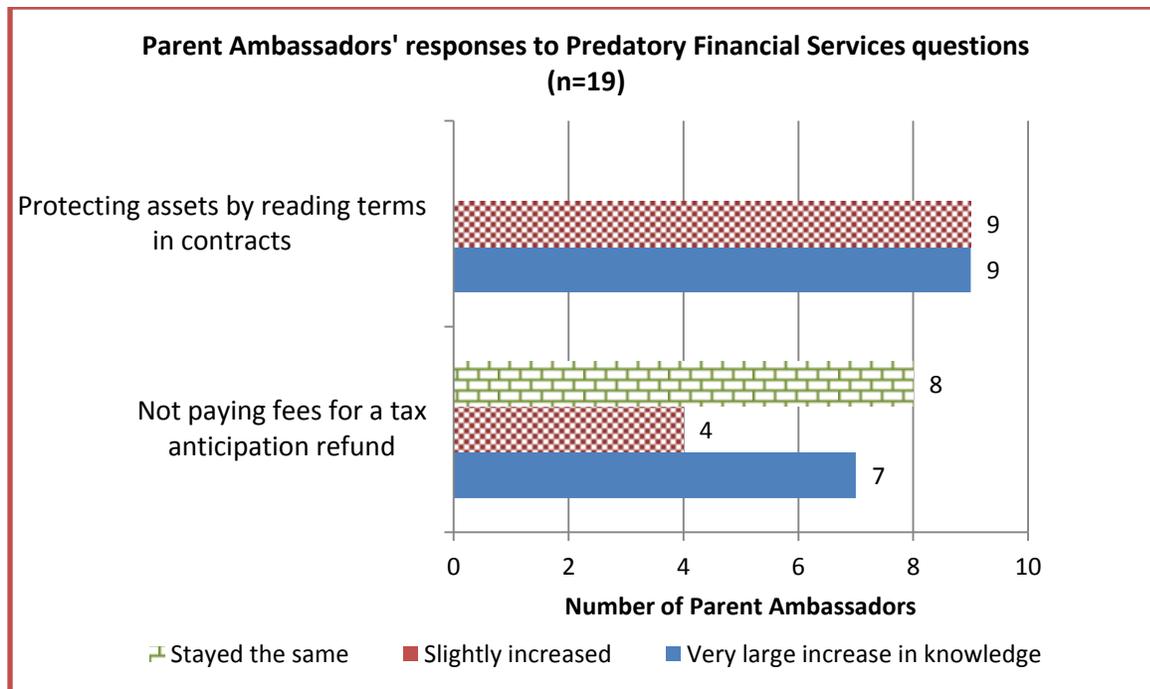
Three topics where at least 67% of the Parent Ambassadors felt they had a very large increase in their abilities were:

- Avoiding rent- to- own contracts
- Checking a lender's business record with the Better Business Bureau
- Using alternatives to predatory financial services

Three other topics where more than half of the Parent Ambassadors responded that they had a very large increase in their abilities were to: identify a sweepstakes scam or an employment scam, understand how paying fees occurs when using a pawn shop, and explain the costs of check cashers.

One topic where half of the participants had a large increase in their knowledge while half of the participants had a slight increase in their knowledge was in protecting their assets by reading the terms offered by a financial institution.

An encouraging finding was that the participants responded that as a result of the financial training session they would not use a pawn shop or payday lender. Some of the participants also responded that they were more aware of scams and would know how to avoid scams.



Accessing the financial resources on the MyIDA Project website

The participants were asked if they were accessing the materials offered on the Head Start Parent Ambassador MyIDA Project Website.

- Just 21% of the participants had accessed and read the Session 1 downloads
- 37% had accessed and read the resources including the money saving exercise, and self-help budget
- 26% had accessed and read the additional resources such as the liquid assets

When asked why they had not accessed the website materials, the reason given by 50% of the participants who had not yet accessed the site was that they planned to access the resources but just had not done so yet.

Single responses from the participants also indicated that one person had not received emails about the website, one did “not know how to get to it,” and one did not know about it. These responses suggest that the explanation of the website and the instructions to access it should be repeated to reach those participants.

Head Start Parent Ambassador IDA Project
Evaluation Summary for Session 3 on Debt and Credit Management
April 26, 2013

Summary of Participants' responses to session evaluation

The 11 Parent Ambassadors completed a post-session questionnaire which assessed their knowledge about debt and credit management. Since this session presented facts and how to improve credit issues, the results listed below indicate that a very high percent of the parents learned new information.



- 9 of 11 knew the best source for a free credit report
- 10 of 11 knew about how to correct an error on a credit report
- 10 of 11 knew what is not in a credit score
- 10 of 11 knew three ways to get out of debt and also knew options to pay down accumulated debt

Gaining information and tools to take action-

In addition to gaining new information, the majority of the participants indicated they were very prepared and ready to take action on several credit and debt issues:

- Dispute negative information on a credit report
- Contact creditors
- Act to percent identify theft and Write a debt validation letter

The parents who participated in a small group discussion responded that receiving sample dispute letters and sample debt validation letters, along with the directions and the encouragement to use the letters and to take follow-up actions, were the most useful content covered in the classes. Some parents responded that using the letters to help resolve their credit issues gave them confidence to continue to work at improving their credit.

Nearly all of the participants responded that they are regularly participating in the telephone conference calls with Devin to review topics or to expand on a new topic. Those who have participated indicated that not only are they benefiting from gaining this information but they have their partner or spouse also listen on the call to hear financial information firsthand.

Some participants not accessing resources- About a third of the participants have not been asking personal questions using the MyIDA web page, or reading the blog, or completing the individual coaching calls. The other participants are accessing these sources some of the time.

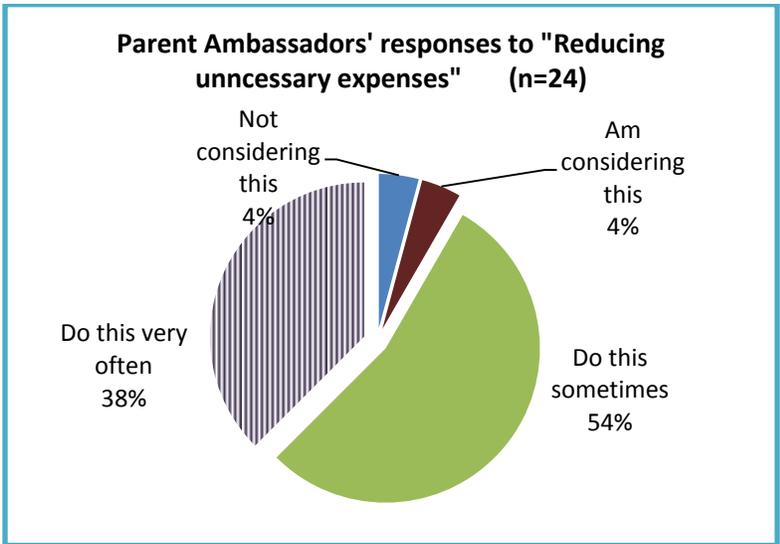
Participants' favorite topics- The participants listed topics they have found to be most relevant for their financial situations:

- Importance of consistently paying bills
- How to handle debt
- Consolidate student loans
- Resolve credit issues
- 7 steps to fix credit

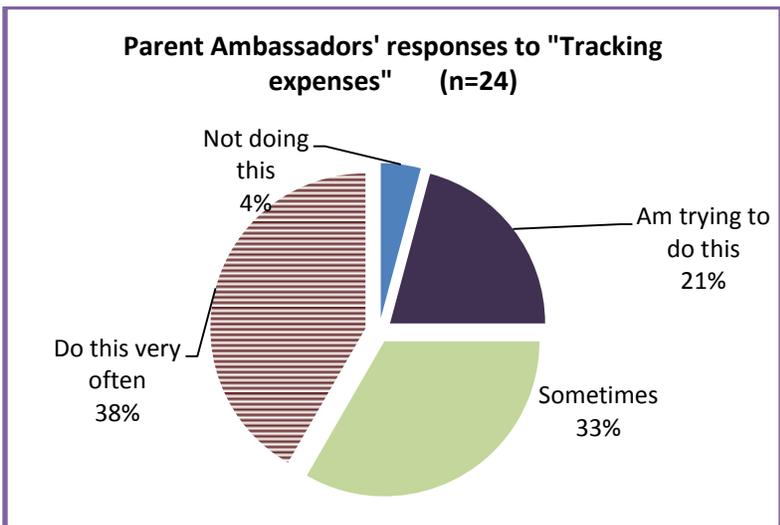
Head Start Parent Ambassador IDA Project
Evaluation Summary for Session 4 on Behavioral Economics
June 25, 2013

Summary of Participants' responses to session evaluation

At the fourth financial literacy session, the 24 Parent Ambassadors completed a post-session questionnaire to assess their knowledge and their decisions related to behavioral economics. The content and approach of this session prompted the Parent Ambassadors to self-reflect on their financial beliefs and beliefs about money which have sometimes held them back as well as to identify new beliefs which will help them to save in the future. The participants also started with a group discussion about who they could confer with and who could assist them with future financial questions when they ended the financial literacy classes and completed the IDA program.

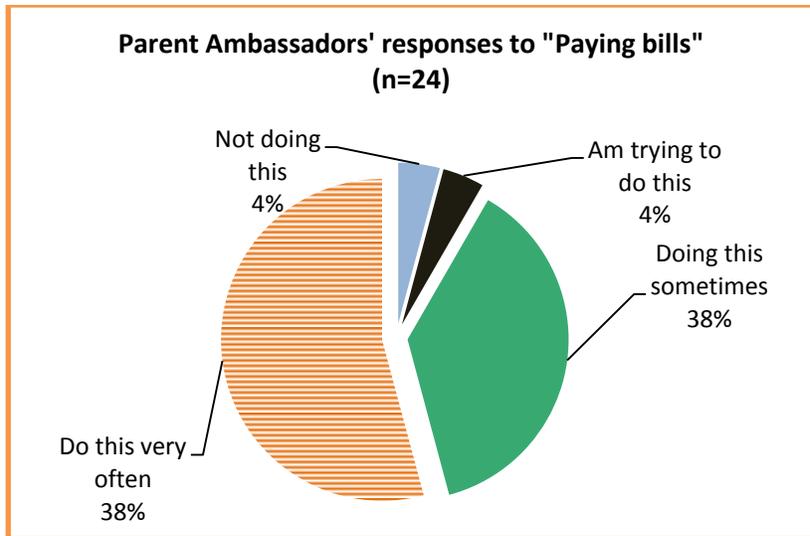


Reducing expenses - Just over half of the participants are reducing their expenses some of the time, meaning they have taken some steps to cut their expenses. Another third of the participants are reducing their expenses more often or are putting more time and effort into reducing expenses. A typical response was that parents bought fast food or beverages (coffee) less often. Given this is about five months after starting financial literacy classes, we would hope to see that change has occurred among the majority of participants.

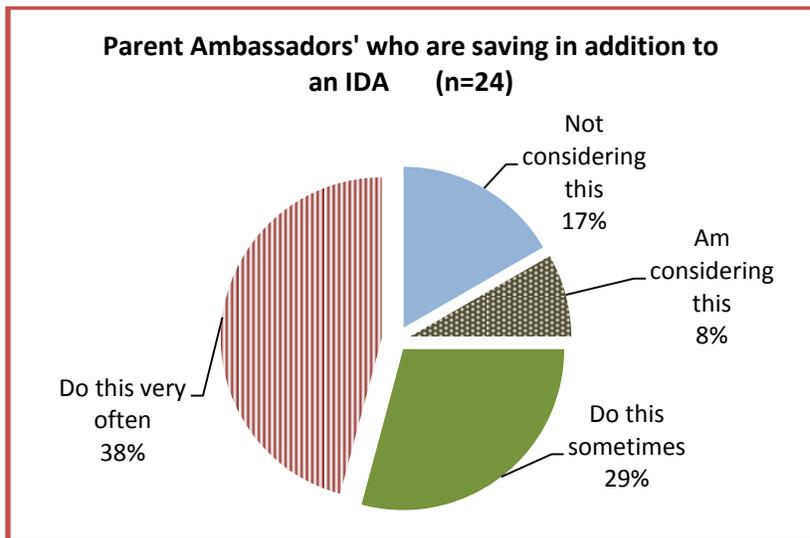


Tracking expenses - Another behavior related to reducing expenses is tracking expenses. At this time, one of four participants is not consistently tracking expenses. Two-thirds of the participants are tracking expenses either sometimes or almost all the time. The participants were encouraged to track their expenses, and at this session, they have been encouraged to examine some of their financial habits or behaviors.

Paying bills- A large percent of the Parent Ambassadors are paying their bills on time most of the time or at least some of the time. There is a fairly consistent response that a very small proportion of the parents are not making an effort to change their behavior or are still trying to take on a new behavior to be more timely in paying bills. Parents responded that they have had to pay late fees and are trying to reduce this behavior.



Saving behavior- There is an encouraging response that more than a third of the Parent Ambassadors are saving often, in accounts that are in addition to their IDA. There are also some occasional savers, 29% of the parents who have savings accounts beyond the IDA. There is also a small proportion of the Parent Ambassadors who are not considering trying to save in addition to their IDA.

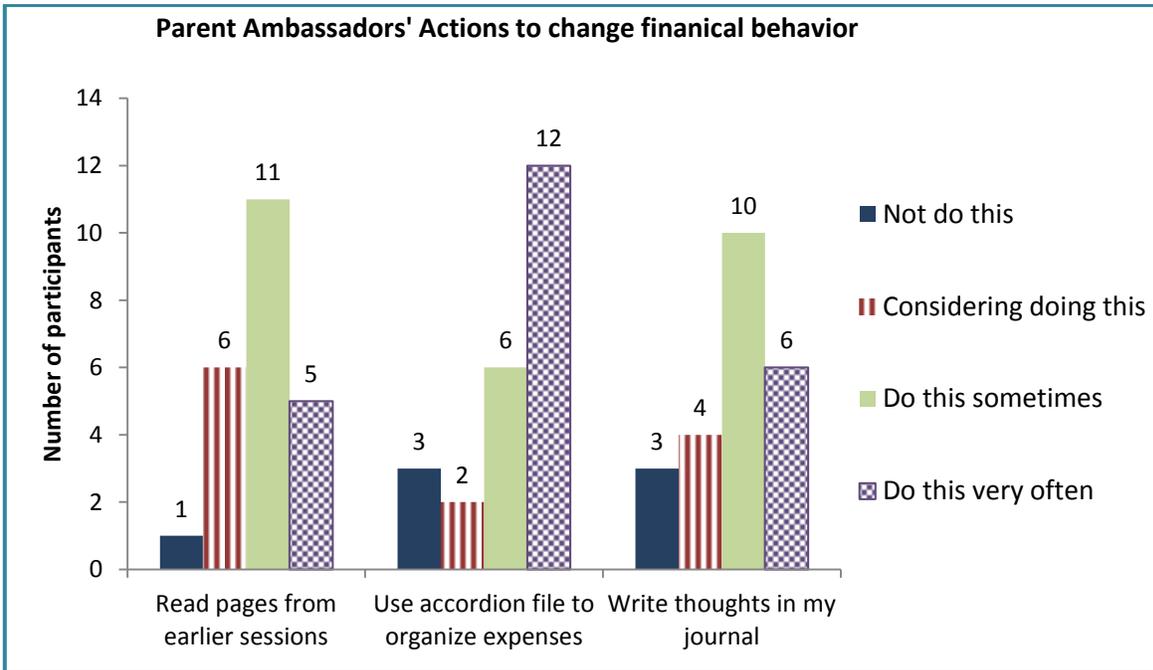


Organizing and accessing information- At the first session, the participants were given an organizing accordion file and a journal to note their feelings and responses. They have received some encouragement to use these to reinforce new behaviors to track expenses and keep family financial documents. Half of the Parent Ambassadors are regularly using the accordion file to help them organize their expenses.

Writing in the journal could also contribute to the parents' shifting their attitudes, working through their reactions and feelings about money, or identifying new intentions. Less than half of the participants, 43%, are writing in the journal some of the time and 26% are journaling regularly.

The participants have also had access to re-read and review the financial session content from the first three sessions which could reinforce some of their thoughts and actions. A majority of the parents are

either reading this content at least some of the time, or are reading it very often. When asked about having the binder of information and the session handouts, several of the parents said that they relied on being able to review the information and read it repeatedly to really understand the content. This small group of parents explained that hearing the topics, in person, was very helpful and interested them to learn more. They then found it very valuable to have the binder of materials as a resource which the participants could access at any time to reinforce their learning and they anticipated being able to use it in the future.



Beliefs about money and financial choices – The participants also responded to several financial belief statements.

- There was nearly total agreement that one of the most important steps to financial security is to save money.
- Nearly all of the participants also agreed that financial choices made today will impact financial status in the future.
- Nearly all of the participants also felt that what can be done with money today depends on what was done with money yesterday.

**Head Start Parent Ambassador IDA Project
Evaluation Summary for Session 5 - A Lifetime of Asset Building October 16, 2013**

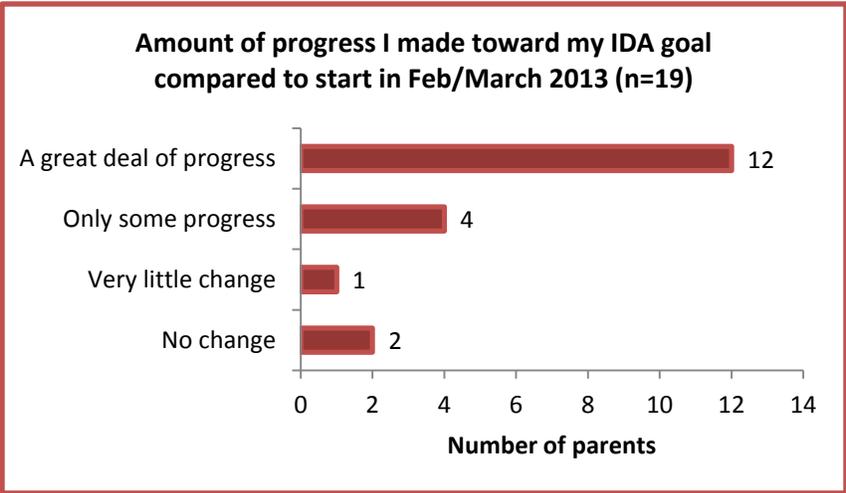
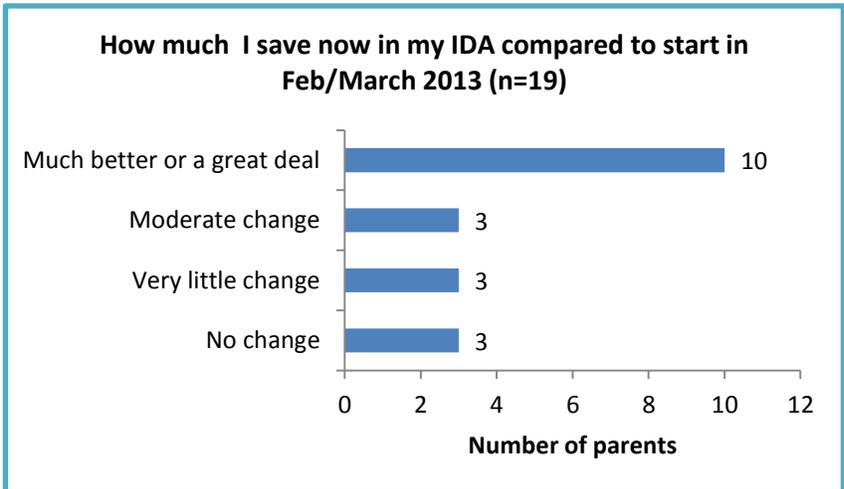
Summary of Participants' responses to session evaluation

The 19 Parent Ambassadors who completed a post-session questionnaire showed an increased understanding of assets by listing social capital, human capital, higher education, vehicles, savings and other assets. They also responded that they had gained asset building tools in having a savings account, increasing their financial education, and accessing financial resources.

- **Building assets-** Parents also responded that asset building is important so they can become self-sufficient, look forward to the future, and they can pass along assets and not debt to their children.
- **Becoming financially prepared –** The majority of the participants indicated that if they were to make a large investment such as buying a home, they now felt prepared to gather information, save for a down payment, increase their income, live within their means, pay down debt, and explore first time home buyer opportunities.

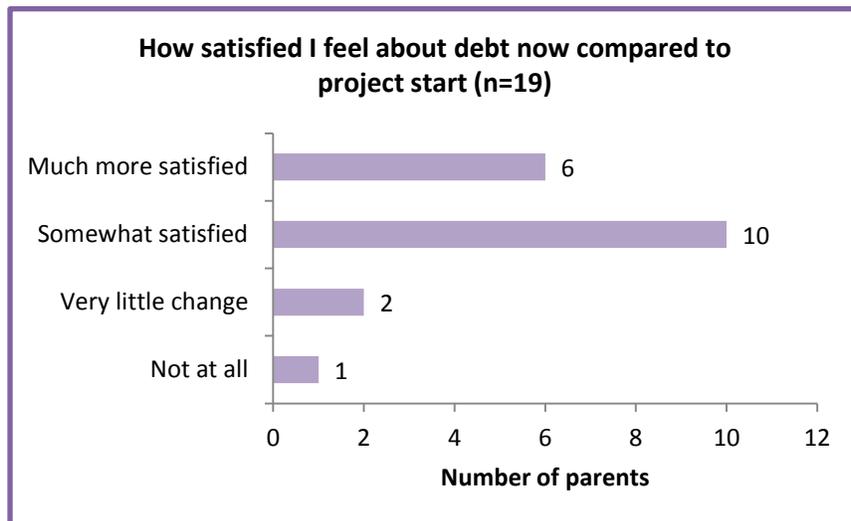
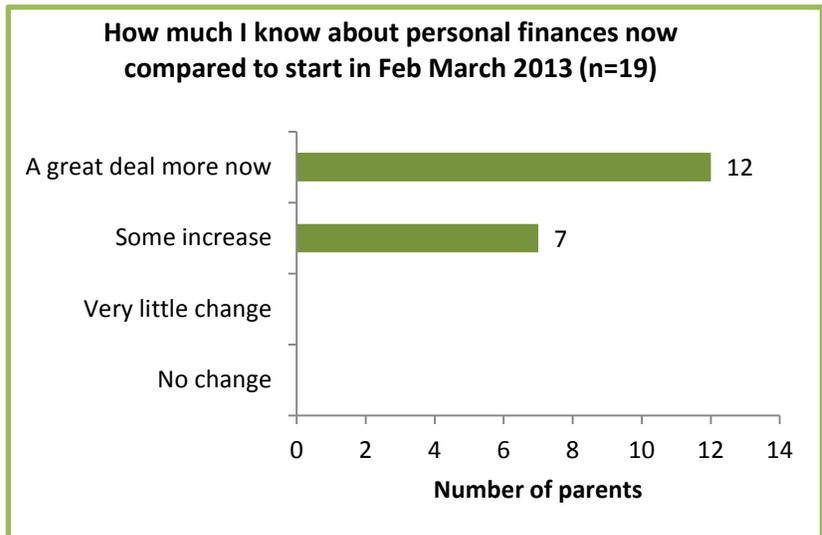
The Parent Ambassadors were also asked questions about their financial capability.

The majority of the parents were saving more in their IDAs at the end of the year compared to when they first started the project. But 6 of the 19 parents who responded to the question had made no change or very little change toward increasing their IDA deposits.



Only 3 of 19 parents who responded felt that they made very little or no change in progressing toward their IDA savings goal. The majority felt that had made a great deal of progress or at least some progress in their savings goal.

All of the Parent Ambassadors fel that they had increased their financial knowledge, either by learning a great deal more or by having some increase in their knowledge.



The majority of the responding parents felt somewhat satisfied or much more satisfied about handling their debt. Many respondents had learned how to prioritize their payments, how to write letters to creditors, and had found it helpful to address the issue of “Who do you owe?”

ATTACHMENT 2

Head Start Parent Ambassador Program

Summary of Focus groups held June 24-25, 2013 with additional information about Monthly coaching calls

This is a summary of small group discussions held with the Parent Ambassadors who attended the 3-day training program in Ellensburg in June 2013, which included the fourth of the five in-person financial literacy sessions. Three discussion groups were held with 9, 3, and 12 participants with the two largest discussions being conducted in English and the smaller group primarily in Spanish.

Describing the Head Start IDA Program advantages and benefits

Many of the participants were very enthusiastic in describing that the IDA program including the financial literacy classes, coaching, monthly phone calls, and financial materials had been a very positive, “awesome, life-changing” opportunity. One participant described it as a way to “start savings and to achieve money for school or a car that you could never get otherwise.” Another participant remarked how could you not do this, this is the easiest way to make \$2,000 that you will ever have. One participant described the IDA program “as a means to save and learn, and if we can do this, then we should be able to save, and you really learn how to manage money.”

One participant described the features of the program, *“It is a structured savings, so it really gets you thinking about how to save money and to accomplish what you want to do.”*

Several participants also described their gratitude for being in the program using words, *“It’s a blessing,” “I am so lucky to be a part of this,” “I just count my lucky stars that I got to do this.”*

Another participant described how she had come to be very positive about the savings program but she had initially been reluctant,

“When I heard this at first, I wasn’t sure because I don’t like to invest in something, but this has been incredible. The learning, all the information from Devin, and the calls that help keep you on track, all of it makes it really possible to do this and now we are totally into this and my husband is too.”

The participants also responded that they had a depth of knowledge that they would not have thought possible. One of the participants described that she had learned so much from each of the face to face sessions and the monthly phone calls. Several of the parents explained that they feel they have been set up to be successful.

One of the fathers described the IDA program as an opportunity to show his daughter the importance of learning how to save money. He brought his daughter to the bank and he explained that he put money in the bank that he wanted to save so he could pay for his daughters to go to school and he wanted to be able to provide for his family. This parent explained that it was very important to him to teach her

that saving even a small amount of money would give you something to use for a big purchase or something that you really wanted.

One parent described that as a result of being in the IDA Program she had reflected on her feelings. She had felt limited in not having money and there were many things she had lacked in her past because she could not afford to buy them. Now, she was not going to let money define who she was. She also wanted to pass along to her young daughter that whether or not you have money is not who you are, but she wanted to give her daughter a means to earn money so that she would have what she needed and she would not go hungry.

Quality of the training has been a positive feature

One feature that the participants were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about was the trainer, Devin, who they described as being realistic, down to earth, respectful, kind, and encouraging.

One of the participants explained that the Head Start parents have related very well to Devin because *“he didn’t forget his roots or wherever he came from because he talks like he is one of us. He doesn’t talk down to us, he breaks a lot of information down so you can understand it, and he really knows what he is doing, and he gave us all those letters that really told us what to do.”*

The participant was referring to the credit dispute and the debt validations letter templates that had been included in the third session on Debt and Credit Management. Several participants agreed this had been very useful content that had given them the push to do something to improve their credit.

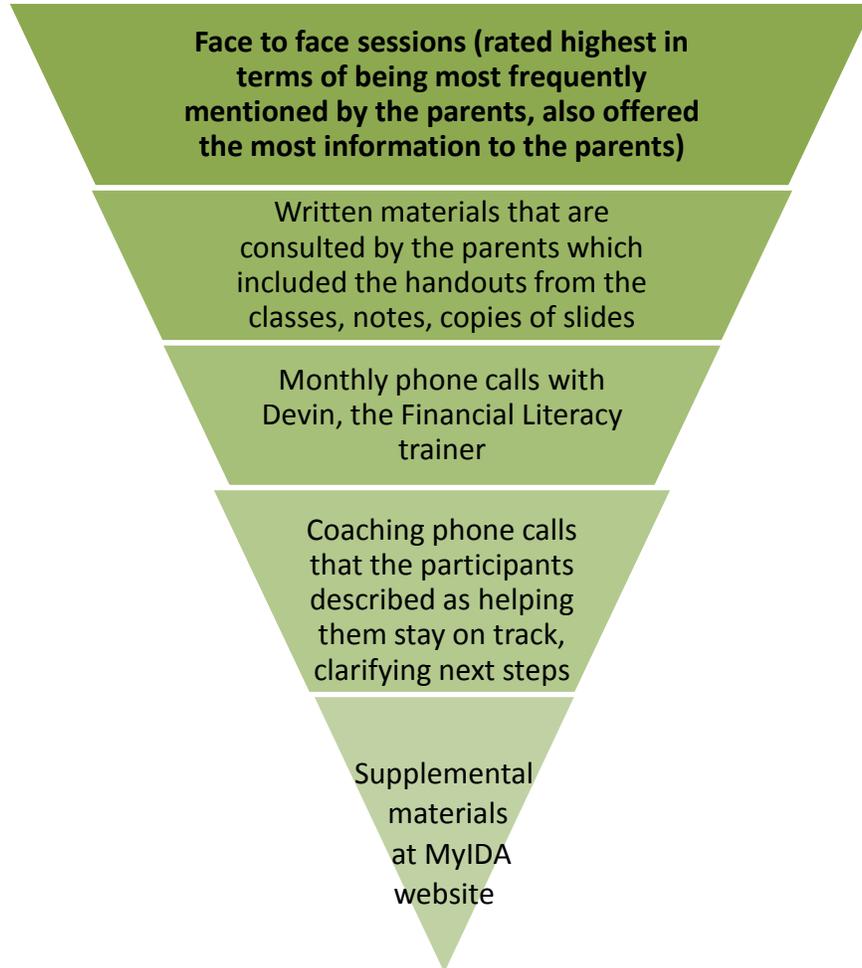
The participants also felt that Devin had been very accessible in answering personal questions and offering additional information. If he was asked something he could not immediately answer, the participants recalled that he would research and then provide the group with the information. In each of the focus groups the participants acknowledged that the amount of information that they were receiving and the manner in which it was presented was exceeding their expectations. Parents were appreciative of the opportunity to be learning so much. One father remarked that the value of the information and their access to Devin’s expertise was worth thousands of dollars if they were to go somewhere and pay someone to be a financial teacher and coach to them.

Components of the IDA program

The Head Start IDA Program is rather intense with the delivery of five in-person financial literacy sessions, monthly phone calls with the trainer which reinforce content and allow for individual questions, written materials in a notebook, online downloadable supplemental documents including guidelines, email access to the trainer to ask personal questions and a new feature of telephone access to the trainer, monthly coaching phone calls for each parent, and access to the parent’s local Asset Building Collaborative (ABC). The parents were asked to describe which components were contributing the most to their learning which led to them ranking the face to face sessions as overwhelmingly useful while the additional materials that were made available on line were not being widely accessed. Supplemental materials on line at the MyIDA website were only mentioned by two parents who said

they made a point to go to the website and browse what was there. Other parents responded that they had not thought about seeking additional information, they more often reviewed the class information.

IDA Program Components ranked by the parents from highest to lowest in contributing to their learning



What assets are the parents planning to purchase?

The parents explained that their plans include using their money to buy a new computer and software, pay off student loans, or invest in a small business. Most of the parents agreed that the details about what they could select as an asset could have been described more fully. They were left with some questions if the money could be used to make a down payment on a house or if it could be used to purchase a vehicle. Some of the parents would like to have a policy be that there is a case by case decision on how the asset can be used. One parent from a more rural county pointed out that in her region, the asset would cover most of a house down payment which could be \$3000. Her understanding was that the asset was not supposed to be used for a down payment because in many regions, the amount would not be sufficient to cover a down payment and without more savings and continuing

income it would not be likely that a family could afford house payments and would not accrue a house as an asset.

As the parents think ahead to the purchases of their assets, some of them are asking for how they could get advice to make good choices with their investment. Since the parents were introduced to the concept of the local Asset Building Collaboratives, one of the parents asked if her local ABC would have information on a topic such as getting ready to buy a house or a car. This led to parents identifying some topics that are of interest:

- How to market a small business in an affordable way when you don't have a budget for marketing
- What to know if you are going to make a big purchase such as a car or a house
- What to know about investing money in a small business

What is a lesson or message that has been most relevant for you?

In general, most parents said that they are sharing each lesson that they are learning with their partner or spouse. The parents recalled that the third session on credit and debt management was especially helpful and they felt prepared to act to improve their credit after the session. There were a few key lessons that some of the parents recalled:

- Get it in writing.
- Never make a financial decision that conflicts with your inner values.
- You can pay your bills down, you should make a list and decide what to pay first.
- Everything about the predatory lending session was new to a small group of parents who had already shared this information with their extended family members and their friends.
- The session getting out of debt was also the most popular lesson for a small group of parents who said they knew people, in their social network, who should have the information that was presented.
- Some parents said they have become much more cautious about spending and they have stopped buying coffee or fast-food and they think about how much something costs before they give in to impulse shopping.

The parents were asked if they have been sharing the information that they were learning with other parents in their Head Start or Early Head Start programs. There was a range of responses.

- About one-fourth of the parents indicated that they had copied handouts or made a presentation to their Parent Council or to other small groups of parents.
- Another fourth of the parents responded that they had not yet given any thought to sharing the information in a group lesson or information session.
- About half of the parents had taken some actions such as: pre-planning what they could share with the Parent Council or other groups of parents in the future, discussing with their program

director what they could plan to cover next year, or identifying topics of interest that they could share informally with parents individually.

The parents were also asked about how they benefited from being a Parent Ambassador

Nearly all of the parents contributed ideas on how they are personally benefiting from the training they are receiving as a Parent Ambassador. One of the most frequently expressed ideas was that the training had brought the parents together with other parents and they had become close friends. One parent explained that meeting everyone and learning to talk to lots of different people has been a bonus. Parents also said that being a Parent Ambassador boosted their self-confidence. One parent explained that she really was very shy and found it very hard to talk to people but that as a Parent Ambassador she had found her voice and she knew how to tell other people her opinion:

I didn't have any family here and I didn't know anyone. I was just about ready to pack up and go home (out of state) but this program, these people have become like a family to me. I've gotten really close to people and there's no judgment, we're all on the same level.

Some parents said that coming together was important to learn about resources and about issues that parents should be concerned about. One parent described how personally fulfilled she was when a Head Start parent in her local area recognized that she was the Parent Ambassador and approached her and asked a question. The Parent Ambassador had never been in a role to provide information and advice so she helped the parent to access some local resources and then followed up with the parent. The Parent Ambassador found it very satisfying to assist another parent and was looking forward to sharing financial information with a group of Head Start parents in the future.

Another parent described having a very positive reaction when he gave a legislator his card that said he was a Parent Ambassador. This parent had also used the card to talk with business representatives in his local area and had found that people recognized the title of Parent Ambassador so he felt he was well respected.

What would you like to see improved with the IDA Program?

Account communication- In each of the three focus groups, some of the participants remarked that the communication about opening an IDA bank account could have been improved. In one of the focus groups, each of the participants explained at least one error that he or she had experienced that ranged from the letter being misaddressed, to receiving incorrect directions of which bank to use such as a bank in another county, or miscommunication about paperwork that was required or papers that were to be signed and returned. When the parents listed the missteps that had occurred this led one parent to say, "They should have done better than that. They should have gotten it all worked out before they told us about it so it wasn't so confusing."

Asset clarification- The miscommunication aside, several parents commented that the IDA Program was a very good opportunity and it was just that the explanations about the bank accounts were not as smooth and efficient as expected. A second area where a smaller group of parents asked for more clarification was in the list of what assets were approved. There was discussion among the participants

as to whether using the asset for a down payment on a car was allowable and if payments toward a small business were acceptable

Access for one-on-one help- Several of the parents asked if there could be more time available to confer with Devin individually because they preferred to talk to him in person about their financial questions rather than by email. There are parents who have been receiving some additional support and information offered by Devin and they have found this to be very helpful.

Are parents developing financial self-efficacy?

The concept of financial self-efficacy has been identified as an important contributor to individuals developing financial empowerment. The idea of having financial knowledge as well as access to a financial product, which is termed financial capability, is necessary but not sufficient to arrive at financial empowerment. A study by EARN which is a large non-profit in California that has worked with thousands of low-income individuals concluded that the missing link is financial self-efficacy. Financial self-efficacy is defined as increased knowledge about managing money with a justifiable self-confidence about handling money, which in turn leads to more successful financial outcomes.

The parents were asked some questions to assess for their developing sense of self-efficacy including some of their behaviors related to decreasing spending, increasing saving, and managing money. Overall, the parents often mentioned words such as feeling in control, feeling better about making decisions, feeling prepared to make decisions, feeling that they could talk about money with their partners, coming to a similar agreement about money with their partner where they had earlier not talked to their partner or they were in very different places. Other parents had different perceptions that touched on the components of confidence in handling money and on control and decision-making:

- More than three-quarters of the parents felt that it was hard to stick to a spending plan when unexpected expenses arise.
- Half of the parents felt that it was hard to make progress toward financial goals.
- The majority of the participants also felt they were more able to identify a solution for a money issue compared to where they had been before being in the IDA program.
- Half of the participants indicated that they are growing in their confidence in their ability to manage personal finances.
- The parents were also evenly split in that about half of them worried about running out of money to meet family expenses and about half of the parents were not worried.

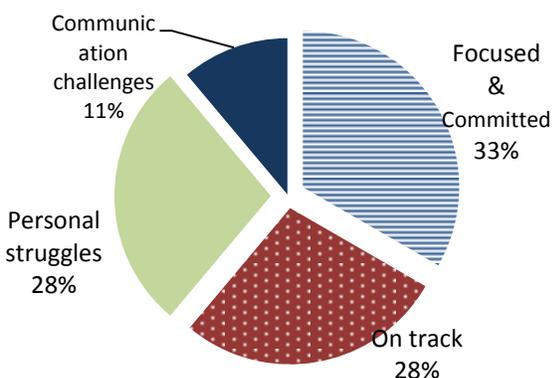
The parents' perceptions of self-efficacy as well as other behaviors will be assessed again at the end of the last class session to compare to their pre-financial literacy responses.

Highlights of the monthly coaching based on Feb- April data

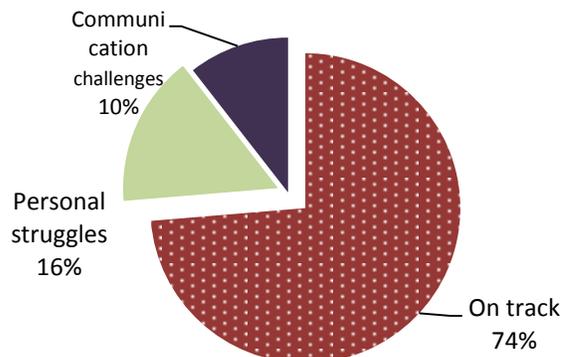
Nearly all of the parents have been participating in a financial coaching call at least once a month since February. One parent was out of the country for approximately two months and missed regular phone calls but has been very engaged since returning home. Several of the participants were somewhat challenging in either not being available for the regular calls or they were presenting some hesitation or resistance to following through with the recommended actions to initially open the IDA.

The data that were collected about the financial coaching shows an encouraging result. While in February approximately one third of the parents were right on track in opening accounts and in making initial deposits, this number had increased to nearly 75% in April. This result is reinforced by some comments made by the parents in the discussion groups which was that they had been somewhat confused with the written communication about the accounts, but when they had the information, and they were prepared the majority opened their accounts.

Parent Ambassadors' Categories of Engagement March 2013



Parent Ambassadors' Categories of Engagement April 2013



Another finding from the coaching data is that the Parent Ambassadors who have been fully participating in the coaching, have been making very good progress on their goals. The participants were rated high at nearly a 3, on a three point scale, in consistently tracking their spending and in ordering their credit reports.

They were nearly as high at making progress in paying down their debt and in reducing expenses. This is confirmed by the comments made by the parents that some of them identified how much they spent in their food and beverage purchases so they reduced these costs. One area where the parents are still working is in starting emergency savings, which would be apart from the focused IDA savings. The concept of building an emergency savings account is recognized as a big step toward breaking the poverty cycle and moving toward financial stability, so hopefully we will see the parents making some progress in this goal area in the next few months.