

Growing Great Kids Curriculum Implementation Study: Executive Summary

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About LeCroy & Milligan Associates:

Founded in 1991, LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. is a consulting firm specializing in social services and education program evaluation and training that is comprehensive, research-driven and useful. Our goal is to provide effective program evaluation and training that enables stakeholders to document outcomes, provide accountability, and engage in continuous program improvement. With central offices located in Tucson, Arizona, LeCroy & Milligan Associates has worked at the local, state and national level with a broad spectrum of social services, criminal justice, education and behavioral health programs.

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Executive Summary

LeCroy & Milligan Associates, Inc. was contracted by Great Kids, Inc. (GKI) to perform an implementation assessment of the Growing Great Kids (GGK) curriculum, as it is used by the Healthy Families Arizona (HFAz-Pima) home visitation program of Child and Family Resources (CFR), in Pima County, Arizona. This study was conducted from April 1, 2013 through March 30, 2014. This study sought to:

- Develop, pilot, and refine fidelity metrics, tools, and protocols for broad use by programs in assessing how fidelity implementation of the GGK curriculum impacts family outcomes and professional competencies;
- Evaluate the impact of the *GGK Tier 1 Certification Training*, *GGK Tier 2/3* professional development, and *GGK Refresher Training* on home visiting and supervisory practices;
- Evaluate supervisory practices based on the framework of the *RE-MAP: A Model For Supervising Home Visitors Seminar*;
- Ensure that GGK is being delivered with the highest level of quality by HFAz-Pima, with the ultimate goal of supporting families, according to their individual strengths, stressors, values, culture, skills sets, etc.; and
- Provide HFAz-Pima Program Supervisors and Family Support Specialists (FSS) with the opportunity to highlight program strengths, identify and document best practices, and learn and grow as a program.

Using quantitative and qualitative methods, LeCroy & Milligan Associates assessed the HFAz-Pima program's implementation of the GGK curriculum against 47 fidelity metrics (see Appendix A). Of the total metrics and sub-metrics evaluated (N=50), HFAz-Pima met or exceeded 33 metrics, did not meet 14, and three were not applicable to the program.

It should be noted that this study piloted the development and measurement of these metrics. Until the metrics are further refined, it is preliminary to provide the program with a summative "fidelity score." In lieu of a score, the evaluation team synthesized all data collected to identify areas in which the program demonstrated a high level of fidelity (both prior to and during the study) and opportunities for improvement or advancement in practices.



Key Program Strengths and Areas Improved Over the Course of the Study

The HFAz-Pima program implements the GGK curriculum with a high level of fidelity to the intended model in many ways. Additionally, over the course of this assessment, several practices notably improved, which are highlighted below.

Staff Training and Professional Development

- HFAz-Pima staff **met and exceeded GGK fidelity areas related to comprehensive staff training and certification.** 100% of applicable staff completed GGK Tier 1, 2, and 3 training, assignments, and certification; Integrated Strategies for Home Visiting; and RE-MAP for supervisors.
- Training satisfaction survey results show that **100% of trainees had a high level of satisfaction with the GGK Tier 1 Certification Training, regardless of trainer, and the GGK Refresher Training.** 100% of trainees reported being satisfied or very satisfied across all measures. Likewise, all respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements concerning their satisfaction with the training.
- Trainees reported an **improvement in their overall skill or knowledge after both the GGK Tier 1 and GGK Refresher Trainings.** A paired samples t-test compared the average percentage of trainees that rated themselves at the two highest levels from before to after the Tier 1 training on all self-assessment measures. Before the training, an average of 50% of trainees self-rated at the two highest levels, whereas post-training an average of 90% rated themselves as feeling good or excellent about their skills and knowledge and mostly to very confident about their ability to carry out areas measured ($t=-6.087$, $p=.000$).
- When asked about which **topics from the trainings that will have the most impact on their work**, participants of the GGK Tier 1 Certification Training talked mainly about the Daily Do's and learning to use the GGK manual. After the GGK Refresher Training, more than a third of participants better understood and were more comfortable in using the Growing Great Families (GGF) curriculum. Participants also learned strategies for incorporating the GGK curriculum into the process of administering assessments with families.
- Prior to this fidelity study, administrative records showed that FSS and supervisors were not consistently developing their GGK Competency Assessment and Development Plan within the recommended time frame of two months post the FSS's completion of Tier 1 Certification. However, data collected during the study suggests that **HFAz-Pima began to implement this practice consistently with FSS staff trained after August 2013.**



Supervision and Team Meetings

- Primary ways that **supervision is beneficial** to FSS include:
 - Discussing cases with the supervisor to determine appropriate curriculum to use based on the family's goals;
 - Determining ways to use the GGK/F curriculum emergently with families (e.g. based on needs, crisis, and stress level, etc.);
 - The process of reviewing and receiving feedback on families;
 - Feeling supported and guided; and
 - Using the curriculum as reference materials during supervision.
- FSS staff benefit from **team meetings** by:
 - Learning from one another, sharing skills and experiences, and team discussions;
 - Receiving feedback on the use of specific modules and activities;
 - Receiving support and assistance from team members and supervisor; and
 - Reviewing curriculum, modules, Daily Do's, and activities during team meetings.
- HFAz-Pima staff **exceeded GGK fidelity areas related to supervisor staff qualifications, frequency and length of supervision, and frequency of discussing cases**. 100% of supervisory sessions occurred weekly for at least 1.5 hours per week, during which supervisors and FSS discussed creative outreach and level 1 and 2 families in depth (20 minutes or more) on a monthly basis.
- Topics reviewed consistently **by supervisors during 90% or more of case discussions observed** include: emergent use of the curriculum; activities and modules used during visits; follow-up on case discussions from previous supervision sessions; tools for assessing family progress; plans for next home visit; and strategies for engaging creative outreach families.
- Supervisors received a **high average quality rating of 2.9 (out of 3)** for listening to FSSs during sessions observed and allowing FSSs time to reflect and respond appropriately. Supervisors also received a high average quality rating of 2.8 for use of reflective supervision.
- Supervisors used and/or demonstrated the **use of Action Tools during 89% of family cases observed**. Supervisors most commonly coached on the use of Problem Talk, Wondering Curiosity, and Accentuate the Positive.



- FSS staff rated the **effectiveness of their supervision at an average of 4.2 out of 5 (5 = completely effective)**. Comparison of pre and post online survey results indicate that FSS have greater satisfaction with supervision at the post survey regarding: Tier 2/3 progression and completion; discussion of how FSSs used GGK curriculum during previous home visits; and improved supervisor knowledge of families.
- One fidelity metric - *Home Visitors and Supervisors review, revise, and tailor Assessment and Development Plans to meet the Home Visitors training needs/goals on a monthly basis during supervision* - **increased from 77% to 79% over the course of the study** and was just shy of meeting the 80% fidelity standard. Likewise, the average supervision rating score given by FSS respondents increased from 3.0 at pre to 3.4 at post (4 = very satisfied). These combined factors suggests that the program has improved in this area over time, but it is still an opportunity for further growth.

Home Visitation Practices

- Fourteen home visit observations were completed by the evaluation team. The FSS staff **met the targets for nine out of the 11 metrics, demonstrating that staff observed have a strong adherence to implementing the GGK curriculum with fidelity**. Notable strengths observed during **100% of observations** include: FSS started their visit with “Making Connections” to check in with parents on what happened after their last visit; used the GGK/F manuals as a conversation guide; and ended their visit by reviewing topics covered and encouraging parents to practice activities prior to their next visit.
- FSS determine which **GGK/F modules to use with families based on emergent family needs, goals, stressors, etc.; HFAz and other program requirements; and the child’s age and/or development status**. GGK/F modules were used emergently in 13 of the 14 home visit observations; strong use of this practice reflects that FSS view this topic area as one of the most beneficial aspects of supervision. FSS interviews reveal that they use the GGF curriculum emergently when their family is experiencing crisis or in times of stress, to “help families re-evaluate their values.”
- All or nearly all **FSS were rated highly during home visit observations** in the areas of: encouraging parent and child interactions; allowing parents time to reflect and respond; demonstrating effective listening skills to build trust; and keeping visits strengths-based. Likewise, **100% of parents were:** engaged during visits; interacted with their child; recognized or referred to child development milestones; and had a good rapport with their FSS.



- **FSS encouraged family engagement** during visits by:
 - Being aware of family cues and responsiveness to activities;
 - Modifying activities to suit a family’s needs, interests, and culture;
 - Demonstrating play, activities, and making toys;
 - Using Ready for Play and Getting in Sync to strengthen parent and child interactions by enhancing parents’ awareness of cues from their infant/toddler; and
 - Checking in with families to determine what was learned or gained from the visit, new skill sets the parent will apply to their daily interactions with their child, and areas to practice for the next visit.
- **Daily Do’s were utilized during all 14 home visit observations, with Brain Builders, E-Parenting, and Character Builders used most often.** FSS also utilized **GGK Action Tools** in all 14 home visit observations to promote parents’ critical thinking, self-confidence, problem solving, self-sufficiency, and skill building. Accentuate the Positive, Wondering Curiosity, and Normalizing were used most often; while Feel Felt Found was not used during any home visit observation.
- FSS use **GGK Milestone Charts when reviewing a child’s development status during assessments** to: help parents set realistic expectations for their child and watch for future development; teach families about practices to support their child’s development and the payoffs; and as a conversation guide, to ask families about their baby’s development and answer their questions.
- FSS survey results showed a statistically significant **increase in frequency of distributing parent handouts and referencing its contents during visits from the pre to post study survey.** Other FSS practices aimed at building parents’ skills, enhancing parent and child interactions, and strengthening the family unit that **showed improvement over time** are: using Ready for Play and Getting in Sync during home visits; and using the conversation guide in the GGK books.

FSS Observations of Curriculum Impact on Families

FSS interviewed discussed the impacts they have observed of using the GGK curriculum on families. FSS gave a variety of responses, focusing on the unique aspects of different tools available through the curriculum, including:

- The **Protective Shield** demonstration has a notable impact on parents as it helps emphasize the importance of E-Parenting practices to build a strong foundation on which their child may grow (i.e. character builders).



- Families also value the **E-Parenting Daily Do**. For some families, empathetic parenting is a new concept, while others do this practice naturally. FSSs feel that the curriculum is written in a way that FSS can demonstrate this behavior and explain why parents should follow these practices. Families also like the concept of putting feelings into words, as a way to improve family communication.
- The **Bubble Brain** visuals and the **Brain Builders Daily Do** handouts help parents recognize the impact of strong parenting and child development practices on their baby's brain development.
- FSSs appreciate that the **curriculum is research and fact-based** so that they can better explain and back up their home visitation strategies with what is written in the curriculum.
- The **GGK Tool** helps parents to express how they have internalized and interpreted the tools that FSS are teaching them. Families find this tool to be a useful reflective activity.
- **GGF modules**, such as "Our Family Values," "Parental Expectations," and "What I'd Like for My Child," help families articulate their values and acknowledge ways their parenting practices will grow certain characteristics they would like to see in their child. Parents feel proud when they revisit these tools, noticing how they reached their goals and of their child's accomplishments realized over time.

FSS also provided several examples of ways they believe **families have achieved success through the GGK curriculum**. Examples include:

- Parents have **internalized the use of Daily Do's on a routine basis**, such as incorporating the 4 Steps to Success Daily Do into their activities, without prompting by the FSS;
- Families have **improved their bonding and attachment** over time;
- Families are **less stressed** and have access to tools and strategies that help them **handle their stress more productively**;
- Children have **met and exceeded physical development milestones** or overcome developmental delays, because parents use GGK activities that support development; and
- E-Parenting strategies have **helped parents work through tantrums** of younger children and encourage pre-teen and teenage children to better express their emotions and feelings.



Areas for Improved Fidelity Implementation

Recommendations for Staff Training and Professional Development

FSS respondents to the online survey and interviews provided a variety of topics or areas to work on in supervision and future professional development, which would enhance the quality of daily practice with families in the field (related to using the GGK/F curriculum and beyond), including:

- Consistent review of the GGK/F curriculum and annual advanced practice training (i.e., Refresher training);
- Strategies and skill building that focus on wraparound home visiting topics, such as local resources and policies;
- Working with special populations; and
- Learning more about health related topics.

Recommendations for Supervision

Opportunities to **improve supervisory practices** include:

- Ensure **timely and consistent development and review of the FSS’s GGK Competency Assessment and Development Plan** during supervision to support the 6 competencies:
 - (1) Establishing the caring relationships with families that result in motivation to grow;
 - (2) Cultivating the growth of secure attachment relationships by fostering empathic and nurturing parenting practices;
 - (3) Supporting parents to optimize their child’s development potential;
 - (4) Nourishing the parents interest in providing competent basic care, healthy nutrition and preventative health practices;
 - (5) Expanding the parent’s capacity to manage stress and to utilize a variety of community resources that will strengthen the individual parent as well as the family; and
 - (6) Incorporating cultural practices into home visits aimed at solidifying the family’s identity and enriching parenting.
- Adjust **length and frequency of supervision** to best meet FSS learning and schedule needs, such as longer or more frequent supervision for those with less direct service experience.



- Review and demonstrate **key modules, Daily Do's, and activities during supervision to support FSS skill building**. Examples include: using the new GGK/F curriculum emergently; implementing Parent Handbook Binders; discussing sensitive topics with families; using the GGK Tool; and reviewing home visit notes for accuracy and completeness.
- Maintain a **current and evolving understanding of GGK/F and use curriculum materials as references during supervision** to enhance best practice implementation and family outcomes.
- Check in with FSS on their **self-care strategies** and **provide emotional support** when needed.
- Increase **use and demonstration of RE-MAP strategies during supervision**: E-Supervising; strength-based communication strategies; reflective supervision practices; and Action Tools. Shadow other supervision sessions to better understand different supervisory styles, practices, and use of strategies. Shadowing may help increase consistent application of high quality supervision strategies by all supervisors.

Opportunities for Advanced Practice Outcomes

Opportunities for **improving home visitation practices**, to enhance implementation fidelity and support enhanced outcomes for families, include:

- Continue to increase **consistent distribution of Parent Handbook Binders** to all families and ensure accessibility of toy making supplies.
- Increase the **use of laminated Daily Do's and Daily Do Visuals** during visits, explicitly noting when the FSS or family uses/demonstrates them. These practices will anchor essential concepts and support parents in building confidence, competence, and skills to enhance child development.
- Reinforce family learning by **revisiting completed key activities, handouts, and Daily Do's during visits** (i.e., Replays found in GGF) and helping families to make connections with past GGK learning and modules.
- Continue to **encourage parents' development of critical thinking and problem solving skills during visits** to support their self-sufficiency, improved health outcomes, and safe and stable living environments.



Recommendations for Future Fidelity Assessment

The evaluation team recommends that GKI consider the following strategies to better support programs in implementing the GGK curriculum with fidelity to the intended model.

- **Revise the Fidelity Metrics** developed in this study to create a more refined focus for future assessments.
- **Continue the distribution of best practice standards** developed as a result of this fidelity to all programs using the GGK curriculum.
- **Make advanced professional development training more accessible** for GGK curriculum sites. Underscore the value of advanced training to program administrators. Study findings suggest that a GGK Refresher Training is a beneficial continuing education strategy to support both new and experienced staff in better use of GGK with fidelity.
- **Develop a quality assurance and fidelity assessment tool-kit**, so that LeCroy & Milligan Associates may conduct (or train local staff to conduct) assessments for programs that utilize the GGK curriculum. GKI can recommend that programs utilize this tool-kit as a way to educate, measure, monitor, and improve their adherence to model fidelity. Study results and anecdotal reports from program leadership show that the program's standards of practice improved because of this assessment. By engaging staff in this assessment, staff became more cognizant of fidelity standards and how their practices aligned with these standards, and more openly shared best practices among co-workers.

