

NEBRASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM

Evaluation Progress Report

Executive Summary

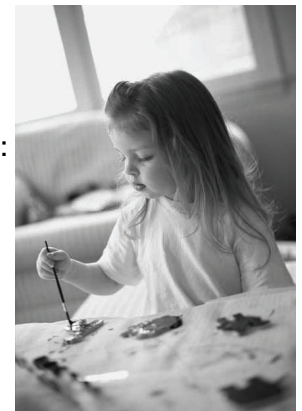
July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF NEBRASKA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM?

Nebraska's Early Childhood Education Grant Program was designed to award state funds to public schools or Educational Service Units (ESUs) to assist in the operation of comprehensive center-based early childhood programs intended to support the learning and development of children in the birth to kindergarten age range. In most cases the projects expanded and/or combined existing pre-kindergarten programs funded through district, federal, or parent fees, and involved collaboration with Head Start. The purpose of Nebraska's Early Childhood Education Grant Program is to provide high quality early childhood program settings that assist children to reach their full potential and increase the likelihood of their later success in school.

The early childhood programs are required to serve children in inclusive classrooms that represent the range of abilities and disabilities of the children and the social, linguistic, and economic diversity of the families. The programs target pre-kindergarten age children:

1. whose family income qualifies them for participation in the federal free or reduced lunch program,
2. who were born prematurely or at low birth weight,
3. who reside in a home where a language other than spoken English is used as the primary means of communication,
4. whose parents are younger than eighteen or who have not completed high school.



Who are the grantees?

In the 2004-2005 year, Nebraska provided early childhood grant funds to 27 districts or Educational Service Units across the state to operate early childhood programs. These programs have been funded from three to thirteen years.

Who are the children served?

In 2004-2005, a total of 1,068 children were served across programs. Typical classroom size ranged from 16 to 20 children. The majority of these programs served preschool children and their families.

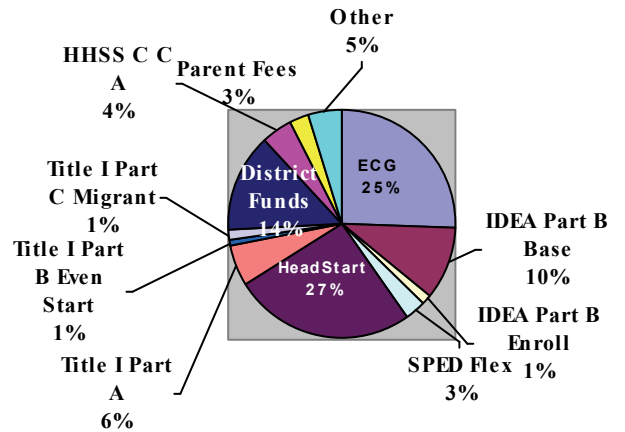
Alliance Public Schools
Centura Public Schools
Conestoga Public Schools
Crete Public Schools
David City Public Schools
Elgin Public Schools
ESU 1
ESU 9
ESU 15
Falls City Public Schools
Gering Public Schools
Grand Island Public Schools
Lewellen Grade School
Lexington Public Schools

Lincoln Public Schools
Millard Public Schools
Omaha Public Schools
Papillion LaVista Public Schools
Plattsmouth Community Schools
Schuyler Grade School
Sidney Public Schools
South Central Unified System #5
South Sioux City Community Schools
Southeast Consolidated Schools
Umon'hon' Nation Public Schools
Unified School System #2007
Walthill Public Schools

Four-year-old children were the largest group represented (57%), followed by three-year-olds (25%). Fewer were served in the younger age groups. The single largest group was White not Hispanic (55%), followed by Hispanic (22%), Black (12%), American Indian/Alaskan (10%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (1%). Many children (22%) had a home language other than English.

HOW ARE THE PROGRAMS FUNDED?

Programs reported funding for the early childhood programs they operated. The 27 programs reported operational costs of \$8,004,568 in the 2004-2005 program year. Overall, programs exceeded the 50% expectation of match to the \$2,097,000 grant funds provided. Generally, the Early Childhood Education Program funding provided by Nebraska represented a quarter of the funding to operate these early childhood programs.



WHAT IS THE QUALITY OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS?

Quality early childhood programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term positive academic performance (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, et al., 2000; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). In order to evaluate the quality of the Nebraska programs, a number of different evaluations tools were used, including the Early Childhood Environment Ratings Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) (Harms, Clifford & Cryer, 1998) and the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) (Smith, Dickinson, Sangeorge & Anastasopoulous, 2002), or the Infant/Toddler Environment Ratings Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) (Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2003). Baseline information was obtained by completing these observational environment rating scales at a sampling of classrooms (at least one from each program).

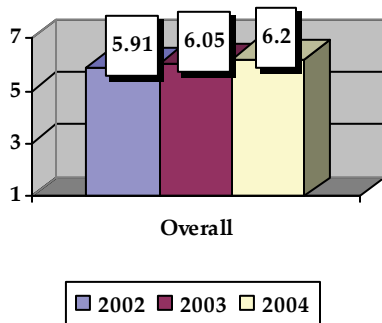
High quality early childhood settings were demonstrated in 100% of Nebraska's preschool programs

The Nebraska Department of Education has established standards for quality based on each tool.

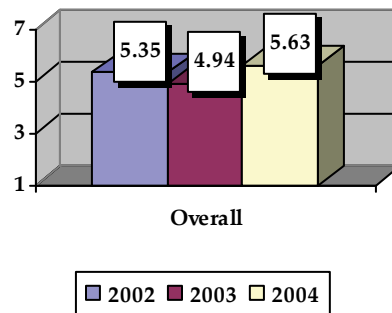
- ◆ 100% of the preschool classrooms met Nebraska's indicator of quality standards on ECERS-R
- ◆ 100% of the preschool classrooms met Nebraska's indicator of quality standards on the ELLCO

Cross Year Comparisons. The preschool classrooms have steadily improved in quality ratings over time. The infant/toddler classrooms have improved since 2002, although some of the classrooms were rated less positively in the fall of 2003. In the spring observation ratings of that year, however, the overall ITERS-R average had improved to 5.94.

ECERS-R Overall Ratings



ITERS-R Overall Ratings



HOW MANY PROGRAMS HAVE NAEYC ACCREDITATION?

Programs are encouraged to achieve accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) within the first 3 years of operation and to keep the accreditation current thereafter. As of December 2005, thirteen of the programs have received NAEYC accreditation (48%). Another nine programs have had their NAEYC accreditation visit, although the results are not yet known.



WHAT BENEFIT DOES PARTICIPATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD GRANT (ECG) PROGRAMS HAVE FOR THE CHILDREN THEY SERVE?

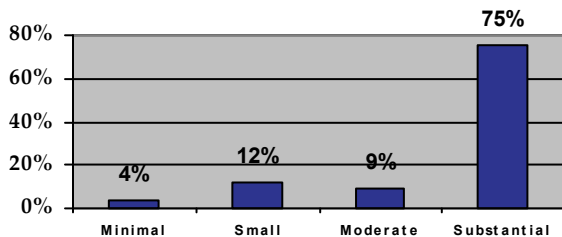
Short-Term Outcomes

Child Observation Record. The development and learning of preschool children were monitored through the use of the High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR). The majority of the programs utilize and report on this developmental assessment. Nineteen programs provided outcomes on Preschool COR data for 562 children and seven programs provided outcomes on Infant/Toddler COR data for 69 children. Due to the small number of infants that were assessed with the COR, the data for this group of young children was not analyzed for this report.

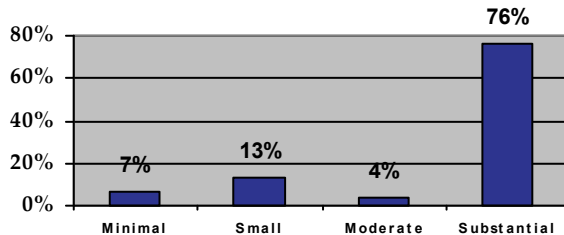
Programs reported the number of children with observation data for the fall and spring, and the number who made minimal (less than .39 gain), small (.4 to .79 gain), moderate (.8 to .99 gain), or substantial (1.0 or greater gain) gains in language/literacy and math/logic. These gains were based on a 5 point Likert scale. As a group, preschool children achieved better than anticipated gains. On average, the majority of the preschool children made substantial gains in math/logic and language/literacy. The following graphs illustrate the percentage of children associated with each category of gain (minimal, small, moderate or substantial) in the area of language/literacy or math/logic.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: GAINS ASSESSED USING HIGH/SCOPE COR

Language/Literacy



Math/Logic



Long-Term Outcomes

Nearly 70% of ECG children were at the 50th percentile or greater (67% reading and 69% math).

Standardized Achievement Outcomes. The long-term impact of an ECG program experience was evaluated by collecting mathematics and reading achievement scores for a sampling of children who attended Nebraska’s state-funded early childhood grant programs. Results for third and fourth grade students were aggregated from six programs. Seventy children who had attended an early childhood grant program were included in the sample. Of the seventy children included in this sample, 33% were identified as special education students. The assessments included the Stanford, Terra Nova, California Achievement Test, and Gray Oral Reading Test. Nearly 70% of ECG program children were at the 50th percentile or greater (67% reading and 69% math).

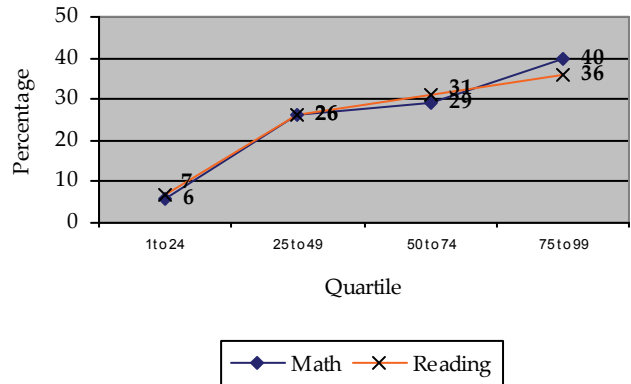
The majority of ECG children met or exceeded district standards in reading (89%) and math (90%).

Nebraska STARS Outcomes. Three programs provided STARS outcome data for children who had an ECG program experience. There was an equal split among elementary and secondary students for the STARS reading scores, with 32 in 4th grade, 21 in 8th grade and 10 in 11th grade. A total of 56 students’ scores were included for math scores. Ten percent of the children were identified as receiving special education for the reading scores and 4% for math. The majority of ECG program children met or exceeded district standards (scored proficient or advanced) in reading (89%) and math (90%).

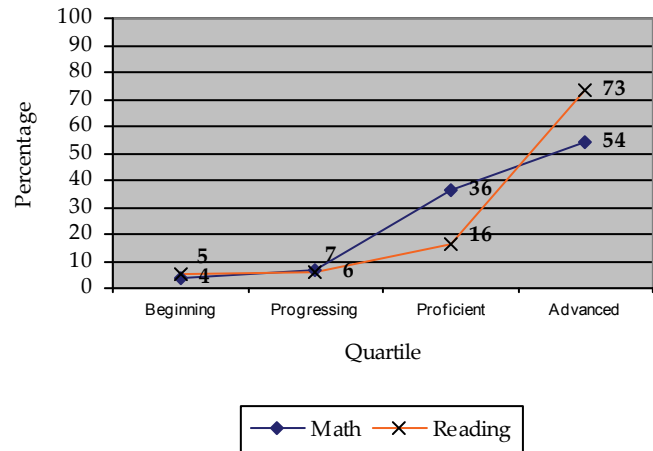
SUMMARY

Clearly, the results of this evaluation indicate that Nebraska’s investment in early childhood grant programs yielded quality programs for young children, as well as substantial developmental gains for the children currently served and long-term academic gains for those who had been served in these programs.

Reading and Math Achievement Scores for ECG Children
3rd and 4th Grades



STARS Math and Reading Aggregate Scores for 4th, 8th & 11th Grade Students with ECG Program Experiences



The full report can be found at www.nde.state.ne.us/ECH/ECGrantProg.htm

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