

Learning Environments in Head Start: National Data from FACES

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Presented at the DHHS Secretary's Advisory Committee
on Head Start Research and Evaluation

Louisa Tarullo, Mathematica Policy Research



FACES Study Design

- **Descriptive study of Head Start children, families and programs**
- **Regular periodicity: new cohort every 3 years (1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009)**
- **Nationally representative samples of 3- and 4-year-old children entering Head Start for the first time***
- **Longitudinal design: interviews, child assessments, and teacher-child reports at fall program entry, spring of 1 or 2 program years, spring kindergarten follow-up**

* The FACES sample does not include children served in Migrant/Seasonal or American Indian/Alaska Native programs, or programs in Puerto Rico or U.S. Territories

Focus of Today's Presentation

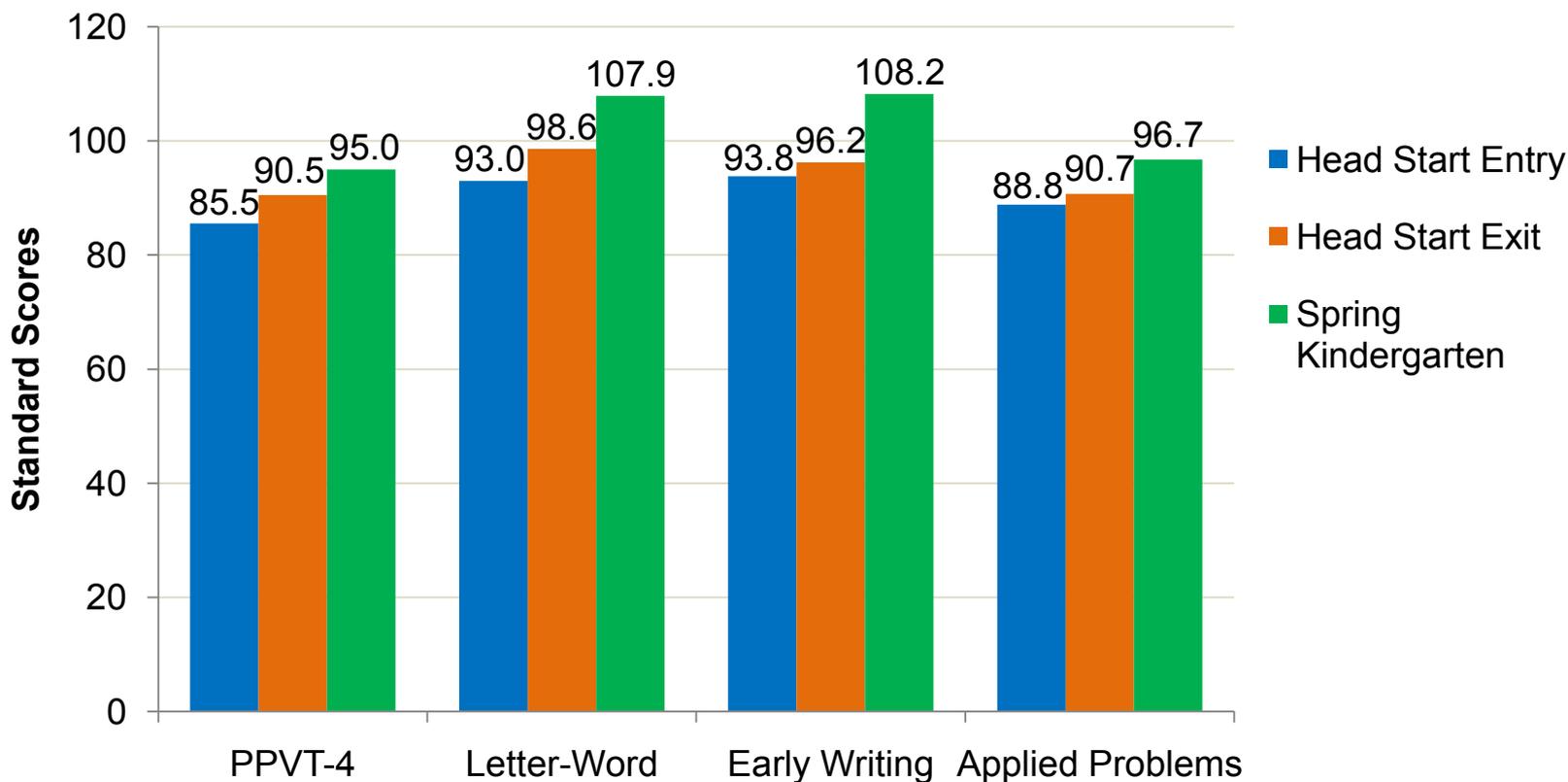
- **Associations between Classroom Characteristics and Child Outcomes**
- **Teachers & Classrooms**
 - Teacher demographics, education, experience, mental health
 - Classroom environment (structure, activities, curricula)
 - Observations of classroom quality
- **Child Skills and Abilities at Entry, Exit and Kindergarten**
 - Cognitive development (direct assessment)
 - Social-emotional development (teacher report)

Key Questions and Topics for Today

- **What are the entering skill levels and progress of Head Start children?**
- **How well-credentialed and supported are Head Start teachers?**
- **What is the composition of Head Start classrooms in terms of child age, DLL status, and entering ability levels?**
- **What is the quality of the classroom environment?**
- **How are structural and process quality factors in classrooms related to child outcomes?**

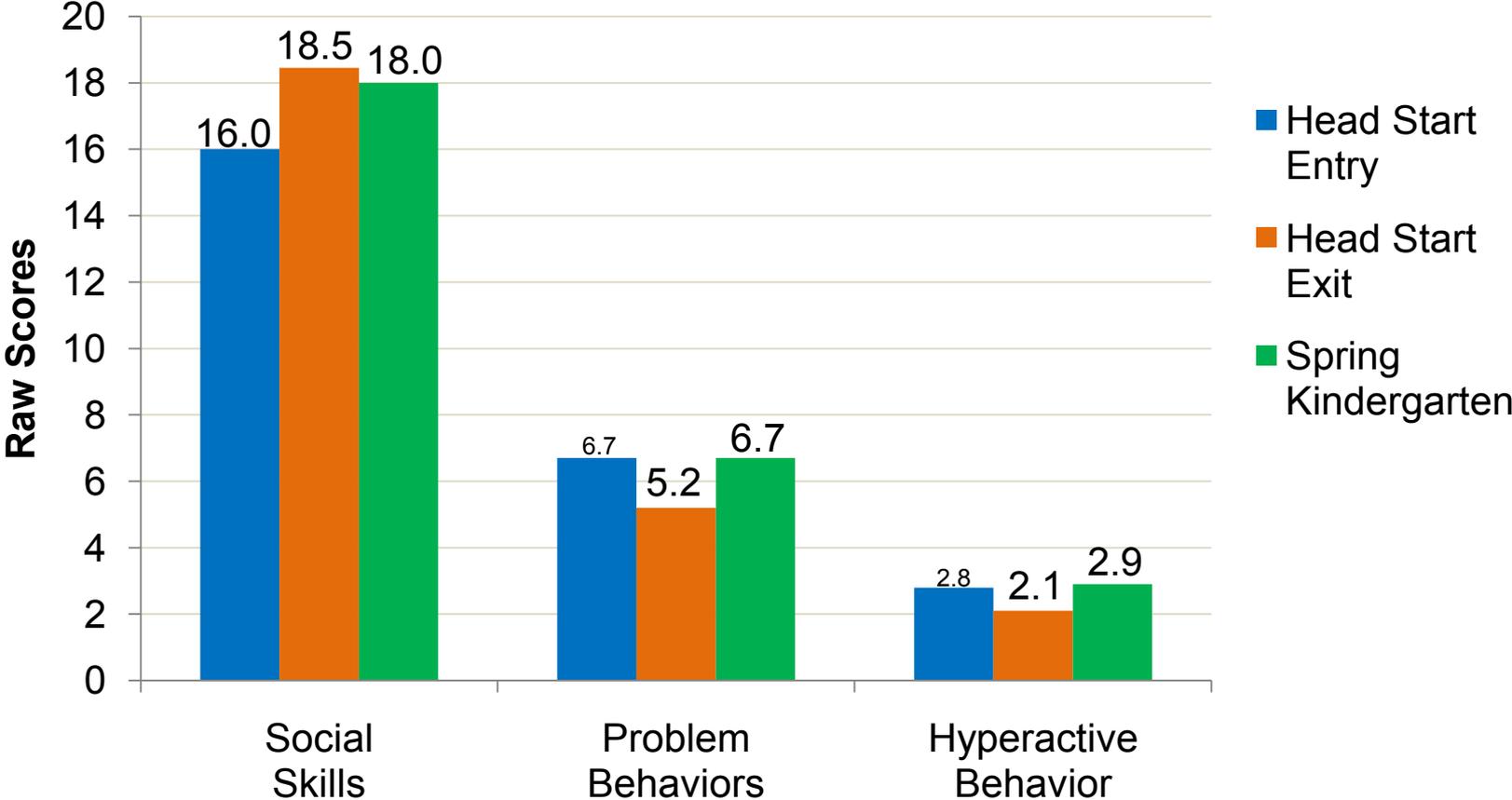
Children's School Readiness Skills and Developmental Status

Children Show Growth in Academic School Readiness Skills



Source: FACES Fall 2006, Spring 2007, Spring 2008 and Spring 2009 Direct Child Assessment

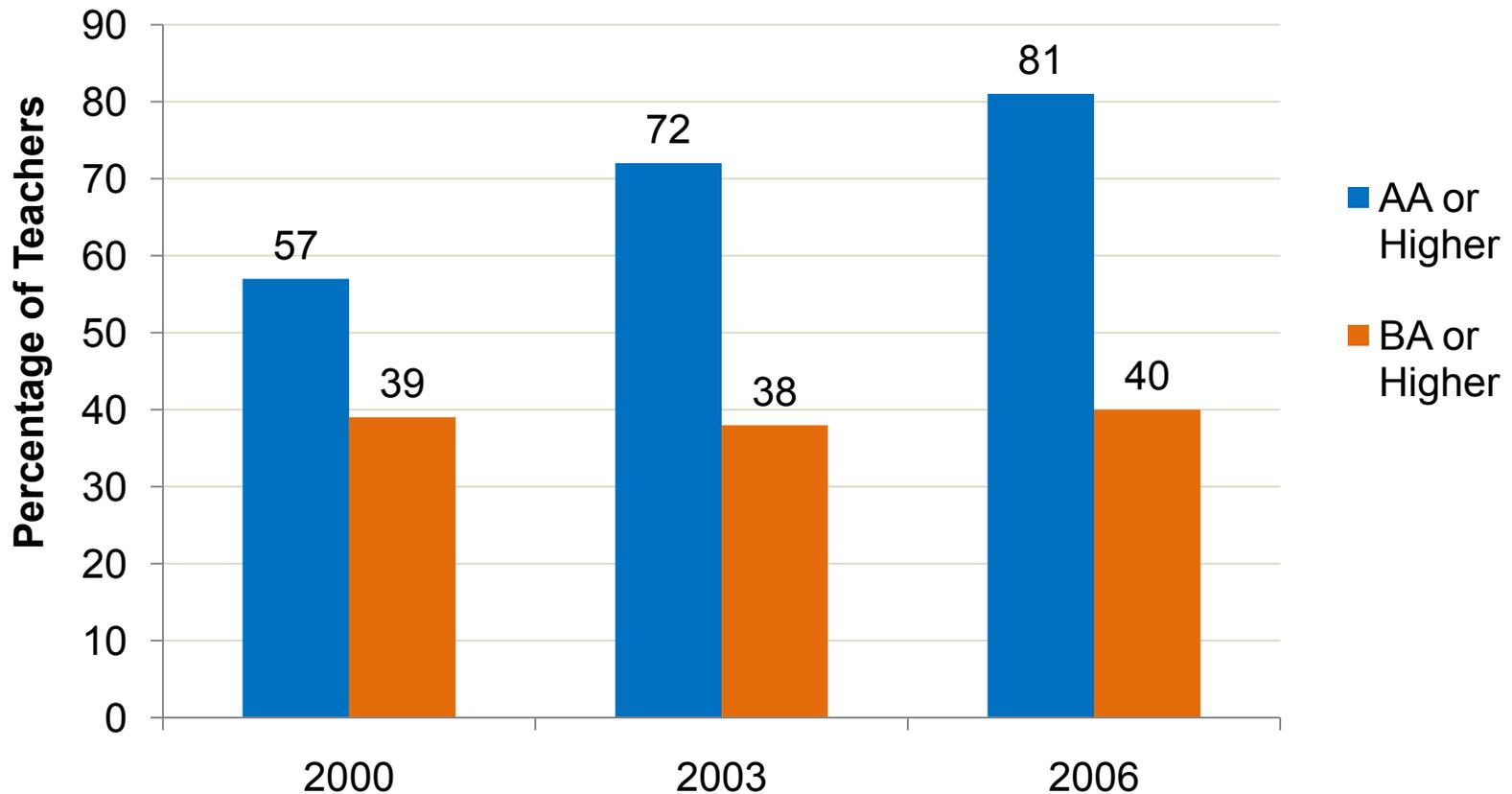
Children Show Growth in Social Skills



Source: FACES Fall 2006, Spring 2007, Spring 2008 and Spring 2009 Teacher-Child Report

Average Teacher and Classroom Characteristics

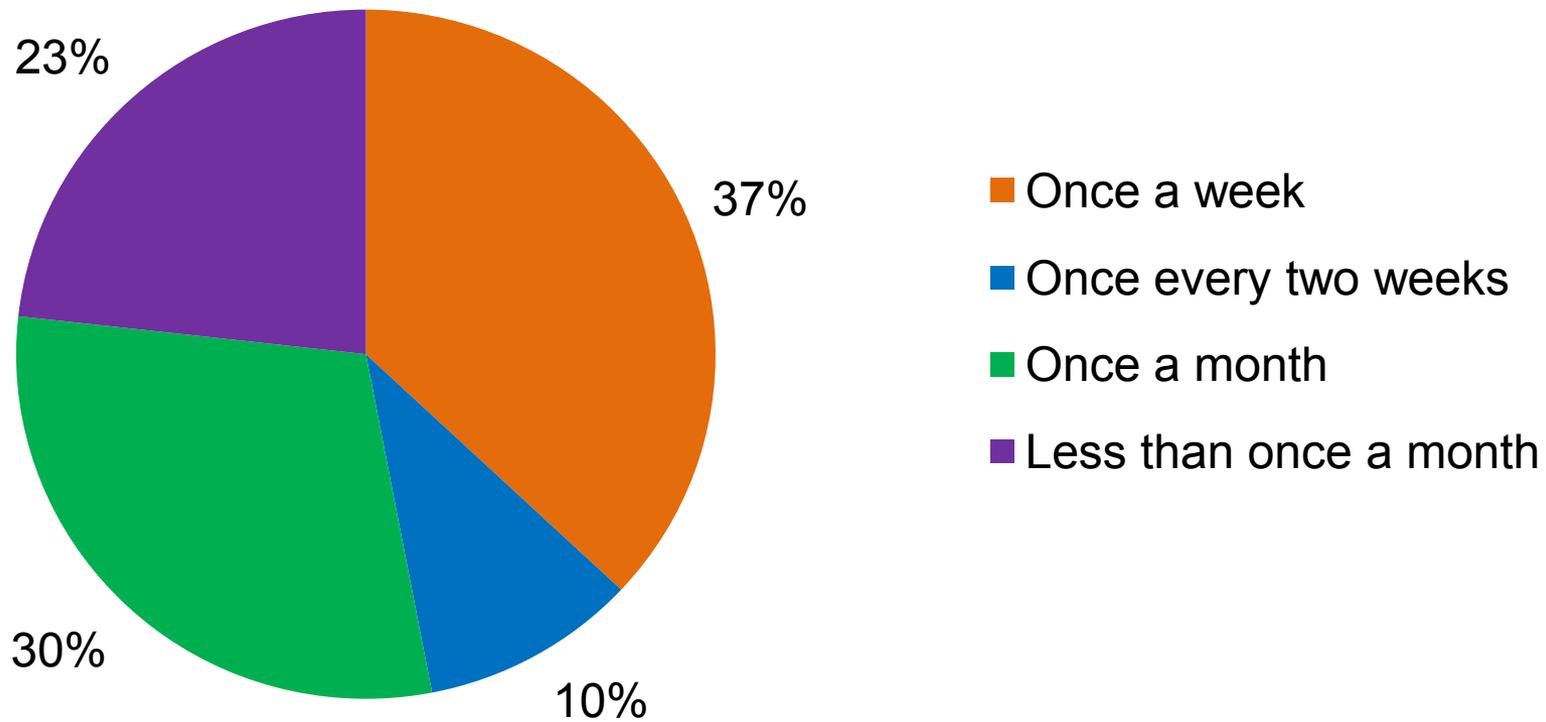
Teacher AA Degrees Increase Over Time



Source: FACES Fall 2006 Teacher Interview (and published sources)

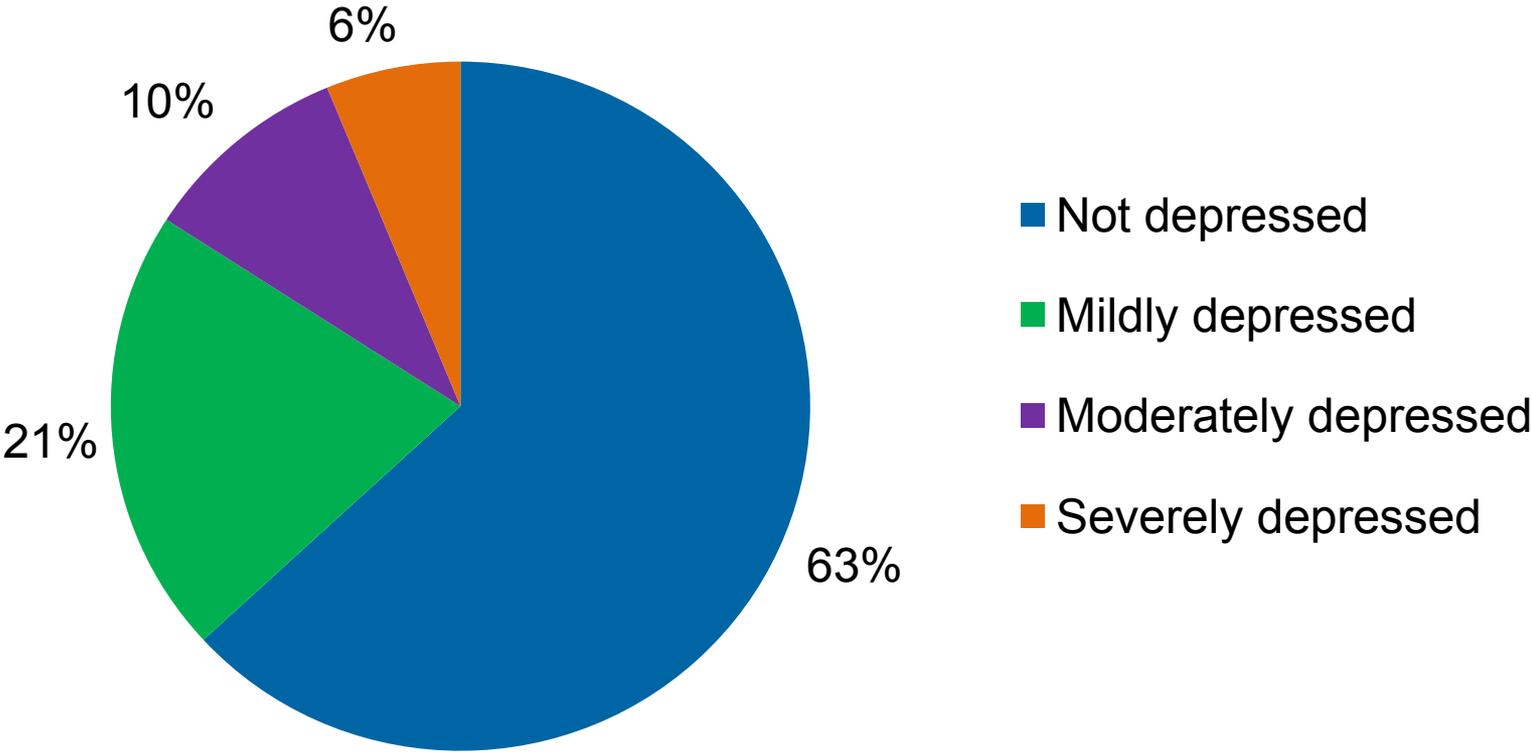
Three-quarters of Teachers Have a Mentor

Frequency of Visits for Teachers Who Report Having a Mentor



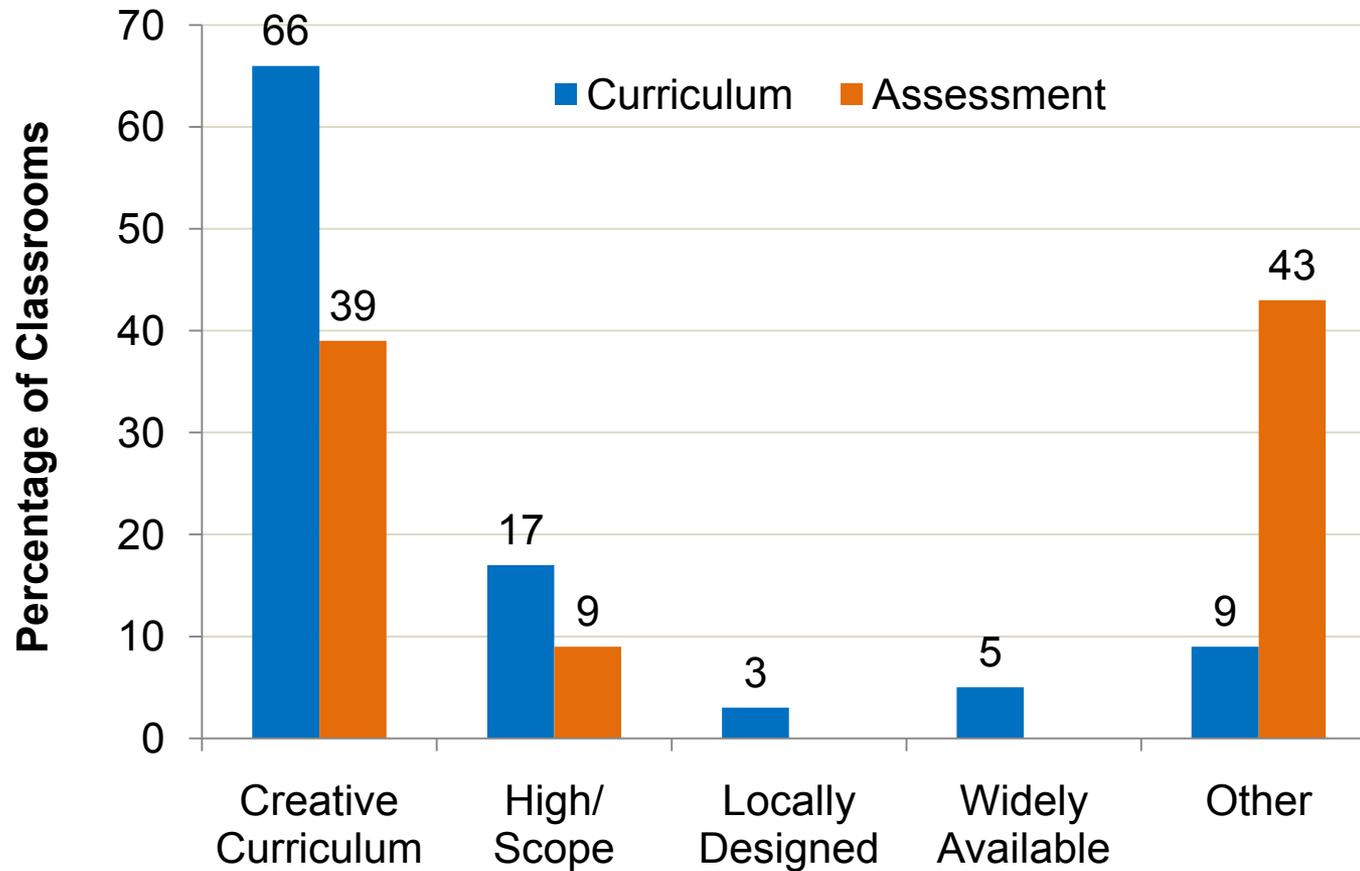
Source: FACES Spring 2007 Teacher Interview

One-third of Head Start Teachers Report Depressive Symptoms



Source: FACES Fall 2006 Teacher Interview

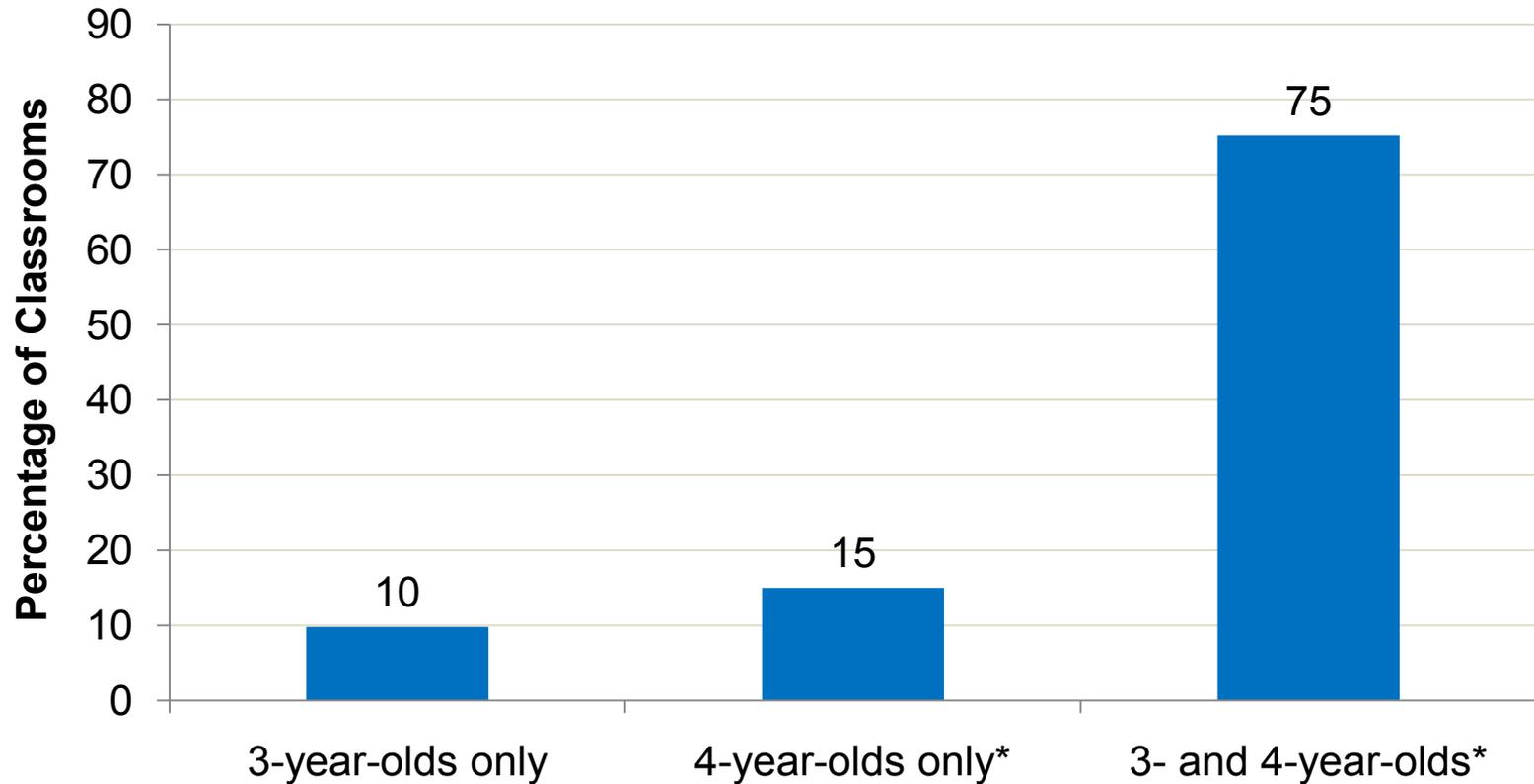
Teachers Primarily Use Creative Curriculum



Source: FACES Fall 2006 Teacher Interview

Diversity Within Classrooms Based on Age, Primary Language, and Skill Levels at Entry

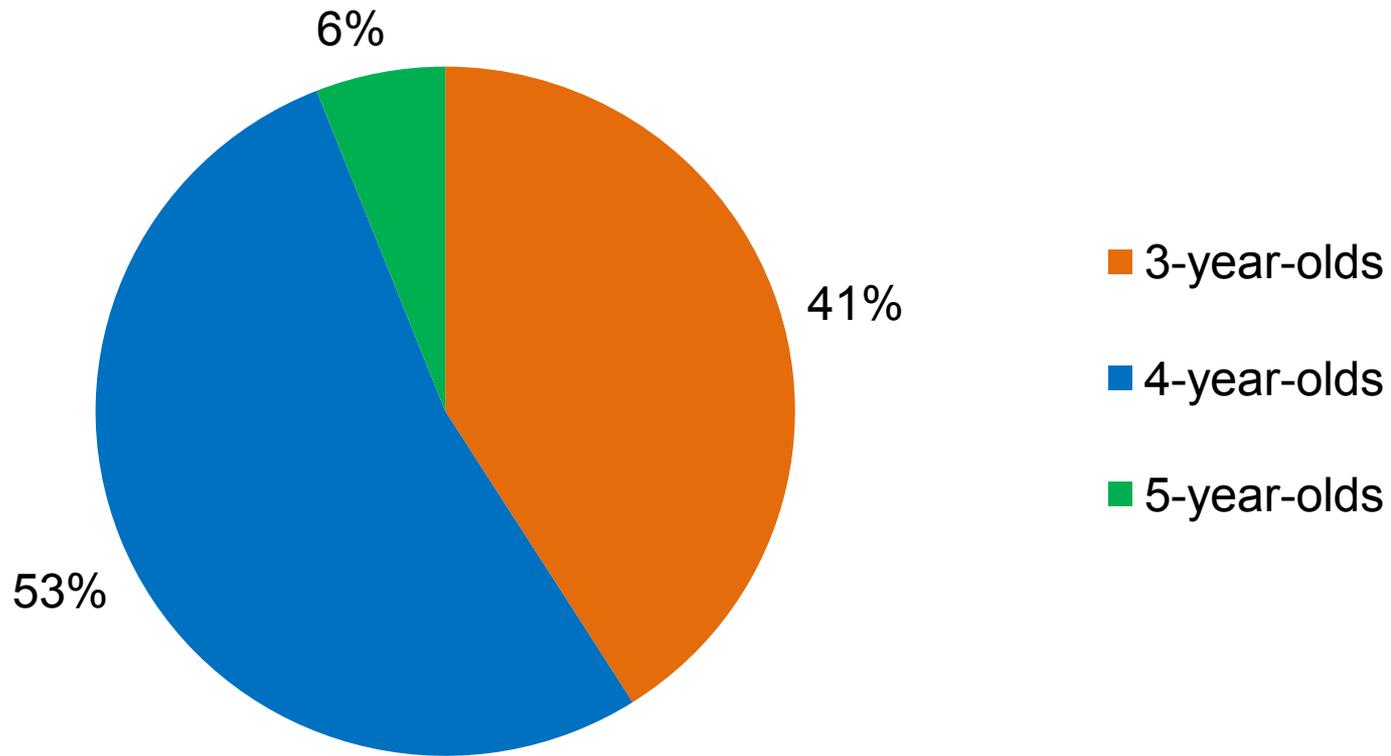
Most Classrooms Have 3- and 4-Year-Olds



*Children who are 5 years old (or older) are included in counts with 4-year-olds.

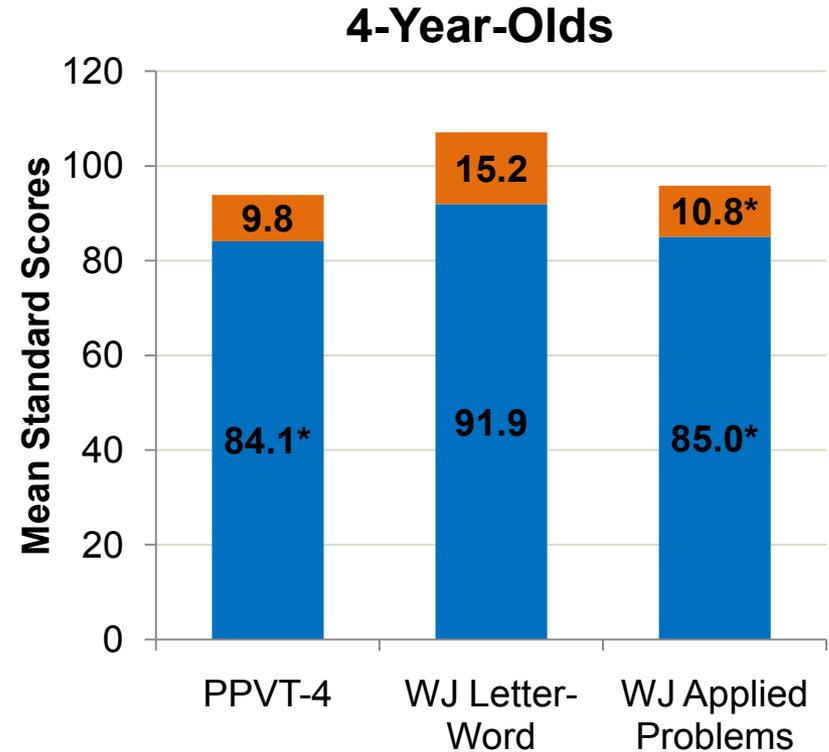
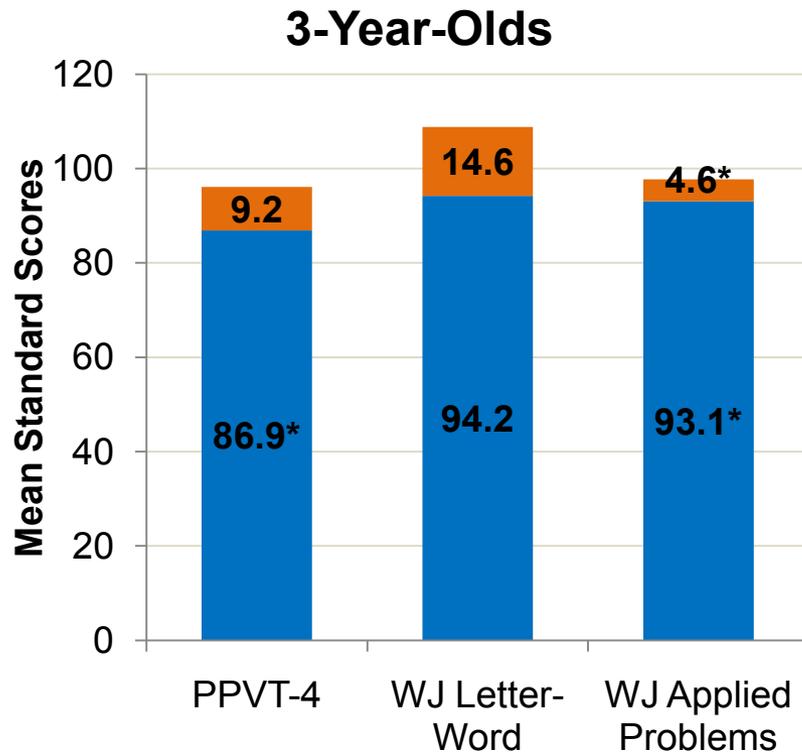
Source: FACES Fall 2009 Teacher Interview

Percentage of Children by Age in Mixed-Age Classrooms



Source: FACES Fall 2009 Teacher Interview

Age Differences in Entering Skills and Progress Through Kindergarten



■ Head Start Entry

■ Head Start Entry - Spring K Change

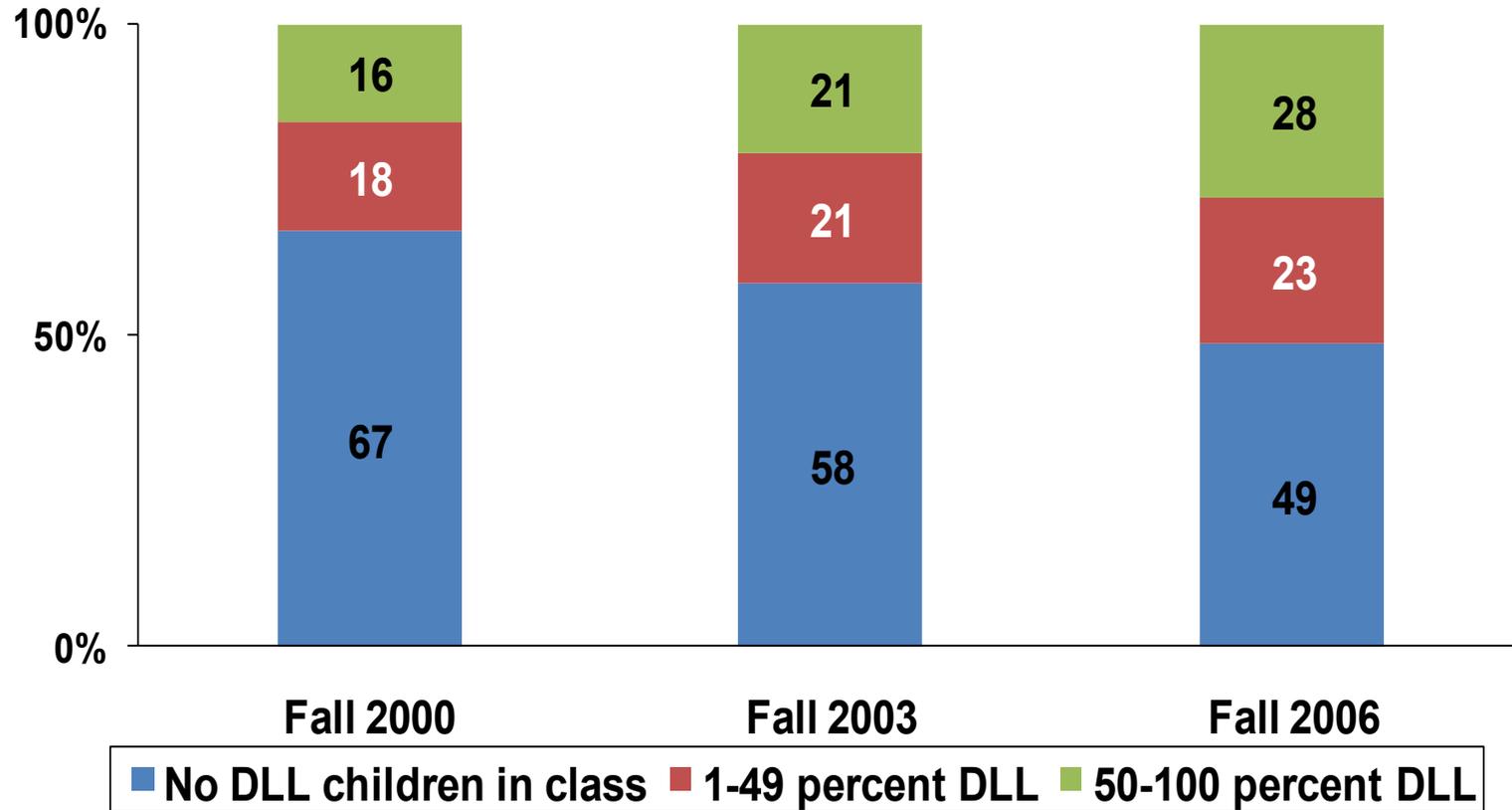
■ Head Start Entry

■ Head Start Entry - Spring K Change

*The difference between 3- and 4-year-olds is statistically significant at the $p \leq .05$ level.

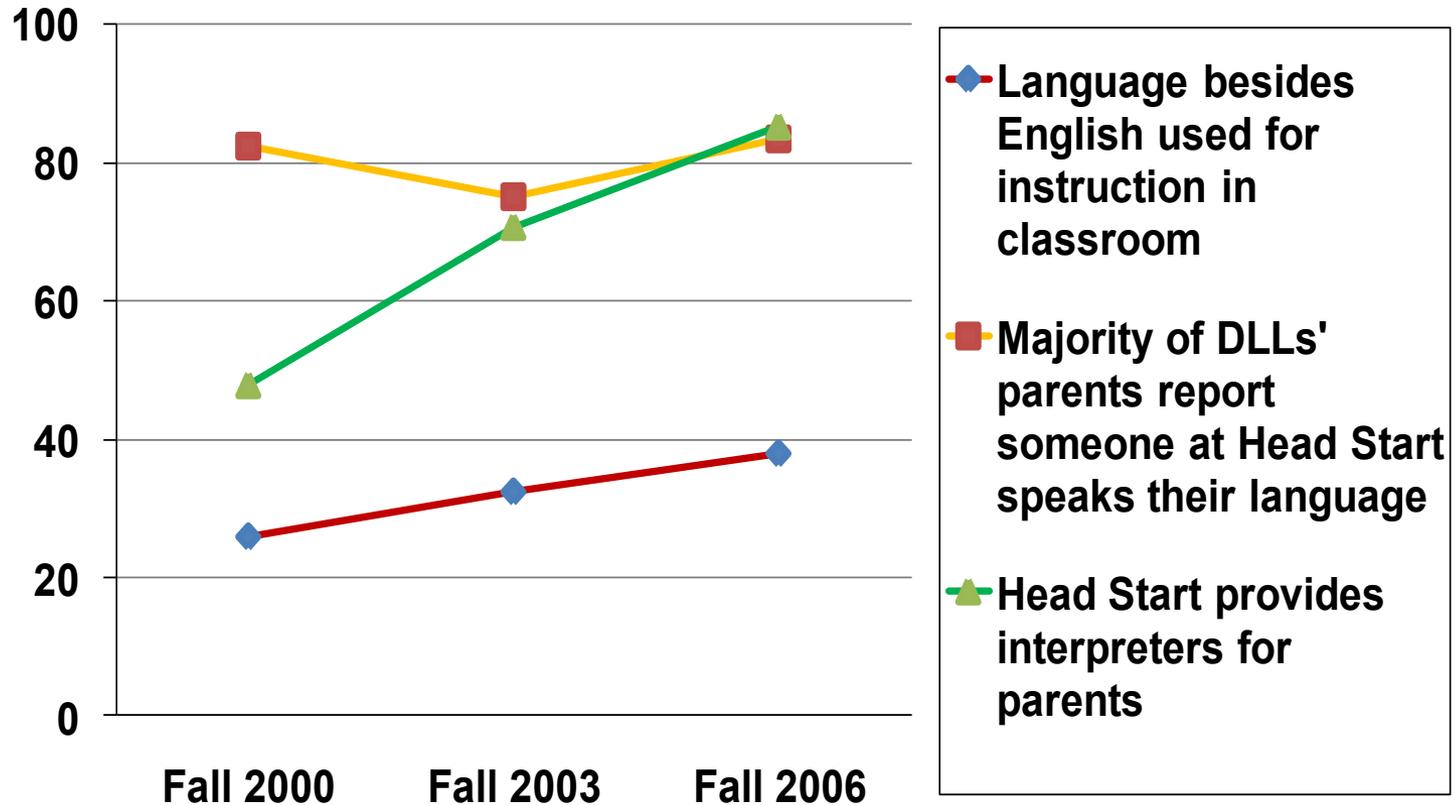
Source: FACES Fall 2006, Spring 2008 and Spring 2009 Direct Child Assessment

Change in Concentration of DLL Children in Classrooms (percentage)



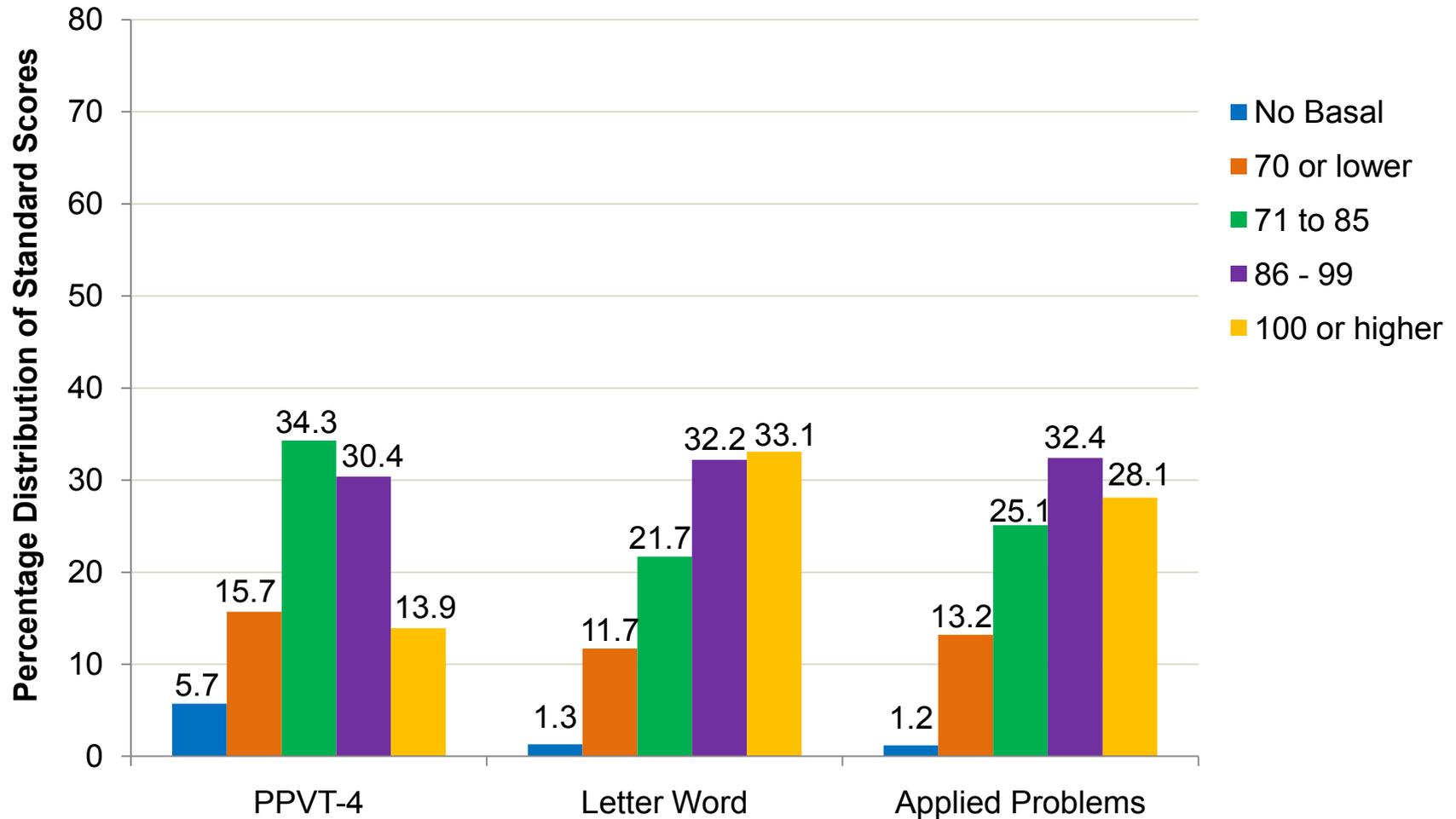
Source: FACES 2000, 2003, 2006 Teacher Reports

Changes in Classroom Language Use and Related Services (percentage)



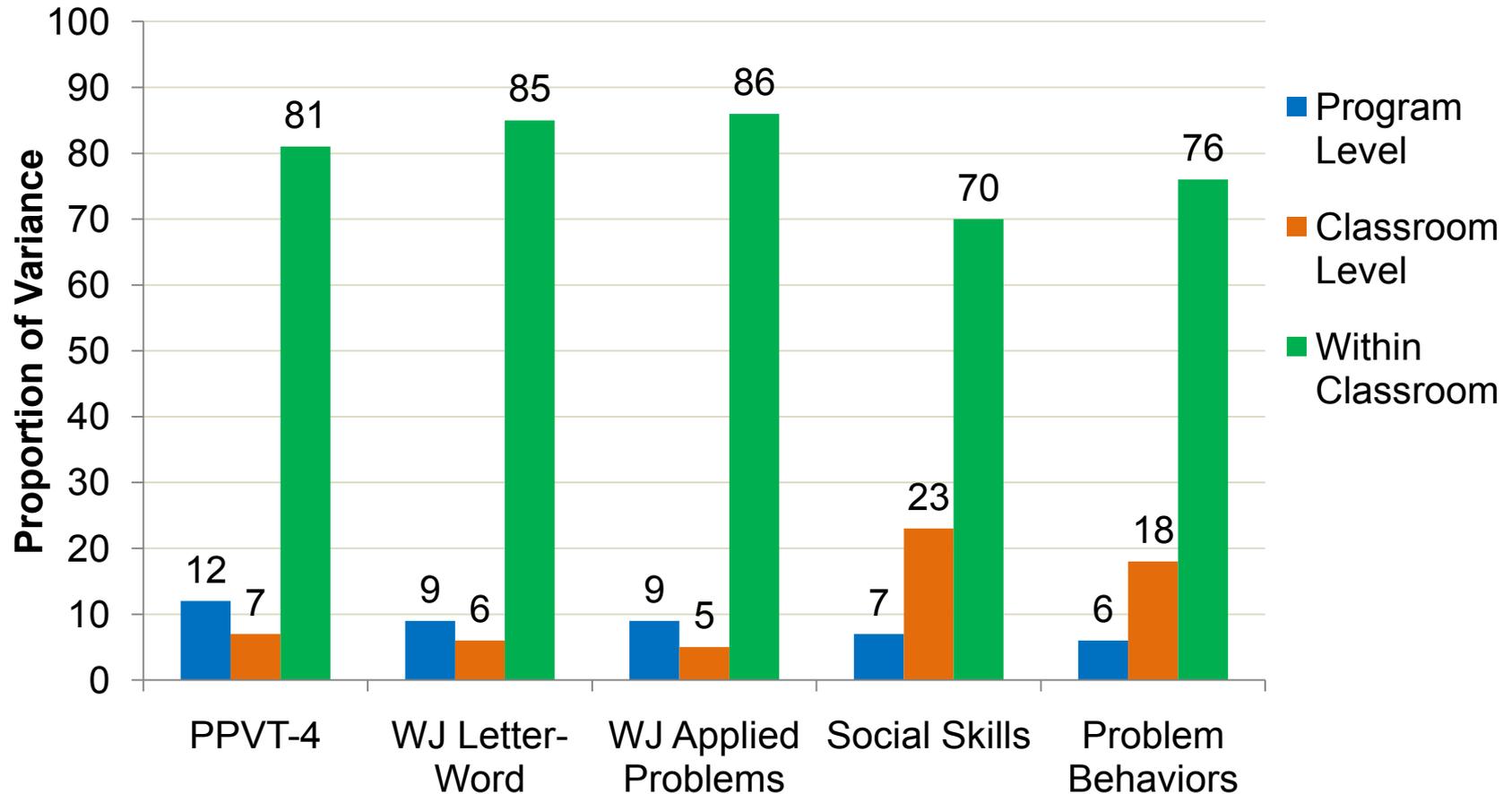
Source: FACES 2000, 2003, 2006 Parent and Teacher Reports

Children Show Diverse Skills at Program Entry



Source: FACES Fall 2006 Direct Child Assessment

Variance in Child Outcomes by Classroom and Program Levels

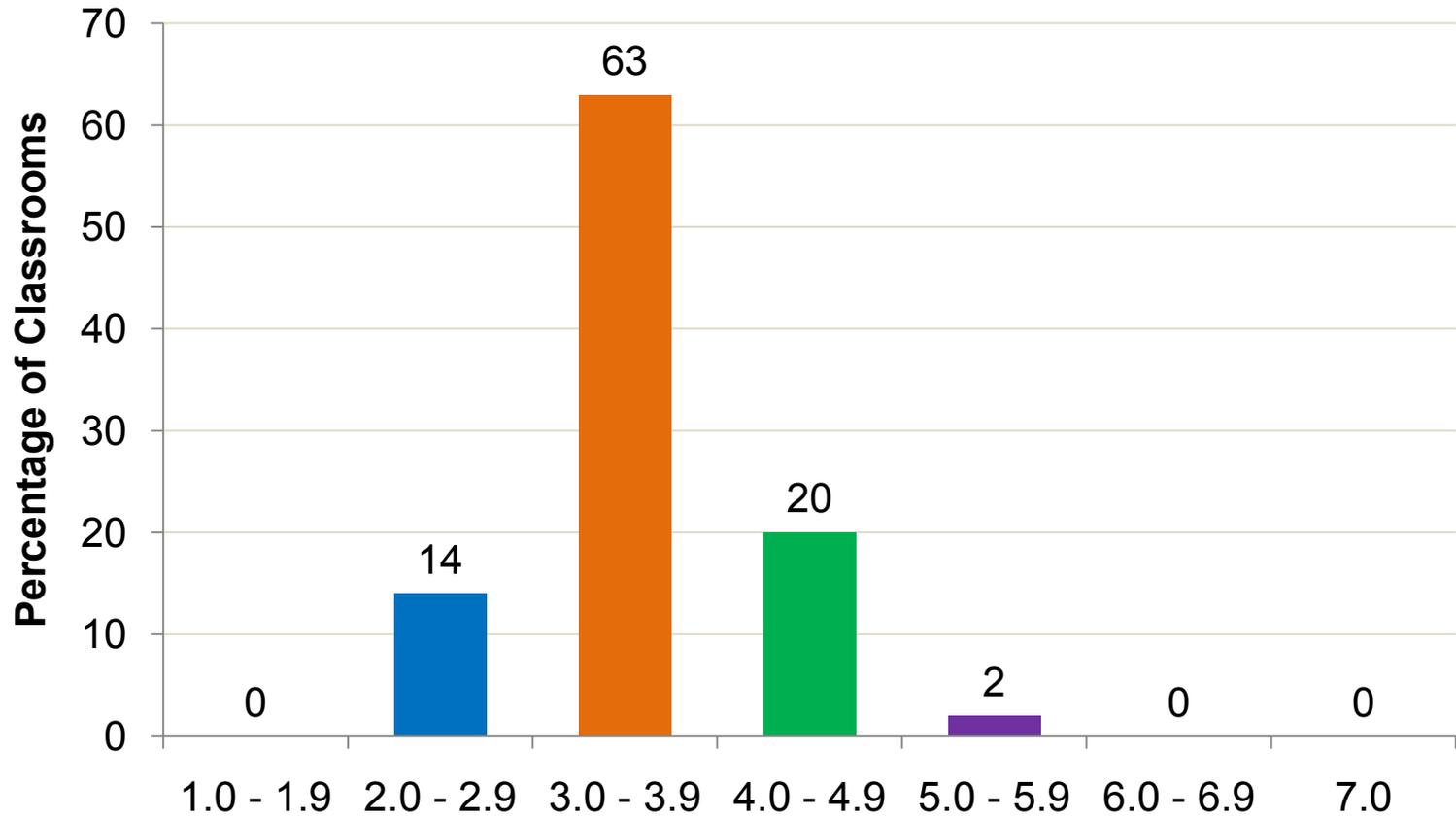


Source: FACES Spring 2007 Direct Child Assessment and Teacher-Child Report

Observed Quality of Head Start Classrooms

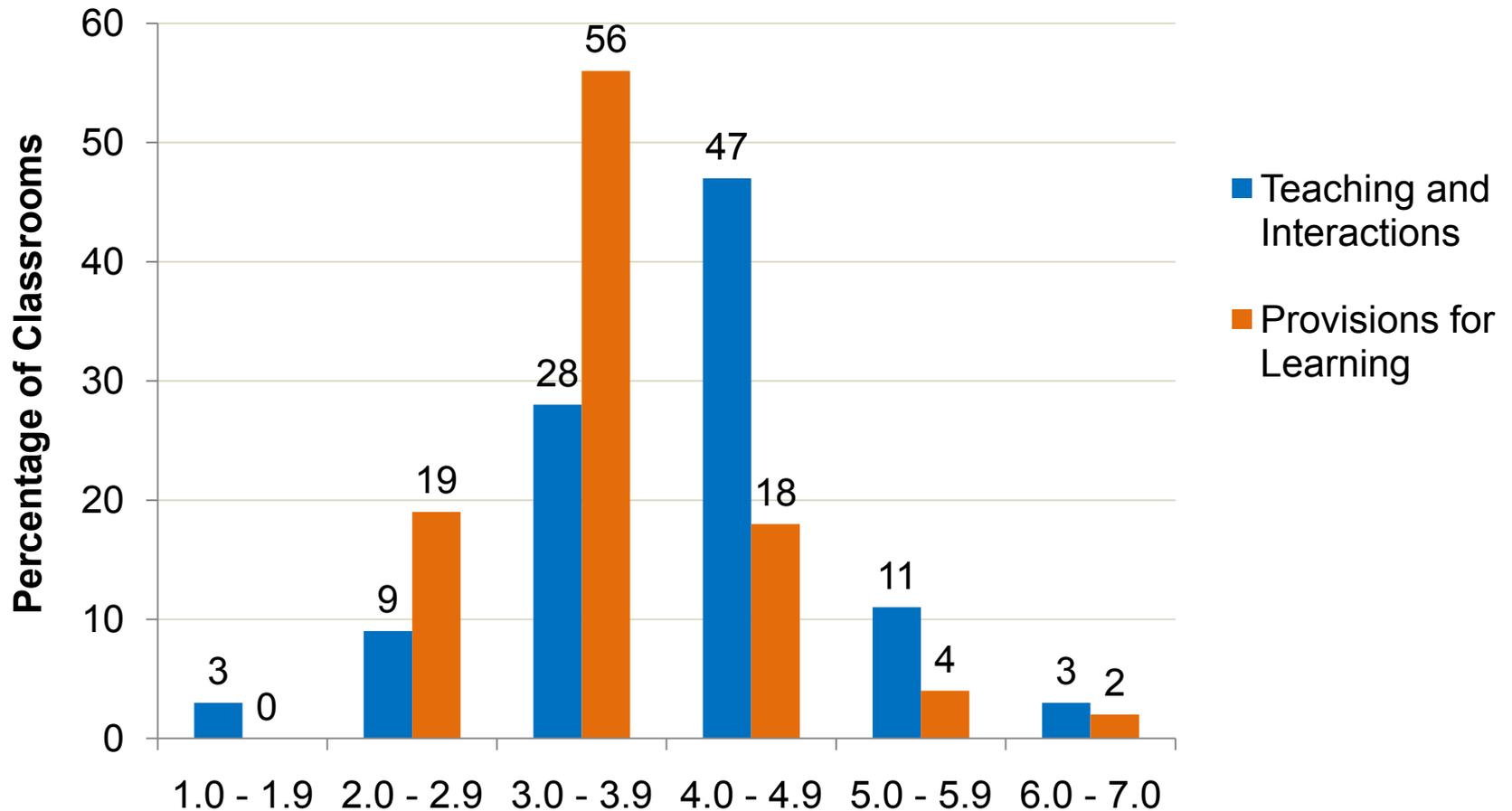


ECERS-R Total Scores



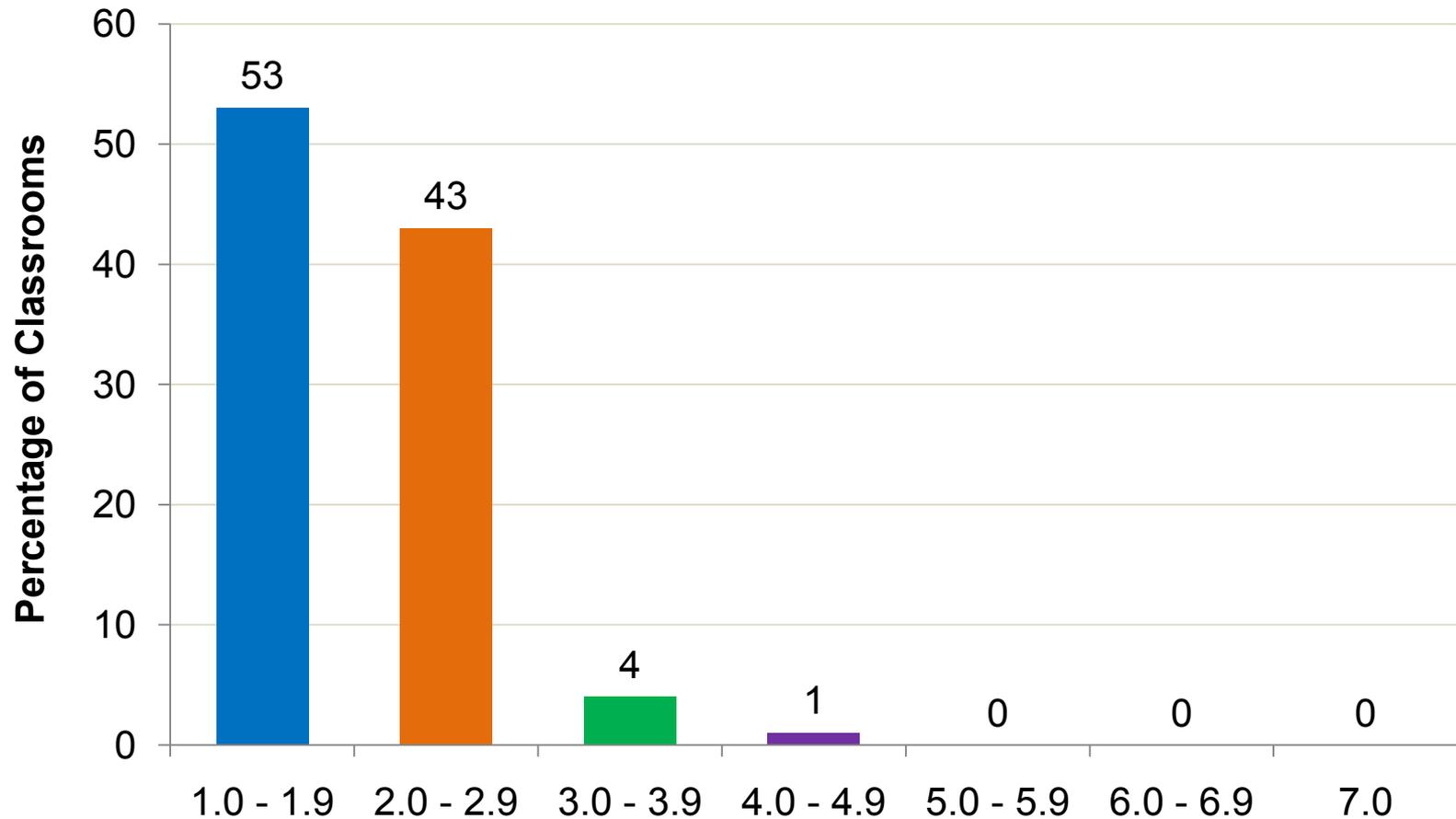
Source: FACES Spring 2007 Classroom Observation

Teaching and Interactions Scores are Higher than Classroom Resources



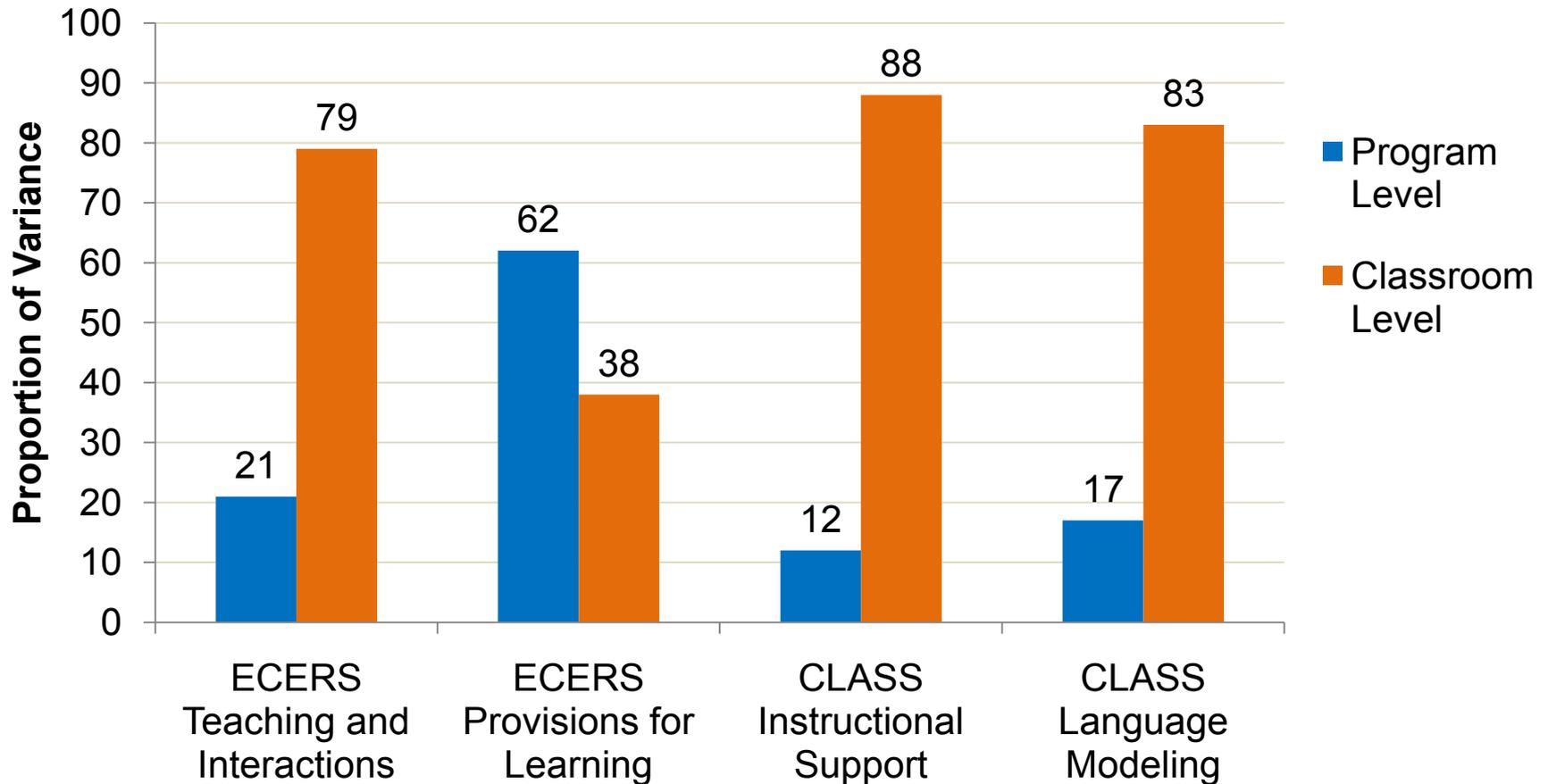
Source: FACES Spring 2007 Classroom Observation

CLASS Instructional Support Scores



Source: FACES Spring 2007 Classroom Observation

Variance in Quality by Classroom and Program Levels



Source: FACES Spring 2007 Classroom Observation

Classroom Factors Related to Developmental Progress of Head Start Children

Growth Curve Models

- **Two-level hierarchical linear models (HLM) examined whether and how child, family, and Head Start characteristics were associated with children's—**
 - **Development at Head Start exit**
 - **Developmental progress from Head Start entry through the end of kindergarten**
- **Models examined children's cognitive and social-emotional development**
 - **Receptive vocabulary**
 - **Letter-word knowledge**
 - **Applied problems**
 - **ECLS math**
 - **Social skills and problem behaviors**

Variables in Growth Curve Models

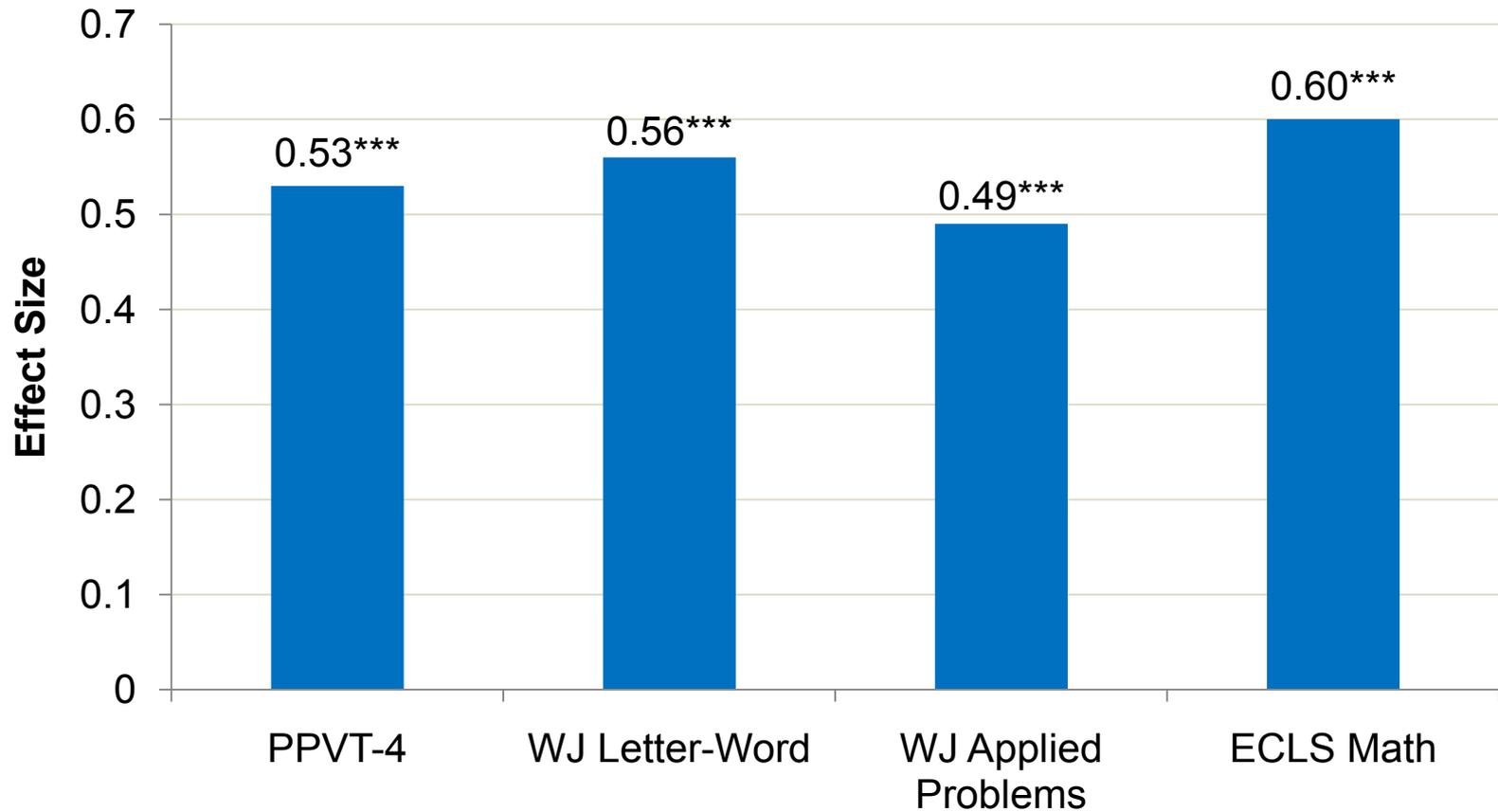
■ Child/Family

- Age at Head Start entry
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Primary home language
- Mother's education level
- Poverty ratio at entry
- Number of books in home at entry
- Frequency of joint book reading at entry
- Parent depressive symptoms at entry

■ Head Start

- ECERS-R Teaching and Interactions
- ECERS-R Provisions for Learning
- CLASS Instructional Support
- Teacher education
- Full-day/half-day class (or program)
- Mean peer abilities and social skills at entry
- Variation in peer abilities and social skills at entry

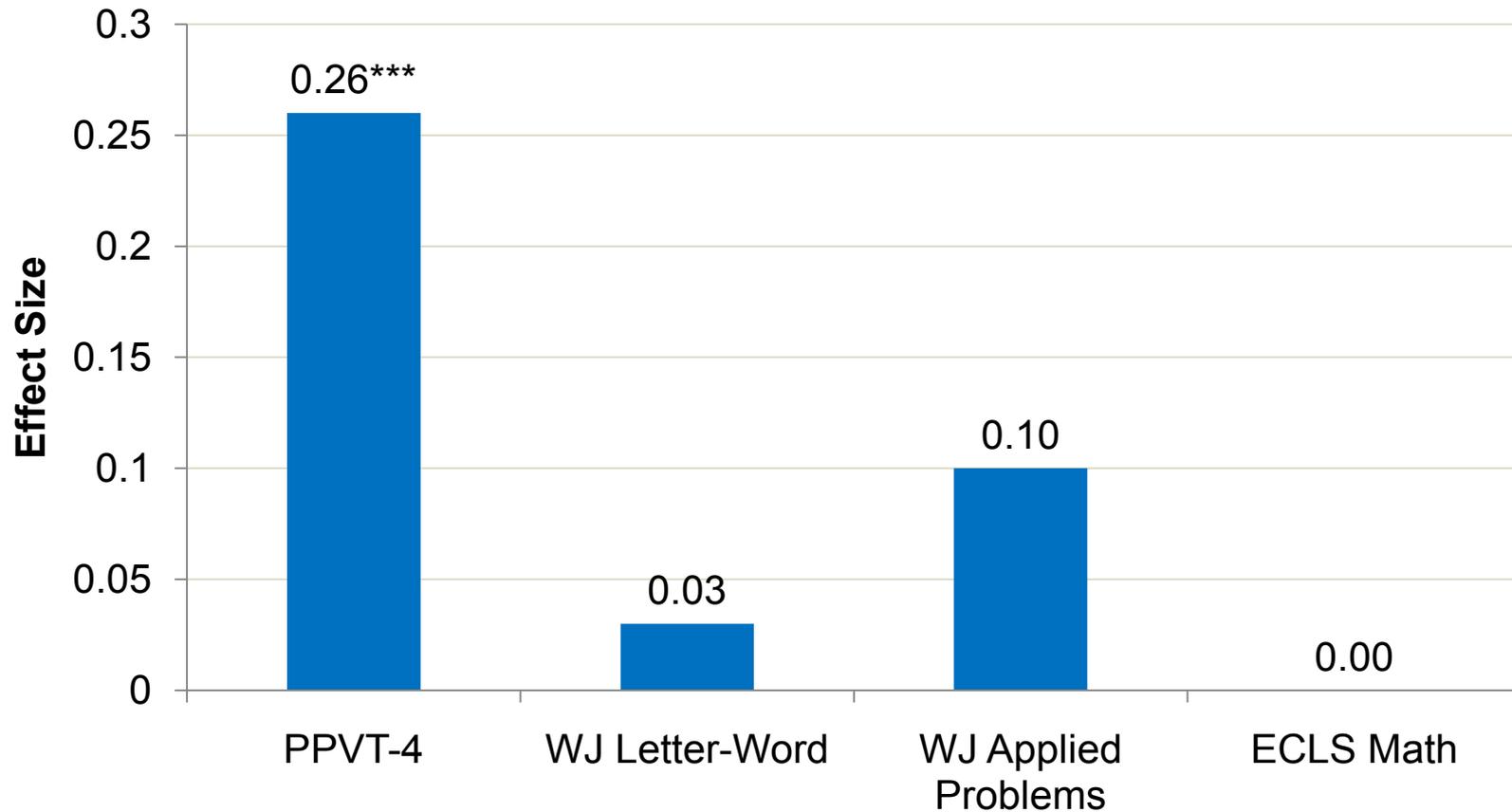
Mean Peer Ability and Children's Skills at Head Start Exit



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Source: FACES 2006 Direct Assessment.

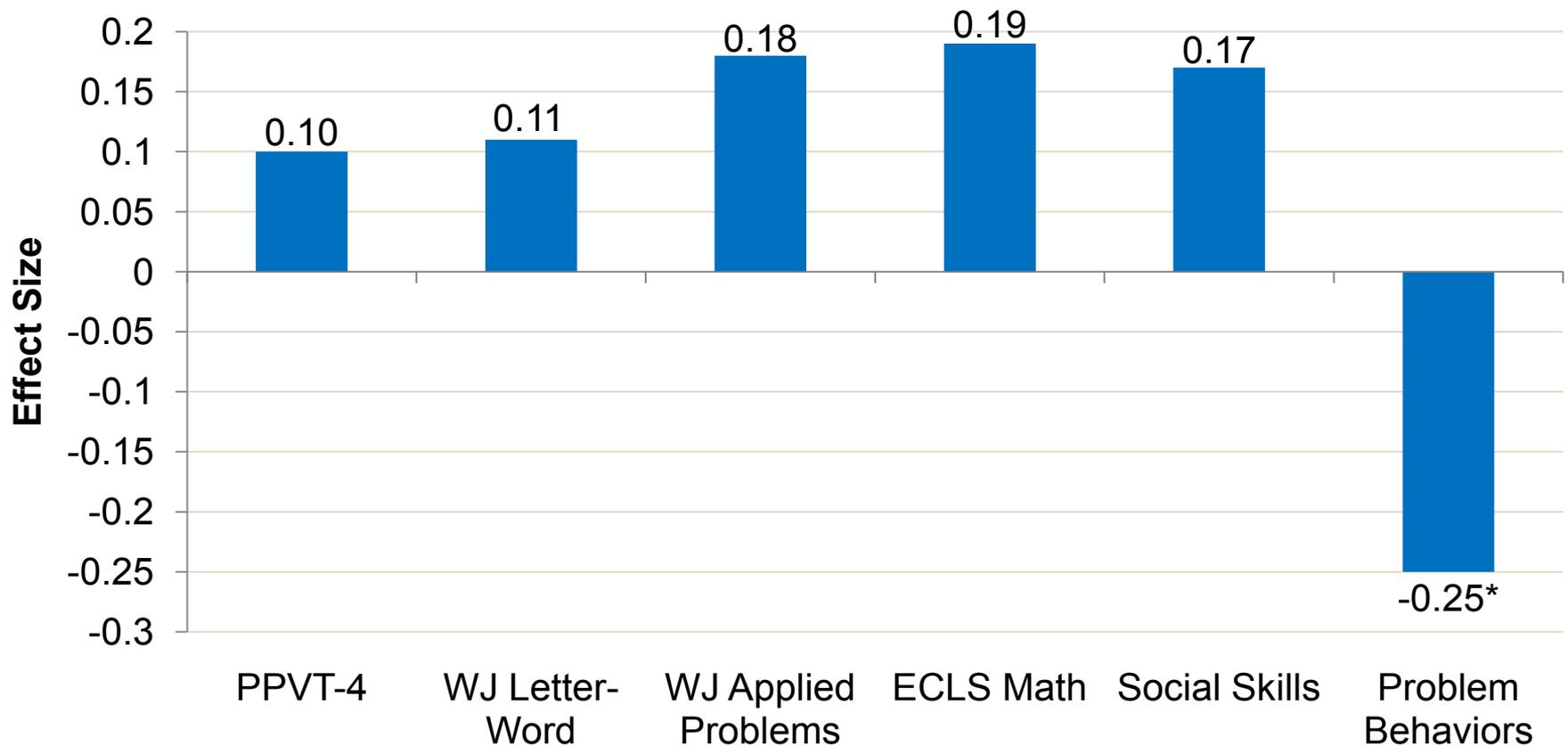
Variation in Peer Ability and Children's Skills at Head Start Exit



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Source: FACES 2006 Direct Assessment.

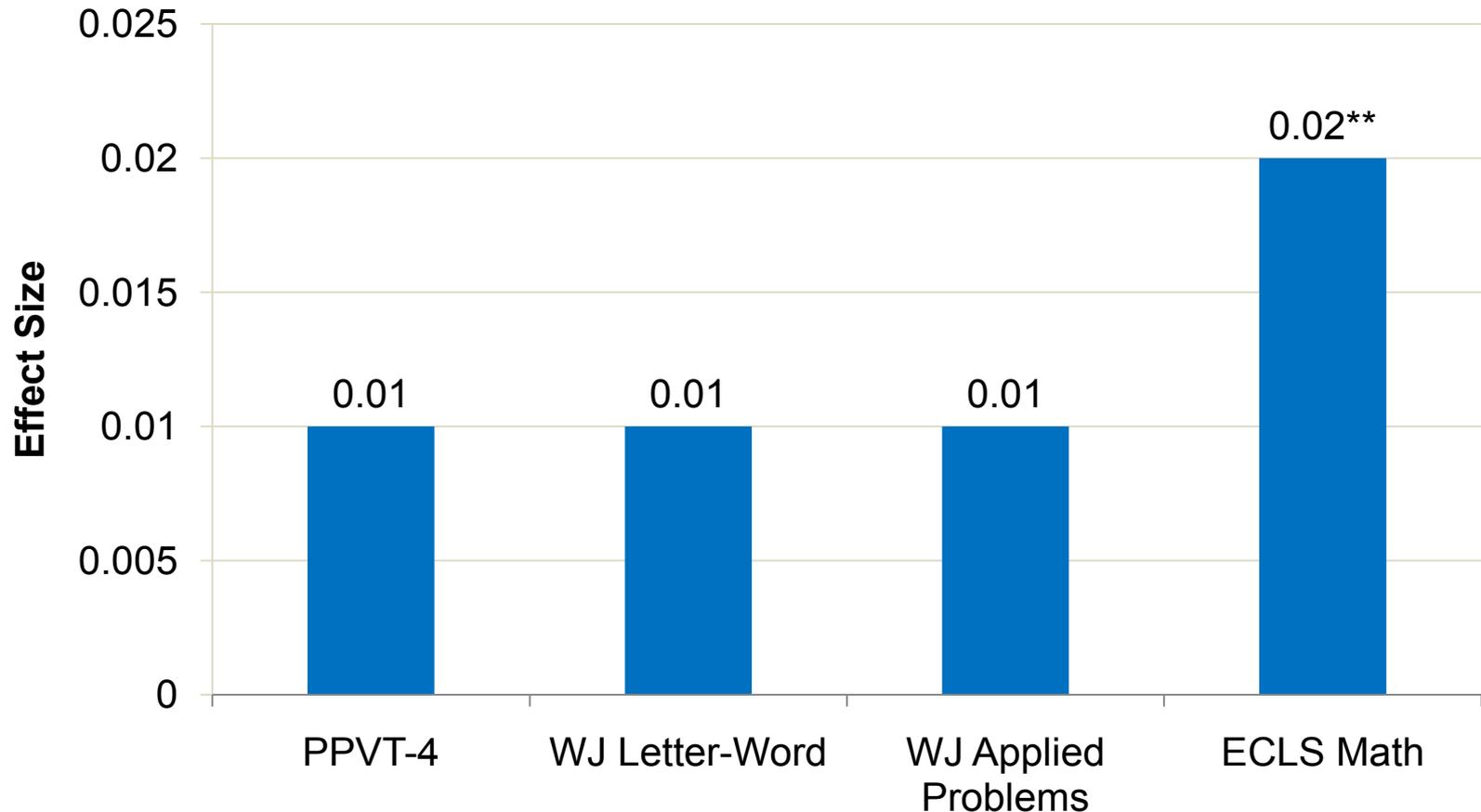
ECERS-R Teaching and Interactions and Children's Skills at Head Start Exit



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Source: FACES 2006 Direct Assessment, Teacher Child Report, and classroom observation.

CLASS Instructional Support and Children's Growth from Head Start Entry to Spring K



Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Source: FACES 2006 Direct Assessment and classroom observation.

Summary and Implications I

- **Head Start classrooms are diverse in terms of child age, DLL status, and entering ability levels, providing particular challenges for staff**
- **Head Start teachers are increasing their credentials, but demonstrate risks to mental health and need for professional development support services**
- **Observed quality varies at the classroom level for interaction-based measures and at the program level for resource-based measures, with implications for monitoring**

Summary and Implications II

- **The developmental trajectories of Head Start children are influenced by factors within classrooms, including peer abilities and observed quality**

FACES 2006 and 2009 Reports*

- **Beginning Head Start: Children, Families and Programs in Fall 2006**
- **A Year in Head Start: Children, Families and Programs**
- **A Second Year in Head Start: Characteristics and Outcomes of Children Who Entered the Program at Age Three**
- **Head Start Children Go to Kindergarten**
- ***Head Start Children, Families and Programs: Present and Past Data from FACES (forthcoming, based on 2009 cohort)***

***A comprehensive set of data tables is also available with each report**

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/faces/index.html>