

Evaluation of York County's Head Start Program

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Executive Summary

Several early education programs set the standard for Head Start and model behavior that have demonstrated positive results for children. These models offer insight into how early education can reach the desired audience and obtain the most positive result. Through review of the practices of this program, several factors appear to remain paramount for preschool success: staff compensation and professionalization, a commitment to quality, meeting the needs of family and financial/structural support all form the skeleton of every model program, both private, non-profit and public alike. By reaching toward these goal, York County Head Start may achieve greater results in its early intervention and educational objectives.

Head Start generally operates in the form of a half-day program. However, greater benefits can be achieved when a full-day program is offered, as working parents can rely on Head Start for both early childhood education and as a day care provider. Studies indicate that shifting to a full-day program would allow more children to reap the benefits of Head Start, while resulting in only a small increase in expenditures.

Several longitudinal studies illustrate the benefits of early childhood intervention to targeted individuals directly and society as a whole. A study on the Perry Preschool Project yielded benefits of \$17 per dollar invested, resulting from higher student achievement, higher high school graduation rates, decreased criminal activity, and decreased reliance on social services. Other studies point to benefits resulting from lower enrolment in special education classes and less grade repetition among Head Start participants.

Programs with greater financial resources than Head Start, such as North Carolina's Smart Start, result in an even greater benefit to individuals and society alike. Smart Start offers greater parent involvement, including parenting classes, and transportation to and from child care centers. Studies show that parental involvement is key to the success of early childhood intervention.

Additional funding for York County Head Start would likely result in greater net benefits, by improving the quality of the program and by allowing a greater number of eligible families to reap the benefits discussed herein.

Model Programs

Amy Fowler Kinch and Lawrence J. Schweinhart's 2004 report: *Achieving High-Quality Care: How Ten Programs Deliver Excellence Parents Can Afford* points to the central importance of qualified professionals for high quality of the childcare. They illustrate nine early childcare programs that succeed because of the retention of educated, trained staff respected as professionals in their field. Concurrently the workers in these programs frequently earn a higher pay and receive more benefits than their local comparable colleagues but the result is a better environment more conducive to the children's needs and educational achievement. These nine programs (the tenth program listed is a support project for educators) reveal five areas of distinction: "commitment to quality, staff compensation, professionalization of staff, meeting family needs and financial/structural support."¹

These programs illustrate a commitment to quality that helps them rank in the top of the field. They provide staff with written standards of quality, and communicate standards through reviews, parents' program evaluations, self assessments, accreditation, and training. Implementation of policies that aid staff in achieving high standards and ensure low child-staff ratios, maintaining high educational standards for staff as well as paying due attention to all elements of child care develop this commitment.² Quality care is best evidenced in the Bridges Family Child Care of Madison, Wisconsin. In this center, administrators keep child to staff ratios at half the requirement by the state. Children eat hot meals using only organic foods. A local cooperative, a health food store, two bakeries and an organic food warehouse donate these foods for the children's meals. Reaching out

¹ Kinch, Amy Fowler, Schweinhart, Lawrence J. *Achieving High-Quality Care: How Ten Programs Deliver Excellence Parents Can Afford*. 2004. p5.

² *Ibid.* p7.

to community resources such as these businesses remains an important way of keeping costs down for the program while inviting community leaders to help the children. Many of the programs studied include in their funding sources in kind donations from local communities. The owner, Vic McMurray, has worked in child care for 23 years. She focuses on the movement of programs beyond minimum requirements to better serve the children. She designed her program around the needs of the children she serves. Field trips are taken frequently, and the staff encourages the natural curiosity of 3 and 4 year olds to build their self confidence, academic skills and social abilities. This development remains central to early childhood education and preparation for kindergarten.

Staff in these programs had retention rates that are above the norm for their locations. In one such facility, the Children's for Children center at the Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, staff turnover has never topped twelve percent in the last ten years. Parents in the area note this as a great advantage over centers where their children might not see the same caregiver for more than a few months or even weeks. They have a lower child to staff ratio than is allowable by law so that staff may take breaks and so that "even when we are short staffed, we're overstaffed compared to some centers."³ Keeping this ratio low, and retaining staff represent two of the biggest challenges facing early education centers today. When staff turnover stays low, small children become more comfortable with the school environment, and with teachers. Parents may create relationships with teachers, keeping up with children's activities and milestones at school. Parents at the Children's for Children center frequently have relationships with teachers that span the early childhood of more than one son or daughter.

³ *Ibid.* p18.

This continuity helps the staff to work with the home environment and increases the comfort level of the working parents with staff. These teachers receive salaries that place them among the best-compensated staff in Cincinnati in their field. The program even includes in the mission statement the elevation the status of child care workers by providing livable wages and desirable benefits.⁴ Staff receive the same benefits package as all hospital employees and can select from “a broad menu of additional benefits, ranging from a pension plan to a family vision plan.”⁵ These benefits help administrators to obtain high quality staff.⁶

The Lakewood Avenue Children’s School in Durham, North Carolina meets even higher standards for teacher professionalism. All teaching staff members have bachelor’s degrees in early childhood education and one also has a master’s degree.⁷ Turnover stays very low and the average tenure remains at 4.5 years, and Lakewood Avenue compensates them by paying salaries equivalent to the starting salaries in the nearby public schools. The school gives pay raises based on performance and may earn an extra \$500 to \$3,000 for administrative or maintenance tasks for the program.⁸ One of the teachers commented on the salary gives the educators the feeling of professionalism. Staff also receive professional development expenses to encourage them to visit and learn from other programs. These visits help the center to be more competitive by learning the most current and best practices of similar institutions and also to commune with early childhood educators in other places. Professional development has proved vital to good

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* p19.

⁶ National Association for the education of Young Children. *A Call for Excellence in Early Childhood Education*. July 2000.

⁷ Kinch, Amy Fowler, Schweinhart, Lawrence J. *Achieving High-Quality Care: How Ten Programs Deliver Excellence Parents Can Afford*. 2004. p29.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p30.

results.⁹ Once a month, a paid speaker or workshop leader attends staff meetings on topics selected from teacher suggestions. The school also gives teachers discretion over decisions made in and about their classrooms and educates the teachers about the school's budgetary concerns.¹⁰ This helps the staff to appreciate the allocation and tough decisions made by administrators. These characteristics all influence the professional nature of the staff, reinforcing the view that early childhood educators are professionals in their field.

These nine programs provide exemplary practices when meeting the needs of the community and families they serve. In the Kennewick Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program, teachers focus on family involvement and reaching out to the families they serve to provide a sound rounded education for children of all nationalities, races and income. The population served by this group needs distinct services because of its diverse nature. Many of the children in this school come from other Bosnia and Russia, the staff has teachers who speak both languages. The teachers read stories in both English and Spanish and interpret songs in sign language. Staff includes family educators who make home visits with parents, frequently conducting these visits in the parents' home tongue.¹¹ These educators inform parents about procedures such as kindergarten enrollment and also may share teaching/parenting information and techniques. The program helps adults access educational, literacy and health programs and may provide assistance in obtaining basic home services like housing and electricity because many of the parents are recent immigrants. ECEAP, like Head Start, remains a free program,

⁹ Frede, Ellen. New Jersey Department of Education. *Early Childhood Education: Best Practice Guidance*. July 2005.

¹⁰ Kinch, Amy Fowler, Schweinhart, Lawrence J. *Achieving High-Quality Care: How Ten Programs Deliver Excellence Parents Can Afford*. 2004. pp31-32.

¹¹ *Ibid*. pp37-38.

funded by the Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, and its services are free to eligible low income families.¹² ECEAP also funds a parent coordinator position. This person solely works with families, and offers an orientation in the beginning of the year for parents who want to volunteer. To make possible these contributions, the program allies with Volunteer Center, a local non-profit outfit that formally enrolls ECEAP parents as volunteers. The program provides monthly parent meetings and encouragement to continue adult education and give information on such topics as: “fire prevention, parenting with dignity, health and nutrition, and family literacy.”¹³ This program stands out as a model of staff encouragement to families and parent support.

Professional, compensated staff in a quality program cannot exist without financial and structural support. Funding for each of these programs remains distinct to each one’s circumstances. Some are primarily dependent of family fees while others come from state or federal grants or funding. Many of the centers have other sources, such as those listed in the Miami Valley Child Development Centers in Dayton, Ohio. Primary funding comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Head Start Program funding. The center receives further revenue from other public grants such as the Ohio Department of Education for Head Start Continuation and Expansion, the USDA Child Care Food Program and Head Start Training and Technical Assistance funds. Specific programs often have specific funding sources such as the Ohio Children’s Trust Fund for parent training on child abuse prevention. Corporate and business interests give more revenue and in kind donations such as IBM for computer

¹² *Ibid.* p42.

¹³ *Ibid.* p43.

training and hardware, and Society National Bank to purchase computers. Non-profit groups aid this program through support through programs like United Way's family services and literacy programs.¹⁴ Donations and fund raising drives are frequently held to support public and private programs' activities and in-kind gifts of volunteers, playground equipment and space, books, toys and classroom supplies are provided to these centers to aid staff and children. Soliciting donations and volunteers is a vital part of each program.

Today, early childhood education goes hand in hand with early childhood mental health awareness and intervention. Psychological evidence suggests that the earlier educators intervene to help families stop damaging behavior, the better the chances are of altering that behavior permanently. A 1997 report from the National Center for Children in Poverty, and a 2001 volume from the Center for Mental Health Services from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services each point to characteristics of successful early childhood mental health prevention and treatment programs within Head Start and other preschool programs. These characteristics, listed in the HHS 2001 report, include a family centered and familial participatory approach, individualized programs and services, comprehensive services, community based interventions, coordinated services, developmental needs focus and strength and resilience focus.¹⁵

The 2001 report, *Promising Practices in Early Childhood Mental Health. Systems of Care: Promising Practices in Children's Mental Health, 2001 Series, Volume III*, describes the evolution of service delivery to children. "Because very young are served by several separate service delivery sectors, including early intervention, special

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp87-88

¹⁵ Simpson, J. Et al. *Promising Practices in Early Childhood Mental Health. Systems of Care: Promising Practices in Children's Mental Health, 2001 Series, Volume III.* 2001. pp16-17.

education, mental health, and child welfare, there is a growing emphasis in service delivery on transdisciplinary and transagency collaboration so that child-serving agencies can best meet the needs of children and their families.”¹⁶ Learning from other fields, such as ecology has led early childhood mental health professionals to “broaden their focus from the child alone to the mutual transactions among the child, the family and the community.”¹⁷ Head Start finds itself in a unique and central position to aid in this effort. Because Head Start began and remains more than simply a preschool, the abilities it has to intervene are broad, as are the tools it uses to achieve this. The authors of *Lessons from the Field, Head Start Mental Health Strategies to Meet Changing Needs* identify some of the ways that Head Start programs adapt and reach out to aid children and families with mental health needs, as exemplified in the case of Ulster County, New York. This area contained a “rising number of stressors on families, including poverty, domestic violence, and crime,”¹⁸ resulting in many children and families in need of mental health services. “Traditional mental health services were often difficult for these families to obtain. In addition, as can happen in Head Start programs, mental health care was falling through the cracks.”¹⁹ As a result, Head Start formed a partnership with the Ulster County Mental Health Department (UCMHD) to promote mental health and identify mental health problems as early as possible. A social work and psychology internship now helps Head Start to address four areas of mental health in Head Start: classroom activities, parenting/support skills, staff education and support, and on-site individual and family therapy. The psychology interns help families to deal with children with mental health

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Knitzer, Jane, and Hirokazu Yoshikama, *Lessons from the Field, Head Start Mental Health Strategies to Meet Changing Needs*. 1997. p49.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p49.

problems and facilitate parent support groups. These support groups prove integral to parents asking for and receiving help from professionals. The interns work with the children directly and offer help with therapy and often conduct therapy depending on the qualifications of the intern and the nature of the mental health concern in the child. Other strategies employed by Head Start programs are the formations of parent to parent networks to help parents build support and strength in the community.

In Philadelphia, Head Start parents and children were chosen to carry out the three part intervention know as “Reach Out.” Utilizing a “village” model, this effort developed parent support and educational activities by pairing resilient Head Start families who may have experienced problems with abuse with parents who were new to the Head Start program and had the same risk factors.

Then an intensive support strategy, Community Outreach Through Parent Empowerment (COPE), was implemented. This involved developing parent support and education activities for the newly recruited Head Start parents, building social supports among parents, identifying and sharing effective parenting activities, and promoting active parent involvement. The emphasis was on the many positive ways in which low- income African American parents cope with the stresses of their lives. Cultural expression was encouraged, both in teaching style and group member participation.⁴³ The third component paired up children with acting-out behaviors with trained, “resilient” peers in supervised play sessions.

Evaluations showed this intervention as very effective in engaging the parents, as parents were more able to attract new members than Head Start staff had been. The involved parents demonstrated higher levels of support, greater contact with other parents and lower levels of stressors than parents in a control group. Children who had participated showed more positive peer behavior, self control and interpersonal skills. They also demonstrated lower levels of behavioral problems. Both families who had suffered some type of maltreatment and those who did not benefited from

the program.²⁰ Head Start programs also benefit greatly from on-site as opposed to on-call mental health professionals. These on-site professionals can care for children in the programs, reach out to families, and provide staff support for teachers who often find themselves personally effected by the stressors placed upon the children or upon the teachers themselves. Forming parent networks, and partnerships with local institutions, supporting on site mental health professionals all aid Head Start in providing mental health services to children and their families.

Further, attention to avoid sensitive wording such as “mental health” or “abuse” must be made in order to aid parents’ involvement. Cultural differences between educators and families may cause miscommunication and strife, and programs like the Kennewick ECEAP offer lessons in cultural awareness that helps families succeed. The Philadelphia Head Start parent to parent network and family support system utilized cultural attention and activity to help children overcome stressful situations, and addressing cultural distinctions is a necessary part of addressing early education and intervention concerns.

Overall, many lessons can be learned from all of these exemplary programs, but above all, the message is very simple: treat staff as professionals, and reach out to help through the entire environment that a child lives in. These programs prove that support built through parents can extend to the community and encouraging parents’ to involve themselves in their children’s education is the vital first step to securing communal support for children’s education in the future.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p57.

Full Day versus Half Day Programs

Exposure to a socially and educationally stimulating environment is key to the developmental success of young children. At the same time, quality childcare is essential to enable parents or guardians to pursue educational opportunities or obtain gainful employment. Head Start therefore fulfills a dual role of preparing low income three and four year olds for school, while providing child care services while a parent works away from home. When welfare reform was carried out in 1996, the federal government provided incentives for parents to find jobs, by making child care credits available to TANF recipients. The TANF Fifth Annual Report to Congress stated that in 2000, 58.5 percent of single mothers below 200 percent of the poverty line with children under the age of six were employed, compared to 44.4 percent in 1996²¹.

However, participation in Head Start did not show substantial effect by these developments. According to a report published by MDCR, a social policy research group, the half-day structure of Head Start runs counter to the needs of working parents, especially low income single mothers. The report notes that the half-day program fail to benefit parents who work a full-time and who are in need of child care services throughout the workday. The fact that Head Start only caters to a narrow age group, i.e. three and four year olds, poses a further challenge to parents with multiple children of different ages. In order to allow their children to participate in Head Start, parents are required to drop their younger child or children off at a separate day care facility before

²¹ Gary Bryner and Ryan Martin. "Innovation in welfare policy: evaluating state efforts to encourage work among low-income families." *The Review of Policy Research* 22.3 (May 2005): p325.

taking their older children to Head Start. The Head Start program in York County already addresses this concern, by providing day-care services for younger children on-site.

Studying participants in thirteen different workfare programs throughout the U.S., MCDR noted that the use of child care services increased, while participation in Head Start either remained constant or decreased²². In short, children who could benefit from the educational and social training offered by Head Start are instead entrusted to the care of a day care facility. This poses a serious problem in Virginia, where the state relaxed standards for child care centers in the mid 1990s in order to allow more day care providers to enter the market. Currently, Virginia ranks in the bottom half of states for the required levels of staff training, the staff-to-children ratio, and the educational qualifications for individuals directing a center. The current standards also place no limits on classroom size. Standards fail to meet of the recommended guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Public Health Association, and the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care²³.

In response to the needs of working parents, several Head Start programs across the country have shifted from a half-day to a full-day schedule. The Pelavin Research Institute and The Urban Institute conducted a joint study to evaluate the experiences of eight such programs. Their study concluded that in shifting program hours, Head Start faces several challenges including simultaneously scheduling activities for the children in the afternoon and scheduling meetings with parents. Four of the eight programs surveyed offered structured afternoon activities. However, the other four reserved the afternoon for

²² Young Eun Chang, Aletha C. Huston, Danielle A. Crosby, and Lisa A. Gennetian. "The Effects of Welfare and Employment Programs on Children's Participation in Head Start." *MDRC*. June, 2002.

²³ Mark Warner, Governor of Virginia. "Pre-Kindergarten/Early Childhood." On-line: <http://www.governor.virginia.gov/Initiatives/Ed4Life/Pre-K.htm>. 2005.

unstructured activities, as children tended to tire during the latter part of the day and parents would pick up their children throughout the afternoon.

Home visits pose a further scheduling challenge to full time Head Start programs because they must take place on evenings or weekends and therefore require an additional time commitment from the employees. Five of the eight programs surveyed decided to meet with parents at the center instead²⁴.

Funding remains the biggest challenge for full day Head Start programs. In order to be eligible for federal funds for a full day program, children's parents must be employed or be enrolled in an education or training program. Should a parent become temporarily unemployed or drop out of an education program, Head Start may lose funding for the child in question. In several of the programs studied, local governments and other diverse groups helped make up budget shortfalls.

Head Start Benefits Analysis

Early childhood intervention through York County's Head Start program has the potential to deliver measurable benefits not only to the individuals enrolled in the program but also to society at large. Educational gains resulting in greater high school graduation rates and pursuit of higher education yield higher incomes and greater levels of self sufficiency. Improved emotional and cognitive development, and improved relationships between parents and their children produce a reduction of crime, drug use, and the need for costly special education and public assistance programs in the long run.

²⁴ Brush, Lorelei Ph.D., Sharon Deich, Kerry Traylor, and Nancy Pindus. "Options for Full Day Services for Children Participating in Head Start." *Pelavin Research Institute and The Urban Institute*. March 7, 1995

In this section, we examine the benefits that individuals who have been involved in an early intervention process as well as those accruing society as a whole accrue. A large part of this is a consideration of the success of Head Start intervention, but before entering into a discussion of Head Start itself, we will first look at the individual and societal benefits of early intervention generally. To this end, we examine several different early intervention programs: the Perry Preschool Project, the Early Training Project and Smart Start of North Carolina.

The Perry Preschool Project is one of the oldest programs designed to intervene early in the education and social development of children born in poverty in order to try and place them on equal footing with their peers upon entering grade school. From 1962 to 1967, this study, led by David Weikart and Larry Schweinhart, took its 123 poor African-American subjects at ages 3 and 4 and randomly divided them into a program group, which received a high-quality preschool program based on a participatory learning approach, and then a control group who would receive no preschool program. When the children involved with the study reached age 40, the project gathered data on the 97% of the individuals who were still living. This comprehensive data involved interviews with the participants about earnings, information from the subjects' schools, social services, and arrest records.

The study documented that society got back \$17 for every \$1 in taxes that they spent on this particular early intervention.²⁵ This gain came from several different educational and social measures. In terms of educational measures, the first benefits were seen almost immediately upon entering school as the program group on average

²⁵ Woodard, Kathleen. "Long-Term Study of Adults Who Received High-Quality Early Childhood Care and Education Shows Economic and Social Gains, Less Crime". <http://highscope.org/NewsandInformation/PressReleases/PerryP-Age40.htm>

outperformed the non-program group on various intellectual and language tests during their early childhood years. This testing edge of the control group continued through school achievement tests between ages 9-14 and all the way through literacy tests at ages 19 and 27. The educational benefit column also shows that members of the group who received the preschool treatment were more likely (65% versus 45%) to graduate high school than those who did not receive the treatment.²⁶ The program group was also 20% less likely to repeat a grade than the non-program group.

High school graduation is associated with significant monetary benefits to the individual and to greater society. A study conducted in 1990, found that for white males, one-time offenders had a high school graduation rate of roughly 33 percent. Non-chronic repeat offenders had a graduation rate of 18 percent, while only 3.3 percent of chronic recidivists had attained a high school diploma.²⁷ High school dropouts are also likely to attain significantly lower wages over the course of their life. According to the Department of Commerce, a high school graduate can expect to attain a mean wage of \$26,000, while the mean wage for a high school dropout is \$19,000. Cohen et al. estimate the total lifetime earnings differential between a high school graduate and an individual who has not attained a high school diploma to be roughly \$216,000 (adjusted to 2005 dollars)²⁸.

Participants in the Perry Preschool project also reported far lower enrolment in special education classes. Roughly, 16 percent of participants spent all school years in special education, versus 28 percent of non-participants. Publicly supported Special

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Tracy, P. E., Wolfgang, M. E., and Figlio, R. M. (1990). *Delinquency Careers in Two Birth Cohorts*, Plenum Press, New York (page 59).

²⁸ Mark A. Cohen. "The Monetary Value of Saving a High Risk Youth." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*. Vol. 14 Number 1, 1998.

education carries high costs to taxpayers. According to York County Chief Financial Officer Dennis Jarrett, York spends approximately \$15,800 per year on each of its 1,197 special education students, which amounts to \$8,950 more than spent on students not enrolled in special education programs.

The Perry Preschool Project also highlighted other significant social and economic gains on the part of the individuals who received the early intervention treatment. At age 19, approximately 50 percent of program participants had current employment, as compared to 32 percent for non-participants. At age 27, a considerable gap in the employment rate remained (71 percent versus 59 percent). The study found more of the program group (76 percent versus 62 percent) were employed at age 40 than those who did not receive early intervention. Members of the program group were also more likely to own their own homes by age 40. Membership in the program group also increased the individual's median annual earnings by age 40 by an average of \$5,000. Similarly, reliance on public assistance, e.g. welfare, Medicaid, or unemployment benefits, remained considerably lower for participants in the Perry Preschool Project. At age 27, only 15 percent of participants received public assistance as compared to 32 percent; between ages 17 and 27, 59 percent of participants had at some point received public assistance versus 80 percent for non-participants²⁹

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, the group who received high quality early education had significantly fewer arrests than the non-program group (36% versus 55%) and far fewer members of the program group had been arrested for violent crimes (32%

²⁹ Karoly, L.A., Greenwood, P.W., Everingham, S.S., Hoube, J., Kilburn, M.R., Rydell, C.P., Sanders, M., and Chiesa, J. 1998. *Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*. Washington, DC: RAND Corporation (pages 18-27).

versus 48%) or drug crimes (14% versus 34%). Cohen et al. estimated the societal costs of a life of crime based on a 1998 study. When costs incurred by victims and the criminal justice system are taken into account, the average adult criminal costs society roughly \$236,000 per year. This figure accounts for monetary damages stemming from the crimes themselves while also factoring in non-tangible costs including pain and suffering and the potential loss of a victim’s life. They also include an estimated \$46,000 in costs incurred by the criminal justice system, resulting from criminal investigations, trial, prison, probation, and parole. These calculations are based on the “average” adult career criminal, who commits two to four violent crimes and five to ten property crimes per year³⁰.

Major Findings of the Perry Preschool Project

	Number of Subjects	Preschool Group	No-Preschool Group	P-Value
Mean IQ at age 5	123	95	83	<.001
Age 15 mean achievement test scores	95	122.2	94.5	<.001
Percentage of all school years in special education	112	16%	28%	0.039
High school graduation (or equivalent)	121	67%	49%	0.034
Post-secondary education	121	38%	21%	0.029
Arrested or detained	121	31%	51%	0.022
Females only: teen pregnancies per 100	49	64	117	0.084
Receiving welfare at age 19	120	18%	32%	0.044
Employed at age 19	121	50%	32%	0.032

(Source: Beruetta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, and Welkart (1984))

³⁰ Blumstein, A., Cohen J., Roth, J. A., and Visher, C. A. (eds.) (1986). *Criminal Careers and Career Criminals*, National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

The longitudinal study on the Early Training Project, carried out in Murfreesboro, TN between 1962 and 1965, indicates similar success rates, albeit in different achievement areas. By age 18, only three percent of the children who participated in the program had been enrolled in special education classes, compared to 29 percent of non-participants. Furthermore, at 68 percent versus 52 percent, the high-school graduation rate by age 18 was also significantly higher for participants than for non-participants³¹.

Another landmark program of early intervention is North Carolina's Smart Start. It differs from Head Start in that it is a public/private initiative for the improvement of early education where Head Start is only publicly funded. Therefore, Smart Start has considerably more fiscal resources to work with in order to improve the lives of children from the beginning. Funding for Smart Start is currently \$192 million in state funds, but donations have more than matched this number, with \$200 million in donations for Smart Start as of December, 2004 since its inception in 1993.³²

One study of Smart Start was published in March of 2003 was conducted by the FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team. This team is associated with the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina. The study assessed 110 North Carolina preschool child care programs and observed 512 preschool children on their development between 1993 and 2002. The three main conclusions drawn were as follows: (1) Between 1993 and 2002, child care quality in this sample steadily and significantly increased, (2) Participation in Smart-Start funded activities was significantly positively related to child care quality, and (3) Children who attended higher quality centers scored

³¹ Karoly, L.A., Greenwood, P.W., Everingham, S.S., Hoube, J., Kilburn, M.R., Rydell, C.P., Sanders, M., and Chiesa, J. 1998. *Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*. Washington, DC: RAND Corporation (pages 18-27).

³² "Smart Start History" December 2, 2004. <http://www.smartstart-nc.org/overview/main.htm>

significantly higher on measures of academic and social-emotional skills and abilities deemed important for success in kindergarten than children from lower-quality centers.³³

This study gets at something important. Many of the same findings with respect to improvements in academic and social-emotional skills are found in children involved in Smart Start. However, the study did not find improvements against a non-program group of no early intervention in the form of preschool at all; instead, since Smart Start is so much more comprehensive than any early intervention program, this study compared Smart Start successes against the performance of non-Smart Start preschool programs in North Carolina. Part of the reason why Smart Start gets results so superior to non-Smart Start preschools involves the parental programs offered by Smart Start. Since 1993, 276,500 parents received health and parenting education. The program involves them in every step of the process with their children, and this trend is growing. In FY 2000-2001, for example, more than 28,700 parents participated in Smart Start parenting classes, support groups, and home visiting programs, almost doubling the 14,651 in 1996.³⁴ Another aspect of early intervention that Smart Start covers that gives it an edge over other early intervention programs is transportation to their centers. As a result of this service, children are far more likely to attend Smart Start than other preschool programs because their parents do not have to worry as much about finding the time to drive them out to the centers.

Thus, through the combination of the Perry Preschool Project, the Early Training Project, and the Smart Start Evaluation by the FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team, we learn two important things about early childhood intervention. First, the Perry Project

³³ "Smart Start and Preschool Child Care Quality in NC". A report by the FPG-UNC Smart Start Evaluation Team. http://www.fpg.unc.edu/smartstart/reports/Child_Care_Quality_2003.pdf

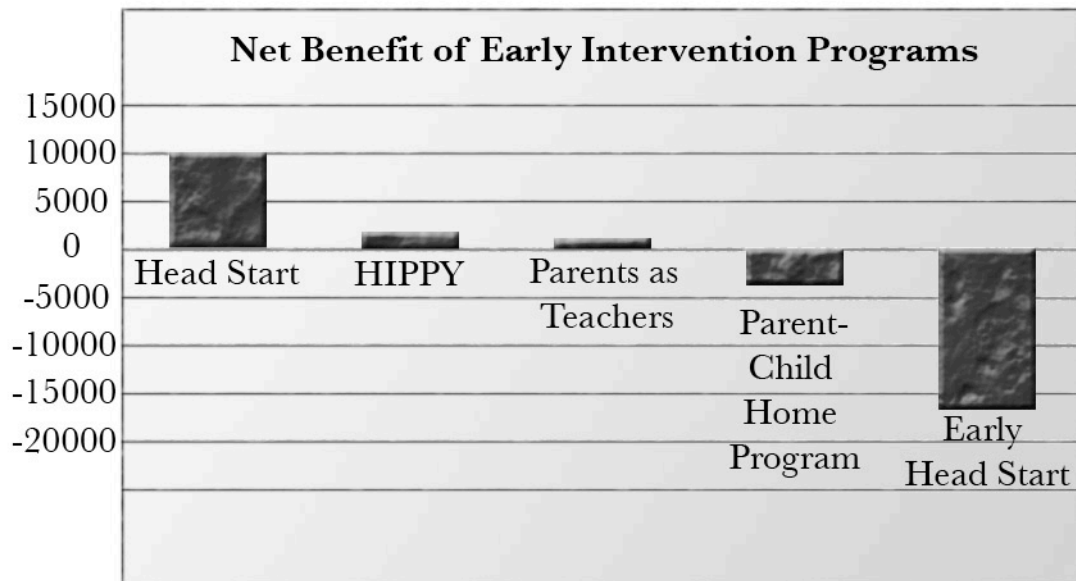
³⁴ Smart Start Quarterly Report Data

and Early Training Project show the significant academic, social, and economic individual gains that can be achieved through the process of early intervention. Several years later, the Smart Start evaluation shows us that specific *types* of early intervention can offer higher yields than plain early intervention by itself. Specifically, parental involvement as a very important factor in effective early childhood intervention, and improved attendance through provided transportation help the child's progress to move in the right direction.

So where is Head Start in this early intervention story? The short answer is that Head Start graduates achieve many of the academic, social, and economic gains seen in the Perry Preschool Project. A benefit-cost analysis carried out by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy in 2004 highlights some of these benefits. The study, which examined various early intervention programs throughout childhood and adolescence, revealed that early childhood intervention for three and four year old children, i.e. Head Start, produces a net benefit of \$2.36 per dollar spent, without taking into account long term societal benefits, which could not be measured in this somewhat limited analysis. Of the programs classified as "Pre-Kindergarten Education Programs," Head Start yielded the greatest net benefit. In comparison, HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), a program that targets parents with low levels of education by providing home visits by teachers, results in a net benefit of \$1.80 per dollar spent. Parents as Teachers represents the only other program included in the study that yields a positive, albeit lower, net benefit of \$1.23 per dollar spent. This program is designed to allow children to acquire basic reading skills by the time they enter first grade. "Parent

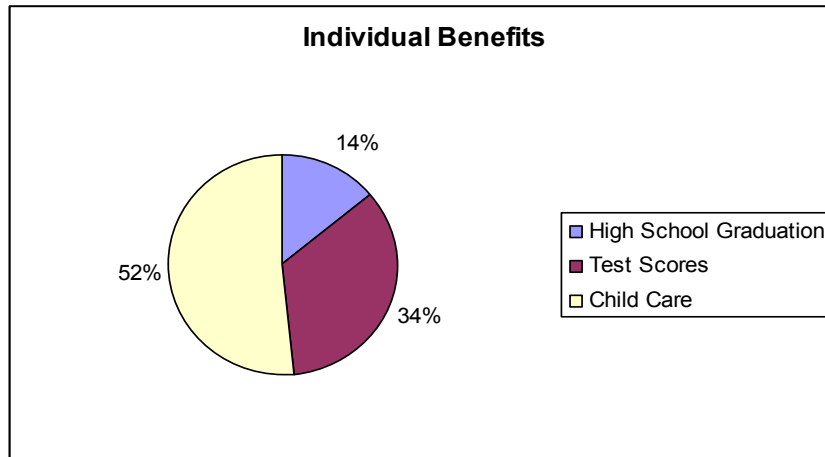
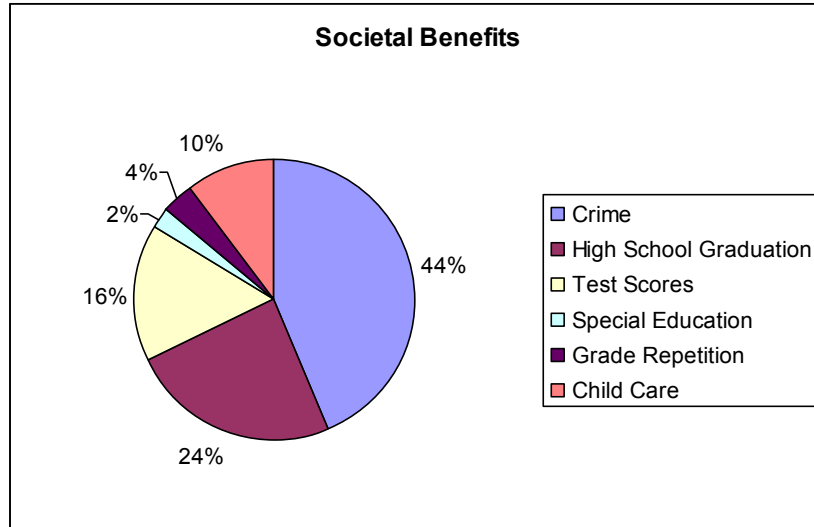
Educators” begin typically begin monthly home visits during the mother’s pregnancy and focus on introducing children and parents to reading.

The study found that at a cost of \$3,890 per participant, the Parent-Child Home Program yielded no measurable benefits. This particular intervention is geared towards children two to three years of age whose parents obtained only a limited education. As part of this program, a “toy demonstrator” brings each child a new book or toy on a weekly basis and encourages parents to read and/or play with their child. Early Head Start, while resulting in modest benefits of approximately \$4,700 per participant, does not demonstrate results that outweigh its high cost of roughly \$21,000. Early Head Start targets low-income women who are pregnant or have a child under two years of age. Services are delivered either in a home or center setting and may be received until the child is three years old³⁵.



³⁵ Steve Aos, Roxanna Lieb, Jim Mayfield, Marna Miller, Annie Pennucci. “Benefits and Costs of Prevention and Early Intervention Programs for Youth.” *Washington Institute for Public Policy*. September, 2004.

Head Start’s net benefits can be broken down into several categories and separated into benefits accrued by individuals and greater society, as depicted by the following charts:



While these statistics are impressive, room for improvement remains, up to at least the level of Smart Start. Head Start might realize this improvement through an increase in funding to help allow Head Start to involve parents to the level of Smart Start and an improvement in transportation to centers to improve attendance.

Before talking about where Head Start can improve, first we consider where it has succeeded. Head Start, though not yet at the level of the “national model” Smart Start, is

a very intricate and family-involved program. The main research engine that studies Head Start is the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES). FACES was launched by Head Start itself in 1997 answers critical questions about program quality and individual benefit outcomes. The FACES 2000 sample included 2,800 children and their families in 43 different Head Start programs across the nation.³⁶

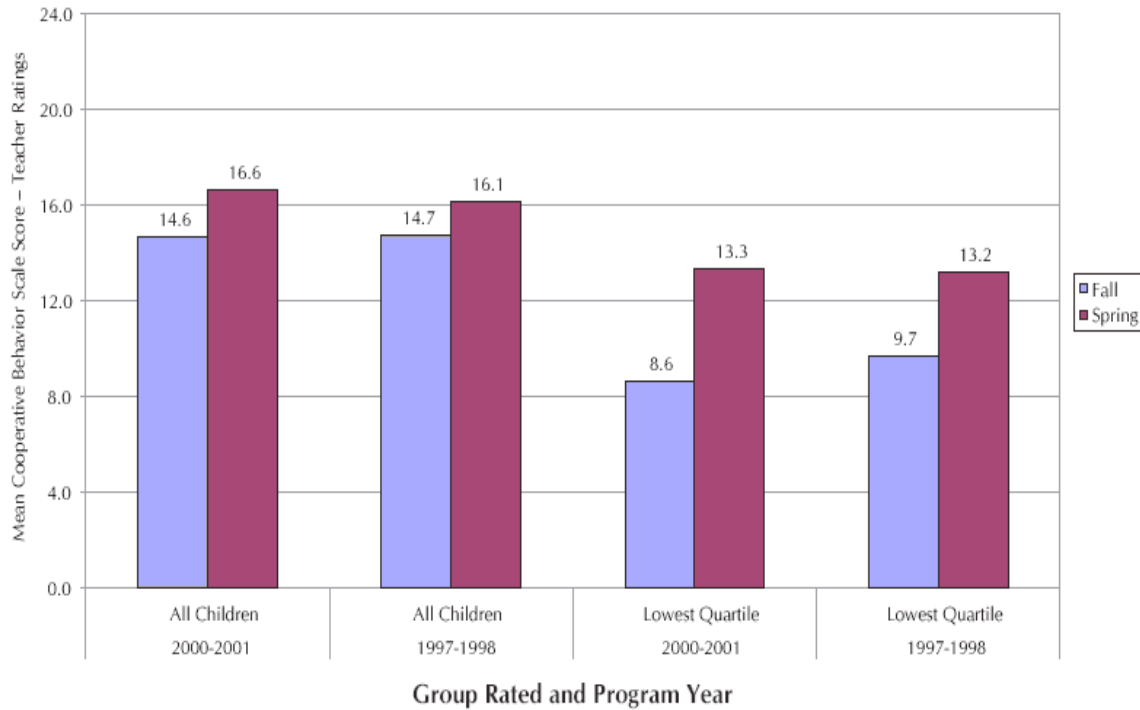
Head Start's children enter the program at a significant disadvantage to the general public. The typical child entered the Head Start Program at about the 16th percentile in vocabulary and early writing skills, the 31st percentile in letter recognition, and the 21st percentile in early math skills. Like the Perry Preschool Project, we can separate the findings of the effects of Head Start on its participants into educational benefits and social benefits. The economic benefits not included as part of FACES 2000 because the research does not follow the Head Start participants into adulthood. However, a study conducted by RAND, which discussed shortly, highlights some social economic benefits.

In terms of educational gains, the gap between Head Start children and children not disadvantaged economically or socially disorderly narrowed during the Head Start year, especially in the field of vocabulary knowledge and early writing skills. The children entered the program knowing an average of 4 letters, and left knowing an average of 9. Both Head Start students with the lowest scores and those children scoring the higher scores within the program showed gains from the fall to the spring of the Head Start year, but the children with the lower scores had gains that were larger than those with higher scores at the beginning.

³⁶ Head Start FACES 2000: A Whole-Child Perspective on Program Performance. US Department of Health and Human Services. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/faces/reports/executive_summary/exe_sum.html

Despite these educational gains, most people involved with Head Start- over 70%- said that social improvements were the main success of Head Start for their children. The FACES survey supports this perception by the parents. On average, children showed considerable growth in social skills and reduction in hyperactive activity during the Head Start year. FACES uses a cooperation classroom behavior rating scale in order to assess a child's social improvement over the course of the year. This scale asks about the frequency of aggressive behavior, hyperactive behavior, and anxious or depressed and withdrawn behavior.³⁷ Specific examples of incidents used to score this scale include items such as "Follows the teacher's directions", "joins an activity without being told to do so", "avoids hitting other children", "waits his or her turn in games", and "invites others to join in activities" to name a few. Then, the teacher was asked to grade each student on a scale from 0-24 with 0 representing "never" and 24 representing "very often". The mean score for the Head Start children studied on the cooperative classroom behavior scale in the fall of 2000 was 14.6. In the spring of 2001, the mean score had risen to 16.6 with a p-value of <.001. This gain was already better than the 1997-1998 FACES survey, showing an improvement in Head Start's ability to build children's social abilities. A graph with the two FACES data follows:

³⁷ FACES instruments: Self-Regulation/Social-emotional Development.
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/faces/instruments/child_instru02/self_behavior.pdf



SOURCE: Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES), 2000-2001 (n = 2,191), 1997-1998 (n = 1,982).

A study entitled “Long Term Effects of Head Start,” carried out by RAND in 2000, investigated the societal benefits associated with this program. The study bases its results largely on the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics (PSID), which includes questions on Head Start and other pre-school program participation and controls for factors such as family background and the environment the respondent grew up in. The study uncovered a sizeable benefit associated with participation in Head Start, which differed by race. For whites, those who attended Head Start were 20 percent more likely than their siblings to graduate from high school. Furthermore, when controlling for parental income, white children were 28 percent more likely to attend college than their siblings who did not attend preschool and 20 percent more likely to attend college than siblings who attended a preschool other than Head Start. Regarding criminal activity, the study shows that Head

Start may have a substantial effect on whether individuals engage in criminal acts.

African American participants were twelve percent less likely to have been arrested.

When discussing Smart Start, we concluded that part of its success could be attributed to significant parental involvement in the program. Part of the reason they can involve parents in most cases is because of their local and private funding allowing greater facilitation of greater parental involvement. Certain Head Start programs also involve the parents to a large degree because they are given federal funding needed to do so. More than two-thirds of Head Start parents had attended parent-teacher conferences, observed in their children's classrooms for at least 30 minutes, or met with a Head Start staff member in their homes at the time of FACES 2000. Despite broad positive educational outcomes, more involved parents of Head Start children scored higher in every educational measure.

Conclusion

A dichotomy exists between Head Start Programs that would *like* to improve the children's individual benefits through the involvement of the parents (almost every Head Start programs) and those that have obtained the funding to do so. In Virginia, differences in funding for Head Start account for this difference in the ability to involve parents at the desirable level, through more home visits or one-on-one interviews, for example. In January of 2005, U.S. Senator George Allen, Senator from Virginia, announced that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded a \$11,505,564 grant to fourteen Virginia programs for the continuation of Head Start.³⁸ Some of the counties affected

³⁸ "Allen Announces \$11 Million in Funding For Head Start Projects in Fourteen Virginia Localities". For Release: January 25, 2005. <http://allen.senate.gov/printer.cfm?c=story&id=2005012538594.015625>

were Prince Edward County, Prince William County, Hanover County, Buchanan County, Franklin County, and Augusta County.

Absent from this list of fortunate counties is York County, Virginia. Head Start remains a federal program of early intervention for children in poverty. In 2002 census data, though certain counties such as Prince Edward, Franklin and Buchanan have very high levels of poverty, York County's poverty numbers not too far off from those of the other counties that were given funding when York did not. This funding could have been essential for the York County Head Start Program and its need for improved transportation to lessen the absenteeism of current Head Start children and also possibly provide access to the program for children who are not currently enrolled at all. York County could also utilize greater funding to increase the parental involvement activities that they already have in place to make the children's individual benefits from Head Start even greater. Furthermore, increased funding could be implemented to facilitate training for staff members. Training, while costly, is essential to ensure that early childhood educators to apply research based knowledge and field tested techniques to the classroom. Lastly, as discussed earlier, a full-day Head Start curriculum in York County would make the program more conducive to working parents and allow them and their children to reap the benefits of early childhood intervention.

Greater funding for York County Head Start would likely increase the net benefits of the program, by allowing Head Start to offer greater outreach to parents and training for staff members. Provision of transportation and full-day services would also appeal to the needs of working parents.