




**Latest Research on Head Start and
Other Early Learning Programs**

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Early Learning Programs

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- Head Start and State-Funded Pre-K Programs
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Head Start

Head Start

- Head Start is a federal-to-local comprehensive early childhood program.
- Head Start and Early Head Start follow the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Underfunding of Head Start

- Model early childhood programs received a much higher cost-per-child than Head Start programs receive from the federal government.
- For example, Perry Preschool's cost-per-child was \$15,166 (in 2000 dollars) versus the Office of Head Start's cost-per-Head Start child of \$7,300 (in 2009 dollars). The difference is nearly \$8,000 per child without even inflating \$15,166 into 2009 dollars.

New Federal Funding

- Fiscal Year 2009: \$7.1 billion.
- The recently enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provides \$2.1 billion in new funds for Head Start and Early Head Start during Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010.



State-Funded Head Start in Fiscal Year 2006

- State Funding: \$135 million
- Additional Enrollment: 15,994
- States: Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Wisconsin

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research 2007



Head Start Is a Quality Program.

- Head Start quality has been observed to be consistently good over time (Family and Child Experiences Survey, 2000).
- Head Start programs are rated as “good” using the ECERS-R (Head Start Impact Study, 2005).

Myth of the Fade Out Effect

- **Myth:** Gains to Head Start children “fade-out in a methodologically flawed 1969 Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University Study.
- **Fact:** Reliable studies have found resoundingly favorable long-term effects on grade repetition, special education, and graduation rates of Head Start children. Studies have found long-term favorable effects on child health and achievement test scores (Barnett, 2002; Ludwig and Miller, 2007).

Head Start Provides Favorable Impacts

- Head Start has been an early childhood model by encouraging parental participation and empowering parents.
- Head Start’s quality, comprehensive services ensure that Head Start provides significant educational, health, law enforcement, and economic benefits.

Head Start Fosters Parental Participation and Empowerment

- Head Start's emphasis on parental involvement contributes to positive growth and the upward mobility of Head Start parents by helping to move them out of poverty (Oyemade, Washington, and Gullo, 1989).
- In Head Start and Early Head Start programs, 893,639 former or current Head Start or Early Head Start parents volunteer (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008).

Head Start Provides Favorable Educational Impacts

- A meta-analysis of reliable studies reveal that Head Start children have increased
 - Achievement test scores and
 - Favorable long-term effects on grade repetition, special education, and high school graduation rates (Barnett, 2002; Ludwig and Miller, 2007).

Head Start Provides Favorable Health Impacts

- Head Start reduced the mortality rates for 5- to 9-year-old children that are 33 to 50 percent lower than for comparable children who were not enrolled in Head Start. These rates were reduced to the national average of mortality rates for all 5- to 9-year-old children (Ludwig and Miller, 2007).

Head Start Provides Favorable Health Impacts (Continued)

- According to an article in the May/June 2009 issues of the *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, children in Head Start centers were more likely to receive health consultations and screenings than children in non-Head Start centers were.
- For example, more than 90 percent of Head Start centers screened for child health problems versus 65 percent of non-Head Start centers. (Gupta *et al.*, 2009).

Head Start Provides Favorable Health Impacts (Continued)

- Children attending Head Start have increased access to dental care and have higher immunization rates than non-Head Start children do (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005; Currie and Thomas, 1995).

Head Start Provides Favorable Economic Impacts

- Based upon their review of Ludwig and Miller's 2007 *Quarterly Journal of Economics* journal article, Ludwig and Phillips (2007) conclude, "These impact estimates taken at face value would suggest that Head Start as it operated in the 1960s through the 1980s generated benefits in excess of program costs, with a benefit-cost ratio that might be at least as large as the 7-to-1 figure often cited for model early childhood programs such as Perry Preschool."

Head Start Provides Favorable Economic Impacts (Continued)

- The preliminary results of a longitudinal study of more than 600 Head Start graduates in San Bernardino County, California, showed that society receives nearly \$9 in benefits for every \$1 dollar invested in these Head Start children (Meier, 2004).

Head Start Provides Law Enforcement Impacts

- Head Start has been shown to benefit participating children and society-at-large by reducing crime and its costs to crime victims (Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2004; Garces, Thomas, and Currie, 2002).

Head Start Impact Study

- The Congressionally mandated National Head Start Impact Study is a longitudinal research project designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Head Start program.
- Experimental random assignment research design.
- Value-added evaluation
- Its final report will likely be publicly released by October 1, 2009.

Head Start Impact Study (Continued)

- In contrast to the Perry Preschool evaluation's control group, 51 percent of 3- and 4-year-old children in the Head Start Impact Study's control groups during the Spring 2003 used early childhood services outside of the home.

Head Start Impact Study Findings

- Its first-year findings reflect 6 to 9 months of Head Start.
- Small-to-moderate, statistically significant, positive impacts for 3- and 4-year-old children enrolled in Head Start were found on pre-reading, pre-writing, vocabulary, and parent reports of children's literacy skills.

Head Start Impact Study Findings (Continued)

- A higher proportion of Head Start parents read to their children more frequently than those parents of children who were not enrolled in Head Start.
- A much higher proportion of Head Start children received dental care than children who did not receive Head Start services.

Head Start Impact Study Findings (Continued)

- A higher proportion of parents with 3-year-old children in Head Start reported that their child was either in excellent or very good health as compared with those parents who did not have children enrolled in Head Start.

Head Start and State-Funded Pre-K Programs

How Do These Findings Relate to Recent Evaluations of State-Funded Pre-K Programs?

- The Head Start Impact Study has a wider range of impacts than impacts reported in several recent state-funded pre-k studies.
- Various foundations are funding evaluations of state-funded pre-k programs.
- Findings (effect sizes) from the evaluations are appearing in publications and the media.

How Do These Findings Relate to Recent Evaluations of State-Funded Pre-K Programs? (Continued)

- A few policy analysts have been comparing these effect sizes with the Head Start Impact Study's effect sizes and arguing that state-funded pre-k programs with high standards are more effective than Head Start is.
- This comparison of effect sizes is methodologically flawed (Wong, Cook, Barnett, and Jung, 2008; Duncan and Magnuson, 2007; Cook, 2006).

How Do These Findings Relate to Recent Evaluations of State-Funded Pre-K Programs? (Continued)

- Methodological issues:
 - Creaming (national program vs. several high quality state programs)
 - Different program eligible populations
 - Comparison group inequality
 - Dissimilar evaluation scopes and designs

For more detailed information, go to

<http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/events/briefingmay06-cook/slide1.html>

Recommendations for State-Funded Pre-K Programs (Continued)

- State-funded pre-k programs generally do not have the range of comprehensive services that Head Start provides.
- State-funded pre-k programs, particularly those that target at-risk children, can improve their services and programming by adopting the Head Start Model and following the Head Start Program Performance Standards. A few states already do.

Early Head Start

Early Head Start Impact Study

- The Early Head Start Impact Study was a longitudinal study designed to measure the effectiveness of Early Head Start on the children and families that it serves.
- Congressional mandate
- Experimental research design
- Timeline: 1996 through 2001



Early Head Start Impact Study Participants

- Three thousand and one families were randomly selected from 17 participating programs.
- The children were randomly assigned to either a treatment group (which receives Early Head Start services) or a control group (which does not receive Early Head Start services).



Early Head Start Impact Study's Findings

- Three-year-old Early Head Start children
 - Performed better than the control group did in cognitive and language development.
 - Experienced higher emotional engagement with their parent during semi-structured play than the control group children did.
 - Displayed sustained attention with play objects, and
 - Were rated by parents to show lower levels of aggressive behavior than the control group children did.

Early Head Start Impact Study's Findings (Continued)

- Compared with the control group parents, Early Head Start parents
 - Provided more language and learning stimulation.
 - Were more emotionally supportive.
 - Read to their child more frequently.
 - Spanked their children less.

Early Head Start Impact Study's Findings (Continued)

- Early Head Start parents were more likely than control group parents to ever be employed or participate in an education or job training program.
- Early Head Start parents were also more likely than control group parents to work more hours each week and participate in any education or training program.

Home Visitation Programs

Selected Home Visitation Programs

- Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP)'s Nurse Home Visiting Program (David Olds)
- Early Head Start

NFP's Nurse Home Visiting Program

- This program is a community health program.
- Each mother partners with a registered nurse early in her pregnancy.
- The nurse visits the mother and her baby at their home on an ongoing basis until the child is two-years-old.

Some Impacts of the NFP's Nurse Home Visiting Program

- Evaluations of this program found reductions in:
 - ❖ Child abuse and neglect.
 - ❖ Emergency room visits for accidents and poisonings.
 - ❖ Arrests when the child reaches 15-years-old.
 - ❖ Behavioral and intellectual problems when the child reaches 6-years-old.

Some Impacts of the NFP's Nurse Home Visiting Program (Continued)

- A cost-benefit analysis found that for each dollar invested in this program yields a return to society ranging from \$1.26 to \$5.70 (Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon, 2005).

Early Head Start Program's Home-Based Approach

- Early Head Start programs following the home-based option or approach as of 1997 follow the Head Start Program Performance Standards, but they provide all their services to families through weekly home visits and at least two group socializations per month for each family (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).

Impacts of Early Head Start Program's Home-Based Approach

- Children in Early Head Start's home-based programs had higher levels of engagement with their parent during semi-structured play than the control group children did (Love *et al.*, 2005).
- Early Head Start parents in these programs were rated as more supportive of their child during this type of play than the control group parents were (Love *et al.*, 2005).

Impacts of Early Head Start Program's Home-Based Approach (Continued)

- In comparison to control group parents in these programs, Early Head Start parents
 - Demonstrated greater reductions in stress than the control group parents.
 - Participated a higher number of hours each week in a education or training program.
 - Were more likely to participate in education and training activities (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004).

Brookings Institution Recommendation for Early Head Start and the NFP Model

- Julia Isaacs (2007) recommends expanding the Early Head Start program and developing models to integrate such services with the NFP model.
- This recommendation is already being implemented or is being considered in some Early Head Start programs.

The End