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Better Outcomes for All: Promoting Partnerships between Head Start and State Pre-K

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Better Outcomes for All: Promoting Partnerships between Head Start and State Pre-K examines how Head Start and state pre-kindergarten programs can work together to better serve young children and their families. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with state pre-k program directors, Head Start collaboration coordinators, and providers of both Head Start and state pre-k programs in five states.

This paper also draws on the Center for Law and Social Policy's (CLASP) research examining state pre-k programs offered in community-based settings¹ and Pre-K Now's ongoing work with state pre-k programs.

Introduction

Every day, millions of three- and four-year-old children attend early education programs. They look at books, listen to stories, count and measure to quantify the world, and learn how to represent their ideas through construction and language. These young children explore and discover the natural world and the world of machines and tools. They learn to express their feelings, work with others, and work independently. These activities help them to succeed in school by strengthening their foundations for literacy, numeracy, and social, emotional, and physical health.

The range of early childhood education program models includes, among others, state-funded pre-k, Head Start, and child care programs. Children attend these programs in public schools, private schools, colleges, businesses, community-based centers, and homes. Yet, in early education programs of all kinds, limited resources, uneven quality, limited operating hours, and restrictive eligibility often make it difficult for families to access the opportunities they seek for their children.

To promote access to high-quality early education programs, state and local policymakers have developed innovative partnerships that benefit from the best each program model has to offer.² These partnerships integrate multiple program models and funding sources to improve quality by hiring teachers with bachelor's degrees and by offering comprehensive health and family-support services. They also open classrooms to children from a range of income groups and expand the program day for children who need full-day, full-year care.

Better Outcomes for All: Promoting Partnerships between Head Start and State Pre-K examines a narrow slice of these partnerships: those that include state-funded pre-k and federally funded Head Start programs. It focuses on two of the several models of early childhood education, acknowledging that these programs are just one piece of a fully integrated system of early care and education for children from birth until kindergarten entry. For a brief overview of Head Start see [Appendix A](#), and for state pre-k programs see [Appendix B](#).

This paper draws on the Center for Law and Social Policy's (CLASP) research examining state pre-k programs offered in community-based settings as well as Pre-K Now's ongoing work with state pre-k programs. It probes more deeply into five states – Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, Oregon, and Wisconsin – to look explicitly at how Head Start and state-funded pre-k can work together. (For more information on programs in these states, see [Appendix C](#).) From rural Montello, Wisconsin, to the urban neighborhoods of Newark, New Jersey, Head Start and state pre-k programs are actively working toward coordinated delivery of pre-k services. As a result, more children are enrolled, more full-day, full-year options are available, and many policymakers report that the quality of collaborating programs is improving across settings. None of the state or local players interviewed for this report said that achieving these outcomes was easy, but they all said it was possible under current law and well worth the effort.

Why Focus on Head Start and State Pre-K?

Policymakers recognize that state pre-k and Head Start are two primary models of early childhood education, especially for children at risk of school failure. Head Start and state pre-k programs have the potential to provide valuable services for children, but a lack of coordination between them also has the potential to create a system that seems fragmented and haphazard to families seeking services. The recent growth of state pre-k programs means families have more options, but without purposeful coordination, state pre-k and federal Head Start risk limiting who provides services as well as separating children according to family income, differing definitions of “at risk,” and/or the need for full-day care.

Better coordination can maximize resources and avoid duplication of effort; it also has the potential to improve the quality of programs and lengthen the service day to meet the needs of working families. Coordination is not a silver bullet. More funding is necessary as Head Start and state pre-k programs currently reach only a small percentage of eligible children. Better coordination cannot provide all the resources needed to serve all eligible children – let alone those presently ineligible who could benefit from high-quality pre-k experiences – but it can increase efficiency, streamline service delivery, and help develop a higher-quality, more-responsive system for families and children.

A Vision for the Future of Early Care and Education for Three and Four Year Olds

An integrated system of high-quality early care and education would give children access to high-quality programs. Regardless of the setting their parents chose, three- and four-year-old children of all incomes and cultures would learn and play together in rooms where the teachers have bachelor’s degrees in early childhood education and are paid on the same salary scale as teachers in the local K-12 school district. A range of health and family support services would be available to those children who need them. Well-coordinated, smooth transitions would occur as children enter and graduate from these programs. Resources would be available to serve all children in the setting that best meets the needs of their families, such as full-day, full-year programs for working families.



Challenges of Collaboration

To achieve an early education system that serves more families with higher-quality services, Head Start and state pre-k partners need to have detailed knowledge of the differences between their two programs and be able to anticipate the potential obstacles to collaborative partnerships. While Head Start maintains a common set of standards for all of its programs, variations in state pre-k standards occur at the state level and even at the community level. For example, Illinois currently gives priority to “programs serving primarily at-risk children,” but each program establishes its own definition of risk in its application for funding. Knowledge of how the programs differ at the state and local levels will facilitate partnerships at the program and classroom levels.

This section addresses four common challenges of collaboration: differing missions, teacher credentials, comprehensive services, and eligibility requirements. It also offers examples of communities where creative, committed leadership from federal, state, and local administrators has moved the two programs beyond co-existence and created partnerships that serve Head Start and state pre-k children in the same classroom.

Missions

In interviews for this report, some Head Start directors expressed concern that collaboration would dilute Head Start’s mission to serve the comprehensive needs of children and their families. Others feared that it would weaken efforts to identify and serve the lowest-income children. These concerns underscore the need to enter into collaborations with a full understanding of the missions of the two programs. Bridging differing missions is perhaps the most difficult challenge to overcome because it relies on effective relationships between individuals in positions to promote collaboration and on a commitment to integrate the missions of both programs without compromising standards.

Marsha Moore, Commissioner
Bright from the Start
Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Even programs with different cultures and histories can collaborate effectively if there’s willingness to trust and share resources and responsibilities.

In **Illinois**, the state and regional administrators of the child care, pre-k, and Head Start programs use their leadership positions to promote collaboration. They appear together to encourage their constituents to coordinate recruitment efforts. For example, when coordination was not working in one community, the state pre-k director and the federal regional director of the child care and Head Start programs jointly visited school superintendents and Head Start grantees to encourage them to work together. The result was better communication among the local providers of early education programs, which led to the full enrollment of Head Start and state pre-k programs. In some cases, the solution was to identify eligible children who were not enrolled, and in other cases, children were able to enroll in both the Head Start and state pre-k programs to benefit from a full day of school.

Challenges of Collaboration

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In **New Jersey**, many district superintendents were initially unwilling to partner with local Head Start programs, but with time, the dedication of state and federal stakeholders, and the influence of multiple state supreme court decisions, New Jersey proved it was possible to create opportunities and incentives to bring the two programs together. As of 2005, 24 of the state's 28 Head Start grantees collaborate with the local school district.

Teacher Credentials

Some state pre-k directors expressed concern over the ability of Head Start programs to meet higher state pre-k teacher credentialing requirements. Twenty-five of the 48 state pre-k programs – of the 38 states that offer pre-k some have more than one program – require pre-k teachers to hold a bachelor's degree and many of these also require teacher certification.³ As of 2005, only 17 states required teachers in all programs to have a bachelor's degree. Head Start requires that all teachers hold at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and that at least 50 percent of lead teachers nationally hold an associate-level college degree. In the 2004-05 program year, 69 percent of Head Start teachers had an associate's degree (AA) or higher and 36 percent had a BA or higher.⁴

When Head Start programs already employ teachers who have the credentials required by the state pre-k program, teacher credentials are not an obstacle to collaboration. When Head Start teachers do need to earn higher credentials, state leaders can help teachers meet these new standards. In **New Jersey**, the state pays for any teacher in an Abbott-funded program to return to school for a bachelor's degree.

New Jersey's Abbott Preschool Program

The Abbott Preschool Program was created with the fifth decision in the landmark *Abbott v. Burke* school-funding case, in which the New Jersey Supreme Court required that all three- and four-year-old children in the highest poverty school districts receive a high-quality pre-k education. As a result, children in Abbott programs receive a full-day, full-year pre-k program from teachers certified in early education for an average cost of \$10,361 per child (2004-05).

In **Wisconsin**, school districts overcome the disparity in teacher credentials using three different solutions. Some school districts hire a certified teacher to work in the Head Start program, some provide funding to the Head Start grantee to retain or hire a certified teacher, and some encourage team teaching, where a certified teacher works side by side with a Head Start teacher.

Eligibility

Eligibility restrictions have the potential to create an early education system that is segregated by income, with Head Start serving the lowest-income families and state pre-k programs filling in when Head Start programs are full. These restrictions limit who can provide state pre-k programs as well as who can attend Head Start or state pre-k.

Head Start focuses on the lowest-income families. Programs funded only with federal Head Start funds must limit enrollment so that at least 90 percent of families are at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty threshold when they enter the program. While 19 state pre-k programs have no income requirement tied to eligibility, many of them are only offered in communities with high proportions of low-income families.⁵ Some states have higher income cut offs than Head Start but still limit eligibility to low-income families. Still other states tie eligibility to particular at-risk factors that may include income.

Challenges of Collaboration

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While family income eligibility requirements differ between Head Start and state pre-k in most states, no federal Head Start rules prevent programs from serving Head Start and state pre-k children who meet different eligibility requirements in the same classroom. Head Start cost-allocation guidelines permit classrooms to serve both Head Start-eligible children and those who exceed that eligibility but meet state pre-k requirements.⁶ All expenses must be divided proportionately between state pre-k and Head Start according to who is eligible for each program.

In **New Jersey**, state and regional administrators have worked closely with state pre-k and Head Start providers to standardize the allocation of costs between the two programs. A formula is used to calculate how much the state should pay Head Start providers for services that exceed Head Start standards.⁷ The state benefits by leveraging the capacity and federal funding of Head Start grantees, and the grantees are compensated for the higher level of services they provide.



Comprehensive Services

Head Start grantees must provide a range of health, developmental, and mental health screenings as well as family-involvement and support activities. When the screenings or supports indicate additional services are necessary, Head Start extends its support to help families gain access to needed services. This level of comprehensive service is generally not part of state pre-k programs. Of the 48 state-funded pre-k initiatives in 2005, 27 required vision, hearing, and health screenings and at least one support service for children and families.⁸ Just five states require pre-k programs to employ a family caseworker to assess families' needs and connect them with health and social services to support the child's school readiness.⁹

Any collaboration with Head Start must ensure that all Head Start children receive the comprehensive services required by federal law and can also provide opportunities for other children to benefit from Head Start's expertise in providing comprehensive supports and social services.

In **Illinois**, where state pre-k currently gives priority to children at risk of school failure, all children served in Head Start-state pre-k partnerships receive Head Start's comprehensive services regardless of their eligibility for Head Start. State pre-k funds or other social service funds are used to provide the needed services for children ineligible for Head Start.

In Montello, **Wisconsin**, where all four year olds living in the school district are eligible for state pre-k, comprehensive support services vary by child. All children at Montello's Early Learning Center who are funded through Head Start receive Head Start's comprehensive services. All other children benefit from some of the Head Start services, such as the initial screening and the family-involvement activities.

Pathway to Success

Collaboration between Head Start and state pre-k programs requires new relationships among state and regional administrators; among school superintendents, principals, and Head Start providers; and between teachers inside classrooms. The interviews conducted for *Better Outcomes for All: Promoting Partnerships between Head Start and State Pre-K* captured the advice of several people who have made the commitment and created successful partnerships. Their experiences revealed a continuum of steps that lead to integrated partnerships. The first four steps illustrate the beginning of the pathway to success, and the final three show more advanced stages of integration.

1. State-Federal Collaboration. Strong partnerships can begin between individual providers, but it helps to have state and regional federal leaders acting as role models. In **Georgia**, and **Oregon**, the state pre-k and Head Start collaboration offices were housed together. Working side by side built strong relationships between the two programs and allowed opportunities for partnerships to grow. In both states, the administrators also built relationships with their counterparts in the regional federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) office. In **Illinois**, the state pre-k, child care, and Head Start directors meet monthly with their partner from ACF. These meetings build trust and understanding among the programs, allow for early identification of problems, and build a platform for advancing local partnerships.

Continuity of those in leadership roles is another key to collaboration success. In **Oregon**, **Georgia**, and **Illinois**, the Head Start-state collaboration directors and their counterparts in pre-k administration have built on a series of small successes over more than a decade.

2. Advisory Councils. Many states promote relationships through state or local advisory councils that include representatives from pre-k providers and from Head Start. The purpose and power of these councils varies. In some **New Jersey** school districts, the Early Childhood Advisory Council gives local stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the school district's community-wide planning; to review progress toward full implementation of high-quality programs regardless of venue; and to propose resolutions to issues that arise during implementation. In **Oregon**, the state superintendent takes recommendations on the selection of grantees from the state-level Early Childhood Initiatives Advisory Committee. All councils provide an opportunity to bring potential program providers together, to promote better understanding of the different missions and policies among the provider communities, and to build trusting relationships from which more collaborative partnerships can grow.

3. Application Requirements. Some states allow nonprofit and for-profit pre-kindergartens, child care centers, family child care providers, Head Start programs, and school districts to apply for state funds to offer pre-k services. Through a carefully developed application, states can require programs to work together. The more competitive the application process is, the more the state can demand. **Illinois** awards extra points for applications that demonstrate cooperation among local schools, child care providers, and Head Start programs. **Oregon** requires that other Head Start and state pre-k programs operating within an applicant's service area approve the applicant's request for additional funds.

Pathway to Success

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4. Joint Professional Development. Head Start and state pre-k programs can leverage one another's funds and promote relationships between staff by co-sponsoring professional development opportunities. In **Oregon**, state pre-k and Head Start programs share their in-service training schedules and invite their counterparts. In **Georgia**, Head Start and state pre-k teachers attend an advanced summer training institute, and Head Start family service workers come together with state pre-k resource coordinators for joint training. The local child care resource and referral organization in Rockford, **Illinois** pooled funds from Head Start, child care, and state pre-k to bring a mental health specialist to meet with Head Start and public school teachers, child care providers, and parents, on a schedule that worked best for those groups.

These four steps, alone, cannot create an integrated Head Start-state pre-k system. Implementing strategies from the next three steps, all at the advanced end of the collaboration continuum, will move states further along the pathway to successful integration.

5. Shared Monitoring. Collaboration in the monitoring of the two programs can streamline administrative costs and minimize classroom disruptions. **Oregon** collaborates with federal monitoring teams to use Head Start's monitoring process, the *Program Review Instrument for Systems Monitoring* (PRISM). The partnership has included state funding for monitoring of Head Start programs that receive state pre-k funds, additional staff for the monitoring teams, and space for the teams to meet. PRISM may not be appropriate for pre-k programs in other states, but there is no reason for Head Start and state pre-k not to share their monitoring information. Sharing information can help avoid duplication of effort at the program level, lead to more efficient monitoring, and potentially make more funds available for direct services to children.

Kay Henderson, Early Childhood Division Director
Illinois State Board of Education

We must be accountable for the use of funding, but it does not have to be apparent at the service-delivery level.

6. Cost Allocation. A key challenge in forming collaborative partnerships is maintaining accountability for combined funding streams. Audit fears can keep partners from exploring new financial relationships. The time-consuming task of filling out similar or duplicative reports for different funders may also be a barrier. The key is to convene the fiscal experts from each program to answer questions and give detailed examples of how to allocate costs appropriately. The Office of Head Start offers some guidance for cost allocation,¹⁰ but the interpretation of this guidance and of state pre-k rules requires that high-level leaders from each program become engaged. In **Wisconsin**, the Department of Public Instruction published *Financing Four-Year-Old Kindergarten in Community Approaches* to provide examples of how programs can allocate costs (and responsibilities) for a more coordinated system of pre-k.¹¹ This guide includes examples of contracts and partnership agreements that designate who provides and pays for each service.

Pathway to Success

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7. Collaboration Coaches or Facilitators.

Sometimes a trained coach or facilitator can help the two sides come together. **Illinois**, **New Jersey**, and **Wisconsin** all provide this facilitation, which can be necessary to work out the details at the local level. In **Illinois** and **New Jersey**, the directors of the state pre-k, child care, and Head Start collaboration offices as well as staff from the ACF regional office work together as a facilitation team. They make joint visits to communities to help build a bridge between their constituents. In **Wisconsin**, where school districts determine whether and how they will offer state pre-k programs, the state pays for collaboration coaches to encourage local programs to overcome any barriers to collaboration.

Though no state has a fully integrated system statewide, parts of that system are already visible. At the local level, with the guidance of committed program directors, there are models of success. In **Wisconsin's** rural Montello School District, 37 percent of the children in the collaborative Early Learning Center are not funded by Head Start, and some exceed Head Start's income eligibility, but all children receive the same classroom experience. The school district provides two teachers and an aide, transportation, supplies, and some custodial service. At this local site, the system is coordinated, and a recent Head Start evaluation lauded the program for how well the two programs blended together. Indeed, monitors could not tell what each funding stream paid for when they observed the classrooms. Five years ago, before it began its partnership with the school district, the Montello Early Learning Center enrolled 20 children in Head Start. Now, 80 to 85 children receive a program that combines the highest standards from Head Start and Wisconsin's pre-k program.

Elizabeth Burmaster, Wisconsin State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Developing collaborative community approaches is hard and complex work. It takes courage...vision, commitment, and flexibility to figure out a new way of blending and maximizing public and private resources for children and families. The underlying theme for successful community approaches is, "What is it that we need to accomplish to educate and care for all children?"



A Call to Action

Successes like Montello's are the result of persistence and leadership, and such successes can and should become more prevalent. Programs must recognize that some families need a seamless system of full-day, full-year, high-quality early education and care. State programs and ACF, together, should develop clear plans for expanding beyond simple coordination of information, training, and services to develop more fully integrated systems and work toward inclusive partnerships. The following recommendations can help policymakers craft successful collaborations to ensure access to needed services for eligible children and families.

Provide more federal and state leadership to promote collaboration. Collaboration cannot be mandated, but it can be encouraged. In the past, federal officials in the Administration for Children and Families took the lead in promoting and encouraging collaboration among programs. Regional, federal, and state government officials can do more to actively encourage and challenge school districts and Head Start grantees to collaborate and to remove any barriers they have created. They can use their bully pulpits to send a clear message. They can convene meetings at the regional and state levels to bring providers together, engage the state Head Start Association, and establish personal relationships. They can create intergovernmental agreements that outline state-level, collaborative strategies and objectives and support local efforts. However, these steps by themselves are not enough. Collaborations ultimately happen at the program level, and state and federal officials should provide the facilitation and/or coaching necessary to help providers work out the details.

Include Head Start as an eligible provider of services in the state pre-k system. As state leaders expand pre-k programs or contemplate new ones, they can look to Head Start as a model and invite Head Start providers to help build the system. Head Start-state collaboration directors and other Head Start leaders in each state can take the initiative to inform state pre-k leaders about Head Start's well-established infrastructure and how it can serve as a strong base for building a pre-k system.

Provide the highest quality of services defined by each of the partnering programs. Where state pre-k and Head Start programs differ on quality standards, the collaboration between the two programs should select the highest standards for the classroom, the children, and their families.

Provide new resources to ensure that quality programs are available on a full-day basis to more children. In an environment of limited resources, coordination and integration cannot, alone, provide enough programs to serve all children who need them. New resources at the state and federal levels are needed to expand access to these programs and to child care centers that may be serving the same children and families.

Maintain Head Start's comprehensive services for children in poverty. At a minimum, all Head Start-eligible children should have access to Head Start's comprehensive services. Children not eligible for Head Start may also need extra supports and should have access to such services. The two programs can build a pre-k system that provides access to additional support services for those who need them.

A Call to Action

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Help providers design programs that meet the needs of the children they serve. Careful cost allocation allows children funded through both programs to play side by side, learn from one another, and help one another. State and federal guidance and regulations should be closely examined to provide direction that ensures programs accurately allocate costs to provide services that are in the best interests of children.

Provide the professional development and compensation that teachers need to obtain bachelor's degrees and certification in early childhood education. The education and specialized training of pre-k teachers relates directly to the positive learning and development of children. Research has shown that teachers with a bachelor's degree and specialized education in early childhood are more effective than those with less formal education.¹² The state and federal governments should provide the supports and resources necessary to help teachers obtain this education, create alternative pathways to certification, and help program providers afford appropriate compensation and benefits. Compensation scales should be structured to ensure that teachers at any level of credential are not penalized for choosing to work in a community-based pre-k, Head Start, or child care rather than in a program associated with a public school.

Conclusion

Collaboration between state pre-k and Head Start is possible and is happening in sites across the country. Existing partnerships demonstrate that collaboration can provide better-quality services for children and their families. Differences in program standards, eligibility, funding, and missions can be bridged through leadership, technical assistance, and careful evaluation of policies.

Successful collaboration cannot be mandated, but it can and should be externally motivated. The ability to serve more children in higher-quality programs is incentive enough for some providers. For others, state pre-k administrators, Head Start-state collaboration directors, and regional federal ACF leaders can and should take an active role in addressing the challenges that hinder collaboration. They can provide local programs with positive support rather than punitive consequences. State leaders working together provide a model for local programs, but these leaders can also provide concrete supports such as training and mentoring in collaboration and organizational change.

Research for *Better Outcomes for All: Promoting Partnerships between Head Start and State Pre-K* made clear that partnerships between state pre-k and Head Start are not easy and require determination, cooperation, compromise, and creative conflict resolution. Yet it also made clear that throughout the country, policymakers and program providers are working together toward a vision of seamless, high-quality early education for the children in their communities.

Appendix A: Head Start Overview

The following description is meant to serve as a brief introduction to Head Start programs; it is not meant to be an exhaustive description of these programs. For further information about how states include Head Start and other community-based providers in their pre-k programs, visit <http://www.clasp.org/publications/stateprofiles.htm>.

For more than 40 years, Head Start has provided comprehensive early childhood education to those children who need it most. In that time, it has evolved, and, today, employs extensive research-based standards and boasts an infrastructure that supports collaboration and quality through professional development, technical assistance, and monitoring. Head Start is available in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, but eligibility is generally limited to children from families with incomes at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty threshold or those receiving public assistance. Even within this targeted framework, Head Start currently serves only about half of eligible children.¹ In 2005, Head Start served 816,294 children ages three and above; the average cost per child is currently \$7,222.²

Head Start is a federal-to-local program, with federal funds going directly to local grantees that administer the program in community-based settings, including child care centers,

schools, and other sites. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “the Head Start program has a long tradition of delivering comprehensive and high quality services designed to foster healthy development in low-income children. Head Start grantee and delegate agencies provide a range of individualized services in the areas of education and early childhood development.”³ Head Start services include vision, hearing, dental, general health, developmental, and mental health screenings, as well as follow-up services when needed. In addition, Head Start offers family-involvement activities, support, and training; regular parent conferences; referrals for needed social services; and activities to support children’s transition to kindergarten.⁴ These comprehensive services are central to Head Start’s mission to serve the ‘whole child,’ and the 2005 Head Start Impact Study found impacts on important measures such as improved parenting practices.⁵

The Head Start law requires that 50 percent of Head Start teachers nationally have at least an AA degree; in practice, 69 percent of teachers had an AA or higher in 2004.⁶ All Head Start programs must follow the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Grantees are monitored every three years and receive technical assistance to improve quality and address any program deficiencies.

¹ According to calculations by the National Women’s Law Center based on data from the U.S. Head Start Bureau on number of pre-kindergartners enrolled in Head Start and Census Bureau data on number of children in poverty by single year of age in 2004.

² Office of Head Start, “Head Start Program Fact Sheet Fiscal Year 2004,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/2006.htm>.

³ ———, “General Information,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/about/generalinformation/index.htm>

⁴ See Kate Irish, Rachel Schumacher, and Joan Lombardi, “Head Start Comprehensive Services: A Key Support for Early Learning for Poor Children,” Policy Brief in *Head Start Series*, no. 4 (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2004).

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families, “Head Start Impact Study: First Year Findings,” Michael Puma et al. 2005.

⁶ K. Hamm, “More Than Meets the Eye: Head Start Programs, Participants, Families, and Staff in 2005,” (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2006).

Appendix B: State Pre-K Overview

The following description is meant to serve as a brief introduction to state pre-k programs; it is not meant to be an exhaustive description of these programs. For more information about state pre-k visit <http://www.preknow.org/resource/profiles/index.cfm>.

Investments in state pre-k programs have grown steadily over the last two decades,¹ in part, because of the success of Head Start and in part because of increasing awareness of the value of early education. Public awareness about brain development in the early years has increased demand for high-quality early learning programs. Demands for more accountability in the K-12 public school system also fuel the need for pre-k programs that prepare children for school success.

Unlike Head Start, which has the same standards for every program, state pre-k programs vary significantly with some states offering multiple programs. In 2005, 38 states funded 48 pre-k programs and served about 800,000 children.² Like Head Start, most are available only to children who meet eligibility requirements and are most at risk for school failure.

State pre-k programs may operate in public schools, Head Start centers, community-based child care centers, family child care, or other settings, depending on the state. In Georgia, Oklahoma, Florida, and specific regions of New Jersey, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, state programs are available to any family who wishes to participate. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), states currently spend about \$2.8 billion in federal and state funds, although state spending per child varies considerably – from less than \$1,000 per pre-k child in Maryland³ to more than \$8,000 per child in New Jersey. Nationwide, state spending per pre-k child averages about \$3,500, considerably less than the average per-child expenditures of both Head Start and state public K-12 systems.⁴

Twenty-five state pre-k programs require all lead teachers to hold a bachelor's degree; although not all of these programs require specialization in early childhood education.⁵ States vary significantly in the degree to which they monitor programs or provide ongoing technical assistance to improve quality.

¹ See, for example, H. Blank, K. Schulman, and D. Ewen, "Seeds of Success: State Pre-Kindergarten Initiatives 1998-1999," (Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 1999) and W. Steven Barnett, Hustedt, Jason T., Robin, Kenneth B., and Schulman, Karen L., "The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook," (New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2004).

² Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin each allocate funds to multiple pre-k programs, according to W. Steven Barnett, Hustedt, Jason T., Robin, Kenneth B., and Schulman, Karen L., "The State of Preschool: 2005 State Preschool Yearbook," (New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2006).

³ Barnett, "The State of Preschool: 2005 State Preschool Yearbook." The authors also note, "This figure reflects Prekindergarten Program funds only. Districts may use other sources of state money such as state-aid funds to support pre-k."

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Appendix C: State Pre-K Programs At-a-Glance

These states were selected because of their regional, political, and pre-k program diversity, as well as the inclusion of Head Start programs as partners in their state-funded pre-k initiatives.

Georgia

- The Georgia Prekindergarten Program is a six-and-one-half-hour daily program during the school year.
- Pre-k is open to all four-year-old children statewide.
- The state contracts directly with public and private providers such as child care centers and Head Start that meet state standards.

How it differs from Head Start:

- Services are available to all four year olds v. Head Start, which has specific eligibility.
- Fewer support services are required than in Head Start.

Illinois

- Illinois's Preschool for All pre-k program offers a two-and-one-half-hour daily program during the school year.
- Recent legislation has made all three- and four-year-old children eligible, but funding priority is given to programs with the highest proportion of children at risk of school¹ failure, provided they meet minimum quality standards.
- The state contracts directly with public and private providers such as child care centers and Head Start that meet state standards. Additionally, some school districts sub-contract with Head Start.

- Funding is offered through a competitive, grant-based program.

How it differs from Head Start:

- Illinois pre-k requires lead teachers to have a BA plus certification v. Head Start, which requires an AA degree.
- State pre-k programs must use a curriculum and instruction that is aligned with state early learning standards.

New Jersey

- The high-quality Abbott Preschool Program is a 10-hour, daily program, offered year round.
- All three- and four-year-old children in the 31 Abbott districts are entitled to pre-k, regardless of income.
- School districts receive funds from the state and also sub-contract with Head Start and child care.

How it differs from Head Start:

- Abbott pre-k requires a BA plus certification for lead teachers v. Head Start, which requires an AA degree.
- Abbott features larger classrooms: 45 square feet of indoor space per child v. 35 square feet per child for Head Start.

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New Jersey (continued)

- Abbott pre-k features lower ratios and group sizes than Head Start.
- Abbott pre-k provides access for all in-district three and four year olds v. Head Start, which has specific eligibility.

Oregon

- Oregon's Head Start Prekindergarten Program follows Head Start Program Performance Standards.
- All three- and four-year-old children with family incomes below the federal poverty threshold are eligible, but current funding levels serve only 60 percent of eligible children.
- State funds are not limited to Head Start grantees and can go to any nonsectarian organization that meets Head Start quality standards. Funds must be used to serve more children, not to extend the day for children already enrolled in Head Start.

How it differs from Head Start:

- Teachers in public school settings must have a BA with a specialization in early childhood education v. Head Start, which requires an AA degree.
- Eligibility requirements allow 20 percent of children enrolled to exceed Head Start income eligibility levels v. Head Start's 10 percent.

Wisconsin

- Local school districts determine the schedule, but minimally, Wisconsin 4K offers two-and-one-half hours per day for 175 school days.
- All four-year-old children are eligible, but school districts are not required to provide 4K.
- School districts receive funds from the state and sub-contract with Head Start and child care centers.
- School districts receive 50 percent of the state K-12 per-pupil contribution for a half-day program, and 60 percent if the program also offers a parent-support program.

How it differs from Head Start:

- Wisconsin 4K requires a BA plus certification for lead teachers v. Head Start, which requires an AA degree.
- Local school districts have discretion on the length of the 4K day, curriculum, group sizes, and staff/child ratios.

¹ This expansion of pre-k eligibility is the first step in Illinois' "Preschool for All" plan. The plan, supported by the governor and his Early Learning Council, envisions annual funding increases that will make voluntary, high-quality pre-k available to all three and four year olds by 2011.

Endnotes

- ¹ For a detailed analysis of the role of child care in a coordinated pre-k system see: Rachel Schumacher et al., “All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-Kindergarten” (Center for Law and Social Policy, 2005); available from http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf.
- ² For additional information, see: Michelle Ganow Jones, “Coordinating with Head Start Programs to Support Low-Income Working Families,” *Issue Notes*, vol. 7, no. 5 (2003), <http://www.financeproject.org/Publications/coordinatingwithheadstartprogramsIN.htm> and House Committee on Education and the Workforce, *Testimony of Helen Blank before the Subcommittee on Education Reform*, 109th Cong., 1st sess., Apr. 21, 2005.
- ³ W. Steven Barnett, Hustedt, Jason T., Robin, Kenneth B, and Schulman, Karen L., “The State of Preschool: 2005 State Preschool Yearbook,” (New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2006).
- ⁴ K. Hamm, “More Than Meets the Eye: Head Start Programs, Participants, Families, and Staff in 2005,” (Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2006).
- ⁵ Barnett, “The State of Preschool: 2005 State Preschool Yearbook.
- ⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families, “Information Memorandum: Financial Management Issues in Head Start Programs Utilizing Other Sources of Funding,” Head Start Bureau, 2001).
- ⁷ For detailed information on this formula, see: New Jersey Department of Education, “Tier 1 Abbott Head Start Provider One-Year Budget Instructions and Guidance, 2006-2007,” Office of Early Childhood Education, (Office of Early Childhood Education; reprint, Reprint), New Jersey Department of Education, “Tier 2 Abbott Head Start Provider One-Year Budget Instructions and Guidance, 2006-2007,” Office of Early Childhood Education, (Office of Early Childhood Education; reprint, Reprint).
- ⁸ W. Steven Barnett, Hustedt, Jason T., Robin, Kenneth B, and Schulman, Karen L., “The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook,” (New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2004), 42.
- ⁹ Walter S. Gilliam and Carol H. Ripple, “What Can Be Learned from State-Funded Prekindergarten Initiatives? A Data-Based Approach to the Head Start Devolution Debate,” (2004).
- ¹⁰ “Information Memorandum: Financial Management Issues in Head Start Programs Utilizing Other Sources of Funding,” Head Start Bureau, 2001.
- ¹¹ This financing guide is available at: <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/docs/FundingResourceGuide.pdf>
- ¹² Marcy Whitebook, “Early Education Quality: Higher Teacher Qualifications for Better Learning Environments - a Review of the Literature,” (Berkeley: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 2003).

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