

Edison Taking Off To Success Program



*A Glance at Successes and
Challenges of Year One*

*Edison T.O.T.S. Program activities
are managed by:*



With support from:



Edison Taking Off To Success (T.O.T.S.) Program

A Glance at Successes and Challenges of Year One

Introduction

This has been a challenging first-year for the Edison T.O.T.S. program. When the Dayton Urban League announced on December 3, 2010 that it was suspending its services, it was a shock not only to staff but more importantly program participants. Many of the families were just completing half of the program, and beginning to see the benefits of their involvement. During this time, Montgomery County, East End Community Services and Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. worked within a tight timeframe to determine the best plan of action to maintain services for the T.O.T.S. families. Since December 13, 2010, Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. has been the lead agency, and has devoted time, resources and support to this project, while enhancing the professional leadership and competency skills of the staff in order to enhance the program's success.

This summary report is intended to provide readers with a glance at successes and challenges of the Edison T.O.T.S. program during its first year, as well as suggested program modifications for the upcoming year.

Successes

The Edison T.O.T.S. program has built lasting partnerships and relationships with community agencies, which are located near the Edison PreK-8 School. These partnerships range from the provision of direct service free of charge, to planning committees formed for the benefit of parental engagement at Edison School. Below are a list of agencies and the manner in which they've supported the program:

Edison PreK-8 School (Dayton Public Schools)

- Community Partner with Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative
- Provides office space, equipment, internet and email access for T.O.T.S. staff (minimal fee, if at all)
- Allows Program Manager to serve as member of the District's Leadership Team, which reviews test score and attendance data, as well as make recommendations for the Race to the Top committee to consider.

University of Dayton's School of Education & Allied Professions (Dr. Joni Baldwin)

- Provides families with free school-readiness assessment services (assessment, progress report, and suggested engagement activities)
- Allows undergraduate and graduate students to engage with families during experience

Dr. Charles R. Drew Health Center

- Refers eligible families in the Healthy Mommy, Healthy Baby Program to T.O.T.S.
 - Six have been referred to-date, and one participant graduated during Cycle Two
 - Transportation was a barrier, at the time of referral, for the other participants
- Planning partner for Edison's Dad's Day Out Event held on May 10, 2011
 - Violence Prevention, Healthy Mommy/Healthy Baby, WIC and the Speakers' Bureau were represented during the event

Mound Street Academies

- Assists with recruitment of eligible students
 - 10 have enrolled in the class, and six graduated during Cycle Three
- Provides meeting space, internet and technology access once a week (no fee), for five weeks

Life Skills Center

- Assists with recruitment of eligible students
 - 10 were referred; six have enrolled; and five graduated during Cycle Three
- Provides meeting space, internet and technology access once a week (no fee), for five weeks

Help Me Grow/Brighter Futures

- Reviews and scores Ages & Stages Questionnaires (Social/Emotional and Cognitive forms)
 - To-date 22 families have utilized this service via the T.O.T.S. program
- Coordinator makes recommendations/referrals for other services and evaluations, such as Samaritan Behavioral Health-YCATS (Young Children's Assessment and Treatment Services) and Dayton Public Schools' Special Education program
 - Suggested eight families be referred to YCATS; three families be referred to HMG one family be referred to DPS-SE
 - Two of these families are currently enrolled in HMG

In addition to the community partnerships that have been developed, the engagement of families is on the rise since the start of the program year. Within the past three cycles, we've recruited 167 parents and approximately 131 children. Of those recruits, we've had 72 parents and 103 children participate in at-least one session. The T.O.T.S. program has graduated 34 families, whom we believe are taking off to success!

In fact, one mother completed a nursing certification program at Sinclair while attending the program, and will begin her residency in the summer of 2011. Another family has selected Edison as their school of choice for the 2011-2012 school year. However, as with any program, there are changes that must occur in order to retain family engagement and increase efficiency.

The next section describes the significant challenges that have impacted the implementation and management of the program.

Challenges

Aside from the Dayton Urban League's sudden closing, there were other issues that plagued families throughout the program. One of major challenges that affected family participation in the program was transportation. During our planning phase, we interviewed a number of families that listed transportation as a barrier. At the time, the Dayton Urban League was not able to provide any form of support to address this issue. Now, as the T.O.T.S. program is managed by MVCDC, Inc. transportation is available via bus tokens, on an as-needed basis.

While this challenge was addressed, other factors which keep families from participating have been identified: session provided too early on Saturdays, weather, personal schedules, work, etc. A family's personal situations and decisions have to be considered when attendance data is reviewed, because there could be more than one barrier keeping them from actively participating and eventually "graduating" from the program. Staff has worked diligently to ensure that families' needs are being met. In addition to transportation, another challenge that influenced the program was stable child education staff.

Since December 2010, the program has a child education staff turnover rate of 50%. Now and in the past, substitute teachers and teacher's aides were utilized to provide our child education component. The fact that some of the staff are part-time and cannot work over a specified amount of hours and others are full-time and can't be paid overtime, causes a negative impact on their attendance during the Saturday sessions. It is very difficult to find replacement subs, because of their current work schedules and personal decisions as to when and where they work. This challenge will continue to be monitored, as staff may select not to work on the T.O.T.S. program in the next program year, to free-up their personal schedule in order to spend more time on the weekends with their families.

Currently the program budget allocates for three staff members, two full-time and one part-time. In December 2010, two full-time staff members implemented the program; however, in April 2011, the family support specialist resigned due to personal circumstances. In the midst of completing Cycle Three and recruiting for Cycle Four, it has been a challenge to effectively support families within the following areas: conducting home visits, recruiting, building community partnerships, facilitating three

separate program sessions, and following up on referrals made to families in need. While it has been a challenge, it has been possible to maintain quality and contact with families from all three cycles. The agency has been very supportive, whenever supervision and/or resources are needed, including working swiftly to post, interview, and hire a new team member by July 2011.

The next section describes suggested changes that may increase family engagement and reduce staff turnover and burnout.

Proposed Modifications

The Edison T.O.T.S. program is designed to provide families with access to community services in order to overcome barriers that would negatively impact a child's physical, social, emotional and mental development. There are a number of components that make a program whole. Below is a list of component modifications being proposed for consideration and approval by Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc.

Staffing:

1. Hire child education staff to specifically work on Saturdays, and then allow those staff to pick-up more hours during the week. Interviews should take place to demonstrate the seriousness of the position. Another option could be to provide overtime to two part-time staff and two teacher aides.
2. Develop a partnership with Wright State University's Center for Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA), as well as Social Work departments at other local universities/colleges, in order to implement an internship position that could provide graduate students with hands-on experience in the areas of management, social service and direct service. In September 2011, CUPA provided a graduate-level intern for a total of 300 hours.

Budgeting:

1. Re-allocate funds to rent a bus and/or van to transport families to and from field trips. Currently the budget has a line item for two field trips @ \$45 per hour, up to 4 hours. However, bus charter companies charge that amount for one trip; therefore funds are not enough to cover two field trips without placing the burden on families to find their own way to off-site locations.
2. Re-allocate funds or provide financial support to hire consistent child education staff (see #2 in the **Staffing** section).

Recruiting:

1. Hire program graduates to function as outreach workers, within eligible attendance zones.
2. Place program information on the agency's website, in order to boost visibility of the program's partnership and purpose.

Note: All program modifications are being proposed with the understanding that funding, time, and resources will be taken into consideration by Miami Valley Child Development Centers, Inc. administrators.