

Evaluations of School Readiness Initiatives: What Are We Learning?

Definition of school readiness initiative...

- The program must be a publicly-funded program or intervention, which directly targets children from birth to age five. A stated goal of the initiative is to enhance children's readiness for school.

Terms searched...

- *School readiness*
- *Kindergarten readiness*
- *Early intervention*
- *Head Start*
- *Family literacy*
- *Even Start*
- *Pre-kindergarten*

These terms were combined with key words such as *outcomes, evaluation, and results*

Criteria for Inclusion

- Published between January 1997 & April 2002
- Located in the United States
- Provided sufficient information
- Included outcome data

Search process yielded...

- Total of 32 documents
- 20 met the criteria and included child outcome data
- 9 were coded experimental/ quasi-experimental
- 11 were coded as pre-experimental

Research Questions

- *What types of school readiness initiatives have been evaluated and what research methodologies have been used to collect the data?*
- *What are the outcomes associated with participation in school readiness programs?*
- *What practices seem to best prepare children to enter school ready to learn and succeed?*

- *Question 1: What types of school readiness initiatives have been evaluated and what research methodologies have been used to collect the data?*

Pre-Experimental Studies

- 2000-2001 Head Start/ ECAP Outcomes Report, State of Delaware
- National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program (1998)
- Pre-K Longitudinal Study: Findings from the 1999-2000 School Year (Georgia)
- Head Start/FACES
- Four-Year Old At-Risk Program (Kansas DOE, 2002)
- School District of Saginaw, Michigan (1999-2000)
- Maryland State Board of Education (2002)
- School Entry Assessment Project, Missouri (2002)
- 2000 Kindergarten Survey Report (Oregon)
- Smart Start Baseline Study (Maxwell, Bryant, Keyes, & Bernier, 1997)
- Illinois Pre-kindergarten Program for Children at Risk for Academic Failure

Quasi-Experimental/Experimental Studies

- Early Head Start (2001)
- Does Head Start Help Hispanic Children? (Currie & Thomas, 1999)
- State of Washington, ECEAP (Years 9 & 10)
- Washington, DC Public Schools (Marcon, 2000)
- Chicago Child-Parent Center Program (Reynolds, 2001)
- Smart Start Six-County Study (Maxwell, Bryant, Miller-Johnston, 1999)
- Head Start's Impact on School Readiness in Ohio
- Michigan School Readiness Evaluation (Yr. 3)
- Kentucky Preschool Program

Question 2: What are the outcomes associated with participation in school readiness programs?

- Question 3: *What practices seem to best prepare children to enter school ready to learn and succeed?*

Summary and Conclusions

- Preschool and school-age interventions can produce benefits (e.g., language/literacy, cognitive, and social-emotional development)
- Modest benefit to children, particularly low-income, at risk children.
- Need for long-term data and more rigorous evaluation design
- Measure of program quality

Future Research...

- More rigorous design
- Use of valid/reliable measures
- Data on program quality features