



**Coming to the Hillsboro Area Hospital campus—
A new look at child development**

one Little Leap at a time

Q-What is Little Leaps? It is a research project which aims to leap forward the developmental outcomes of our little ones, giving our children the necessary skills they need to succeed in school and life. Their leaps, little by little, will build the foundation necessary for Hillsboro's children to build the brightest of futures.

Q-What is this research all about? All parents worry about doing the right thing for their child. However, society, technology, changes in the economy, employment, the environment and a host of other issues has challenged families in new and never before encountered ways. These differences from when you or your parent grew up have challenged some extremely vital methods of relating to the child that previous generations did not experience. The methodology will assure the way that interaction with children covers the essentials that maximize the physical capacity of the child brain at a critical time, when it is growing at its fastest. The methodology has proven to be effective in different environments. What is unique in Hillsboro is that this is now being introduced in the rural environment in a different setting.

Q-How will the program work? The team will use the documentation that the HCCDC teachers already complete. SIU SOM will provide the parents and teachers with bags of toys throughout the year. These bags will be for the parents to keep and use to play with and interact with their child. The bag will include information on what educational domain the toy is targeting and how to use it to stimulate the child.

Q-Time is precious. Does this require a lot of time? The participation level is simple. If a teacher and parent communicates and interacts with a child through play now, no one will be doing anything different or more than they already do. All the documentation paperwork will be done by the teachers. Parents will only continue to complete the currently required HCCDC Ages and Stages questionnaire once or twice a year.

Q-Will the information on my child remain confidential? Each child's name will be protected. The documentation that the research team takes from our teachers will not be accompanied by a name, only a number, so each child's name will never be used in the study. The details of how thoroughly the confidentiality will be protected will be made available to the parents.

Q-Who will be involved? The level of engagement is SIU SOM, HCCDC, parents, child, Hillsboro Area Hospital, Hillsboro Area Health System, Hillsboro Health Foundation, Hillsboro Area School District #3, in that rank order.

Q-Who will be interacting with each child? The staff at HCCDC and each child's parents will be the ones interacting with each child. The research team from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine will be analyzing the data provided to them by HCCDC.

Q-When will the research begin? In August we will have a family night that all parents will be invited to. Parents will hear from the research team at SIU and the team of teachers at HCCDC. They will explain the program in detail and answering any questions. The program will begin in September.

Q-Will parents be charged for participating? No, there is no charge. The partners are covering all of the costs.

Q-What does research mean at Southern Illinois University School of Medicine? Research at SIU SOM is about finding and measuring ways to improve the health of residents. The current project is taking evidence based programs known to improve children's developmental outcomes and introducing them through HCCDC in a rural community. The development levels of the children will be measured, as they already are, to determine if the program is making a difference.

Q-Why Hillsboro Child Care Development Center? The hospital has partnered with the Hillsboro School District for over a decade to assure that there is access to child care that will provide a stepping stone for development of future health care staff, to serve the economic future of the area as well as make certain there is a generally affordable learning and development center to enhance the ability of the community to recruit and retain our staff in the area. The HCCDC was reviewed by SIU SOM and their close relationship with the hospital and the quality of their staff and present programming qualified them to be selected as the partner that SIU SOM would like to study because of their training, development, size, age of child served and existing curriculum, proximity of medical staff and the existing relationship that HCCDC presently has with SIU SOM medical students.

Q-Why Hillsboro? Hillsboro Area Hospital has been in conversation with the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine for a number of years to make a difference to the communities they serve. The SIU SOM service area includes all of the service area of Hillsboro Area Hospital. The hospital has been closely involved in partnering with other groups to improve opportunities for youth.

Q-Why Rural? Research on the developmental deficiencies in the United States have identified that young rural Americans are not enjoying the same levels of development as urban children. We want to put an end to that.

Q-Are there other things a parent can do if they don't have a child in HCCDC? There are things. We'd be happy to share. But even more so, when we can demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach to development, we will be helping others as quickly as possible. The SIU School of Medicine, Hillsboro Area Hospital, Hillsboro Area Health System and the Hillsboro Health Foundation have pledged to make this approach effective and affordable and make the model available to all rural communities in the United States.



Q-Are there any books or toys that are used to teach the child? Yes, there are child safe objects. These objects are provided to the parent as the child develops. When the child has progressed beyond the existing objects, a new set will be provided.

Q-What do parents do with the object bags when the child has progressed? These items will create sentimental value for the child, the parent and siblings. They will remain with the family.

Q-Do the parents have the option of not including their child in the project? Yes, they do. However, the base techniques are part of the existing approach, and it is anticipated that if a parent chooses to take a wait and see approach that "seeing is believing" and their concerns will be allayed and all children will be a part of this methodology.

