



## FACES FINDINGS

NEW RESEARCH ON  
HEAD START OUTCOMES  
AND PROGRAM QUALITY

**DECEMBER 2006**



## ABOUT FACES

**The Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES)** collects data on a nationally representative sample of Head Start programs, classrooms, teachers, parents, and children examining the quality and effects of Head Start. Three waves of data collection have occurred: in 1997, 2000, and 2003. Information presented in this publication is primarily based on the 2003 cohort, however, 1997 and 2000 data are also presented. Unless otherwise noted, the sample for the 2003 child outcomes analyses includes all 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children who passed an English-language screener. All findings presented are statistically significant. Instruments used to collect data are presented below:

**The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Third Edition (PPVT)** - which measures children's word knowledge. The mean standard score for children of all income groups is 100, with a standard deviation of 15.

**Selected scales from the Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery (Revised)** - including the Letter-Word Identification, Applied Problems, and Dictation Tasks, which assess children's prereading skills, early counting and arithmetic skills, and prewriting skills. The mean standard score for children of all income groups is 100, with a standard deviation of 15.

**Social Skills Scale** - A summary index based on 12 items with 24 possible points related to children's cooperative behavior and social skills.

**Preschool Learning Behavior Scale (PLBS)** - which contains 29 questions that assess the child's approaches to learning, including the child's motivation to learn and behaviors that enhance the child's learning.

**Problem Behaviors Scale** - which contains 3 subscales: the Aggressive Behavior scale (4 items), Hyperactive Behavior scale (3 items), and Withdrawn Behavior scale (7 items).

**Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) Reading and General Knowledge Scales** - The Reading scale taps skills that indicate reading ability, recognition of letters and phonemes, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The General Knowledge scale taps skills in the natural sciences and social studies.

**Parent Interview** - which collects demographic information, parent report of their child's activities and behavior, child's and family's health status, and volunteering and satisfaction with Head Start.

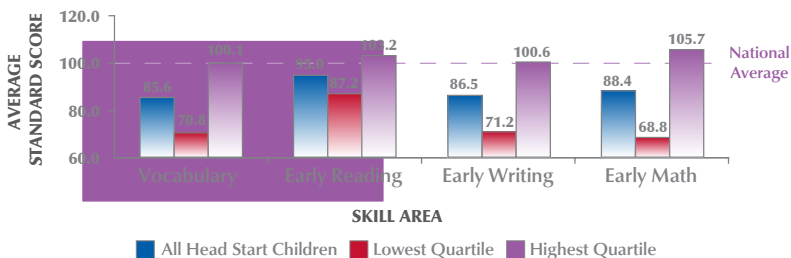
**The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)** - which consists of 37 scales measuring a wide variety of quality-related processes occurring in the classroom. Items are rated on a 7-point scale, with the following anchors: (1) inadequate, (3) minimal, (5) good, and (7) excellent.

**Classroom Activities Scale** - completed by teachers to assess the extent to which literacy-related activities are taught in the classroom.

# CHILDREN

## HEAD START CHILDREN ENTER WITH BELOW AVERAGE SKILLS IN EARLY LITERACY AND MATH

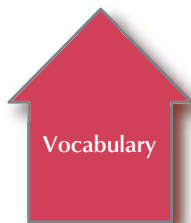
Most children enter Head Start at a great disadvantage in terms of their early literacy and math skills, with scores well below national averages. However, children bring considerable diversity in skills to the program. Some children scored at or above the national average, while others scored in the lowest 2 percent of all U.S. preschoolers.



FACES Fall 2003

## HEAD START CHILDREN SHOWED GROWTH IN SEVERAL AREAS

Over the program year, Head Start children showed statistically significant expansion of their vocabularies, early writing, and early math skills. The gain in early reading skills was found only for 4-year-olds. However, children's skills in all areas remained below national norms.



FACES 2003

## WHAT HEAD START CHILDREN CAN DO

At the end of the program year, a typical soon-to-be graduate of Head Start possesses a variety of cognitive and social skills that signify a readiness to learn in kindergarten. Head Start children can:

- Identify 10 basic colors by name.
- Count 11 objects.
- Identify at least 10 letters of the alphabet.
- Show the front cover of a story book and open it to start reading.
- Use free time in acceptable ways.
- Help put work materials away.
- Follow the teacher's directions.
- Join in activities without being told.
- Follow the rules when playing games.
- Wait their turn in a game.
- Accept classmates' ideas for play.
- Invite others to join in activities.



## WHAT HEAD START CHILDREN CAN NOT YET DO

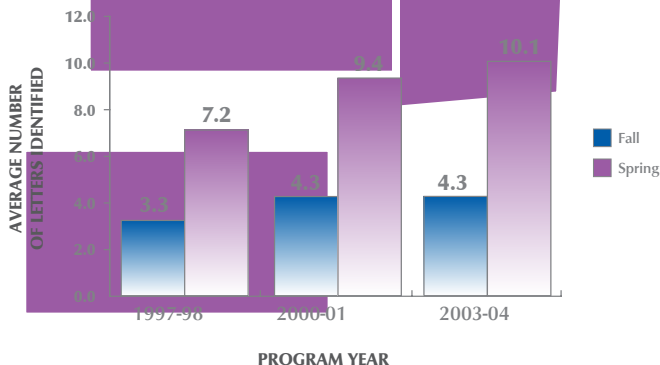
However, there are some skills a typical Head Start child has not yet accomplished.

- Answer simple factual questions about a story read to him/her.
- Know that you go from left to right and top to bottom when reading English text.



## INCREASE IN NUMBER OF LETTERS KNOWN

The average number of letters that 4- and 5-year-old Head Start children know continues to grow. In spring 2004, the average Head Start child met the Congressional goal of knowing at least 10 letters of the alphabet prior to entering kindergarten.



FACES 1997, 2000, 2003

## GAINS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

One third (33 percent) of children in FACES 2003 were English language learners (ELL). Of these children, 86 percent spoke Spanish. The Spanish-speaking children who passed the English-language screener in both the fall and spring showed growth in their English vocabulary skills.



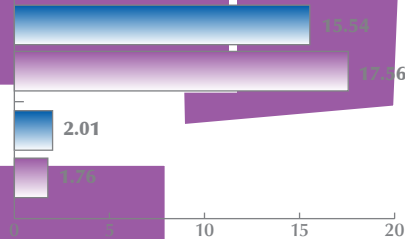
FACES 2003

## HEAD START CHILDREN'S SOCIAL SKILLS IMPROVE

Most Head Start children showed growth in their social skills during the program year, with gains in cooperative classroom behavior and a decrease in withdrawn behavior as rated by classroom teachers.

Cooperative classroom  
behavior (range of 0-20)

Withdrawn behavior  
(range of 0-14)



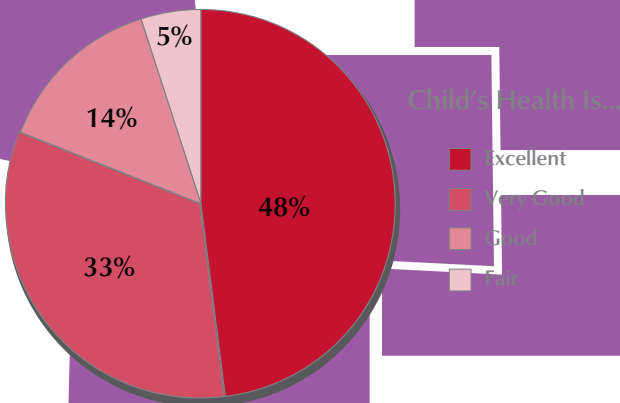
AVERAGE SCORE

Fall  
Spring

FACES 2003

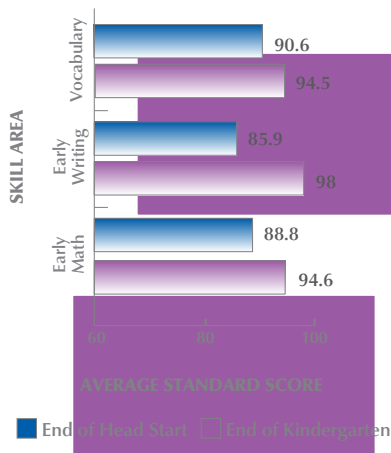
## HEAD START CHILDREN'S HEALTH STATUS

Head Start parents reported that their children enjoyed very good or excellent health. Additionally, 93 percent of Head Start children had access to Medicaid or other health insurance.



FACES Spring 2004

## HEAD START CHILDREN'S PROGRESS IN KINDERGARTEN



In kindergarten, Head Start graduates made further progress toward national averages in vocabulary, early writing, and early math scores. Interestingly, the size of gains that children made while in Head Start predicted their achievement levels at the end of kindergarten—the larger their Head Start gains, the higher their kindergarten achievement.

FACES 2000

## CHILDREN WITH HIGHER SOCIAL SKILLS IN HEAD START DO BETTER IN KINDERGARTEN

Children who received higher cooperative behavior ratings and lower problem behavior ratings from Head Start teachers scored better on cognitive assessments and behavior ratings at the end of kindergarten.

Higher Social Skills in Head Start Are Related to:

### Kindergarten Cognitive Assessments

- Reading Skills
- General Knowledge

### Kindergarten Behavior Ratings

- Teacher Ratings of Cooperative Classroom Behavior

FACES 2000

# FAMILIES

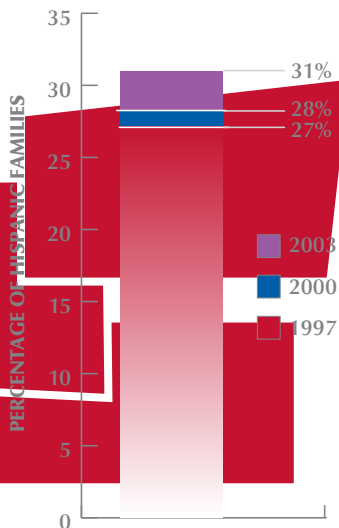


A typical Head Start family has 4 family members and a median household income of \$13,200. One third (33 percent) of Head Start children live with their married parents. A majority of mothers of Head Start children are in their twenties, single, in the workforce, and hold a high school diploma. A majority of fathers of Head Start children are single, employed full-time, and hold a high school diploma.

FACES 2003

## HEAD START FAMILIES

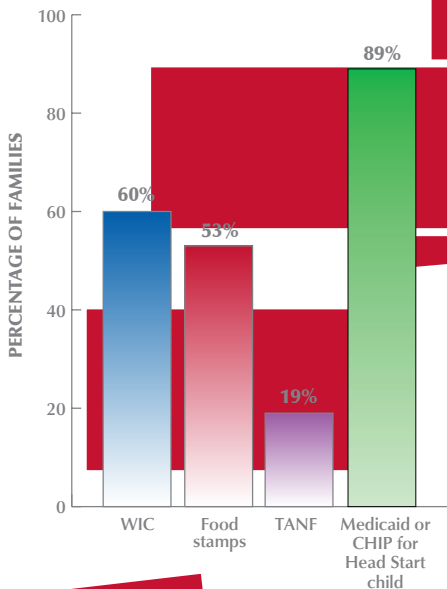
The percentage of Hispanic families in Head Start has gradually increased from 27 percent in 1997 to 31 percent in 2003. One third of Head Start families reported speaking a language other than English in the home. Most often this language was Spanish (86 percent), but German, Polish, Yupik, French, Hmong, Chinese, and Arabic were among the other 26 languages spoken by Head Start families.



FACES 1997, 2000, 2003



## SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INCOME



Despite high levels of employment, a majority of Head Start families receive some type of supplemental income or assistance. Receipt of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) has dropped across the three FACES cohorts—from 27 percent in fall 1997 to 19 percent in fall 2003.

FACES Fall 2003

## FATHERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Less than half of Head Start children lived with both their mother and father. Whether or not fathers lived with their Head Start child, greater father involvement was related to more frequent positive social behavior and less frequent problem behavior at the end of the Head Start year.

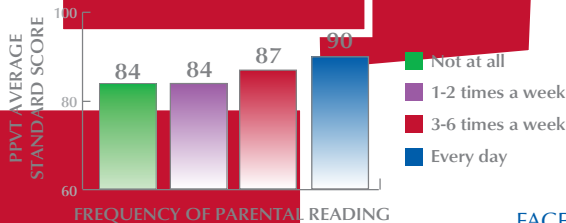
When Fathers Are More Involved  
(whether living at home or not)



FACES 2000

## READING TO CHILDREN

Most Head Start parents (74 percent) reported reading to their child three or more times a week. Children whose parents read to them every day had greater vocabulary scores than children whose parents read to them less frequently. In addition, when parents read to their child at least 3 times a week, their children had more positive approaches to learning than children whose parents read to them less often.



FACES Spring 2004

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN

Head Start families spent time with their children doing numerous weekly and monthly educational activities. The more activities that parents and children did together; the higher the children's emergent literacy scores and

### More Weekly Activities (such as)

- Telling a story
- Teaching letters, words or numbers
- Teaching songs or music
- Doing arts and crafts
- Playing with toys or games
- Doing errands
- Doing chores

Is related to higher scores in vocabulary and color naming and less aggressive and hyperactive behaviors and fewer overall problem behaviors.

### More Monthly Activities (such as)

- Visiting the library, shows, museums, and zoos
- Attending community or sporting events
- Discussing family history

Is related to higher scores in social awareness, color naming, counting, book knowledge, print concepts and less aggressive behavior.

FACES 2000

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT IS RELATED TO IMPROVED CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES

Parent involvement in Head Start is related to children's cognitive and social outcomes. Children with more involved parents scored higher on emergent literacy and math tasks, and also had more positive social behavior than children whose parents were less involved.

### PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- Attend parent-teacher conferences
- Observe in their children's classrooms for at least 30 minutes
- Meet with a HS staff member in their homes
- Volunteer in child's classroom
- Prepare food for HS events
- Participate in fundraising
- Attend parent education meeting

### IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Vocabulary
- Book knowledge
- Early writing
- Early math
- Letter identification
- Parent reports of positive social behavior
- Less aggressive behavior
- Fewer overall behavior problems

FACES 2000

## PARENT'S PROTECTIVE ROLE FOR CHILDREN

Head Start may play a role in protecting children from the negative outcomes associated with family risk factors. When parents were involved and/or satisfied with Head Start, their children's outcomes were improved compared to parents who were not involved or satisfied—even if the family experienced multiple risk factors.

### RISK FACTORS

- Maternal depression
- Exposure to violence
- Alcohol use
- Involvement in the criminal justice system

### MEDIATING FACTORS

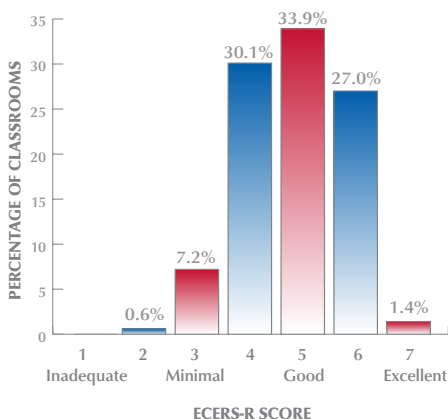
- Parents involved in Head Start
- Parents report their children had positive experiences
- Parents report satisfaction with the program

### IMPROVED OUTCOMES

- Emergent literacy
- Early math
- Positive behavior

FACES 2000

## CLASSROOM QUALITY IN HEAD START IS GOOD

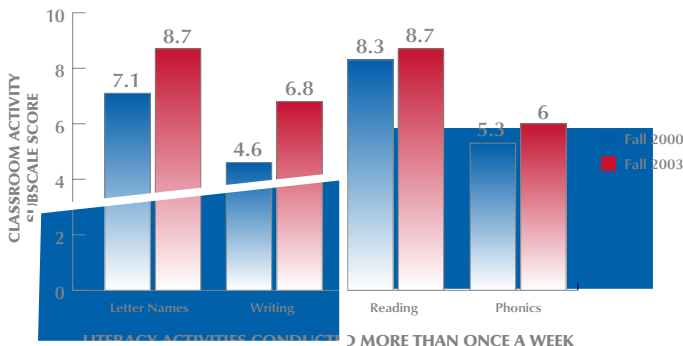


Trained observers rated the overall Head Start classroom quality as good, with an average ECERS-R score of 4.8 on a 7-point scale. In addition, the average Head Start class size and adult-child ratio exceed the standards required by the Head Start Program Performance Standards and NAEYC accreditation standards.

FACES Fall 2003

## HEAD START TEACHERS ARE PROMOTING EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

Head Start teachers reported an increase in teaching a variety of early literacy skills from fall 2000 to fall 2003. Specifically, teachers reported engaging in letter naming, writing, reading, and phonics activities more frequently in 2003 compared to 2000. The largest increase was in the area of writing activities, which included writing letters of the alphabet and the child's own name.



FACES Fall 2000 and 2003

## STRENGTHS IN HEAD START CLASSROOMS

The ECERS-R measure of classroom quality reveals those areas in which Head Start classrooms provide excellent services, as well as areas in which Head Start classrooms face challenges.

**Furniture for routine care, play and learning**—Furniture is child-sized and in good repair (93% of classrooms),

**Staff child interactions**—Staff encourage the development of mutual respect between children and adults (80%),

**Provisions for children with disabilities**—A high level of integration and degree of planning for children with disabilities (75%),

**Interactions among children**—Staff facilitate positive peer interactions (70%),

**Room arrangement for play**—Interest centers are well planned and organized (66%), and

**Encourage the child to communicate**—Staff balance listening and talking appropriately and link spoken communication with written language (66%).



## CHALLENGES IN HEAD START CLASSROOMS

**Nature/science**—Some nature and science materials are available daily, but everyday events are not used to learn about nature or science (85% of classrooms),

**Music and movement**—Some musical materials are offered and activities are conducted at least weekly, but variety and availability are somewhat limited (83%),

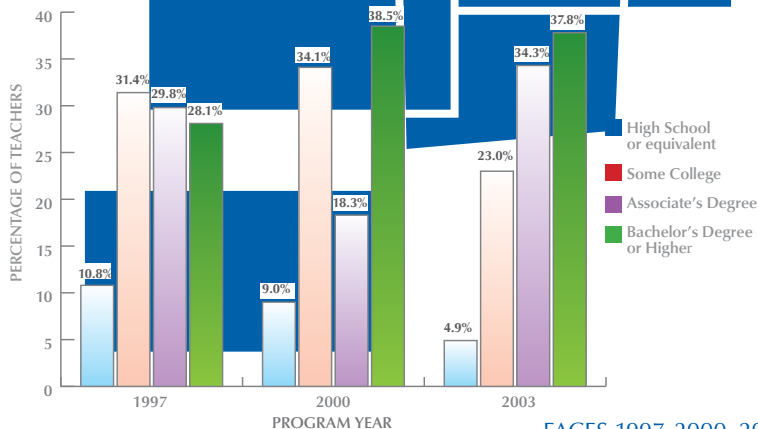
**Space to be alone**—Little space for a child to be alone (77%),

**Books and pictures**—A wide selection of books (including books that present fantasy and factual information; stories about people, animals, and science; and books that reflect different cultures and abilities) is not accessible for a substantial portion of the day (77%), and

**Math/numbers**—Some math and number materials are available, but not regularly linked to practical life events (74%).

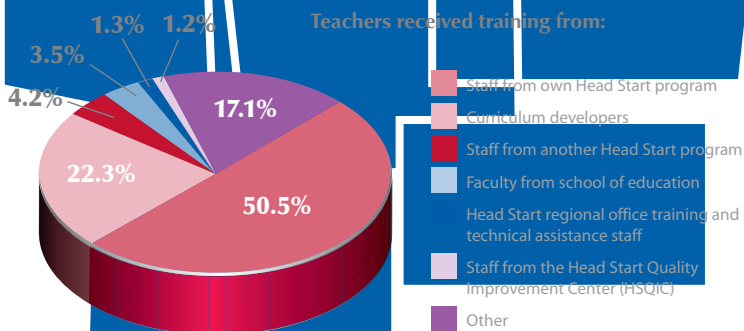
## TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS ARE HIGHER

FACES 2003 found higher teacher educational credentials in Head Start than in FACES 1997 and 2000. Teacher's level of education is related to attitudes and knowledge about early childhood education practices.



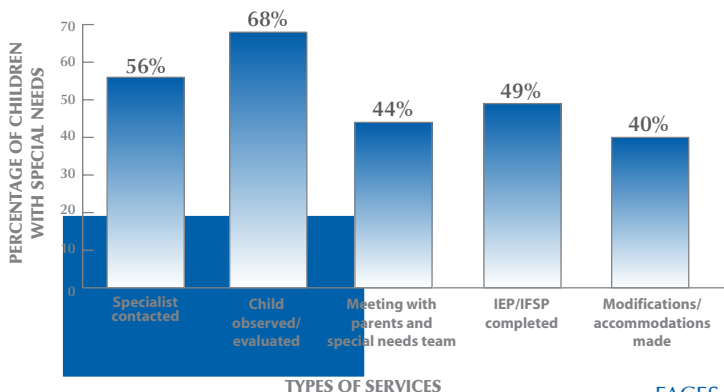
## TEACHERS RECEIVE TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Nearly all Head Start teachers (95 percent) received training in their curricula. Training and support was provided in a variety of ways, most often from within teachers' own programs.



## SERVING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In spring 2004, 19 percent of Head Start children had a special need identified, such as a developmental delay, speech impairment, or behavior problem. Teachers reported that children received a variety of services to meet their needs.



FACES 2003

## IMPROVING PROGRAM QUALITY AND OUTCOMES: WHAT IS HEAD START DOING?

Head Start aims to promote positive child outcomes in the Head Start Family Literacy Project. Staff and parents are provided with research-based resources and training designed to engage them in the promotion of language and literacy development in the classroom and in the many other environments of a child's everyday experience.

Head Start has launched the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC): a web-based platform for the dissemination of information, knowledge, and resources related to Head Start. The ECLKC is designed to connect a wide range of people in the field to each other (including Head Start staff, parents, T/TA providers, and researchers) as well as to valuable information.

Head Start is working to improve the social and emotional outcomes of young children through its Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL). CSEFEL develops and disseminates evidence-based, user-friendly information to help early childhood educators meet the growing needs of children with challenging behaviors and mental health challenges.

Head Start is engaged in several efforts to address the unique needs of English Language Learners. The 1st and 2nd National Head Start Hispanic Institutes provided a forum for furthering Head Start's efforts to raise awareness and provide outreach and culturally appropriate services to Hispanic children and families. The Culturally Responsive and Aware Dual Language Education (CRADLE) Project is helping Early Head Start programs gain an understanding of the linguistic and cultural needs of families and promising practices in dual language acquisition for infants and toddlers.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION...

The following reports contain more detailed information about the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) and Head Start's Program Performance Measures:

Head Start Performance Measures Center, Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES 2000): Technical Report, February 2006

Head Start FACES 2000: A Whole-Child Perspective on Program Performance, Fourth Progress Report, May 2003

Head Start Program Performance Measures: Longitudinal Findings From the FACES Study (2000)

Head Start Program Performance Measures: Second Progress Report (June 1998).

To obtain a copy of these reports, or for a direct link to instruments used in this study, please visit the FACES website at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/faces/index.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/faces/index.html).

For related information on Head Start research, please visit the ACF Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation website at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/index.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/index.html) or the Office of Head Start website at [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/).

### **Administration for Children and Families Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation**

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