

# **Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Head Start**

**April 2000**

Commissioner's Office of Research and Evaluation  
And the Head Start Bureau  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Gail E. Joseph and Rachel Chazan Cohen from the Commissioner's Office of Research and Evaluation in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families. Information in this report was gathered by SocioTechnical Research Applications, Inc. and Juarez and Associates, Inc. under U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contract number 105-93-1913, under the direction of Henry M. Doan, Federal Project Officer.

First and foremost we acknowledge the openness and insight of the families who participated in this study. Their contributions are essential to understanding the Head Start experience. We are indebted to the many program directors and staff for working with us and participating in site visits, focus groups, surveys and interviews. We realize this called for time and effort over and above the dedicated hours they already spend committed to the children and families they serve.

Many individuals in the Administration on Children, Youth and Families were instrumental in the preparation of this report. Special thanks to Michelle Plutro, Marita Hoppmann, Julie Bosland, James A. Harrell, and Patricia Montoya for their thoughtful insights. We appreciate the care with which the following individuals reviewed earlier drafts of this report and provided helpful suggestions: Louisa Tarullo, Michael Lopez, Mary Bruce Webb, Tom Schultz, Ann Linehan, and Craig Turner.

We are also grateful for the work and commitment of the Technical Advisory Panel including: Dr. Eugene Garcia, former Director of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education; Dr. Margo Gottlieb, Director of Assessment and Evaluation, Illinois Resource Center; Dr. Luis Laosa, Principal Research Scientist, Educational Testing Service; Dr. Carol Brunson Day, Executive Director for the Council on Early Childhood Professional Recognition; Dr. Marlene Zepeda, Professor, California State University, Los Angeles; and Mr. Gilbert Garcia, of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Most of the children are newcomers to the United States; they have come from Nicaragua, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, and Colombia. They still speak Spanish, though after a year in Head Start, most of them are now fluent in English as well. ... They climb up to the stage, where a large American flag covers the entire back wall. The children sing a traditional Hispanic song of leave-taking, "Adios, St. Peter." Then, with faces full of hope, they conclude with "The World is a Rainbow."*

*-Quoted from Zigler and Muenchow, 1992, p. 245.*

*At first [our program] just had two languages, English and Spanish. Because of the makeup of the community they had a large Spanish-speaking population. [We] first started noticing a change in the population about 10 years ago. Then we saw that there were more and more Vietnamese. At first we couldn't communicate with the Vietnamese [families] and we didn't have the staff to take care of these children.*

*Then about 4 years ago we saw that we had a population of Cambodian families that we were not serving at all. [We] tried to find staff who spoke their language. We found that the Cambodians tend to stick to one area [of the community] and that the program had thus to put the services in the area where their families were living.*

*In the program we also had to change the food served, to be culturally sensitive. We were meeting the needs of those with a Spanish diet but not the Vietnamese, at first.*

*-Interview conducted with a Head Start Health and Nutrition Coordinator, April 1995*

Since its inception in 1965 as a summer program launched during President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty," Head Start has helped more than 16 million children and their families. Head Start was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children with a program to meet their emotional, social, health, nutritional, and psychological needs. The idea was that, with a little help -- a head start -- children from even the most disadvantaged families could begin elementary school at the same level as their more advantaged peers. In 1998, Head Start served more than 800,000 children in over 48,000 classrooms across the United States. Head Start is also a recognized leader in providing services to children of migrant workers, and American Indian families.

In the last three decades, the United States population has undergone some dramatic demographic changes yielding a far more culturally diverse population. These changing national demographics mean that Head Start must learn how to access new populations, encourage their participation and tailor programs to meet their unique needs.

## **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

The current study was commissioned by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) in 1993, in order to better understand the diversity in language and culture of the Head Start population and to identify the range of services provided to this population. The objectives of this study were:

1. To describe the Head Start population, including the cultural and linguistic groups served and their distribution.
2. To describe what services programs have developed (i.e., classroom curricula, parent involvement components, staff training, etc.) to address the unique service needs of children and families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
3. To describe barriers faced by Head Start programs as they address the needs of an increasingly diverse population.

## **METHODS**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to meet the objectives of this study. Three primary data sources were used:

1. a from Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), an annual self-report survey of all Head Start programs.
2. Surveys were sent to Head Start programs in 1993; the sample included approximately 2,000 (1,413 returned) Head Start programs nationwide.

- Site visits were made to 30 programs, including 58 classrooms in 1995. The sample of 30 programs was selected based on an analysis of the survey data and consultations with Head Start staff and Regional Offices. Sites were selected on the basis of diversity of children and families; diversity of staff; innovative classroom materials and curricula; and staff training in multicultural awareness, sensitivity and procedures.

## MAJOR FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are summarized below. First, the Head Start population is described, followed by a summary of multicultural practices adopted by Head Start programs to serve an increasingly diverse population.

### The Head Start Population

- Over Two-Thirds of All Head Start Children Are Minorities*

A majority of children enrolled in Head Start are members of a minority group; the largest minorities represented are Blacks and Hispanics.

**Table ES.1 Ethnicity of Children Enrolled in Head Start 1992-1993**

Census Category	% of Head Start Population	# Head Start Children
White	33.0	235,945
Black	36.3	259,004
Hispanic	23.8	169,909
American Indian/Alaskan Native	3.8	27,128
Asian/Pacific Islander	3.1	21,917
<b>Total minority</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>477,958</b>
<b>Total U.S.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>713,903</b>

**Table ES.2 Ethnicity of Children Enrolled In Head Start 1998-1999**

<b>Census Category</b>	<b>% of Head Start Population</b>	<b># Head Start Children</b>
<b>White</b>	30.3	253,116
<b>Black</b>	35.2	294,048
<b>Hispanic</b>	28.0	233,902
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	3.4	28,402
<b>Asian</b>	2.1	17,543
<b>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	1.0	8,354
<b>Total minority</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>582,249</b>
<b>Total U.S.</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>835,365</b>

The numbers of minority children increased between 1993 and 1999. The percent of minority children served rose from 67% to almost 70%, reflecting an increase of 104,291 children. The Hispanic population showed the most growth, increasing from 24% to 28%. Head Start served 233,902 Hispanic children in 1999, as opposed to 169,909 in 1993, an increase of 38%

- *Head Start Children Speak Diverse Languages*

The programs surveyed listed over 140 languages spoken by Head Start children. Spanish is the most common language spoken other than English.

**Table ES.3 Home Languages of Children Enrolled in Head Start 1992-1993**

<b>Language</b>	<b>% of Enrolled Children</b>	<b># of Enrolled Children</b>
<b>English</b>	78.8	562,868
<b>Spanish</b>	17.5	125,186
<b>French</b>	*	214
<b>Haitian</b>	0.3	2,213
<b>Vietnamese</b>	0.4	2,713
<b>Hmong</b>	0.3	2,427
<b>Chinese</b>	0.4	2,499
<b>Cambodian</b>	0.2	1,142
<b>Korean</b>	*	286
<b>Japanese</b>	*	71
<b>Other</b>	2.0	14,284

**Table ES.4 Home Languages of Children Enrolled in Head Start 1998-1999**

<b>Language</b>	<b>% of Enrolled Children</b>	<b># of Enrolled Children</b>
<b>English</b>	75.9	634,042
<b>Spanish</b>	20.4	170,414
<b>Asian</b>	1.5	12,530
<b>Native American</b>	0.3	2,506
<b>Other</b>	1.9	15,872

The diversity in home language spoken in the Head Start population is increasing. The percent of non-English speaking households rose from approximately 21% in 1993 to approximately 24% in 1999. The largest growth was Spanish speaking households,

increasing from 17.5% to more than 20%. Head Start served 170,414 children from Spanish speaking households in 1999, as opposed to 125,186 in 1993, an increase of 36%.

### **Program Response to Diversity**

- *Recruitment Strategies Changing to Reach New Populations*

Surveyed programs reported that they were modifying their outreach strategies in the following ways:

- Advertising (local and/or mass media) in the language of the community;
- Open houses;
- Going door-to-door to recruit families; and
- Contacting agencies, churches, and other groups/functions serving minority communities.

This study also found that social service staff had a unique opportunity to recruit families since they interfaced daily with the community. Programs with bilingual and multilingual social services staff helped parents fill out enrollment forms and, when possible, they distributed Spanish and Vietnamese versions of enrollment forms. Some programs that did not have bilingual staff or translated forms contracted with translators. In some cases, when translators for specific languages were difficult to find (e.g., Hmong or Creole), parents brought their own translator, typically another family member or friend.

- *Head Start Staff Generally Reflect the Backgrounds and Languages of Enrolled Children*

Survey data demonstrate that, nationwide, Head Start staff generally reflected the ethnicity of the children and families they served. Across the country, when there were more than 10 children of a particular ethnicity in a program, they were represented by a staff member of similar ethnic background. Survey data indicated that there were somewhat more white staff (44% of all staff) than white children (35% of all children). Blacks, Hispanics and Asian American/Pacific Islander staff were slightly underrepresented compared to children from these backgrounds.

Results of the survey indicate that staff spoke 93 of the approximately 140 languages spoken by Head Start children. There were about 14,000 children who attended programs in which there was no staff available who spoke their home language. Programs serving speakers of low prevalence languages, such as Quiche speakers from Guatemala or speakers of certain Chinese dialects, often had difficulty finding Head Start staff who spoke these languages.

- *Multicultural Materials are Plentiful*

Most classrooms observed had multicultural materials. Most sites offer materials in every learning center that include books, dolls, music, posters, and traditional dress-up clothes. National survey results confirm that most programs had books, dolls, and music representing different ethnic groups. Some less common items included audiovisual materials.

Survey respondents indicated that the African American culture was the most frequently represented in their materials, followed by Hispanic. Head Start educational staff found it a challenge to find developmentally appropriate books written in Vietnamese, Chinese, Hmong, and other Asian languages. In some cases, parents were asked to translate books or tape record stories in their home languages.

- *Bilingual and Multicultural Activities*

Classroom observations found that while multicultural materials were often available in the classrooms, teachers did not often use them in daily activities. Teachers indicated that even when they had materials, they did not always know what to do with them.

When activities were planned they included cooking and eating different foods, singing songs, dancing, watching presentations, and going on field trips.

- *Parents Were Pleased with Multi-Cultural and Bilingual Services*

Parents reported, in focus group interviews conducted during site visits, that they were pleased with program attempts to respond to the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of their children. They liked their children's teachers and the materials used in the classroom. Parents agreed that learning about cultures other than their own is good for their children. Most immigrant parents stated firmly that although they value their home language, they wanted their children to speak fluent English so that they will succeed in school.

- *Importance of Parent Involvement*

Head Start staff report that parents make substantial cultural contributions to their children's classroom. Parents were particularly helpful when they provided translation, offered assistance on how to integrate different cultures into the classroom, or shared foods, stories, dances, and songs. At times, parents were invited to explain the significance of cultural and family traditions to the children.

Program staff described parent involvement in programs as "very good". Parents who came to centers regularly developed a close rapport, not only with the staff and children, but with other parents too. Strategies to increase parent involvement at many sites included parent appreciation activities and production and circulation of newsletters and flyers, translated into several languages. Some sites even provided incentives such as

childcare or transportation to encourage parents to attend parent committee and policy council meetings. Although many programs provided translators at meetings, the translators were not consistently available at every site or at every meeting. Staff emphasized the need for more planning, increased translation of materials, better communication with parents and staff, and consciousness-raising to teach staff and parents how to view different cultures with more openness.

- *Parent Activities*

Parent involvement staff encourage and support parents in their search for employment through life skills classes that focus on self-esteem building, goal setting, career options, self-marketing, job skills training, and time and money management. Additional parent activities include providing college opportunities, Child Development Associate (CDA) training, courses on parenting and multicultural awareness.

Several programs also offered English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy training for parents. Staff in centers providing ESL reported these classes were the most important service offered to parents.

- *Health Services Were Somewhat Constrained by Limited Bilingual Services in Communities*

Head Start emphasizes the importance of early identification of health and developmental problems and provides health services either directly or through community referrals and partnerships. However, in interviews conducted with administrators and staff during site visits, some Head Start sites reported difficulties finding and coordinating with health service providers who spoke the families' home languages. This problem was particularly acute when the child needed specialized services for a suspected or diagnosed disability. Due to difficulties in getting translators to help families with health visits, Head Start program staff accompanied some families to health clinics to assist with translation. Health coordinators also complained about a lack of health education and information materials available in families' home languages.

## **RECENT CHANGES IN HEAD START POLICY**

It is noteworthy to say that, since the conclusion of this descriptive study, with the revision of the Head Start Performance Standards that took effect in January 1998, the Head Start Bureau has moved forward to develop new standards to require grantees to better meet unique needs of children and families of bilingual and multicultural backgrounds. The Revised Performance Standards require the following: (a) that grantees be trained to better implement the Head Start Multicultural Principles; (b) that grantees actively improve their ability to coordinate with community healthcare providers who are able and willing to meet unique needs of bilingual and multicultural populations; (c) that grantees conduct health, developmental, and other screenings in families'

preferred languages; (d) that grantees provide translators to assist non-English speaking parents during medical and dental provider visits.

The Performance Standards also require grantees to conduct community needs assessments to, among other things, describe demographic changes in local communities and explore their effects on enrollment of children and families in their programs. They also require the assessment of the effectiveness of local programs' bilingual and multicultural practices. The Performance Standards also require that programs develop new approaches to improving parent involvement with an increasingly diverse population of parents. These new program requirements are reviewed during periodic monitoring visits by the Head Start Bureau to ensure that quality program services are provided to children and families of bilingual and multicultural background.

Data gathered for the Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Head Start has provided the Head Start Bureau with a wealth of information on services which local programs designed and provided children and families of bilingual and multicultural background. These innovative services were spontaneous responses of local programs to meet the urgent needs of bilingual and multicultural children and families as programs faced influxes of planned or unplanned numbers of these newcomers in their service areas. Classroom observations and interviews with program staff conducted during site visits revealed a wide spectrum of services provided and actions taken by local programs to meet parents' expectations of services. Focus group interviews with parents conducted during site visits confirmed that parents were generally satisfied with the services provided.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Head Start programs can and do impact community practices outside of their doors. Here are some efforts that, over time, will improve our ability to serve families from diverse cultural and linguistic heritages.

Within the Head Start community:

- Demographic changes in local communities should be monitored as well as their effects on recruitment and enrollment of children and families in Head Start programs. Efforts should be made to reach out to eligible non-English speaking families, who are often prevented from accessing Head Start services due to language barriers.
- Training and technical assistance on bilingual and multicultural programming is needed, including dissemination efforts to share information with both programs and parents on the current availability of bilingual and multicultural resources.

- The Head Start community must continue striving to understand cultural values of families served and to incorporate them meaningfully and respectfully into program practices.

Beyond the Head Start Community:

- Head Start should continue to encourage diversity in the fields of early childhood education, teacher training, and early childhood education research. Head Start already invests in the training of minority individuals through grants to Tribally Controlled Universities, Historically Black Colleges, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Similarly, Head Start has increased the percentage of graduate student researchers receiving support for Head Start research.
- Head Start can aid in the efforts to promote census participation. This is essential in accessing federal and state resources for childcare, Head Start, education, public health services, as well as other community programs. Having an accurate profile of the community will also allow individual Head Start programs to monitor the success of their recruitment and enrollment practices.
- The fields of child development and early childhood education need resources to encourage the development of more empirically supported bilingual and multicultural approaches to curricula appropriate to preschoolers and to the language groups represented in Head Start programs. Research is needed to conceptualize, evaluate and broadly implement bilingual and multicultural practices that lead to improved child outcomes.

## **FINAL WORD**

The manner in which we support, respect and accept differences in our communities of young children will influence the ways in which they mature into the adult voices and the decision makers that shape our future communities and our nation.

A culturally and linguistically responsive approach to serving children and families honors family and individual uniqueness. While there are many values of the predominant culture, our challenge is to be sensitive to and respectful of all values. Incorporating family differences and multicultural principles into the resources and technologies we use to support children is not only a pragmatic challenge, it is for some a paradigmatic change. As the populations we serve become increasingly diverse, we must continue to engage in a powerful discourse about the issues of familial, cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity, and how Head Start communities support the hopes, dreams and successes of all children and families served.

## **1 – Introduction**

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, services for children and families must continue to change to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the population. The Head Start program, which provides comprehensive developmental services to preschool children and their families, has a long-standing commitment to multiculturalism. This report represents the first national study describing the range of bilingual and multicultural services offered by Head Start programs. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the Head Start program, outlines the purpose and basic design of this research study, and reviews Head Start policy and research findings regarding multiculturalism and bilingualism.

### **THE HEAD START PROGRAM**

Head Start was designed to help break the cycle of poverty by providing preschool children and their families with a program to meet their educational, emotional, social, health, and nutritional needs. The idea was that, with a little help—a head start—children from disadvantaged families could be ready for school like more advantaged peers. Since 1965, when it was launched as a 6-week summer program, Head Start has been extended to cover the school year -- and increasingly the full year -- and has served more than 16 million children and their families. In 1998, Head Start served more than 800,000 children in over 48,000 classrooms across the United States. Head Start is a recognized leader in providing services to children of migrant workers, and American Indian families. Programs for families of migrant workers have been serving pregnant women, infants and toddlers, as well as preschool-aged children for over 25 years. In 1995, nationwide services for pregnant women, infants and toddlers were initiated through Early Head Start.

In addition to providing developmentally and culturally appropriate services to children, Head Start is also committed to supporting parents in their role as primary educators, nurturers and advocates for their children. Head Start encourages parents to become involved in all aspects of the program, from participation in classrooms to involvement in policy and other programmatic decisions. Through linkages with community organizations and programs that focus on early childhood development, family support, health, and education, Head Start helps families access a wide array of community services.

Within the guidelines established by the Program Performance Standards, Head Start grantees have the flexibility to develop programs and services to meet the specific needs of the communities they serve. Generally, local governments, school districts, or Community Action Agencies apply for Federal grants to establish Head Start programs in their communities. Once the grants are awarded, these grantees either administer the programs themselves or delegate program administration to local community organizations, called Head Start delegates.

To support Head Start's overall goal of improving the school readiness of young children, Head Start Program Performance Standards embrace a core set of values, including commitments to:

- Establish a supportive learning environment for children, parents, and staff, in which the process of enhancing awareness, refining skills, and increasing understanding is valued and promoted;
- Recognize that the members of the Head Start community—children, families, and staff—have roots in many cultures. Head Start families and staff, working together as a team, can effectively promote respectful, sensitive, and proactive approaches to diversity issues;
- Understand that the empowerment of families occurs when program governance is a responsibility shared by families, governing bodies, and staff, and when the ideas and opinions of families are heard and respected;
- Embrace a comprehensive vision of health for children, families, and staff, which assures that basic health needs are met, encourages practices that prevent future illnesses and injuries, and promotes positive, culturally relevant health behaviors that enhance life-long well-being;
- Respect the importance of all aspects of an individual's development, including social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth;
- Build a community in which each child and adult is treated as an individual while, at the same time, a sense of belonging to the group is reinforced;
- Foster relationships with the larger community, so that families and staff are respected and served by a network of community agencies in partnership with one another; and
- Develop a continuum of care, education, and services that allow stable, uninterrupted support to families and children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998).

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

In recent years, Head Start has witnessed increasing diversity within its programs and in the communities it serves. Population data show that the combined minority population, including the Census categories of Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and Hispanic, saw an increase of more than 200% from 1960 to 1990. This increase was ten times greater than the growth rate of the white population in the U.S. In addition to the fact that there are more minorities overall, Census data indicate minority families are three times more likely than their white counterparts to be living in poverty. As a result of both increased diversity due to immigration and population growth and an increase in the number of pre-school children from minority families who are living in poverty, a growing number of minority children and children for whom English is a second language are eligible to participate in Head Start.

This dramatic shift in the demographic composition of the United States has important implications for America's educational policies. These changes create a need to re-examine the ways in which positive interactions can take place between people of diverse cultures and

language groups, and to incorporate this knowledge into bilingual and multicultural child development programs and services.

Head Start recognizes that such demographic patterns demand that new policies be developed to foster bilingual and multicultural programming in order to encourage the participation of a culturally and linguistically diverse population. Anecdotal reports prior to this study suggested that many Head Start programs were responding to these demographic changes at the local level, but little documentation of the exact nature of these bilingual and multicultural programs was available.

The current study was commissioned by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) in 1993, in order to better understand the bilingual and multicultural populations served by Head Start and to identify the range of services provided to these children and families. The objectives of this study were:

1. describe the Head Start population, including the cultural and linguistic groups served and their distribution.
2. To describe what services program have developed (i.e., classroom curricula, parent involvement components, staff training, etc.) to address the unique service needs of children and families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
3. To describe barriers faced by Head Start programs as they address the needs of an increasingly diverse population

To fulfill these objectives, the study utilized the annual Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), a mail-administered written survey of grantees, and site visits to 30 Head Start programs (58 classrooms). A detailed description of the design and methodology of this study is provided in Chapter 2 of this report.

This research was a landmark study for Head Start in several ways. First, the study examined how the Head Start eligible population has changed over time, and how Head Start program services responded to these changes. Second, this study examined all of the Head Start component services -- health and nutrition, parent involvement, social services, and education -- rather than focusing on a single component, as was common in prior research. Finally, as a descriptive study, it focused on capturing the broad array of bilingual and multicultural program services, rather than determining the impact of one or more of these services.

## **HEAD START'S APPROACH TO BILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION**

The Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) asserts that effective programming for low-income preschoolers "requires understanding, respect, and responsiveness to the cultures of all people and families" (ACYF, 1992, p. 5). In recognition of the growing diversity among Head Start's target population, ACYF published a guide to help programs better meet the cultural

and language needs of children and families, entitled: Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs (1992). A summary of the Head Start multicultural principles is provided in Exhibit 1-1.

### **Exhibit 1-1 Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs**

1. Every individual is rooted in a culture.
2. The cultural groups represented in the communities and families of each Head Start program are the primary source of culturally relevant programming.
3. Culturally relevant and diverse programming requires learning information about the culture of different groups and discarding stereotypes.
4. Addressing cultural relevance in making curriculum choices is a necessary, developmentally appropriate practice.
5. Every individual has the right to maintain his or her identity while acquiring the skills required to function in our diverse society.
6. Effective programs for children with limited English-speaking ability require both continued development of the primary language and intensive English studies.
7. Culturally relevant programming requires staff who reflect the community and families served.
8. Multicultural programming benefits all children by enabling them to develop an awareness of, respect for, and appreciation of individual cultural differences.
9. Culturally relevant and diverse programming examines and challenges institutional and personal biases.
10. Culturally relevant and diverse programming and practices are incorporated in all components and services.

—ACYF (1992)

According to these principles, Head Start programs are to provide services to their target audience in a manner that reflects the diversity of the community and celebrates individual differences. The goal for each child is to become "a world citizen through multicultural programming." This guide promoted the use of new staff recruitment procedures to increase staff diversity, not only in children's educational services but also in other areas of program service, such as home visitors and family service workers. In addition, the Multicultural

Principles fostered the development of fully multicultural curricula or the addition of more culturally responsive experiences within a program's existing curricula. Head Start programs were also encouraged to seek out more culturally representative materials, especially books, with parents often taking the lead in the identification of materials that would be familiar to their children.

In 1992, Head Start began requiring grantees and delegates to use multicultural programming in all Head Start components -- education, parent involvement, health and social services. The Head Start guidelines, however, permit flexibility in order to avoid prescribing service provisions that may not be relevant within a community or neighborhood. The revised Head Start Program Performance Standards that took in effect in January 1998 encompass all the multicultural principles and mandate that:

- Staff reflect the ethnicity of their community and speak the languages of the children they serve;
- Children have someone to communicate within the classroom in the language of their choice; and
- Programs reflect the everyday experiences of the inhabitants of the local community.

Given the strong emphasis on cultural relevance in Head Start, the program has taken a pluralistic approach to meeting the language needs of its diverse population. As reflected in Head Start Multicultural Principle #6 and the Performance Standards described above, Head Start encourages the continued development of the child's home language in the program as well as the acquisition of English. In order to support this goal and ensure that staff composition reflects the languages spoken by enrolled children, Head Start programs often use parents as program aides or classroom volunteers, or hire parents as teachers' aides and assist them in attaining Child Development Associate (CDA) certification and becoming teachers.

Throughout its policies, Head Start consistently emphasizes that young children need a solid base in their own language and an environment that conveys respect for their expressions, and understandings of the world.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT**

This report is organized into six chapters. Chapter 2 provides a detailed explanation of the research methods. Chapters 3-5 present the findings in terms of Children and Families (Chapter 3), Parent Participation and Perspectives (Chapter 4), and Classrooms (Chapter 5). Chapter 6 concludes the report with accomplishments, challenges and recommendations for the Head Start program.

## **2 – Methods**

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study, including descriptions of the data sources, data collection and analytic strategies.

Data sources included the annual Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), a mail-administered written survey of grantees, and site visits to 30 Head Start programs (58 classrooms). Analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data was used to document the cultural and linguistic diversity of children and families served by Head Start, as well as the response of programs to this increasing diversity.

In 1993, surveys were conducted and PIR data were analyzed in order to describe both the population served and program responses to this population. In the spring of 1995, in-depth site visits were conducted in 30 Head Start programs. These site visits form the primary focus of this report as they provide rich descriptions of how Head Start programs have responded to an increasingly diverse population of children and families. To illustrate the dynamic nature of the Head Start population, PIR data from 1998-1999 are also presented.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The current study addresses research questions related to the diversity of those served by Head Start, the challenges that programs face in serving these populations, and the solutions and innovations used by programs to meet the challenges. Following is a list of the study questions:

1. How diverse is the Head Start population?
2. What services have programs developed (i.e., classroom curricula, parent involvement components, etc.) to address the unique service needs of children and families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds?
3. What are the various types of cultural, logistical, and administrative barriers which Head Start programs face in attempting to serve these populations?

### **CONSULTANTS**

The Technical Advisory Panel served as a regular source of guidance and feedback throughout the study. Panel members provided guidance on the evaluation design, hypotheses, sampling plan, development/selection of data collection instruments, data collection strategies, data analysis, and synthesis of the study findings. They facilitated awareness of issues and concerns regarding program practices, and ensured that appropriate contacts and authorizations were made with Head Start staff, Head Start officials, and a host of extended organizations.

ACYF selected Technical Advisory Panel members who are experts in the fields of multicultural early childhood education with considerable experience with the workings of Head Start programs. The membership included the following people:

- Dr. Margo Gottlieb, Director of Assessment and Evaluation, Illinois Resource Center;
- Dr. Luis Laosa, Principal Research Scientist, Educational Testing Service;
- Dr. Carol Brunson Phillips, Executive Director for the Council on Early Childhood Professional Recognition; and
- Dr. Marlene Zepeda, Professor, California State University, Los Angeles.

Mr. Gilbert Garcia, of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA), U.S. Department of Education, also attended the meetings of the Technical Advisory Panel to provide insight and information from OBEMLA's perspective.

In November 1993, the Technical Advisory Panel assisted in finalizing the survey questions and in May 1994, members made suggestions about site visits and the ways in which they would be carried out. The members were also asked for their input on the format of this report and the reporting of project results applicable and useful to ACYF and to practitioners.

The research team also consulted with several persons outside of ACYF, including Ms. Mary Lewis, a retired program officer from the Head Start Bureau, who provided in-depth knowledge of bilingual and multicultural Head Start programs. In her previous position, Ms. Lewis was instrumental in developing ACYF's Multicultural Principles and in overseeing six specially funded Head Start bilingual and multicultural demonstration projects. Ms. Lewis reviewed the data collection instruments, suggested changes in wording to make these more familiar to Head Start staff and recommended interviewing other relevant staff.

The research team met with bilingual and multicultural grantee representatives at a Head Start conference in San Francisco, California, to: (1) identify what instruments were used to examine multicultural issues in their centers; (2) identify important multicultural domains; and (3) explore resources available to Head Start staff in implementing the Multicultural Principles. Also consulted were seven education component coordinators from the Texas Migrant Council and approximately 70 Head Start administrators from Region IX. These meetings afforded an opportunity for the research team to explore issues related to multicultural practices and to pretest the instruments.

Draft reports were reviewed by a board which consisted of the following professionals: Ms. Parker Anderson, Assistant Director, Professional Development, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC); Dr. Linda M. Espinosa, University of Missouri; Dr. Margo Gottlieb, Illinois Resource Center (also on the Technical Advisory Panel, supporting and guiding the research efforts from the beginning); and Dr. Patton Tabors, Harvard University, Graduate School of Education.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

To obtain information on the ethnicity and primary languages of children, services provided to them, challenges and successes encountered while providing those services, and lessons learned from programs, three sources of data collection were utilized

1. Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data, based on annual self-reported surveys of all programs, was used to determine the characteristics of the Head Start population (including geographic distribution, ethnicity, and home languages). As indicated earlier, population characteristics are reported from spring of 1993, when the study was begun and the surveys were completed. The 1998-1999 PIR data is also presented as an update and to demonstrate the increasing diversity in the Head Start population.
2. A national survey of all Head Start grantees was conducted in order to gather information on the population served and the range of services available to culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. The survey included information on the language and ethnicity of children and staff, brief descriptions of waiting lists, materials and innovative services. The survey was mailed in the spring of 1993 to all 2,006 Head Start programs. A response rate of 71 percent was achieved for the survey (n=1413).
3. The research team visited 30 programs to gather qualitative data on services designed to meet the needs of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. Interviews, focus groups, and site observations were used to collect this information. All 58 classrooms in these programs were also observed. Site visits lasted from three to four days. The sample of 30 programs was selected based on an analysis of the survey data and consultations with Head Start staff and Regional Offices. Sites were selected on the basis of diversity of children and families; diversity of staff; innovative classroom materials and curricula; and staff training in multicultural awareness, sensitivity and procedures. The site visits allowed for an even greater in-depth understanding of the challenges and solutions to serving diverse populations. A more detailed description of the site visits is presented below.

## **SITE VISITS**

These in-depth case studies describe practices and challenges in a variety of Head Start programs. The site visits provided a deeper understanding of the nature of the challenges faced by Head Start staff. Observations focused on processes and procedures and went beyond collecting simple frequencies of incidence. Thus, the site visits allowed for examination of the need for cultural sensitivity as well as documentation of how individual Head Start programs have responded to that need. The qualitative methodology consisted of: observations in the community; interviews with Head Start directors, component coordinators and teachers; focus group interviews with parents; and observations to describe the site, classroom context, and multicultural component services.

Sites were selected through careful analysis of the survey data and consultations with Head Start staff and Regional Offices. Selected sites included self-reported multicultural programs from the mail survey respondents, which a) served diverse groups, b) had staff that spoke the language of their enrollees, c) had diverse materials, and d) provided training in multicultural awareness, sensitivity, and procedures.

Site characteristics are presented in Tables 2.1 through 2.4. The chosen sites represent a broad array of geographic locales, sizes, agency auspices, and populations served. Larger programs were somewhat over-represented as large urban programs tended to serve a more diverse population. However, programs ranged from very small (less than 200 children) to large (over 1,000 children enrolled). Of the agencies visited, ten were public/private non-profit, nine were Community Action Agencies, six were school-based programs, and four were run by local governments. Programs tended to serve children with a variety of home languages. Eight programs had between eight and ten languages, and five programs had more than ten languages.

**Table 2.1 Geographic Location of Sites**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Site Location</b>
NE	TOTAL = 8
SE	TOTAL = 4
NW	TOTAL = 6
SW	TOTAL = 6
CENTRAL	TOTAL = 6
<b>TOTAL SITES</b>	<b>30</b>

**Table 2.2 Size of Selected Sites**

<b>Total Funded Enrollment</b>	<b>Number of Programs</b>
Less than 200	7
201 - 400	5
401 – 600	4
601 – 800	4
801 – 1,000	2
Over 1,000	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>

**Table 2.3 Agency Types**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Number of Programs</b>
School System	6
Non-Profit Organization	12
Community Action Agency	9
Local Government Agency	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>

**Table 2.4 Number of Languages Represented**

<b>Number of Languages Represented</b>	<b>Number of Programs Represented</b>
English Only	2
English + 1 Language	2
English + 2 Languages	4
English + 3 Languages	4
English + 4 Languages	2
English + 5 Languages	2
English + 6 to 10 Languages	9
English + Over 10 Languages	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>

### **Site Visit Instruments**

Due to time and resource constraints of data collection efforts (two-person teams for 3 to 4 days at each site), research staff had to quickly focus upon the identification of innovative multicultural practices being used in the Head Start programs. Therefore, the following instruments were developed for carrying out the in-depth site-visits for the descriptive study:

#### **1. Interviews**

Interview schedules were designed for key individuals at each site. A core set of common questions was asked of all interviewees. In addition to these core questions, there were questions on specific component areas (i.e., health and nutrition, education, social services, and parent involvement). In cases where a person occupied more than one position at the site, he or she responded to the core questions and to the sections relevant to his or her specific responsibilities. Highly trained field workers knowledgeable in the organization and characteristics of Head Start programs conducted the interviews using a format containing largely open-ended questions for

each interviewee. The questions were consistent for a given type of respondent, and permitted the collection of comparable data across study sites. Following are descriptions of each set of component area questions:

- *Head Start Director/Grantee Representative Interview.* At sites where the grantee had a number of Head Start centers to administer, the research team interviewed the individual who had direct responsibility for coordinating bilingual and multicultural services. The interview focused on: grantee interpretations of Head Start mandates; financial issues; grantee policies and resultant guidelines for providing services; other child development services available in the community; and the number and demographic characteristics of the students receiving services within the grantee catchment area.
- *Center Coordinator Interview.* The team interviewed the individual who was directly responsible for the day-to-day management of the selected center. The interview focused on: profile of children (ethnicity and language proficiency) served by the center; parent participation in center activities; community support for bilingual/multicultural services; the program (ages served, facilities, funding for special services, in-service training, teacher turnover); and bilingual and multicultural services (types of services, language abilities of staff-teachers; credentialing and in-service training).
- *Parent Involvement Coordinator Interview.* The person responsible for the design, implementation, and supervision of all parent involvement activities was the source for this interview information. These activities included parents working as volunteers, attending training courses (such as health education, job skills, and parenting), and participating as members on Head Start committees. Interview questions focused on types of services and opportunities provided, and the extent and type of parent involvement from different linguistic and cultural groups.
- *Social Services/Outreach Coordinator Interview.* The research team interviewed persons responsible for recruitment, selection, provision of social services and with linking Head Start families with services related to literacy and job training, health services, and programs serving other special needs. Interviews focused on types of services, recruitment practices, community participation and support, language and cultural characteristics of service providers, and participation of Head Start families.
- *Health/Nutrition Coordinator Interview.* The primary objectives of Head Start's health services are to provide a comprehensive health program covering medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health services to preschool children, including those with disabilities; to promote preventative health care; and to provide health education and community linkages to a health care system. Interviews included questions on the types of health services, language and cultural characteristics of service providers, local outreach techniques, and materials provided for parents.
- *Education Coordinator Interview.* The educational component provides for individual programming to meet the needs of children and families from ethnically and linguistically

diverse backgrounds. The interview complemented classroom observations by focusing on the educational philosophy of the program, types of parent involvement, staff training, and resource materials.

- *Teacher/Aide and Home Visitor Interview.* The research team interviewed the lead teacher and aides in each observed classroom. This interview provided data on: educational background of the teachers; staff training; linguistic/cultural composition of the children in each classroom; the language use of teachers, aides, parents and children in the classroom; grouping of children; and services provided. Where appropriate, this same section was used to interview persons responsible for carrying out home visits.
- *Head Start Bilingual Specialist Interview.* In sites having an individual with responsibilities for coordinating services or consulting with teachers and aides about bilingual and multicultural services provided to children, that person was interviewed. The interview focused on: the goals and objectives of the services; the population served; the types of services (dual-instruction, language separation, ESL, Afrocentric, etc.); enrichment programs available (libraries, computer); program history; and materials or curricula used.
- *Disabilities Coordinator Interview.* The Disabilities Services Coordinator designs, coordinates and implements the services and recruiting of disabled children. In sites with this position, the research team interviewed that person. The interview focused on: the organization of the handicapped services, including recruitment, enrollment, diagnosis and provision of services; the coordination of an interdisciplinary team (if one exists) to support services; staffing; services provided by community agencies; training for staff and parents; specialists employed to work with the disabled children; advocacy work; and the technical assistance needs of the program.

## 2. Parent Focus Groups

Research staff conducted focus groups with Head Start families participating in bilingual and multicultural services. Convening groups of parents provided information on how the strategies employed by the Head Start program were seen by the actual recipients.

## 3. Observation Forms and Note Taking

Observers used both checklists and running notes to capture the richness of activities in the sites. Checklists are an efficient means of collecting data, and were used to determine the range of services provided at a given site. Classroom observations were conducted using a running log of naturally occurring activities. Research staff prepared a list of all persons in the room before an observation began. Then, they described the behavior of each person for each activity. Such note-taking, focused on specific activities, allowed for an accurate estimate of services provided in an individual classroom.

## **ANALYTIC STRATEGY**

The analytic strategy is primarily descriptive. The research team looked for information across the three sources that could illuminate promising practices in Head Start programs. Again, the goal of this report is to describe what Head Start programs have been doing to address the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse population, what constraints programs have faced. Simple frequencies from the PIR and survey data will be presented along with narrative descriptions of information gleaned from the site visits.

### 3 – Children and Families

As noted in the introductory chapter, there has been rapid growth in minority representation in the United States population. The combined minority population, including the Census categories of Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native, increased more than 200% from 1960 to 1993. This increase was ten times greater than the increase in the white population over the same time period. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing minority population among the four groups. The Census Bureau estimates that minorities will comprise 47% of the U.S. population by 2050.

This chapter describes the ethnicity and home language distribution within the Head Start population when this study was begun, in the year ending in the spring of 1993. The national data is presented, followed by regional breakdowns. The profile of the population is taken from the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data from the year 1992-1993. Enrollment information from the 1998-1999 PIR will also be presented to document the recent efforts made by Head Start to attract children and families from minority groups.

**Table 3.1 Ethnicity of Children Enrolled in Head Start 1992 – 1993**

<b>Census Category</b>	<b>% of Head Start Population</b>	<b># Head Start Children</b>
<b>White</b>	33.0	235,945
<b>Black</b>	36.3	259,004
<b>Hispanic</b>	23.8	169,909
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	3.8	27,128
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	3.1	21,917
<b>Total Minority</b>	67.0	477,958
<b>Total U.S.</b>	100	713,903

Over two-thirds of children enrolled in Head Start are members of a minority group. Head Start PIR data show that in 1993, 67% of children enrolled were members of a minority group, the largest two groups being Blacks at approximately 36%, and Hispanics at approximately 24%.

Head Start is a national, federally funded program, administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, with ten regional offices around the United States and two special program branches (Migrant and American Indian programs) located in the central office in the Head Start

Bureau in Washington, DC. The profiles of children and families served vary widely across the regions, and thus enrollment information will be presented by region as well as nationally. To clarify terms used in this section, Department of Health and Human Services Regions are listed in Table 2.2.

**Table 3.2 Regions**

<b>Region</b>	<b>States</b>
<b>I</b>	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
<b>II</b>	New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands
<b>III</b>	Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia
<b>IV</b>	Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia
<b>V</b>	Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin
<b>VI</b>	Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
<b>VII</b>	Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska
<b>VIII</b>	Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, South Dakota
<b>IX</b>	Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Pacific Insular Areas
<b>X</b>	Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington
<b>XI</b>	American Indian Program Branch (located in Washington, DC)
<b>XII</b>	Migrant Program Branch (located in Washington DC)

Regions vary widely in the percentages of minority children served, as well as the profile of the minorities served. In terms of the overall populations, Region XI and XII have the highest percentage of minority children. These two regions are atypical, as they are not geographically limited; they serve special populations throughout the nation. Region XI serves nationally recognized Indian tribes, and 94% of the children served are American Indian or Alaskan Native. Region XII serves migrant workers and their children and is 96% Hispanic. It is also important to note that Region II, with 83% minority, serves Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in addition to New Jersey and New York. The remaining nine regions serve from 38% to 81% minority children.

Many Head Start children do not speak English at home, and many come to Head Start with limited English proficiency. The PIR forms that programs complete have a finite number of choices for each question. Thus, the data presented below reflect the language choices on the 1993 PIR data form. Many languages do not appear on this list, limiting our knowledge of the true breadth of languages spoken.

**Table 3.3 Ethnicity of Children Enrolled in Head Start Regions--Percentages**

<b>Region</b>	<b>% White</b>	<b>% Black</b>	<b>% Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	<b>% American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	<b>% Hispanic</b>	<b>% Total Minority</b>
<b>I</b>	53	23	3	1	20	47
<b>II</b>	17	28	2	*	53	83
<b>III</b>	45	46	2	*	7	55
<b>IV</b>	30	67	*	*	3	70
<b>V</b>	49	41	2	1	7	51
<b>VI</b>	24	40	1	2	33	76
<b>VII</b>	62	32	1	1	4	38
<b>VIII</b>	57	7	2	7	27	43
<b>IX</b>	19	16	16	1	48	81
<b>X</b>	53	9	4	9	24	47
<b>XI</b>	5	*	*	94	1	95
<b>XII</b>	2	1	*	1	96	98

\*less than 1 percent

PIR data indicate that approximately 21% of Head Start children did not speak English as their primary language. While Spanish is the most common language spoken other than English, substantial numbers of Head Start families speak French (including Caribbean dialects), various Chinese dialects, Vietnamese, and Hmong. The survey allowed programs to list the languages children speak, as opposed to the PIR, which only allows for endorsing the languages on the provided list. The programs surveyed listed over 140 languages spoken by Head Start children.

**Table 3.4 Home Languages of Children Enrolled in Head Start 1992-1993**

<b>Language</b>	<b>% of Enrolled Children</b>	<b># of Enrolled Children</b>
<b>English</b>	78.8	562,868
<b>Spanish</b>	17.5	125,186
<b>French</b>	*	214
<b>Haitian</b>	0.3	2,213
<b>Vietnamese</b>	0.4	2,713
<b>Hmong</b>	0.3	2,427
<b>Chinese</b>	0.4	2,499
<b>Cambodian</b>	0.2	1,142
<b>Korean</b>	*	286
<b>Japanese</b>	*	71
<b>Other</b>	2.0	14,284

**Table 3.5 Home Language of Children Enrolled in Head Start by Region**

<b>Region</b>	<b>% English</b>	<b>% Spanish</b>	<b>% French</b>	<b>% Hmong</b>	<b>% Other</b>
<b>I</b>	79	16	2	*	3
<b>II</b>	49	47	1	*	3
<b>III</b>	93	6	*	*	1
<b>IV</b>	97	2	1	*	*
<b>V</b>	94	4	*	1	*
<b>VI</b>	83	16	*	*	1
<b>VII</b>	97	2	*	*	1
<b>VIII</b>	92	7	*	*	1
<b>IX</b>	54	33	*	1	11
<b>X</b>	74	19	*	*	6
<b>XI</b>	86	1	*	*	13
<b>XII</b>	6	92	*	*	1

\* less than 1 percent

PIR data indicate that across most Regions the majority of children speak English as their primary language. Again, there is substantial variability across Regions in the proportion of children with a home language other than English. Region XII, serving the migrant population, has the lowest percentage of English speaking children, 6%. In the remaining 11 regions, the percentage of English speakers ranges from 49% to 97%.

Between 1993 and 1999, Head Start enrollment increased by 17%, from 713,903 to 835,365 children. Enrollment in 1999 reflects the changing demographic patterns in the United States. Table 3.6 and 3.7 present data on the Head Start preschool population in the year ending in the spring of 1999.

**Table 3.6 Ethnicity of Children Enrolled in Head Start 1998-1999**

<b>Census Category</b>	<b>% of Head Start Population</b>	<b># Head Start Children</b>
<b>White</b>	30.3	253,116
<b>Black</b>	35.2	294,048
<b>Hispanic</b>	28.0	233,902
<b>American Indian/Alaskan Native</b>	3.4	28,402
<b>Asian</b>	2.1	17,543
<b>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	1.0	8,354
<b>Total Minority</b>	69.7	582,249
<b>Total U.S.</b>	100	835,365

The numbers of minority children and non-English speaking children increased between 1993 and 1999. The percent of minority children served rose from 67% to almost 70%, reflecting an increase of 104,291 children. The Hispanic population showed the most growth, increasing from 24% to 28%. Head Start served 233,902 Hispanic children in 1999, as opposed to 169,909 in 1993, an increase of 38%.

The home language choices listed in the 1998-1999 PIR form differ from the 1992-1993 form, making direct comparisons across time periods more difficult. Table 2.7 presents the languages listed in the PIR and the programs' description of the total Head Start population for the year ending in the spring of 1999.

**Table 3.7 Home Languages of Children Enrolled in Head Start 1998-1999**

<b>Language</b>	<b>% of Enrolled Children</b>	<b># of Enrolled Children</b>
<b>English</b>	75.9	634,042
<b>Spanish</b>	20.4	170,414
<b>Asian</b>	1.5	12,530
<b>Native American</b>	0.3	2,506
<b>Other</b>	1.9	15,872

The diversity in home language spoken mirrors that of the ethnicity in the Head Start population. The percent of non-English speaking households rose from approximately 21% in 1993 to approximately 24% in 1999. Again, the largest growth was Spanish speaking-households, increasing from 17.5% to approximately 20%. Head Start served 170,414 children from Spanish-speaking households in 1999, as opposed to 125,186 in 1993, an increase of 36%.

In summary, the Head Start population is increasingly diverse with respect to the culture and linguistic backgrounds of children enrolled. The following chapters will describe how Head Start programs serve the unique needs of children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**Population Shifts  
Key Findings**

- A majority of children enrolled in Head Start are members of a minority group. The largest ethnic group served by Head Start is Black children.
- The Head Start population is increasingly diverse; the percent minority rose from 67% in 1993 to approximately 70% in 1999. The sharpest increase was in Hispanic children, whose enrollment increased by 38% between 1993 and 1999.
- The programs surveyed listed over 140 languages spoken by Head Start children. Spanish is the most common language spoken other than English.

## **4 – Parent Participation and Perspectives**

This chapter summarizes findings from focus groups and interviews with parents and family resource coordinators. Interviews and focus groups took place during the site visits to 30 programs that serve culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.

Through the survey, Head Start centers reported attempts to involve parents in all aspects of the program, including center-based programming, workshops, program planning, and center operations. When parents participate in classes on child development or when staff visit a family's home, parents get a chance to learn about their child's progress and specific needs.

**Barriers to Parent Participation.** During site visits, disparity in reporting by staff about parent involvement was noted. Although most directors stated that parent involvement was very high, other staff members reported low parental involvement. Staff explained that logistical problems, such as lack of transportation and childcare, preclude parent involvement, and sometimes parents do not participate because program staff do not speak their language. Although many programs provide translators at meetings, the translators were not consistently available at every site or at every meeting. Parents explain that when translators are not available at meetings, they feel helpless.

**Strategies to Increase Parent Participation.** Many parents come to centers regularly and develop rapport, not only with the staff and children, but with other parents as well. To increase parent participation, some sites have adopted the "buddy system," where a Head Start parent invites another parent to a meeting, class, or other event. Other sites give a banquet for parents as a token of gratitude. "Parent Breakfasts" give families access to information about services, opportunities for participation, and a chance to meet other parents. Strategies to increase parent involvement at many sites included circulation of newsletters and flyers, both translated into several languages. These newsletters and flyers are also used by programs to announce activities. Some programs find it more efficient to tape a verbal translation of the newsletters. They send home a small tape recorder with the taped transcription.

Attending parent committee and policy council meetings gives parents a chance to voice their opinions and concerns, and to make an impact on program planning decisions. Some sites provide incentives to attend the meetings, such as childcare or transportation.

### **PARENT ACTIVITIES**

#### **Life Skills Training**

Parent involvement staff encourage and support parents in their search for employment through life skills classes that focus on self-esteem building, goal setting, career options, self-marketing, job skills training, and time and money management.

## **English as a Second Language Training**

Some parent involvement coordinators believe that parents' lack of proficiency in English leads to limited employment and educational opportunities and decreased confidence. In order to support parents' English proficiency, many programs offer English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy training for parents. However, while many ESL and other classes start out with strong attendance, attrition is common. A few sites offer classes at night, which seems to suit many working parents.

## **College Opportunities**

In addition to ESL and literacy classes, many sites also offer GED (General Equivalency Diploma) classes and testing, Child Development Associate (CDA) programs, and college opportunities for parents. One site offers free college classes to parents, including books and tuition, along with free child care and a stipend. Some parents have received their CDA certificates through this program and many are subsequently hired by a Head Start program.

## **Culture Specific Training**

Social services staff offer training to parents on a variety of topics, including literacy, home repair, and financial management. Coordinators report that "culture-specific" training attracts more parents, particularly from the specific ethnic group targeted, than do general topic training sessions. A popular workshop offered by one program that is targeted specifically to immigrant parents is called "Disciplinary Methods to Raise Children." The trainers are sensitive to the disciplinary methods used in parents' home countries, but expose them to new methods based on knowledge of child development and well-being. Other workshop topics include CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), child development, and nutrition.

## **Job Training and Employment**

Some programs are also instrumental in providing job training and helping parents locate employment. They facilitate the job search process through local employment agencies and offer training in specific job skills. Other programs hire parents, particularly bilingual parents. Some sites report that as many as 60% of their current staff is comprised of Head Start parents. Parents typically occupy clerical, technical, or teaching positions.

## **MULTICULTURAL ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS**

### **Cultural Committees**

A Cultural Committee was organized by parents at one site to coordinate storytelling and the display of cultural artifacts. Another program offers culture-specific workshops on child rearing,

gang violence, arts and crafts, and multicultural issues. At several sites, parents take full responsibility for organizing and presenting the multicultural presentations and other events during the year.

### **Field Trips**

Another technique in use by social services staff is to expose parents to different cultures by taking them on class field trips. For example, one program took children and parents to Chinese shops, museums of Mexican history, and ethnic dance performances to help them appreciate other cultures. Head Start parents are also given opportunities to socialize with other parents during multicultural potluck dinners, banquets, cultural activity meetings, and bake sales. During interviews, staff stated that food-related activities are very successful and attract a strong parental attendance. Parents seem to enjoy these events because of the diverse foods and the opportunity for social interaction.

## **OTHER SERVICES**

### **Basic Necessities**

Social services staff support parents in the acquisition of such basic needs as housing, food, and clothing. Many recent immigrants do not know how to locate these resources in their new communities. Social service providers utilize their existing linkages in the community to help parents find sources of free or inexpensive clothing and food giveaways.

### **Social Services**

Head Start programs offer services to help parents reduce stress and to provide additional support to cope with daily life. Some of these services target issues appropriate to specific groups; for example, a counseling program provided by an Asian-American organization deals with adjustment following immigration. The Texas Migrant Council provides "post-immigration counseling" to Spanish-speaking seasonal agricultural workers in the Southwest. Other sites offer counseling related to domestic violence, substance abuse, and child maltreatment.

Social service staff have unique opportunities to recruit new families since they interface daily with the community. For example, when conducting home visits, they can also distribute flyers, which are often translated into several languages, directly to other eligible families.

In many programs, social services staff respond to the needs of specific ethnic groups, sometimes providing translation services and accompanying families on visits to social service agencies or healthcare appointments.

## **Nutrition Services**

Some programs have developed multicultural cookbooks that include recipes from several cultures. One program has printed a cookbook that includes recipes ranging from Burmese chutney rice to Norwegian polar fish and Guatemalan baked bananas. In addition to the cookbook, the program offers a series of parent workshops on foods from around the world. As part of this workshop, trainers emphasize cooking foods that are low in sodium and fats.

## **Health Services**

Head Start emphasizes the importance of early identification of health problems. Every enrolled child becomes part of a comprehensive health program that includes immunizations, medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional services. Services are provided by Head Start programs either directly or via community referrals.

Some Head Start sites report difficulties in coordinating with low-cost health services and identifying providers who speak the families' home languages. Some administrators complain that it is difficult to contract with translators to help families during healthcare visits because of cost and related paperwork. Health coordinators complain about a lack of health education and information materials available in families' home languages. In some cases, Head Start program staff accompany families to health clinics to assist with translation.

Health coordinators face the challenge of encouraging parents to have their children immunized and to attend well-child visits. Head Start staff report that some parents do not adhere to the mainstream belief in the importance of preventive pediatric healthcare.

There are few health education materials available in languages understood by non-English-speaking Head Start families.

## **RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT**

Exposure to the community and to parents gives social services staff a chance to recruit parents directly. Staff may distribute flyers at community organizations or answer questions about eligibility.

Programs with bilingual and multilingual social services staff help parents fill out enrollment forms and, when possible, they distribute Spanish and Vietnamese versions of enrollment forms. Some programs that do not have bilingual staff or translated forms contract with translators. In some cases, when translators for specific languages are difficult to find (e.g., Hmong or Creole), parents bring their own translator, typically another family member or friend. Sometimes an older sibling acts as a translator. Sites without bilingual staff are limited in their ability to enroll families.

Programs reported that they were modifying their outreach strategies in the following ways:

- Advertising (local and/or mass media) in the language of the community;
- Open houses;
- Going door-to-door to recruit families; and
- Contacting agencies, churches, and other groups/functions serving minority communities.

## HOME VISITS

While the focus of this study was center-based services, research staff also observed numerous home visits. Observations of home visits indicated that home visitors differed in their approaches to working with parents and children in their homes. Many teachers visiting homes and home visitors were cognizant of the individual family's cultural values and customs and used this information to inform their practice.

*The teacher was greeted warmly by the family. Recognizing that this family preferred that visitors remove their shoes upon entering, she removed her shoes immediately. When the teacher sat down, the father offered her a snack. It was a nut and grain mix in a colorful woven basket. The father explained that it was from Eritrea and that it was customary to eat it with your hands. The teacher ate some and asked how they made it. The mother seemed pleased to tell her. Throughout the home visit she was careful to ask the mother and father about their child and family as she discussed their son's progress. When she was done, the father asked if she could stay for some tea and bread. Even though this was at the end of a long day for the home visitor, she obliged. While sipping tea, she asked the parents what they missed most about Eritrea, and the father smiled as he began to relay in detail the treasures of his birthplace. All the while the teacher listened intently. The teacher explained later in an interview that most of her home visits go longer than scheduled.*

Other visitors did not individualize their practice to individual families and in some instances ignored the family's cultural values and customs. Home visitors and other professionals who interact with families cannot help but bring their own cultural values and assumptions into interactions with families. To minimize the potentially intrusive effects of their cultural practices, they must learn to set aside personally focused beliefs and values. Continued professional development in cultural and linguistic diversity, which leads to understanding family uniqueness, is a critical component in helping all personnel involved in service delivery in Head Start.

**Key Findings**  
**Parent Participation and Perspectives**

- Many parents feel included in and welcomed by programs; however, such barriers as transportation, childcare and staff not speaking their language often keep them from participating in meetings and other events.
- Translators are not consistently available at every site or at every meeting, and parents feel helpless when they are unable to communicate in these settings.
- Many recent immigrants do not know how to locate basic resources in their new communities.
- Social services staff respond to the needs of specific ethnic groups, sometimes providing translation services and accompanying families on visits to social service agencies or healthcare appointments.
- Many programs report difficulty in coordinating with low-cost healthcare providers who speak Head Start families' home languages and understand relevant issues related to serving these multicultural families.
- Some, but not all, home visitors tailor their interactions in the home to the family's cultural background and beliefs.

## 5 – Classroom

*The classroom had posters of leaders of different ethnicities, pictures of families from different ethnic groups wearing traditional clothes, and labels in several languages. In the house area, they had lots of items such as a mocajate (a butter making utensil from Mexico), a tortilla warmer, a dim sum warmer, chopsticks, and Vietnamese bowls and cups. They had lots of multicultural books and tapes in Spanish, English and Vietnamese. This classroom included many multicultural materials for the children to play with. This was a nice classroom where they respect and encourage the use of the children's home language. The teaching staff was affectionate, attentive and warm toward the children. The children seemed to get along well and played together. The classroom environment was conducive to learning and playing. The room was filled with materials for the children to play with and it certainly gave a feeling of belonging.*

This chapter summarizes findings from site visits. Site visits were conducted with 58 classrooms in 30 programs that serve culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. These site visits provided rich, descriptive data about individual classrooms. Sites were selected through analysis of the PIR and survey data and consultations with the Federal Project Officer, other ACYF staff, and Head Start Regional Offices. Selected sites also included self-reported multicultural programs from the mail survey respondents. Principle among site visit selection criteria was the presence of diversity in both families and staff. Data were collected using qualitative methods, including individual interviews held with staff, focus groups with parents, and structured classroom observations.

Results of site visits indicated that Head Start staff have different understandings of the meaning of and approaches to "multiculturalism." For example, many programs believed that hiring staff that represent the languages and cultures of participant families makes their program "multicultural." Other programs described their multicultural programming efforts almost solely in terms of holidays, cooking, and materials such as books.

### **DIMENSIONS OF MULTICULTURAL APPROACHES**

Programs vary widely in their approaches to and degree of integrating multicultural programming in the classroom. Most of the classrooms visited used what is referred to in the literature as a contributions/additive or "tourist curriculum" approach (Banks, 1995; Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force, 1989; York, 1992). Fewer Head Start classrooms utilized an anti-bias or activist approach to curricular planning. This is most likely a reflection of the wider availability of multicultural materials but less available training opportunities in multicultural education. In essence, programs purchase multicultural materials for the classroom, but the teachers are unsure of how to plan and implement "multicultural" lessons.

### **The Contributions/Additive Approach**

*"Last year on Chinese New Year we made Chinese dragons and ate won-tons. And then on Cinco de Mayo we made quesadillas and played with a pinata. The children love learning about different cultures."*

Utilizing the contributions approach, heroes, heroines, holidays, foods, and discrete cultural elements are celebrated only occasionally. The intent is positive: to introduce children to different cultures, so they will learn to respect each other and not develop prejudice. However, deterioration into a "tourist" or "token" curriculum often keeps this approach from accomplishing its constructive intent. The approach emphasizes the "exotic" differences between cultures and makes light of the lives of persons from other cultures by dealing not with the real-life daily problems and experiences of different peoples, but with surface aspects of their celebrations and modes of entertainment. In essence, children "visit" other cultures and then "go home" to the daily classroom, which reflects only the dominant culture. The focus on holidays, while providing fun and excitement for both children and adults, may give the impression that this is all "other" people -- usually people of color -- do (Derman-Sparks & The ABC Task Force, 1989; Banks, 1995).

### **The Action/Anti-Bias Approach**

*"At the beginning of the year there was a lot of prejudice, but the Persona Dolls have helped, along with stories from the library. The doll with a prosthetic limb was introduced to the children through storytelling and telling the children that the girl (doll) is embarrassed because of a difference she has -- when the children found out why, they told her (the doll) that it was nothing to be embarrassed about-- it has helped with the idea of disability and the children interact better with a boy in a wheelchair in the school program."*

Anti-bias curriculum incorporates the positive intent of the contribution/additive approach and uses some similar activities, while seeking to avoid the dangers of a tourist curriculum. Children learn about and help make decisions on important personal, social and civic problems. The children also take actions to help solve them. An anti-bias/activist approach teaches children to challenge prejudice, stereotypes, bias, and the "isms," while affirming a child's sense of self and ethnic identity. Children in classrooms that utilize an anti-bias approach are challenged to think about racism and prejudice in a developmentally appropriate context. For example, the children might learn about Rosa Parks and the circumstances of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the ensuing struggle for justice. This would not be taught only on or around Martin Luther King's birthday, but would be taught early on in the year and revisited throughout the year.

## **CURRICULA**

Several published and locally designed bilingual and/or multicultural curricula were used in Head Start classrooms visited. When asked what curricula they utilized, program responses

varied. Some programs reported using the Spanish versions of curricula such as High/Scope or the Creative Curriculum. Additional curricula programs used are listed below. This list is not exhaustive of all multicultural curricula, but instead only reflects curricula programs claimed to use.

- *Nuevas Fronteras* is a bilingual/bicultural curriculum based on the assumption that a child's cultural background is reflected in his or her learning process. This curriculum emphasizes use of the "most appropriate cognitive style" while enabling the child to develop a new learning style. Sites using this curriculum tend to display an "all-inclusive" approach towards learning. For example, staff might use examples from different cultures when narrating a story through the use of pictures or music.
- *Roots and Wings* is based on the idea that a child must feel pride in his or her cultural background in order to learn about other cultures. This curriculum focuses on the child's home culture and introduces other cultures later. Programs using *Roots and Wings* incorporate songs, dances, and other activities from the children's home culture. One education coordinator explained the philosophy behind selection of this curriculum: "First you are interested in their development as human beings and then about multiculturalism."
- *Amanecer*, which means "the dawning of a new day," is based on the philosophy that past and future experiences impact a child's learning process. This curriculum emphasizes new experiences that are consistent with the child's past experiences and stresses learning concepts and ideas in the home language. The second language is introduced only after the child has demonstrated competence in the first language. However, it is unclear how and by whom a child's competence in the first language is assessed.
- *Living Together Peacefully* began as a pilot study at one of the Head Start centers visited. It uses a four-step approach to cover each unit: (1) doing, (2) sharing, (3) processing, and (4) transferring/applying. It includes activities to be done at home as well as in the classroom. Although this curriculum was originally developed in English, a Head Start teacher has translated it into Spanish and Hmong.
- One American Indian program has developed its own curriculum in cooperation with the local Native Advisory Committee and a nearby university. The curriculum includes stories about animals and characters from traditional American Indian stories, such as the coyote and the spider. One aspect of this curriculum is to demonstrate to children that other cultures have similar kinds of stories.
- NAEYC's *Anti-Bias Curriculum* is one of the most widely used. Typically, programs use this curriculum to supplement other curricula in an effort to teach children, parents, and staff not to consider color, gender, or other characteristics in judging people.
- Several sites use Afrocentric curricula, which emphasize African culture, intergenerational support, and a holistic worldview. Teachers employ a "language enhancement" teaching model which "instills confidence by promoting acceptance of the way each child expresses

him or herself." In this model, the teachers are trained to adopt forms of expression used by the child in order to teach about the surrounding environment. One site uses an Afrocentric curriculum that emphasizes the principles of Kwanzaa, including unity (Umoja), self-determination (Kujichagulia), cooperative economics (Ujima), collective work and responsibility (Ujamaa), creativity (Kuumba), purpose (Nia), and faith (Imani).

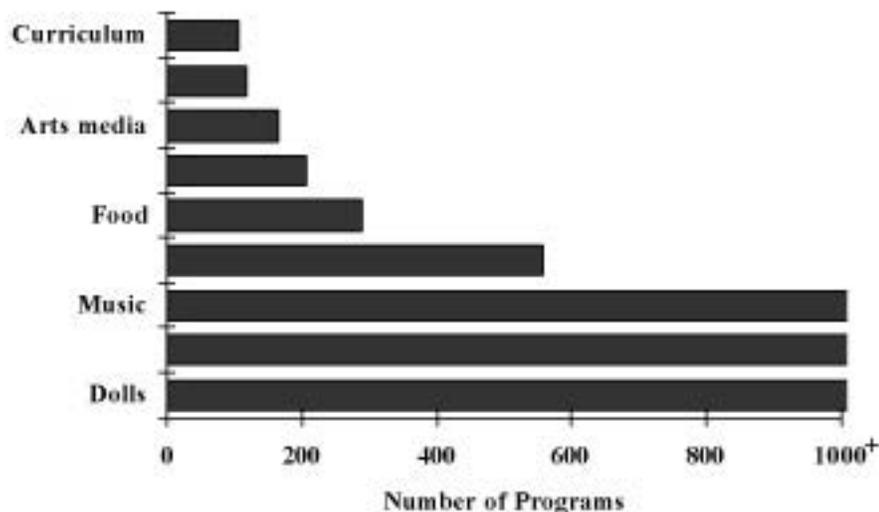
## MULTICULTURAL MATERIALS

Most sites have some materials that represent both mainstream and ethnic or racial minority communities. Survey results (n=1,424) found most programs had books, dolls, and music representing different ethnic groups (See Exhibit 5.1). Survey respondents indicated that the African American culture was the most frequently represented in their materials, followed by Hispanic. Staff reported that these multicultural materials are now easier to find than in the past.

*"I remember years trying to find pictures of black families for my classes years ago and I could not find them. Now I can find these things anywhere."*

The site visits verified that programs more often than not have materials that represent various cultures. Most sites offer materials that include books, dolls, music, posters, and traditional dress-up clothes. Materials featuring children with visible disabilities, however, were found in less than one-third of the classrooms visited.

Exhibit 5.1 Head Start Multicultural Classroom Curricular Materials



Source: Survey '93

A description of multicultural materials commonly seen during site visits by classroom area follows:

### **Visual Displays**

Almost all Head Start classrooms display posters showing different ethnic groups interacting with each other. The posters portray ethnically diverse children, children with disabilities, children engaging in non-traditional gender activities, and different family constellations.

Many teachers display pictures of the children from their class around the room. This practice of featuring photos and artwork of the children in the class naturally reflects the diversity of the class. One classroom had a pictorial representation of the daily schedule using pictures of the children in the classroom actually doing the activities. Another classroom had parents decorate their child's cubby with pictures and drawings of their family.

### **Dramatic Display**

The housekeeping area in most Head Start classrooms provides for the greatest amount of multicultural activity. Most classrooms were attractively decorated with ornaments and tableware from mostly Asian and Hispanic cultures. Many parents donate these items from their homes; examples included: Oriental woks, different types of chopsticks, tortilla baskets, a mortar and pestle, Asian plates, teapots, washboards, and place mats depicting the Chinese zodiac. The kitchens contain diverse plastic foods such as pita bread, tacos, sushi, and a bowl of rice.

The "dress-up" clothes seen in the classrooms represent various community helpers such as doctors, firefighters, policeman, mail carriers, and everyday dress. Some classrooms offer traditional "multicultural" dress up clothes including American Indian tribal clothing, Mexican dresses, Guatemalan jackets, Hawaiian skirts, hats made from African fabric, and Chinese dresses and shoes. When playing "dress-up", the children were typically observed dressing in mainstream clothing versus in "multicultural" clothing. However, one teacher explained that the children in her class were more likely to dress up in the "multicultural" clothing if they had talked about it in class, or the children had seen a character in a story dressed in a similar manner.

A few classrooms have a "market" or "grocery" prop box with empty boxes of food products such as an empty can of refried beans, a bag of lentils, and cans of beans printed in Chinese. One predominantly Asian-American classroom has brooms from different Asian countries. The "multicultural kits" at one site have items such as play bread from around the world or musical instruments from around the world. One kit, labeled "Everybody Eats", contains plastic replicas of breads and cooking utensils from various cultures with explanatory material about each item.

Head Start classrooms contain an assortment of dolls from several ethnic groups. As observed, most classrooms have dolls that represent the classroom's ethnic composition and dolls from other ethnic groups as well. Dolls represent Asians, Europeans, blacks, Latinos, and American Indians.

## **Blocks**

Some classrooms add multicultural materials to the block area. One popular set of dolls is the Block Play People. Block Play People are about 5 inches tall and portray a range of ethnic groups, ages, professions, genders and disabilities. Examples include a grandmother wearing pants, a black female doctor, and an American Indian dressed in contemporary clothing. Many children seem to enjoy playing with the Block Play People and often play with them as multi-ethnic families and neighborhoods.

## **Books**

Books abound in the Head Start classrooms, and most, but not all, classrooms have bilingual and multicultural books. Books in English and Spanish are in abundance, as well as books about African-American culture. Book topics include multicultural tales and themes relating to traditional hats, ethnically diverse faces, skin color, countries such as Vietnam and China, ethnic foods, Kwanza celebrations, and American Indian traditions. Most bilingual books are in English and Spanish. Common titles include *Tortillas para Mama*, a nursery rhyme book; *The Red Hen*; *All the Colors of Our Skin*; and a book on Latin American folklore. There are few books written in Vietnamese or Chinese; however, some books have pictures of Asian children.

Another strategy to have books that represent the diversity of the class is to create them. One teacher makes "class books" representing all the diversity in the classroom. The books are made up of photos of the children in the class. They show many classroom events such as celebrations of Kwanzaa, children dressed up as community workers, field trips and other special happenings. One book is called "Alike and Different." In the "Alike and Different" book, each page features a child's drawing of two children in the classroom. There is a dictation of the child explaining how the two are both alike and different. A Polaroid photo of the two friends is glued to the same page. Another book is titled "My Family is Special." In this book, a child's family completes each page. There is a self-portrait of each family, complete with a photo. Each family has completed the sentence: "My family is special because..."

## **Manipulatives**

The manipulative areas in Head Start classrooms typically have toys and activities for children to exercise their fine motor skills. Items such as puzzles, legos, peg boards, geo-boards and small dolls to dress up are included. Some classrooms have added multicultural materials to this area.

A few Head Start classrooms have small, flannel, multiethnic figures with traditional clothes. Children are free to dress them in any costume they wish. The children can mix and match the ethnicities of the figures and the origin of the costumes. Some classrooms also have collectible ethnic dolls in traditional dress displayed across the room, primarily for decorative purposes.

Other classrooms also present multicultural puzzles in the table toy areas. These puzzles illustrate children from around the world dressed in traditional clothing, men and women in non-traditional roles, and heroes of color such as Martin Luther King Jr.

## **Art**

Art areas typically have a multitude of art media but not necessarily multicultural materials. Most art areas have easels, paper, paints and collage materials such as feathers, shells, noodles and confetti. A few classrooms, though, have added multicultural materials. Multicultural art materials included different color skin tone paints, paper, markers, colored pencils and crayons. One classroom had precut paper dolls of different skin colors for the children to decorate with a variety of materials. One classroom had mirrors in the art area for children to look at while making "self-portraits." The self-portraits were displayed around the room.

## **Music and Movement**

Head Start classrooms have a diversity of instruments from around the world in their music and movement centers. Many classrooms sing and play instruments to music from around the world. One classroom uses a large African Gathering Drum to call the children to circle.

Around the music areas, some classrooms had posters with famous musicians from around the world. One classroom near the Mexican border displayed a bulletin board featuring the late Selena.

Many classrooms also have record and tape players with a variety of music. One classroom chose a class "DJ" every day at lunchtime. The DJ selected the music the children would listen to at lunch. There was a diverse collection of music from all over the world, including Big Band jazz, classical, flute music from the Sierra Madres, reggae and Afro-Cuban jazz and children's music. While the music was playing, the teacher would engage the children in a conversation about what the type of music was called and what country it came from.

## **Computer/Audio-visual**

Head Start classrooms have computers for children to use to varying degrees. Some have brand new computers and new software, others have out-dated models of computers with limited software and some do not have computers at all. Classrooms with newer computers also tend to have software available in a variety of languages. Most CD-ROM games have optional settings for language.

## **Parent Areas**

Almost all Head Start classrooms have parent areas or bulletin boards inside the classroom. Information on these boards was typically available in English and Spanish. The following types of informational flyers were printed in many languages, including English, Spanish, Vietnamese and Cambodian:

- A parent volunteer hand book
- Head Start family services

- Policy Council meeting minutes

However, many flyers were available in English only. Some programs limited the text of informational flyers and had the information represented pictorially instead. One program produced the class newsletter in English but utilized parent and community volunteers to translate the material on to a cassette tape. The tapes were sent home with small tape recorders for the parents to listen to along with the newsletter.

## **BILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL MATERIALS**

The site visits revealed that while materials were often available in the classrooms, teachers did not often use them in their daily activities. Teachers said that they struggled to find multicultural materials best suited to the children served, but when they had them, they did not always know what to do with them.

When activities were presented, they included cooking and eating different foods, singing songs, dancing, watching presentations, and going on field trips.

### **Cooking**

In some programs, staff incorporate food preparation and eating into their multicultural activities. For example, they might prepare Chinese wontons or American Indian fry bread. During this time teachers label food items in different languages. One teacher described the manner in which a cooking activity seemed to "bring out" a seemingly shy and withdrawn Spanish speaking girl:

*"I was introducing the cooking activity at circle time. The children were watching me closely as I pulled the ingredients out of the grocery bag one at a time. We were going to make a tortilla soup. I got the recipe from Ana's grandmother. As I pulled items out, the children would shout out the names. But when I pulled out the jalapeno, it was silent. I waited a little while and then shy, little Ana, who until then never spoke at circle -- in fact she rarely spoke at all -- almost jumped through the roof as she shouted, "jalapeno, jalapeno." In the little Spanish that I knew, I said, "Si, Ana. Es verdad. Es uno jalapeno. Muy bueno, Ana!" After that Ana led the cooking activity with confidence and excitement. I realized then how important it was to validate each child's culture in my classroom, how much confidence it gave them."*

### **Meals**

Visited Head Start programs had menus with foods typical to a U.S. diet -- for example, chicken nuggets, mashed potatoes, gravy, bread, apples, and milk. Even when nutrition coordinators say that their programs prepare "multicultural meals," closer observation reveals that these meals consist of only slight variations from the mainstream American diet, such as tacos, pizza, or

"Chinese chicken salad." During one site visit, it was noted that programs serving predominantly Chinese children, for example, are more likely to serve Chinese food for meals and snacks. Some program staff explain that they prefer to offer "an American menu" to familiarize children with typical American foods so that they will have already acquired a taste for them when they transition to public elementary schools.

At some sites, staff report that they attempt to implement new cooking styles, but that their cooks do not know how to prepare different foods. Moreover, parents and children are both reluctant to eat unfamiliar foods. Program staff often encourage children to try new foods by tasting them first and then modeling their enthusiasm to the children. In other cases, staff encourage parents to diversify their diets to improve children's health.

## **Singing**

Although surveys show that children sing songs in Spanish, Creole, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Hmong, during site visits it was noted that children were singing predominantly in English or Spanish. In some classrooms, they may sing a song in one language, and then repeat it in a second language. For example, in one classroom children sang "Las Mañanitas" for a non-Hispanic black girl's birthday and then sang the birthday song in English. The Spanish song, "Los pollitos dicen pio, pio, pio" (i.e., "The chicks say, pi, pi, pi") is another popular choice. In another classroom, children learn to sing a song before lunchtime in Spanish, Vietnamese, and English. Children and teachers seem to be well versed in the lyrics in each language. Many songs focus on respecting children from different ethnic groups and on celebrating diversity.

Many sites play a variety of American Indian, Spanish, and/or African-American songs. One teacher plays songs recorded by the late Selena, mariachi music, and other Mexican folk music. In another classroom, observers noted that the classrooms possess a selection of music ranging from "earth-tribe" rhythms to Japanese and Hawaiian folk music. Sometimes, children do folk and limbo dancing; on other occasions, they follow along with the music using instruments such as cymbals, maracas and American Indian drums. Although many teachers report playing a wide assortment of music, multicultural music activities during the researchers' brief visits were rarely observed.

Children sing songs at the beginning and end of the class, at meal times, and at circle times. Across the Head Start sites, the most popular songs heard in the classrooms are based on nursery rhymes, the alphabet, colors, animals, and caring about one another. Examples of such songs include "The Red Hen," "The ABC Song," "The Barney Song," "La Cucaracha," "Frère Jacques" and "Pio, Pio, Pio." In some classrooms, the children have the opportunity to pick their favorite songs. In the more diverse classrooms, children sing in different languages including Spanish, Hmong, and Chinese. In one class, children were singing a song in both Spanish and Tagalog. Most children are actively involved in the singing. However, in classrooms where the majority of children are English speaking, they sing only in English.

Music also accompanies some small group activities. One teacher plays American Indian music while children make colorful masks, and another plays nursery rhymes while the children are working with arts and crafts materials.

### **Dancing**

Dance is important in many Head Start classrooms. During site visits, some children were dancing an Afro-Cuban salsa, others were doing a Caribbean limbo, and still others were dancing to Jamaican music. A teacher taught children the zapateado, a popular Mexican dance, which many seemed to enjoy. Music and dance also serve as a sign to start or end an activity. In most classrooms, specific songs signal a transition from one activity to another and the children recognize it as such. For example, when children in one classroom hear calypso music, they know that it is time to clean up.

## **CLASSROOM STAFF**

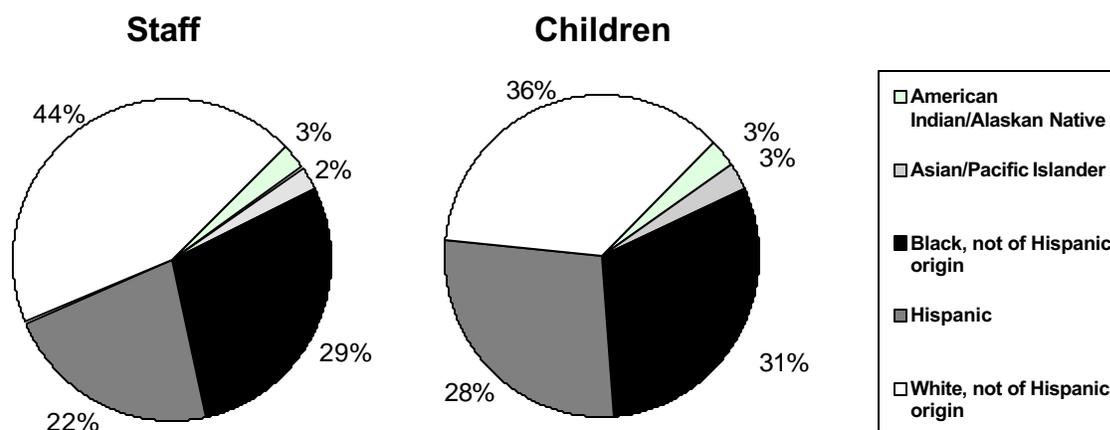
### **Ratio of Staff to Children**

Survey data from the 1,424 programs responding in 1993 indicate that, overall, there are more white staff than white children. There is an even ratio of American Indian/Alaskan Native staff to children in Head Start programs. Other racial and ethnic groups have slightly fewer staff than children:

- 29% of staff are black, and 31% of children are black;
- 22% of staff are Hispanic, while 28% of children are Hispanic; and
- 2% of staff are Asian/Pacific Islander, and 3% of children are Asian/Pacific Islander.

Exhibit 5.2 shows these overall national staff-to-child ratios.

## Exhibit 5.2 Ethnicity of Head Start Staff and Children



Source: Survey, '93

Across the country, when there are more than 10 children of a particular race or ethnicity in a program, they are represented by a staff member with similar racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Large numbers of Hmong (1,666), Haitian (1,744), and Vietnamese (1,065) children have fewer staff members representing their ethnicity than do black or Hispanic children. Although their overall numbers are lower, families originally from El Salvador, Ecuador, Honduras, and Chad have proportionally fewer representative Head Start staff members. Programs serving speakers of low prevalence languages, such as Quiche speakers from Guatemala or speakers of certain Chinese dialects, often had difficulty finding Head Start staff who spoke these language.

Research staff, using checklists to record their observations about language use in the 58 Head Start classrooms visited, found that more than half (50%) of program administrators use the children's home language other than English. Additionally, about three-quarters of teachers (70%) and assistant teachers (68%) use the children's home language, including English. However, surveys point out that there are about 14,000 children who attend programs in which there are no staff available who speak their home language.

While some surveyed programs (23%) were hiring bilingual staff, others noted that it was a challenge to recruit and hire well-trained bilingual staff. Not only were trained and certified bilingual staff difficult to locate, but many required higher salaries because of their language skills. Programs had a particularly difficult time finding staff who spoke Hmong, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Creole. When they could not hire new staff, some programs hired translators.

## **Teachers' Background and Training in Multi-culturalism**

Staff explained the origins of their perspectives on multicultural education for preschoolers. Some used lessons from their own childhood, and others read books and took college courses or workshops at national Head Start conferences on multicultural issues.

According to the survey, training in multicultural sensitivity was not only the most frequently requested training topic, but was also ranked as an important type of training of the training topics listed on the survey. The site visit data, however, indicated that not all staff participated in such training. Further, none of the programs visited included parents in training efforts.

*The right corner of the room has several hangings of kente (African) cloths that the children created with paper towels folded once length-wise and curly, wavy wire stamps. As I interviewed the teacher, Ms. R., she said she had learned about the kente cloths only recently through a culture awareness workshop, something she'd like to participate in more often.*

In interviews, many staff credited the education coordinators with making Head Start services more multilingual and multicultural. Education coordinators ensure that centers are equipped with materials and they encourage training on new programs and curricula. Some education coordinators develop new curricula to share with classroom staff.

## **Parent's Contributions to Classrooms**

Head Start teachers encourage parents to assist in the classroom, primarily with translation. In some classrooms where teachers are monolingual, they rely heavily upon the parents to translate.

*The children were separated in three different groups and an adult read a book in their home language. Nine children were in the music area with the assistant teacher reading "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" in Vietnamese. She was showing them the pictures from the book. In the house area, the male Hispanic parent was with two children reading the same book in Spanish. The head teacher was in the block area with four children reading the same book. She read in English and pointed at the pictures in the book.*

Parents often provide a valuable source of information about their own culture. Teachers and coordinators report that parents share their cultural traditions by bringing items from their home to use in the classrooms or to guide activities. For example, one parent brought a bronze tea set from Lebanon; others brought traditional musical instruments and clothing. At times, parents are invited to explain the significance of cultural traditions to the children. Parents also cook and taste traditional foods with the children. These cooking events usually accompany celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year, or Hanukkah. A parent might also make a particular dish, such as dim sum, a traditional Chinese tea-time food consisting of many small dishes, to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

In interviews and focus groups, parents explained that they feel a loss of control when they cannot communicate with the children. In classroom observations, non-English-speaking parents appear to be most comfortable working with the children who speak their home language.

## **LANGUAGE IN THE CLASSROOM**

Inconsistent with survey data to a broader set of Head Start programs, research staff observed that in most classrooms visited, the head teacher speaks primarily in English while the assistant teacher speaks English and a second language. Usually, the bilingual assistant teacher plays a critical role in the communications between and among children and teachers. The assistant teacher often talks to the monolingual (non-English) children and translates for the teacher and the other children. A few Head Start classrooms have a team of three teachers; however, these three-person teams rarely provide the optimum linguistic-ethnic/racial match with children. For example, in one classroom with Asian and Hispanic children speaking Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, and varying degrees of English, the teachers are Laotian, Hispanic, and Black, and do not speak Chinese or Vietnamese.

In contrast, in some classrooms, both the teacher and the assistant speak several languages. In one classroom, teachers were using English, Spanish, and Creole. Children were very adept at code-switching. For example, when teachers speak Spanish to Spanish-speaking children, the children respond in Spanish; yet when the children need to communicate something to an English-speaking teacher, the children speak in English. Most often, teachers communicate in English, while children are speaking a range of languages, including Spanish, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese), Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Creole.

Further, in the classrooms with monolingual English staff, teachers and assistants communicate with children using memorized phrases in the children's home language, such as "sit here," "listen to me," or "stop doing that." When more complicated messages need to be conveyed, the monolingual teachers rely on bilingual children.

Teachers note that although many children enter Head Start speaking little or no English, nearly all children are functional in conversational English by the time they leave Head Start. Teachers marvel at the pace at which children acquire English skills. In many cases, bilingual children become their teachers' intermediaries, translating instructions, activities, and other concepts to their monolingual peers. Furthermore, bilingual children often act as social liaisons between and among the other children.

Language preference can be an important criterion for choosing play partners. Some Head Start children may socialize exclusively with peers and teachers who speak their language, particularly if they are not fluent English speakers. In interviews, teachers and education coordinators said that throughout the year, as children gain more English vocabulary, their play patterns change. Typically, at the beginning of the year, the children speak only in their home language; about mid-year, they become less talkative and interact less with their peers as they observe language and communicative interactions from afar. Finally, towards the end of the year, the children

interact more and more often, "trying out" English words with their English speaking peers and teachers.

## **PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM**

*"I think teaching about different cultures is important so that the kids can make new friends. Through the program my kids learned that you do not judge people by how they look but by who they are. We are in the same world."*

Parents report that they are pleased with program attempts to respond to the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of their children. They like their children's teachers and the materials used in the classroom. Parents agree that learning about other cultures is good for their children:

*"I think teaching about different cultures is important so that the kids can make new friends. We are in the same world."*

One Hispanic parent praised her program's bilingual approach:

*"I like that they are Latino and speak Spanish; in other schools they speak English and I want my child to learn both."*

Most immigrant parents stated firmly that although they value their home language, they want their children to speak fluent English so that they will succeed in school.

## **ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION**

Analysis of the classroom observations and staff and parent interviews illuminated several unresolved issues in Head Start programs as well as in the field of early childhood education. English only or bilingual programming, representation of other cultures, segregated programs and holiday celebrations are issues on which programs differ widely and need further guidance.

### **English-Only or Bilingual Programming**

English-only or bilingual programming remains an issue unresolved in Head Start programs. Many Head Start staff believe that children should be exposed to and continue to learn both their home language and English. Conversely, other staff are outspoken in their belief that Head Start must help children and families become Americans by using only English in the classroom, despite the child's level of English comprehension or his or her home language.

Like staff, parents report dissimilar opinions on the issue as well. Most immigrant parents state firmly that although they value their home language, they want their children to speak fluent English so that they will succeed in school. Some parents explicitly ask that their child speak only English in school so that they will learn the language to succeed in school. Other parents

remark that their children refuse to speak their home language with them any more. For families with grandparents who know little to no English, there is a growing communication gap between the generations.

## **Representation of Other Cultures**

The issue of which groups to represent in a multicultural classroom is controversial among programs. While one program may emphasize linguistic and cultural diversity across many cultures, including those not represented by program families, another program may focus on the languages and cultures represented by participant families, with the goal of building families' self-esteem vis-à-vis their own ethnic background. One grantee operates separate centers that target different ethnic groups; however, some staff disagree with this practice, asserting that it further segregates these families. At other programs, staff debate whether it is appropriate for individuals who are not members of a particular ethnic group to teach about that group's heritage and traditions.

## **Holidays**

The celebration of cultural and religious holidays is a controversial topic at several Head Start sites. Those in support of celebrating these holidays believe that this is a way to bring different cultures into the classroom. Those who oppose such activities feel that these celebrations cannot, and do not, accurately and properly represent the cultures. These two conflicting views seem to shape the holiday policy of many Head Start programs.

Programs that celebrate holidays tend to concentrate on one specific culture during the holiday season. Such sites introduce aspects of that culture only during that time. For example, during Chinese New Year, teachers include Chinese culture, but throughout the remainder of the year, teachers make minimal reference to it.

In classrooms where holidays are celebrated, parents bring traditional items to reflect the specific holiday and/or they cook traditional dishes for the children. One site reported that, during Chinese New Year, the children learn about the Dragon Dance, fireworks, Chinese foods, and the meaning of the New Year. That program stresses the celebration of cultural holidays as an integral part of the program's being multicultural.

On the other hand, "no-holiday" sites refrain from celebrating commercial or religious holidays, and replace them with seasonal activities or general celebrations to teach common underlying concepts believed to be age appropriate, open-ended, and relevant. Proponents of this approach argue that this practice does not discriminate against any culture or religion because it does not select which cultural holidays to celebrate. For example, instead of Christmas, they celebrate the "Winter Festival," attaching no association to Christianity.

## **CONTINUING CHALLENGES FOR HEAD START PROGRAMS**

### **Finding Materials**

Staff members find that some bilingual and multicultural materials can be difficult to locate. Among the most difficult items to find are age-appropriate books in languages used by Southeast Asian children. There is also a need to acquire materials or translations of materials into Chinese, Creole, Hmong, Russian, and Vietnamese.

### **Adapting Curricula**

Education coordinators report that their greatest challenge is in finding, adapting, and/or developing multicultural/bilingual curricula appropriate to the populations they serve. This task often involves educating the entire staff as well as the families. Many of the sites are in the process of introducing an anti-bias curriculum or developing a curriculum to reflect the uniqueness of the families in their community. One education coordinator has created "multi-ethnic" kits containing different activities and lessons, such as multicultural celebrations. Most of the sites conduct multicultural lessons using dance, songs, stories, workshops, pictures, and foods. As one education coordinator concluded: "The education component stresses the importance of understanding the children's family background and individual experiences." Materials need to be translated accurately so that information can be distributed to non-English-speaking parents in an efficient manner.

### **Communicating with Parents**

Parents find it very difficult to communicate with teachers and other staff in English. Several programs report communication problems between staff and parents, due primarily to language difficulty. Staff emphasize the need for more planning, increased translation of materials, better communication with parents and staff, and consciousness-raising to teach staff and parents how to view different cultures with more openness. For example, a black parent stated that her Policy Council is composed primarily of white parents, and she is concerned about being outnumbered by persons who do not value her opinions.

### **Screening Assessment and Disability Services**

Language constraints prevent some sites from using specific developmental assessment instruments. Head Start staff (usually the health and disabilities coordinator, the social service coordinator, or the nurse) conduct the initial developmental screening and the teachers conduct follow-ups throughout the school year. Some programs select instruments that minimize verbal communication between the test administrator and the child. The most popular developmental assessment instruments used are the Dial-R, the High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR), and a speech and language screen, the Fluharty.

There are few developmental and health screening and assessment instruments that can be administered to non-English-speaking children; most of the available tools have not been validated with minority or non-English-speaking populations. Head Start staff report difficulty in finding bilingual technicians trained to provide speech and language services to non-English-speaking children with disabilities.

**Key Findings**  
**Multicultural Classroom Practices**

- Most programs describe their multicultural programming efforts almost solely in terms of holidays, cooking, and materials (such as books).
- Most sites have some materials, mainly posters and pictures, that represent both mainstream and ethnic or racial minority communities. While multicultural materials were plentiful in classrooms, teachers did not often use them in their daily activities.
- Most head or lead teachers speak primarily English and the assistant teachers or aides speak a second language. Several programs report communication problems between staff and parents, due primarily to language difficulty.
- Many immigrant parents want their children to learn English so that they will succeed in school. Teachers report that although many children enter Head Start speaking little or no English, nearly all children are fluent in conversational English by the time they graduate from Head Start.
- Parents provide a valuable role in multicultural classroom programming by bringing items from home that represent their culture, giving presentations on cultural traditions, cooking ethnic foods, and teaching ethnic songs and dances to teachers and children.
- Parents are pleased with program attempts to respond to the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of their children and agree that learning about other cultures is good for their children
- The celebration of holidays is a controversial topic at several Head Start sites. Those in support of celebrating holidays believe that different cultures can be included in the classroom through the celebration of cultural holidays. Those who oppose such activities feel that these celebrations cannot, and do not, accurately and properly represent the cultures.
- Education coordinators report that their greatest challenge is in finding, adapting, and/or developing multicultural/bilingual curricula appropriate to the populations they serve.
- There are few developmental and health screening and assessment instruments that can be administered to non-English-speaking children; most of the available tools have not been normed with minority or non-English-speaking populations.
- Training in multicultural sensitivity was ranked by Head Start programs as an important type of training.

## **6 – Accomplishments and Challenges for the Future**

Head Start, from its inception, has been well suited for meeting the needs of diverse children and families. The ethos of inclusive community, and the commitment to and empowerment of children and families has made hundreds of thousands of young children, their families and staff feel welcomed and validated. The Head Start Program Performance Standards stress the importance of enhancing the sense of dignity and self-worth of each child and his or her family. As a federal program with national guidance, but local governance, grantees are free and encouraged to make culturally responsive program decisions reflective and respectful of their community.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to describe specific strengths and programmatic challenges as described by staff and parents. The section closes with recommendations for Head Start programs as well as for larger community efforts.

### **ADVANCES AND CHALLENGES FOR HEAD START PROGRAMS**

- In fact, Head Start does serve a diverse community and this diversity is increasing. A majority of children enrolled in Head Start are members of a minority group; the largest minorities represented are Blacks and Hispanics. The programs surveyed listed over 140 languages spoken by Head Start children. Spanish is the most common language spoken other than English. Head Start programs still face the challenge of reaching all eligible children. They have particular trouble reaching small or disenfranchised groups, such as recent immigrants and speakers of low prevalence languages.
- In many communities, language and cultural barriers prevent Head Start from recruiting and enrolling eligible non-English-speaking families.
- Overall, there exists a fairly good match between ethnicity and language of students and staff. However, it is a challenge to recruit and hire well-trained bilingual staff. Not only are trained and certified bilingual staff difficult to locate, but many require higher salaries because of their language skills. Programs had a particularly difficult time finding staff who speak Hmong, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Creole.
- Programs serving children from more than three linguistic or ethnic groups face the challenge of having to represent all groups in their programs. For example, at one site with children who speak six different languages, the program found it to be impossible for staff to speak all six languages.
- While some types of bilingual and multicultural materials are increasingly easier to acquire, staff found it more challenging to provide services in a manner that consistently integrates a multicultural philosophy. As one staff member explained, "The hard part was not [in] infusing the sense of pride and understanding of our culture, but in developing attitudes that sustain it." Some staff reported being frustrated at their inability to find specific bilingual and

multicultural materials. Among the most difficult items to find are age-appropriate books in languages used by Southeast Asian children. There is also a need to acquire materials or translations of materials into Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Russian, and Creole.

- Administering multicultural programs is expensive. Programs need additional resources for materials, field trips, translators, and training for staff.
- Parents from diverse cultures act as important resources and their talents enhance bilingual and multicultural programming. Parents are particularly helpful when they provide assistance on how to integrate different cultures into the classroom and when they share foods, stories, dances, and songs.
- Most Head Start programs were able to find appropriate community social and health services for families. However, some Head Start sites reported difficulties finding and coordinating with health service providers who spoke the families' home languages. This problem was particularly acute when the child needed specialized services for a suspected or diagnosed disability.

## **PARENTS' VIEWS**

- Most non-English speaking parents want their children to learn English and are pleased that they are attending Head Start. Generally, parents report that they are pleased with the rapidity with which their children learn English. Most children leave Head Start with greatly improved conversational English skills. Yet, some parents report that when their child's English surpasses their own, the balance of power can subtly shift between parent and child. It can be a challenge to maintain generational and cultural respect with new gains. For instance, although children are encouraged to speak up in Head Start classrooms, this practice contradicts the culture in some traditional families where children are taught that they may not question their parents.
- Parents are pleased with the Policy Council because it serves as a forum for their opinions and gives them a right and an opportunity to make a difference in the program. Parents participating on the Policy Council feel proud and empowered.
- Parents welcome the opportunities to obtain their GED, to earn a CDA certificate, and to be employed by the Head Start program. Non-English speaking parents are especially appreciative of English-as-a-Second-Language courses.
- Translations of all materials and translators for meetings are greatly needed to allow parents to participate with dignity and significance.

## **RECENT CHANGES IN HEAD START POLICY**

It is note-worthy to say that, since the conclusion of this descriptive study, with the revision of the Head Start Performance Standards that took in effect in January 1998, the Head Start Bureau has moved forward to develop new standards to require grantees to better meet unique needs of children and families of bilingual and multicultural backgrounds. The Revised Performance Standards require the following: (a) that grantees be trained to better implement the Multicultural Principles; (b) that grantees actively improve their ability to coordinate with community healthcare providers who are able and willing to meet unique needs of bilingual and multicultural populations; (c) that grantees conduct health, developmental, and other screenings in families' preferred languages; (d) that grantees provide translators to assist non-English speaking parents during medical and dental provider visits.

The Performance Standards also require grantees to conduct community needs assessments to, among other things, describe demographic changes in local communities and explore their effects on enrollment of children and families in their programs. They also require the assessment of the effectiveness of local programs' bilingual and multicultural practices. The Performance Standards also require that programs develop new approaches to improving parent involvement with an increasingly diverse population of parents. These new program requirements are reviewed during periodic monitoring visits by the Head Start Bureau to ensure that quality program services are provided to children and families of bilingual and multicultural background.

Data gathered for the Celebrating Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Head Start has provided the Head Start Bureau with a wealth of information on services which local programs designed and provided to children and families of bilingual and multicultural background. These innovative services were spontaneous responses of local programs to meet the urgent needs of bilingual and multicultural children and families as programs faced influxes of planned or unplanned numbers of these newcomers in their service areas. Classroom observations and interviews with program staff conducted during site visits revealed a wide spectrum of services provided and actions taken by local programs to meet parents' expectations of services. Focus group interviews with parents conducted during site visits confirmed that parents were generally satisfied with the services provided.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

Head Start programs can and do impact community practices outside of their doors. Here are some efforts that, over time, will improve our ability to serve families from diverse cultural and linguistic heritages.

Within the Head Start community:

- Demographic changes in local communities, as well as their effects on recruitment and enrollment of children and families in Head Start programs, should be monitored. Efforts

should be made to reach out to eligible non-English speaking families, who are often prevented from accessing Head Start services due to language barriers.

- Training and technical assistance on bilingual and multicultural programming is needed, including dissemination efforts to share information with both programs and parents on the current availability of bilingual and multicultural resources.
- The Head Start community must continue striving to understand cultural values of families served and to incorporate them meaningfully and respectfully into program practices.

Beyond the Head Start community:

- Head Start should continue to encourage diversity in the field of early childhood education, teacher training, and early childhood education research. Head Start already invests in the training of minority individuals through grants to Tribally Controlled Universities, Historically Black Colleges, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Similarly, Head Start has increased support for graduate students conducting research in Head Start.
- Head Start can aid in the efforts to promote census participation. This is essential in accessing federal and state resources for childcare, Head Start, education, and public health services, as well as for other community programs. Having an accurate profile of the community will also allow individual Head Start programs to monitor the success of their recruitment and enrollment practices.
- The fields of child development and early childhood education need resources to encourage the development of more empirically supported bilingual and multicultural approaches to curricula appropriate to preschoolers and to the language groups represented in Head Start programs. Research is needed to conceptualize, evaluate and broadly implement bilingual and multicultural practices that lead to improved child outcomes.

## **FINAL WORD**

The manner in which we support, respect and accept differences in our communities of young children will influence the ways in which they mature into the adult voices and the decision makers that shape our future communities and our nation.

A culturally and linguistically responsive approach to serving children and families honors family and individual uniqueness. While there are many values of the predominant culture, our challenge is to be sensitive to and respectful of all values. Incorporating family differences and multicultural principles into the resources and technologies we use to support children is not only a pragmatic challenge, it is for some a paradigmatic change. As the populations we serve become increasingly diverse, we must continue to engage in a powerful discourse about the issues of familial, cultural, ethnic and linguistic identity, and how Head Start communities support the hopes, dreams and successes of all children and families served.

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