

Explorers Dimension at the El Camino Learning Center
Report to UCOP
Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, UC San Diego
June 30, 2001

Overview

In response to the University of California President's call for proposals for "Advancing Student Achievement through Collaborative 'Action Research'," representatives from UCSD's Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC), the Boys and Girls Clubs of San Dieguito, the San Diego Housing Commission, Del Mar Hills Elementary School and the local junior and senior high schools proposed to bring together "collaboratively designed and supported programming to the Learning Center operated by the Boys and Girls Clubs of San Dieguito in the federally funded El Camino Town Homes located in Del Mar, California."

There are 42 families living in the housing project, including 115 children between the ages of 3 and 18. The residents have met federal poverty guidelines in order to qualify to live at El Camino. El Camino is an ethnically mixed neighborhood, the residents of which speak more than a dozen home languages. What makes El Camino unique, and creates special problems for young residents, is its location in affluent Del Mar. While El Camino residents live well below the poverty line, the children attend school in an area with an average household income of \$66,320. Whereas El Camino is ethnically and linguistically diverse, 93% of Del Mar's population is white. The social and economic extremes of this situation, reflected in the local schools, pose particular problems for the El Camino children, especially as they approach junior high school. It was these social and educational problems that our research collaborative sought to address in this study. Our applied goal was to offer these children a comfortable, but challenging academic space in which to develop a sense of their capabilities and assets.

Using an approach based on action research in a community of knowledge which is marked by reciprocal exchange of expertise and learning, we were guided in our study by the following research questions: 1) How do children from the housing project negotiate their presence in the affluent area's schools? and, after designing and implementing a homework/exploratory learning club that takes that information into account, 2) How can we learn from and improve the effectiveness of an informal learning program located in the housing project and designed to link the university, Boys and Girls Club, housing commission, and schools in a holistic approach to learning?

We began our study at the beginning of academic 2000-2001, with meetings of the original members of the action research collaborative in order to begin to design programming for the Learning Center. In mid-September, at a meeting at the local middle school, the group decided to conduct a needs assessment with the child and adult residents of the Town Homes. The assessment instrument was jointly designed and administered by the Boys and Girls Club in October. The results were analyzed by the group in late October, and in early November, program design began. During this process, it became clear that K-6 children comprised the largest group of child residents and those who were most interested in participating in a new program. Additionally, most parental interest came from the families of K-6 children. On the basis of this evidence,

the action research collaborative's focus changed, and the representatives of the middle and high schools dropped out. In January, a new elementary school principal joined the action research collaborative as well as four teachers and three UCSD undergraduate students, two of whom were doing field research internships in Human Development. In addition to changes in the members of the action research collaborative, the original program design, which called for programming at the housing project's Learning Center was changed. The new program, the Explorers Dimension, opened on January 31 and February 1, for one afternoon per week in each of the two elementary schools attended by the El Camino children. In mid-April, the program expanded to include the two days at the schools as well as two days per week at the Learning Center.

Consistent with the grounded and open nature of action research (Chamot 1995; Eden & Huxham 1996, Van Beinum 1998), our action research collaborative, our study, and the design of the program we implemented changed in response to the changing ecology in which we worked. In spite of substantial changes over the last 10 months, we have been able to both address our research questions and implement a program that has demonstrated positive outcomes for the children, adults, and institutions involved. We have learned that without special attention to their needs and particularly, their potentials, the children from the housing project do not easily negotiate their presence in the affluent area's schools. We have also learned that the best way to link the university, the Boys and Girls Club, the housing commission, and the schools in a holistic approach to learning is to move bodies (of the children, mentors, and engaged adults) through the spaces of school, neighborhood and virtual communication. In addition, we have learned that by coordinating existing resources in a process of collaborative reflection and development, we can deliver an effective informal learning program at relatively low cost, which points to the program's potential for sustainability. These lessons as well as others learned from our action research collaboration will be addressed in more detail below.

Action Research Collaborative

The action research collaborative that originally proposed the Explorers Dimension consisted of a UCSD faculty member and two postdoctoral fellows who are members of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition at UCSD. These individuals remain active in the project. In addition, the Boys and Girls Club staff person employed as unit director at the El Camino Learning Center has been very actively engaged, although the individual who filled that role changed in early September. Similarly, the individual representing the housing commission changed in early September. Of the other proposed members, only the principal of Del Mar Hills Elementary has remained actively engaged. As noted above, representatives of the local middle school and high school dropped out when it became apparent from the needs assessment that the new program should target children in grades K-6. (Interestingly, the principal of the middle school was instrumental in developing the needs assessment.) New members who joined the action research collaborative in January were the principal of Del Mar Heights Elementary, the other school attended by El Camino children, and four classroom teachers from the two schools. In January, the group was also joined by a student research assistant from UCSD and two student interns from the Human Development Program. Another member, who became active in the fall was the Program

Director of the Boys and Girls Clubs of San Dieguito. The community members of the collaborative who were most active in nine meetings of the action research collaborative as well as ongoing e-mail correspondence were those in the position to mobilize resources, i.e., the two principals, the two Boys and Girls Club employees, and the representative of the housing commission. Most of these individuals accepted no or only minimal compensation, asking that funds be directed to the program.

A pilot version of the Explorers Dimension was implemented during the winter quarter. The need for formalized guidance of UCSD mentors who were interns in a field practicum in Human Development, as well as the need for regular and consistent field notes led the action research collaborative to recommend hiring two student research assistants to fulfill these tasks. These individuals participated with other members in the action research collaborative by attending meetings and posting their fieldnotes on a listserv which included all members of the collaborative and the UCSD mentors.

In all, 11 undergraduate mentors from UCSD's Human Development program participated, one in the fall, three in the winter, and nine (two of whom continued from the winter quarter) in the spring. One of this last group was motivated to seek employment at the Learning Center after graduating in June and has been hired by the Boys and Girls Club as the Learning Center's program director.

Needs Assessment

The needs assessment instruments for children and parents was developed in meetings of the action research collaborative and administered on a voluntary basis to child and adult residents of the El Camino Townhomes (See Appendix 1.). English, Spanish, and Russian versions were made available. Twenty-four children and eleven adults from eleven households responded to the surveys. The number of children responding (24) was consistent with the number of children ages 6 to 14 of the parents who responded (25).

Preliminary analysis of the survey data was done by a UCSD postdoc, the Learning Center unit director, and an intern from the Human Development program. Finer grained analysis was done by the action research collaborative at meetings in October and November. The majority of the respondents were children and parents of children who already participated in the Learning Center. Of the twenty-four child respondents, there were ten girls with a mean age of 11.9 years. There were fourteen boys with a mean age of 9.29 years.

Both parents (73%) and children (86%) desired a college education for the children. Most parents (91%) and children (83%) described the children's academic performance as average or above average. Twenty-one percent (21%) of the children, but none of the adults, described the children's academic performance as excellent. When asked if they were happy with how the children were doing in school, most of the parents (82%) and children (79%) said they were happy. There was a greater difference in parents' and children's responses to being asked if they were content or satisfied with the children's social relations and/or wellbeing at school. While eighty-eight percent (88%) of the children reported being content/satisfied, only sixty-four percent (64%) of the adults did so.

Both parents and children were equally interested in enrichment in computers (55% and 58%). Other than computers, children were most interested in enrichment in

sports (42%), writing (42%), and Spanish (42%). Parents, while interested in enrichment for their children in writing (64%) and sports (45%), were also interested in math (55%), reading (45%), and music (45%). An area of substantial difference between adult and child respondents was in the kind of program they would prefer. The parents preferred a structured and school-like program (82%) and the children preferred an open and club-like program (83%).

The most surprising result of the needs assessment was the discrepancy between the adult agency representatives' assumptions about the residents' needs and the self-report responses of the residents. For example, the service providers anticipated that the children would be struggling academically and socially in school and would also welcome additional help in English. The majority of parents and children reported being content with the children's academic performance and comfort at school. Because this discrepancy is suggested by the potential for positive bias in self-report (Pelham 1998, Robbins 1963), the student intern interviewed the Boys and Girls Club staff at the Learning Center. The Unit Director reported that while 91 children had participated at the Learning Center, roughly one-quarter attended regularly and voluntarily. It is probable that those who responded to the survey were heavily represented by this self-selected group of highly-motivated children, and that it was they who encouraged parents to respond to the survey in order to receive a small incentive (candy) for turning in the survey. As it turned out, our experience in running the Explorer's Dimension also suggests that at least a portion of the El Camino children, and most of those attending the Explorer's Dimension, do struggle in school, both academically, and socially. This will be discussed further below.

Project Implementation Design

In order to respond to the interests expressed in the needs assessment, the action research collaborative began developing a plan that would combine school-like activity and play. Because the Learning Center was originally constructed as a three bedroom apartment, the relatively small and crowded environment was judged by the collaborative not to be conducive to a school-like atmosphere. Frankly, there was too much noise and too many bodies present. Also, because the Learning Center was being run by the Boys and Girls Club, which had an open-door policy, meaning all children could enter and depart at will, the space and noise problems were exacerbated. For these reasons, the action-research collaborative deviated from the originally proposed plan, and chose to implement the Explorer's Dimension at the two elementary schools attended by the El Camino children.

Schools

Del Mar Hills Elementary and Del Mar Heights Elementary are located within a mile of each other and both about two miles from the El Camino Town Homes. The schools serve children from grades K-6. During winter quarter, the Explorers Dimension started to run for 1.5 hours after school on Wednesdays at Del Mar Heights, and Thursdays at Del Mar Hills. Later, the Del Mar Hills program day was changed to Mondays. This was done in response to scheduling conflicts and to assure that the children had homework, which they often did not have on Thursdays. At Del Mar Heights, one male second-year teacher participated and the program took place in his

sixth grade classroom. The room was bright, airy, and quiet. At Del Mar Hills, two female teachers, a veteran of several years and a first-year teacher, participated along with a newly credentialed female substitute teacher. Del Mar Hills is built in an open design favored in the sixties and seventies. Several classrooms radiate like pieces of pie from a central shared space used as a computer lab. The rooms each have at least one partially open wall, providing access to the center and sometimes to other classrooms. Here the program was held in the first-year teacher's fifth grade classroom. The room was open on one of its three sides to another classroom and the shared central space. It was often noisy and, though open, appeared dark and crowded.

Transportation

The children from El Camino who attended the two schools were bussed to and from the sites by the school district. In order for them to remain after school for the Explorers Dimension, the Boys and Girls Clubs of San Dieguito provided transportation home after the program using a Club van and Club staff with Class B licenses. This service was provided as an in-kind contribution by the Boys and Girls Club.

Snack

Because the children had been at school all day, the action research collaborative recommended that a healthy snack be provided during the program. This was purchased and made available by the Unit Director from the Learning Center. Due to logistical challenges, a small supply of snack items was provided to the UCSD research assistants to store in their cars for use in the event that the Unit Director or her substitute were unable to make it to the program on any given day. The snack was provided as an in-kind contribution from the Housing Commission and Boys and Girls Club.

It is important to note that the timing of the snack was different at the two schools. At Del Mar Heights, children had snack at the beginning of the program and in the classroom. There, the snack was accompanied by casual socializing with the teacher, researchers, and mentors. At Del Mar Hills, the children had snack after homework, approximately 45 minutes into the program. There, snack was offered outdoors, in uncomfortable conditions on park benches or a black top. Snack time at Del Mar Hills was characterized by rambunctious behavior and frequent disciplining.

Homework and Play

LCHC has a long history of research and implementation of informal after-school programs that mix learning and play and use computer games and other activities to enhance academic competencies (See Cole 1996). These programs have avoided overt measurement and school-like tasks. Based on the needs assessment and the experience of the principals and teachers in the action research collaborative, the Explorers Dimension was designed to mix play with educational games and group activities with homework assistance. While the order of the activities was different at the two schools, the program at those sites included snack time, homework assistance, and play with games like "Boggle," "24," math bingo, antonym/synonym bingo, "Life," and "Madlibs." At both schools there were several occasions when the children and mentors went outdoors and played large motor games like basketball or "traffic." When children said they did not have any homework, or had completed their homework, they were offered books and

asked to read and respond to comprehension questions. In the spring quarter, children frequently asked for assistance on longer term classroom projects like essays and reports.

High Ratio of Adults to Children

A characteristic of LCHC's after-school programs has been a high ratio of adults to children. In the winter quarter, when the Explorers Dimension was piloted at the two schools, the ratio of adults to children was 1:4 or 1:3. This was not adequate to address the different needs of the very diverse children. In spring quarter, a larger cohort (9) of mentors from UCSD's Human Development Program allowed for ratios of 1:1 and 1:1.5. This provided for very individualized attention.

Learning Center

In spring quarter, as the number of UCSD mentors increased, the action research collaborative recommended opening the program two days per week at the Learning Center, as well as two days per week at the schools. Before doing this, the collaborative recommended to the Boys and Girls Club staff that the open-door policy not be in force during the hours of the Explorers Dimension, or for a total of 1.5 hours on each of two days. An agreement to that effect was reached.

Analysis of Program Implementation

The Explorers Dimension ran for a total of fifteen weeks, six weeks at the two schools and nine weeks at the schools and the Learning Center. What follows is an analysis of outcomes from implementation of the program.

Methods and Data

While the outcomes of this study are both quantitative and qualitative, the methodology used, consistent with action research and grounded theory (Strauss 1991) was primarily qualitative, drawing heavily on participant observation, ethnography, and ethnographic interviews. One of the postdocs, both student researchers, and the Unit Director at the Learning Center produced a total of 63 field notes based on their participant observation at the schools and the Learning Center. These were posted to a local listserv (hudproject@communication.ucsd.edu), which included the members of the action research collaborative and the student mentors from UCSD. In addition to correspondence about logistics, over ninety e-mail messages on the listserv (other than the field notes) were used for questions on appropriate actions to take, discussion of design issues, and comments on the field notes. These electronic data were entered into a database at LCHC which permitted searches by keywords, dates, and names.

Other sources of data included journals in which each of the UCSD mentors recorded field notes after each site visit. These have been coded by hand using categories that emerged from the field note analysis (i.e., Self-image of children; behavioral problems; physical and social contexts; and processes of collaboration.) Other categories which have emerged are discipline, change over time in children, adults, the program, and the participating institutions. In addition to their journals, each of the UCSD students produced a research paper based on their own participant observation. The development of these research papers/projects was guided in weekly meetings by one of the postdocs and the student researchers. Topics included: the effects of environment on help seeking

and aggressive behaviors; rewards and the implementation of a token economy; the role of sports in building relationships that enhance learning activity).

Additionally, the final spring quarter meeting of the action research collaborative was recorded and transcribed, as were ten ethnographic interviews with participating adults including the two principals, four teachers, two Boys and Girls Club staff, the representative of the housing commission, and one former student mentor who is now a staff member at the Learning Center.

Quantitative Findings

Quantitative data include the numbers of children served and average daily attendance. These are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Children served directly by the Explorers Dimension

Schools: n = 23			Learning Center n = 10 (plus 23)		
Age:	Male:	Female:	Age:	Male:	Female:
7	1		5	1	2
8	2	2	6	2	
9	3	1	7	1	1
10	4	2	8	1	
11	4	1	13	1	
12	4	--	14		1
Total:	17	6	Total:	6	4
Ethnicity:	Male:	Female:		Male:	Female:
US Anglo	2			1	
African Am.	3	2		2	3
Latino	4	2		3	
Middle Eastern	2	2		1	
Mixed race	5				
Russian	1				
Total:	17	6		6	4
Total children directly served: 33					
Average daily attendance:		Del Mar Heights	6		
		Del Mar Hills	9		
		Learning Center	15		

Table 1 provides the attendance figures and demographics for the children who were directly impacted by their participation in the Explorers Dimension. The different ages and ethnic groups served reflect the population of the El Camino Town Homes. A surprising finding is that more boys participated than girls. It is important to note that while the school site programs were effectively closed to children other than direct participants, at the Learning Center, children and teens other than those participating directly were often near. On average there were fifteen additional teens and preteens who would attend in small groups around the periphery of the Explorers Dimension Activity. Their attendance increased as the spring quarter progressed.

Qualitative Findings

Due to the fact that this report is being submitted three weeks after the program concluded, our qualitative findings remain preliminary. Clear trends that have emerged across data types and sources are described below under the headings of emergent categories.

Self-image of Children

The children who attended the Explorers Dimension at the schools demonstrated positive change over the course of the fifteen weeks. One clear marker of change was in expressions of confidence. At the beginning of the program, several children used expressions like "I'm stupid.", "I can't do division.", "This is too hard." By the end of spring quarter, these statements were no longer made. Three case studies illustrate the kind of change that occurred.

Jesus is a third-grade Latino boy. Based on 10 field note and journal entries and interviews, Jesus moved from quitting math homework due to its difficulty in early March through a process of self-discovery in April ("I don't understand" to "It's easy."). In May 9, when doing math homework, he volunteered that "I love it!" When interviewed on June 5 and queried about division, he said "Oh, I like that...I like that." He explained the process: "Because like, before I used to go to this [the Explorers Dimension], I sort of had bad grades and stuff...Ant then I came to this, and I started to like to come...I liked it a long more."

Carinna is a third-grade African American girl. Through interactions at the Explorers Dimension it quickly became apparent that her math and reading skills were extremely low. She had difficulty adding single digits and reading brief sentences. Carinna also sat very quietly and rarely spoke. She did not compete for attention and never asked for help. By late April, she expressed pride in reading a story by herself. In late May, she independently wrote a poem and presented it to the children and adults at the program. She also reported feeling better about school and her capabilities.

Antonio is a sixth-grade Latino boy. The individual attention he received at the Explorers Dimension demonstrated that his sixth grade math homework was impossible for him. Asked to solve equations, he had no concept of negative numbers, the role of parentheses in an equation, or the meaning of a variable. He had clearly advanced in grade without gaining those skills. Antonio was often frustrated to the point of leaving the room and sitting outdoors in isolation (though he continued to come). Based on the teacher's knowledge of Antonio's talent in writing, the teachers, mentors and researchers began to focus on that potential versus the math difficulties. By mid-April, Antonio and

written a rap and presented it to the group. He also stayed through the program and was more engaged in homework, including math. He had fewer outbursts and was more open to interaction. At the end of the school year, the principal reported that Antonio had received an award for writing a thoughtful and poignant essay on the meaning of some poems by Robert Frost.

Other children demonstrated change as well. One third-grade Latino boy, who resisted reading at the beginning of the program, was motivated by personal interest to do an independent study on Albert Einstein. Another sixth-grade African American boy who was extremely consistent in highly disruptive behavior and regular attendance received his school's award for his DARE essay. A third-grade Latina girl reported that her math grade had changed from a C+ to an A- because of the help she got at the Explorer's Dimension.

In the interviews with children, all ten interviewees said the program had been helpful and should continue. Most said that the way to improve it would be to have more children participate, including those who were not from El Camino. They said the best part was "the helpers." When asked why she thought it was this program rather than other things that helped her improve, one child responded that at the Explorers Dimension the helpers did not make her feel dumb for asking for help.

Behavioral Problems

In their interviews and at the recorded meeting, the two principals, one teacher, and the Boys and Girls Club unit director all reported seeing improvement in the behavior of the children who participated in the Explorers Dimension. One principal said he had been approached independently by the bus driver who brought the El Camino children to both schools. The driver had asked what happened to make the kids so much better behaved on the bus. The principal felt it was the personal attention and the demonstration of faith in their potential that the children received at the Explorers Dimension. This impression was supported by the other principal and teacher who had noted increased confidence and better social skills in the group. This was also true of the Boys and Girls Club Unit Director.

In order to explore whether this point could be documented in field notes and journals, we coded the 63 field notes and found that 31 referred to behavioral problems. When combining the field notes and the UCSD student journals, we were unable to identify change in the incidence of references to behavior problems. We did, however, see a clear shift from generally disruptive behavior in the winter quarter to more directed interpersonal attacks, verbal and occasionally physical, in the spring quarter. This shift coincided with increased structure in the program and increased bonding between the UCSD students and the children. It appears that as the children became more comfortable in a more structured program environment they began to act out ethnic tensions. For example, most of the personal attacks included racial slurs and were directed by males at males from other ethnic groups.

Discipline

It is interesting to note that most of the personal attacks and all physical violence took place at one school. At that program site, there were more children and more overt discipline. Inconsistently, the same occurred outside the Learning Center at the El

Camino Town Homes, in an atmosphere of no discipline. Still, we suspect that the physical and social contexts played an important role in this phenomenon.

The Role of Physical and Social Contexts

In analyzing the evidence of behavioral change in the children, it became apparent that most and the clearest examples of change had occurred at the Del Mar Heights site. Individual change was difficult to document at the Learning Center, although as more structure and stricter behavioral requirements were put in place, the institutional setting changed and more children began to attend the Explorers Dimension there. Of the two schools, Del Mar Heights had the more closed, but brighter, classroom. There was one male teacher who was consistently present. Also, the number of children present, was consistently lower, making the adult to child ratios at that site higher. There was also the difference in the order of activities and the location of snack time. At Del Mar Heights, snack was eaten in the classroom at the beginning of the session. At Del Mar Hills, snack was eaten outdoors, after homework time. It appears that the apparently more controlled snack setting at Del Mar Heights actually produced a more open space for social interaction and relationship building with the UCSD mentors. Similarly, by having snack in the classroom setting, children who were anxious to get to their homework, could pull out books and start to work with their mentors during snack time, an occurrence that increased over the spring quarter.

Given the many variables, it is impossible to isolate which, if any of the above differences produced the calmer and possibly more productive context at Del Mar Heights. What is clear from the field notes, journal entries, and transcripts is that one school site was characterized by repeated calls for order, discipline, and control as well as more disruptive behavior. This site was also characterized by the presence of different teachers and by groupings of children that acted as cohorts, often for disruption. The other was characterized by less disruption, building rapport between the children and adults and a community of learners (Rogoff 1995) atmosphere that included all present.

It is important not to discount the different physical plants of the two schools. Del Mar Heights is bright and fresh, having been recently renovated. Del Mar Hills is being renovated this summer. Interestingly, the children from that site have commented repeatedly on their excitement about the school being renovated.

Building Rapport

In the winter quarter, the ratios of adults to children precluded the development of regularly paired adults and children. In the spring quarter, there was a process of emergent pairing over the term. The children began to seek out regular partners and to work with them throughout the sessions. This pattern coincided with increased productivity.

A particular instance of building rapport is illustrated in the case of the UCSD mentor who sought and gained employment at the Learning Center after graduation. She has effectively built a social bridge between the university and the town homes as well as between last year's program and its continuation. Importantly, she reports that other mentors from the spring quarter have stopped by to visit the children at the Learning Center since the program ended.

Processes of Collaboration

Our action research collaborative took very seriously the grounded and emergent nature of this project. As noted above, the project has changed and expanded over time. Our collaborative endeavor has demonstrated improving communication, emergent structure, and emerging trust.

We came to rely heavily, but not solely, on e-mail for correspondence and as a virtual space for reflection and ongoing program refinement. While it was important to remember that not all adult participants had access to e-mail or experience with e-mail culture, the listserv proved to be a powerful tool. The principals reported using the field notes as a tool for gaining understanding of the El Camino children in terms of “the whole child.” Insights from the field notes were shared with the children’s classroom teachers and to design special interventions. This was the case, for example with Carinna and Jesus, mentioned above.

Effective use of these field notes, a research tool long used by LCHC, requires a level of trust that the notes will be used constructively. Establishing this trust took time and explicit discussion with teachers, principals, and the other adult participants. Of all the participants, the teachers were the most reticent about using the field notes. Two of the four did find them useful by the end of the program.

The structure that emerged during the implementation process was supported by improved communication. The shared, but differently ordered, activities at each site were one development. Reliability of snack, transportation, and adult mentors were other products of emergent structure. One issue that emerged and which requires further development is that of the distribution of responsibility for discipline. The action research collaborative will work this summer to develop guidelines for adult participants and for children. In addition, the principals, teachers, and researchers will co-develop an orientation for the UCSD mentors that specifically addresses the issues of acceptable behavior and discipline.

Discussion

All parties in the action research collaborative that developed and implemented the Explorers Dimension have expressed the conviction that the program should both continue and expand. In addition to development of the program, we have evidence of development in the participants and the cooperating institutions. In addition, we have evidence that the project has and will continue to make a significant contribution to UCOP’s educational outreach efforts.

Child development

Field note, journal, and interview data indicate that the majority of the children who participated in the Explorers Dimension benefited by acquiring a new sense of belonging at school. Unsolicited comments testifying to positive behavioral change, e.g., less infighting and name calling, came from bus drivers, teachers who were not participating in the program, UCSD students, and the adult participants. In contrast to their frequently unruly behavior, the children voiced support for the program using Heath and McLaughlin’s measure of success (1993), they voted with their feet, attending regularly. Other evidence comes from the former mentor now working at the Learning Center. She reports that the children value the certificates they got at the end of the

program. One child, who had left his at the school said, "Thank God, [another child] took it home." It is now hanging on the refrigerator and his mom is so proud.

Adult development-teachers/researchers/practitioners

The adult participants also report benefit from their participation in the Explorer's Dimension. The Unit Director at the Learning Center reported: "...it's definitely been beneficial for me in working with people and meeting with people and becoming a team in something, a grant like this, something I've never done before." The teacher at Del Mar Heights reported being surprised at the positive effect and the ease of transition between the school and after school environments. He was pleased to participate in a learning environment that mixed play and learning and used a less structured approach.

Institutional Development

Both principals report that having the Explorers Dimension at their schools has been beneficial to the El Camino children, teachers, and their whole student populations. As one describes it:

„I see improvement in behavior and in communication. Maybe that's just natural... I attribute it to possibly ...having extra attention, and feeling more valued and more part of the school in a different way. That's why I think it's important to this campus, it sends a real message.

The representatives of the Boys and Girls Club and the housing commission also report that their experiences with the Explorers Dimension have enhanced their efforts to provide programming that will have lasting benefit for the El Camino children. One clear result is a change in policy at the Learning Center to place more emphasis on intergenerational learning activities. Like the teachers and principals, these participants also say they have particularly enjoyed learning with and from the UCSD students. Reciprocally, the UCSD students have expressed enthusiastic support for the program and its importance to their educations and future plans.

Contribution to UCOP Educational Outreach Efforts

The Explorers Dimension has contributed and will continue to contribute to UCOP's educational outreach efforts by engaging children from groups that are under-represented at the University of California in meaningful contact with UCSD undergraduate students, postdocs, and faculty. Additionally, the Explorers Dimension has and the opportunity it provided to collaborate in action research with community schools and institutions has built productive relations of exchange that promise to continue. That continuation will provide future children from El Camino and those in similar circumstances with UC students and faculty who recognize and celebrate their potentials.

Future Plans

We have secured the commitment of the Boys and Girls Club, the housing commission, the participating schools, and the university to continue supporting the Explorers Dimension with transportation, space, staffing and LCHC guidance for UCSD

student mentors from the Human Development Program. During Year 1, the action research collaborative developed and piloted the program specifically for children from the El Camino Town Homes housing project. This approach was taken in order to facilitate understanding of the particular needs of those children. Interestingly, the program has attracted the interest of other children at the schools and their parents who have approached the principals asking to participate. Based on LCHC's prior work, which has avoided labeling children, e.g., those from the HUD housing, and consistent with the recommendations of the first-year child and adult participants, during Year 2, we hope to expand the program to include other children from the two elementary schools who are referred to the Explorers Dimension by their teachers and the principals, but who do not live in the housing project.

The action research collaborative will use summer 2001 to develop and produce participant guides for children and adults as well as an orientation program for UCSD mentors. These will be piloted in the fall quarter. We will then refine the guides and orientation programs and track their use in the winter and spring quarters.

During summer 2001, the UCSD faculty member and postdocs, together with the principals of the two schools, will develop protocols for 1) quantitative assessment of child participants' academic progress and social skills development, and 2) integration of the after-school program and the children's classroom experience through ongoing communication with the teachers. These protocols will be tested and tracked using researcher field notes and interviews. The assessment tools will be piloted in the fall and refined. The refined versions will be used in winter and spring.

In addition, the schools, the Boys and Girls Club, and the housing commission have all expressed interest in developing a program to actively integrate parents in their children's activities at school and at the Learning Center. The action research collaborative will develop a plan that both recognizes parents' time constraints (most work long hours) and seeks to capitalize on parents' and older siblings talents and accomplishments by organizing a series of parent and sibling-led special programs and projects at the Learning Center.

Finally, while the Explorer's Dimension work has required relatively low funding because the project has coordinated existing resources, the action research collaborative has recognized the need to secure permanent local funding. We will begin the process of developing funding in summer 2001, using reports on Year 1. This process as well as project oversight will be the work of the action research collaborative in Year 2.

Data collection and analysis will be ongoing during Year 2. Final reports and articles will be produced in summer 2002.

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