

Partnerships and Collaborations: Head Start, Child Care, and Prekindergarten

Chair: Mary Capello

Presenters: Walter S. Gilliam, Dell Ford, Thomas W. Schultz

Discussant: Graciela Italiano-Thomas

- **Head Start in State Prekindergarten Systems: Where Are We Now?**

Walter Gilliam

- **Universal Head Start Prekindergarten, a Public/Private Partnership**

Dell Ford

- **Assessment and Accountability in Early Childhood Partnerships**

Thomas W. Schultz

Gilliam: The National Prekindergarten Study is the first nationwide study of the way in which state-funded prekindergarten programs are being implemented. It gives a sense of what these programs look like from a policy standpoint, as well as the kinds of classroom-level implementations to discover the relationship between policy and what the children actually received.

State-funded prekindergarten programs are those that are administered and funded, at least in part, by some kind of a state entity. They are currently experiencing massive growth. There might be other block-granted federal dollars that go into the program as well. However, there has to be some kind of state commitment before it is considered a state-funded prekindergarten program. Most of them only serve 4-year-olds, but some serve 3- and 4-year olds, with Massachusetts serving children as young as 2 years and 9 months.

For this study, the program needed to be classroom based. Similar to Head Start, the classroom component can look very different and can have a wide range of amount and intensity. These programs vary from everyday, full day to half-day, and some of them only meet a few days a month. In very rural outlying areas in Alaska, the teacher flies out in a plane and offers a program for a few days and then flies over to the next place.

To qualify, the state goal of these programs needs to be school readiness. However, researchers did not evaluate whether or not the program was good enough to actually improve children's school readiness. Also, location in a State Department of Education was considered a de facto statement of school readiness.

In general, these programs are largely targeted toward low-income children, although in a few states there are universal programs. Universal does not necessarily mean that everyone is able to get in the program. Universal just means that there is no requirement other than age, but it is possible to be on the waiting list and never get into the program. Also, the program may not be in all communities, yet it would still be a universal program by some definitions.

The first state-funded prekindergarten program began in 1898 in Wisconsin and stopped in the 1950s, when funding ended. Head Start started in 1965, and in 1966, California and New York created state-funded prekindergarten programs. Since that time, the number of state-funded prekindergarten programs has increased dramatically.

For our research, a program was considered a state-funded Head Start if the funding itself created new slots or expanded opportunities for children to be served from Head Start. Researchers looked at 40 states with 52 different state-funded prekindergarten systems. A random sample of over 4,000 classrooms was taken from about 40,000 state-funded prekindergarten classrooms.

The response rate was 81%. Part of the reason for the high response rate was researchers' willingness to call people when it was convenient for them. This meant that researchers in Connecticut were calling teachers in Alaska at 3:00 a.m. EST. Another reason for the high response rate is that teachers were delighted that someone cared enough to talk to them about the work they were doing.

Data were collected using a computer-assisted telephone interview, which took about 45–55 minutes. It was administered in English and Spanish. The respondent was always the lead teacher. Participants were given \$10, but many of them sent it back.

Fifty-eight percent of prekindergartens are located in a public school rather than a Head Start, and 29% are in a Head Start. About half of that is located in a Head Start within a public school, which is a grantee of the state-funded prekindergarten system and also a Head Start grantee. The other half of that 29% is Head Start grantees not affiliated with the public schools but accepting dollars from whatever state entity that provides for state-funded prekindergarten. About 13% of the total is in another setting, neither in the public schools nor in Head Start. That breaks down to about 6% for nonprofit agencies, 5% for-profit child-care centers, and 2% for faith-affiliated programs.

State-funded prekindergarten versus Head Start are not mutually exclusive entities. There is a lot of collaboration already going on. Many conversations at the decision level are largely around how to create collaboration; however, collaboration is already out there. Similarly, it is not possible to discuss whether programs should be going toward state-funded prekindergarten models or towards Head Start because there is too much overlap between the two to separate them.

Teachers in a public school are far more likely to have a Bachelor's degree while Head Start-only teachers are significantly less likely to have one. On average teachers in public schools had 4 years of college compared to 2.1 years of college in Head Start-only programs. Those that were in Head Start-grantee public schools and those in other settings fell somewhere in the middle.

Public schools have larger numbers of children in each classroom than the others. Head Start had the smallest number of children per classroom. The state-funded prekindergarten programs that are in Head Start and those that are in Head Start /public school hybrids track

very similarly, in terms of the proportion of health services, health screening, dental screening, vision screening, and immunization that is provided by the program up around the 80 to high 90s percentages. The public schools and other settings are far less likely to provide these services. Both Head Starts on their own and Head Starts located in a public school are significantly more likely than state-funded prekindergartens to provide developmental screening, family-resource service, and home visits and meals.

In terms of program length of day, Head Start was much more likely than public schools to provide extended-day services (defined as 8 hours or more a day). The other segment is largely child-care programs, which are far more likely to offer extra-day services. Head Start looks much better than the public school programs in terms of comprehensive services and accessibility.

Public schools and Head Starts are the main locations for state-funded prekindergarten programs. There are significant overlaps between all of the different programs. This model of public schools and Head Starts mixed together might not be a bad thing when looking at the overall pattern of findings.

In terms of classroom characteristics, classrooms that are located in Head Start–public school hybrids tend to be between the extremes of Head Start and public schools on a variety of different things. However, in terms of comprehensive services, they tend to offer a high level of comprehensive services in relationships to what those programs could provide if Head Start were not present in the public schools.

Universal prekindergarten is probably on the horizon. What is important is the way in which these collaborations shape out. The strengths of Head Start and those of the public schools can potentially be capitalized. This would create hybrid models that can better serve the needs of a more diverse population of children. There are distinctions in strengths and spending between the two programs; however, the aims are very much the same. Therefore, it is important to consider what collaboration ultimately should look like between state-funded prekindergarten systems and Head Start, and how to capitalize on the strengths of both of these systems.

Ford: The Oregon Head Start prekindergarten program reflects a collaborative approach to operating federal Head Start and the Oregon state-funded prekindergarten program. The Federal Head Start Program Performance Standards and eligibility requirements were written into state law for all prekindergarten programs making state prekindergarten programs and federal Head Start programs exactly the same with one exception: Head Start allows 10% over-income families to participate, while state prekindergarten allows 20% over-income families to participate. These programs are jointly administered through a written intergovernmental agreement between the Oregon Department of Education and the Region 10 Head Start office.

The history of this collaborative began in 1985 when Dell Ford and the leadership of the Head Start Association began working with the State Board of Education to write new legislation for a prekindergarten program. By 1987, the Oregon prekindergarten program was born. The following components of the legislation proved to be helpful: (a) the prekindergarten program

coordinate with federal Head Start; (b) an Advisory Board be formed with representation from the Oregon Head Start Association, public schools, child care, and others; (c) the Federal Head Start Program Performance Standards be mandated; (d) the number of children being served be expanded; and (e) it be an open, competitive process across Head Start and other nonsectarian organizations, such as public schools, community colleges, and universities. All federal Head Start programs, including Migrant Head Start, have applied and been successful applicants and now have state prekindergarten dollars. Tribal programs have been encouraged to apply, but no applications have been received as of yet.

There are about 31 grantees in the state. Ten of those are state funded only and do not receive any federal Head Start dollars. Oregon State University uses an innovative model by using their state dollars for a lab school for their teachers who are in the early childhood program. Another model is used by one of the Education Service Districts. Instead of setting up a traditional Head Start program, they worked with their local preschools to place Head Start-eligible children and to provide the resources necessary so that those preschools could meet the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

The state decided to purchase services that basically matched those of the Program Performance Standards, paying the same cost as federal Head Start. Therefore, whatever the federal Head Start program negotiated with the regional office and whatever the costs were, the state paid the same amount in the jointly funded programs. For the programs that were not in Federal Head Starts, the state paid the average cost per child.

In 1991, the legislature developed language that would fully fund Head Start by July 1, 1997. While that target has not been met yet, the legislature is still committed to that happening within the next 4 years. Also in 1991, the Oregon Head Start Collaboration Project established a written intergovernmental agreement with the Department of Education and the Head Start Bureau. This outlined joint monitoring and planning, shared training, and joint policy interpretation, requiring programs to coordinate at the local level before applying for funds. This service area coordination agreement was developed because the state had funded a program in the elementary schools on top of the federal Head Start program, and had asked the federal program to move out of the elementary schools so they could put in the state prekindergarten program.

Another helpful thing that occurred was that the Head Start Association hired a lobbyist in 1996. Since the Head Start association includes all state prekindergarten programs, it was not just federal Head Start but a state prekindergarten as well. Then, in 2004, the prekindergarten movement started. The Collaboration and the Head Start Association worked together to develop the universal Head Start/prekindergarten concept, which is a state–federal partnership approach to universal prekindergarten. At the same time, a coalition of business people called Research to Action Group began working with the Collaboration Project on what the early childhood system looked like in Oregon, and where they should put their energy. In 2005, the governor recommended an 18% cut in the state prekindergarten program; however, through the efforts of the Collaboration, the cut was rescinded.

It was determined that the lowest income and highest need children needed to be found and served by Head Start first. The first priority is to serve children at 100% of poverty or below. When 80% of those children are receiving services, the next priority was to find and serve families at 130% of poverty. There is also the assumption that all families, no matter what their income, need comprehensive services, but as income level get higher, families may need less comprehensive services. For these families, the state will pay only the education.

Future action steps in this next biennium, 2007–2009, include an increase of service level from 60% to 80% for children living at or below the poverty level. For 2009–2011, the target will be to serve 80% of families at 130% of the poverty level. In addition, there is also an ongoing public–private partnership with the Children’s Institute.

The Children’s Institute spent 2 years researching where to put their money and concluded that there needed to be a fully funded Head Start/prekindergarten program. In addition to the research, they conducted a survey of voters and found that 63% of voters support increasing taxes to provide a prekindergarten program for all low-income 4-year-olds in Oregon. Their poll results also indicated that people were more likely to support a program for low-income children versus all children and felt that children aged zero to 3 needed to be home with their parents.

The Child Care/Head Start Work Group is another partnership between various agencies. Three approaches were used: Head Start and Child Care Center partnerships; Head Start and Family Child Care or family, friends, and neighbors partnerships; and Head Start full day/year models. To date, an evaluation of the Head Start and Child Care Center Partnership model for full day/year services implemented in Lane County demonstrates benefits such as increased stability of employment of parents and increased stability of preschool for children. Overall, the intervention group had positive changes in stress levels, quality of parenting, finances, transportation, satisfaction with employment, and satisfaction with agency services.

Schultz: In terms of early childhood assessment and accountability systems, it is important to highlight the rapid increase in the number and nature of requirements, the proliferation of standards in the area of child outcomes, and the growth of the child assessment system. Only 8 years ago, the assessment effort within the Head Start community was limited to 3,000 children. Now there are 2 years of completed assessments of more than 400,000 children from the Head Start National Reporting System. The third cycle of completed research through the FACES methodology, as well as the National Impact Study, is nearly finished. There is a Head Start child-outcomes framework that derives from legislatively mandated outcomes that were initiated by the Congress in 1998. Therefore, Head Start directors are involved in capturing and working to promote a set of child outcomes, as well as administering the large Head Start National Reporting System.

Standards at the state level, as well as initiatives in conjunction with state prekindergarten programs, have been launched. The number of states that have early learning guidelines or outcomes standards for children has grown from only about 10 states in the late 90s to 49 states today. Virtually every state has a formal set of policies that define the goals and, in

many cases, quite detailed indicators of the things that children are expected to learn during their time in prekindergarten programs.

Another important initiative emanating from the Office of Special Education Programs is the development of three national functional outcomes that are going to be used for a system of reporting child assessments required by every state. This system will be governing all programs that received funding through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to serve infants and toddlers or preschoolers. The first round of assessments under that initiative will begin this year or next. Therefore, in a fairly short span of time, existing requirements in the area of program standards have been augmented by a large set of new initiatives, as well as by an increasing number of mandated child-assessments systems.

In the first couple of decades, the key issue facing these partnerships was to figure out how to put these sources of money together, adhere to the eligibility requirements in terms of who could be served, and manage systems to comply with program quality standards. In that process, one had to adhere to child-care licensing or, in many states, a growing voluntary system of quality ratings that emanate from the child-care community. Virtually all states have developed their own standards that vary in both how stringent and how comprehensive they are. In the next decade, the partnerships are going to be about how to create systems of data that document objective evidence that children are learning and that we are making a dent in the achievement gap for the at-risk populations that Head Start is targeting.

There are some particular challenges that occur within these partnerships based on the fact that there are multiple sets of standards and assessments emanating in the area of child outcomes and child assessments. Different standards and assessments for looking at programs in children can have a kind of value-added benefit to it. Each approach to child assessments and child outcomes will contribute to a fuller picture of how children are doing. On the other hand, multiple mandates create tremendous complications and burdens on teachers and program managers. Ultimately, the whole array of outcome initiatives and assessment initiatives across the early childhood funding streams needs to be viewed as a foundation for what goes on for children in the early years of public education

There are a limited number of state mandates in terms of specific assessments and outcomes for kindergarten and the primary grades. However, there is growing attention to what should be done to maximize the learning that children can achieve through the combination of their preschool experience and early school years. There is opportunity for early childhood programs and those involved in Head Start, child-care, and prekindergarten partnerships to find ways to partner with their local public schools and create a curriculum, which leads to coherent pathways for children.

Italiano-Thomas: There is a system in Los Angeles County, California to provide quality preschool for the 155,000 4-year-olds in the county, which is a larger number than in some of the states who have universal preschool. Quality and quantity of the programs are the two basic issues. Agencies in the county are monitored by a group of experts who spend about 4 hours looking at student-teacher ratios, classroom environments, parent involvement, and so forth. A star rating system is used where a 3 is needed to start accessing funding. A 4 gets

more funding and a 5 gets more funding, but all of them get technical assistance through coaching and case management. In the case where an agency, center, or classroom gets a 1 or a 2, capacities are built through the coaching model to bring you up to a three-star level. In terms of creating new spaces, there are many low-income families and middle-class families that do not have access to Head Start. In L.A. County, there were 34 zip codes with no infrastructures to apply for funding. The county board decided to give priority to those 34 zip codes. New spaces are now being built in conjunction with cities, school districts, governments, or with anyone who will partner.

There are diverse providers that are being funded. Head Start is funded by nonprofits. In school districts, for-profit agencies are being funded. Family child-care providers and others working in the community who have a commitment to serve 4-year-olds with quality are being funded. There is no income eligibility, employment, or geographical requirement for parents. Universality in L.A. County was defined as approximately 70% of the population. Right now, approximately 10,000 spaces are being built with plans to build another 10,000 spaces in the next 12 months. However, that is far from meeting the universality requirement of 70% or 80%.

A model of continuous quality improvements through coaching and cocreating quality improvement plans with providers will be developed using the star rating systems to encourage continuous quality improvement. Once a program has a star rating every year, they get revisited. They may be certified at the same star level or the higher star level.

This process is challenging because it is easy to become another type of funding stream, where the programs will jump through hoops to access the money. The motto is one size does not fit all. That means central guidance but local implementation. Before funding, providers must deliver quality in the classroom to children, but they can also be accountable for the funds.

The complexity of this should not be underestimated. Engaging in collaborations takes time and patience. The challenge is how Head Start wants to participate and collaborate with the universal preschool movement. This is an opportunity for Head Start to influence the universal preschool movement so that it will not become another grade in public school, where the cognitive standards and accountability measures will become much like grades K through 12. Head Start knows child development and the holistic comprehensive service model. It has the opportunity as a professional community to influence the process of social change happening on behalf of children and families.