Head Start Quality Research Centers Consortium I (QRC), Research Partners

**Education Development Center**

*Project Title:*  
New England Research Center on Head Start Quality

*Grantee:*  
Education Development Center, Inc.

*Project Funding Years:*  
1995-2000

*Project Staff:*  
David Dickinson, Aline Sayer, Carol Howard, Martha Bronson, Patton Tabors, Mariela Paez, Karen Craddock, Kimberley Sprague, Louisa Anastasopoulos, David Robinson, Catherine Snow, Cory Lewkowicz, Candy Miller

*Head Start Partners:*  
Francis Collins, Cambridge Head Start, Cambridge, MA  
Stacy Dimino, Communities United, Waltham, MA  
James Houlares, CTI Head Start, Lowell, MA  
Constance Kane, ABCD Head Start, Greater Boston  
Joanne Stone Libon, CAPIC Head Start, Chelsea, MA

*Contact Information:*  
*Research and Content*  
David Dickinson  
EDC  
55 Chapel Street  
Newton, MA 02458  
Phone: 617-618-2454  
Email: ddickinson@edc.org

*Materials*  
Margo Sweet  
EDC  
55 Chapel Street  
Newton, MA 02458  
Phone: 617-618-2749  
Email: msweet@edc.org
Project Abstract:
The objective of the New England Research Center on Head Start Quality (NERCHSQ) was to pursue integrated research studies designed to identify indicators of Head Start quality. The Education Development Center, Inc. collaborated with the Harvard University Graduate School of Education, the Boston College School of Education, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Regional Head Start Office, and Head Start programs throughout the Northeast to develop the NERCHSQ. The research examined the ways in which demographic changes, such as immigration and shifts in poverty, affect program quality. Head Start managers' awareness of and response to demographic changes were examined as well as patterns of interaction and oral language used within classrooms and across program components. A combination of integrated observational studies, action research, and longitudinal examination of children and families were utilized to identify indicators of program quality. Coding systems were developed to rate classroom features and home environments, and to track child development and family functioning. The research teams were composed of Head Start staff and parents. Observational and interview instruments measuring language and social skills were developed and pilot-tested, and later used to chart child development, family well being, and support for child development. The center identified clusters of potential measures used in monitoring program functions, and addressed enhancement of current database capabilities.

Sample:
7 Programs
72 Classrooms
367 Children

Measures:
Child
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III)
Early Phonemic Awareness Profile
Emergent Literacy Profile
Book Concepts
Bronson Social and Task Skills Profile
Social Skills Rating Survey
Teacher Evaluation of Language and Literacy Development
Child Observation Record (High Scope)

Teacher
Teacher-Child Verbal Interaction Profile
Teacher Language and Culture Questionnaire
**Selected Findings:**

1. HLM analyses revealed that the quality of classroom support for literacy, as measured using the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation tool (ELLCO), accounted for significant variance in children's language, literacy, phonological awareness and social development.

2. Parents' reports of support for literacy and engagement in educational activities accounted for significant variance in children's language development.

3. The fall-to-spring changes in phonological sensitivity of children from Spanish speaking homes when assessed in English was highly related to ability to do the same task in Spanish. Growth of this ability when assessed in Spanish was highly related to improvement in English.

**Publications:**


Dickinson, D.K. (under review). Shifting images of developmentally appropriate practice as seen through different lenses.


Presentations:


conducted at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.


**Georgia State University**

*Project Title:* Georgia State University Research Center on Head Start Quality

*Grantee:* Georgia State University, Center for the Study of Adult Literacy

*Project Funding Years:* 1995-2000

*Project Staff:* Martha Abbott-Shim, Frances McCarty, Sarah Franze, Cindy Oxford-Wright, Pearce Adams, Richard Lambert (University of North Carolina-Charlotte), Amy Jones, Joi Antoinette Witt


Head Start Partners:
Gayle Cunningham, JCCEO Head Start, Birmingham, AL
Patsy Thomas, 9th District Opportunity Head Start, Gainesville, GA
Pate Lowery & Clarence Billups, Concerted Services Head Start, Waycross, GA

Contact Information:
Research and Content
Martha Abbott-Shim
Professor Emeritus, Georgia State University
Quality Counts, Inc.
4 Executive Park East Suite 318
Atlanta, GA 30329
Email: masqcounts@aol.com

Papers and instruments are available on our website:
http://education.uncc.edu/qrc

Project Abstract:
The purpose of the Georgia State University Research Center on Head Start Quality (GSU RCHSQ) was to support Head Start's role as a model program for providing quality child and family services. The GSU RCHSQ worked in partnership with three large Head Start grantees to: (1) define quality Head Start program practices, (2) identify effective methods of assessing and monitoring program quality, (3) disseminate information about quality program practices, and (4) work collaboratively with the Consortium of Research Centers on Head Start Quality. Site-specific and cross-site research was conducted to explore linkages between program practices, quality measures, and child and family outcomes, utilizing a contextual or ecological model of development.

The research questions for this project included: (1) What teacher characteristics, teacher beliefs, and classroom structural factors are associated with classroom quality? (2) Is the quality of classroom teaching practices associated with child outcomes? (3) What parent and family characteristics are associated with child outcomes? (4) What indicators of classroom quality are associated with child outcomes? (5) Are staff perceptions of program policies and procedures associated with program quality? and (6) Are characteristics of the family service workers associated with child and family outcomes?

In order to study varying contexts, the research design included hierarchical linear modeling to test hypotheses at child, family, classroom, site, and program levels. The methodology included focus groups and key informant interviews, correlational and quasi-experimental methods, experimental
studies with pre- and posttests, and the use of existing Head Start databases where possible.

Sample:
3 Programs
190 Classrooms
480 Children

Measures:
Child
Adaptive Social Behavior Inventory (ASBI)
Bronson Social and Task Skill
Phonemic Awareness Profile
M-Kids Preliteracy Inventory
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT III)

Classroom
Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs: Research Edition II

Parent
Perceived Parent Competence Scale
Parent Interview
Individual Goals Assessment Questionnaire
Demographic Information Survey
K-FAST (Kaufman Functional Academic Skills Test)

Teacher
Family Involvement Survey
Teacher Beliefs Scale
Instructional Activities Scale
Job Satisfaction Scale

Program
Policy and Program Management Survey (Teacher, Administrator and Parent Council Versions) Self-Assessment Checklist for Promoting Cultural Diversity & Cultural Competency Consumer Constructed Empowerment Scale

Selected Findings:

I. What teacher characteristics, teacher beliefs, and classroom structural factors are associated with classroom quality?

1. Teacher levels of formal education tend to influence classroom quality indirectly through teachers beliefs. When education results in changes in teacher beliefs, then classroom quality tends to improve.
2. Teachers who have more developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices tend to have higher quality classrooms.

3. Classrooms that reflect lower quality tend to be staffed by teachers who have been teaching Head Start for many years.
   a. Teachers with high quality classrooms tend to have more positive views of parents.
   b. Classrooms that reflect lower quality tend to have larger class size and greater numbers of children per adult.

II. How is classroom quality associated with child outcomes?

1. Children tend to do better on measures of cognitive development when teachers use developmental assessments to plan learning experiences that match the skill level of the child, to communicate with parents, and to make referrals.

2. Children in classrooms with smaller numbers of children per adult tend to do better on measures of prosocial behavior.

3. Children whose mothers are depressed tend to be more disruptive in the classroom.

4. Children tend to generalize the positive social behaviors that they learn in Head Start to other settings when classrooms have balanced schedules in terms of learning contexts and opportunities.

5. The younger children in the classroom tend to perform similar to the class average when teachers use developmental assessments to plan learning experiences that match the skill level of the child, to communicate with parents, and to make referrals.

6. Children whose parents are low literate and who attend high quality classrooms tend to do better on rhyming and print concepts measures than children whose parents are low literate and who attend low quality classrooms.

7. Maternal depression is less of a predictor of disruptive behaviors in the classrooms with teachers who use developmental assessments to plan learning experiences that match the skill level of the child, to communicate with parents, and to make referrals. Through individualized attention, these teachers may be able to elicit positive social behaviors in children whose mothers are depressed.

8. Teachers who place a high value on children’s compliance and obedience in classroom behavior tend to initiate fewer positive
interactions, are less responsive to the children, and are less consistent in behavior management.

9. When classrooms provide accessible materials and space that support a variety of learning experiences and child independence, parents tend to report fewer problem behaviors with their children.

10. Age is less of a predictor of children’s positive social behavior in classrooms with teachers who use developmental assessments to plan learning experiences that match the skill level of the child, to communicate with parents, and to make referrals. Through individualized attention, these teachers may be able to elicit positive social behaviors in children who are younger than their peers.

III. What parent, family, and child characteristics are associated with child outcomes?

   1. Teachers tend to rate older children in the classroom as more expressive and as exhibiting more positive social behaviors.

   2. Mothers who report higher levels of depression tend to rate their children as exhibiting fewer positive social behaviors and more problem behaviors than do mothers who report lower levels of depression.

   3. The children and parents from rural communities tend to score higher on their respective literacy measures when the child is enrolled in a high quality classroom versus a low quality classroom.

   4. Teachers tend to rate children who experience home violence as more disruptive in the classroom.

   5. Teachers tend to rate boys as less compliant and less expressive than girls.

   6. Parents tend to rate boys as having more problem behavior than girls.

IV. How are staff perceptions of program policies and procedures associated with program quality?

   1. Teachers tend to have higher job satisfaction when they believe policies are very clear, and their administrators believe more policy clarity is needed.

   2. Teachers tend to have higher job satisfaction when they feel supported by their administrators.
3. Teachers tend to have higher job satisfaction when they feel that communication with administrators is good.

4. Teachers tend to have higher job satisfaction when they feel that administrators hire and retain qualified teachers and teacher aides.

V. What characteristics of families and family service workers are associated with child and family outcomes?

1. Several specific factors emerged from focus groups relating to personal characteristics of family service workers, which enable them to work effectively with Head Start families. These include: maintaining respect for the family, conveying empathy, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and avoiding judgmental attitudes.

2. The prevalence of risk and protective factors among participating Head Start families is consistent in 1997 and 1998.

3. The percentage of Head Start families with different levels of cumulative risk and protective factors is fairly consistent in 1997 and 1998.

4. The total score on the Risk Index tends to be related to a family’s increased need for community services, lower parent literacy levels, lower empowerment scores, decreased number of reading materials in the home, decreased participation in Head Start, and higher parent ratings of their children’s problem behaviors in the home.

5. The total score on the Protective Index tends to be related to a family’s decreased need for community services, higher parent literacy levels, higher number of reading materials in the home, increased participation in Head Start, higher parent ratings of their children’s positive behavior, and lower levels of maternal depression.

VI. What difference does the Head Start program make in the development of children and families in an urban southeastern city?

1. Head Start children made more statistically significant gains in receptive vocabulary than Control children.

2. Head Start children had a faster rate of growth in phonemic awareness, phonemic deletion, and rhyming recognition than Control children.

3. Head Start children made gains in story retelling while the Control children showed a decline in performance.

Publications:


Presentations:


the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Albuquerque, NM.


High/Scope Education Research Foundation

Project Title: High/Scope Research Center on Head Start Quality

Grantee: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation

Project Funding Years: 1995 - 2000

Project Staff: Lawrence J. Schweinhart, Ann Epstein, Amy Fowler Kinch, Sherri Oden, Carol Markley, Ted Jurkiewicz

Head Start Partners: Bussey Center for Early Childhood Education, Southfield, MI Capital Area Community Services, Inc., Lansing, MI Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency, Pontiac, MI Wayne County Regional Educational Services Agency, Wayne, MI

Contact Information: Research and Content Lawrence J. Schweinhart High/Scope Educational Research Foundation Research Division 600 N. River Street Ypsilanti, MI 48198-2898 Phone: 313-485-2000 Email: larrys@highscope.org

Materials Lawrence J. Schweinhart High/Scope Educational Research Foundation Research Division 600 N. River Street
Project Abstract:
The High/Scope Educational Research Foundation joined other Research Centers on Head Start Quality (RCHSQs) to define, assess, and verify the effectiveness of high-quality Head Start program practices. Site-specific research was conducted in collaboration with local Head Start agencies to identify local issues and problems, assist in the development of a local database and program monitoring system, and provide feedback to assist Head Start staff in program development and quality improvement activities. The High/Scope Quality Research Consortium (QRC) prepared for cross-cutting research by generating hypotheses related to Head Start policy and practice at the national level, and addressed sampling, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis issues in pilot-tests of research design and methodology. Observations and input received from Head Start staff, parents, and community members provided the basis for the issues and problems being studied.

The High/Scope QRC collaboration carried out four studies: the Head Start Staff Development Study, the Head Start Educational Practices Study, the Head Start Component Services Study, and a Pilot Head Start Effectiveness Study. The studies focused on: (1) the domains and variables that differentiate levels of program quality; and (2) how program quality relates to children's cognitive development, social skills, emotional development, school readiness, families' child rearing skills, program involvement, and progress toward self-sufficiency. A related research focus was on the contributions of naturalistic assessments of Head Start programs and their influences on children and families. The High/Scope Child Observational Record (COR), an observational assessment of children engaged in spontaneous activities in their natural program setting, was examined along with several other forms of child assessment. The High/Scope Head Start Program Quality Assessment (PQA) is a comprehensive observational and interview instrument on Head Start's comprehensive services for children and families. The PQA was developed from previous High/Scope program assessment instruments and the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Sample:
4 Programs
44 Classrooms
155 Children
Measures:
Child
Child Observation Record (COR)
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III)
Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB)
School Readiness Rating Scale

Parent
Parent Interview

Staff
Director Questionnaire
Teacher Questionnaire

Program Observation
Program Quality Assessment (PQA)
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale

Selected Findings:
Findings emphasize the importance of staffing issues in implementing high quality early education programs. The results have found that Head Start experience, over and above formal education and training, is a significant predictor of program quality. Findings have also suggested that the training methods most positively associated with program quality included curriculum-centered training, hands-on learning experiences, classroom observation and feedback to teachers, and continuity and follow-up by a consistent trainer. The Pilot Head Start Effectiveness study in two programs had attrition problems and produced no evidence of program effects on children's development.

Publications:


Presentations:


University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Project Title:
North Carolina Center for Research on Head Start Quality
Grantee:  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Project Funding Years:  
1995-2000

Project Staff:  
Donna Bryant, Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Beth Tanner, Brooke Holahan, Nora Dahners, Richard Addy, Shari Miller-Johnson

Head Start Partners:  
Chapel Hill-Carrboro Head Start, Chapel Hill, NC  
Franklin-Vance-Warren Head Start, Henderson, NC  
Person County Head Start, Roxboro, NC  
WAGES Head Start, Goldsboro, NC  
Wake-Orange-Chatham Head Start, Raleigh, NC

Contact Information:  
Research and Content  
Donna Bryant  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
105 Smith Level Road, CB No. 8180  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599  
Phone: 919-966-4523  
Email: bryant@unc.edu  

Ellen Peisner-Feinberg  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
105 Smith Level Road, CB No. 8180  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599  
Phone: 919-962-7354  
Email: peisnerf@mail.fpg.unc.edu

Project Abstract:  
The objective of the North Carolina Center for Research on Head Start Quality was to describe the complex relationships among quality measures and between program quality and child and family outcomes. The center's findings may contribute to the development of a set of effective and efficient measures and procedures that can be used by Head Start and other early childhood programs to meet and maintain high service delivery standards. Single- and cross-site studies were conducted in four representative Head Start programs by researchers from the University's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center and the Department of Maternal and Child Health in the School of Public Health.
The research design for this project consisted of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including self- and other assessments, observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys involving Head Start staff, parents, and children. Quality definition, quality interrelationship, built-in feasibility, and outcome studies were conducted. Various descriptive analyses and statistical models were utilized to: (1) study the reliability, validity, and distributions of selected variables; (2) determine interrelationships between quality variables; and (3) define the relationships between program quality and child and family outcomes. Dissemination of research findings included video and print training package products.

Preliminary results from the year one and two research determined the specific characteristics that all groups believe to be important for a good Head Start program, as well as those characteristics that particular groups deem more important than others. Additionally, quality measures for individual programs and child assessments were conducted on a pilot-study level in preparation for future studies.

**Sample:**
4 Programs
61 Classrooms
278 Children

**Measures:**

**Child**
- Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test III (PPVT-III)
- Woodcock-Johnson Letter-Word Identification
- Woodcock-Johnson Applied Problems
- Early Phonemic Awareness Profile (Dickinson & Chaney)
- Emergent Literacy Profile (Dickinson & Chaney)
- Attitudes/Perceptions of Competence (Stipek)
- Teacher Ratings of Children
- Social Skills Rating System, including Problem Behaviors (Gresham & Elliot)
- Adaptive Language Inventory (Feagans & Farran)
- Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (Piantsa)

**Parent Interview**
- Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) Interview

**Staff Questionnaire**
- Attitudes About Job
- Training Activities
- Beliefs About Teaching (Peisner-Feinberg & Bryant)
- Early Childhood Work Environment Survey (J. Bloom)
- Beliefs About Family Services
- Parent Involvement
Health Practices
Demographics
Parent Involvement
Observations of Parent Education Meetings (Castro)
Observations of Parents in Classrooms (Castro)
Collection of Monthly Volunteer Data

Health and Safety
Playground Assessment Using Rating Scales Based on Consumer Product
Safety
Commission Guidelines (Kotch & Devine)
Indoor Classroom Safety Assessment (Kotch & Devine)
Goldsboro Follow-up Study
Kindergarten Teacher Checklist (Maryland State Dept. Of Public Instruction)
Social Skills Rating System (Gresham & Elliot)
Student Teacher Relationship Scale-- Short Form (Pianta)
Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales (Sparrow, Balla, & Cicchetti)
Demographic Characteristics of the Teacher

Classroom Observations
Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-- Revised (Harms, Clifford, &Cryer)
Interaction subscale of the Assessment Profile for Early Childhood Programs
(Abbott-Shim & Sibley)
Caregiver Interaction Scale (Arnett)
Anti-Bias Environment Checklist (Peisner- Feinberg)
Observation of Hygiene Practices (Kotch & Devine)
Observation of Eating Activities (Harms & Peisner-Feinberg)
Structural Characteristics of Classroom

Publications:

Presentations:


In R. Lambert (Chair), Assessing the quality of Head Start programs: The Quality Research Consortium. Symposium conducted at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.