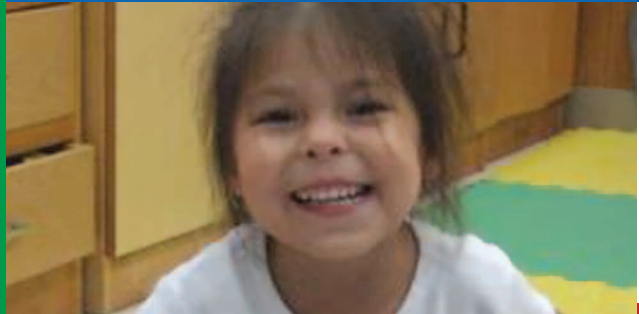


Florida Head Start

A Portrait of Our Head Start Children's Outcomes



2007-08

The **MISSION** of the Florida Head Start Association Research Committee is to conduct, support, and disseminate research of high quality that informs policy and practice and promotes successful children, strong families, effective programs, and healthy communities.

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Executive Summary

Florida Head Start programs have a well-established history of success in preparing children for school readiness using a valid and reliable instrument. The Galileo System for the Electronic Management of Learning is used by 27 Head Start programs in Florida. This instrument allows teachers to measure child growth in eight domains. These domains are:

- Language and Literacy
- Early Math
- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Creative Arts
- Nature and Science
- Gross and Fine Motor Skills
- Physical Health

Though Head Start children entered the program below their peers from more economically advantaged families in most of these domains, they made gains that bring them to or near the level expected of children their age. For six years, progress in all eight readiness domains has been significantly higher than the expected 50 point gain, with gains in most domains nearly double the expected gain.

“My experience was great, and I'm very happy with my child's progress. Thanks to everyone who makes this program possible.”

— Head Start Parent



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FHSA Committee at Work

The Florida Head Start Association Research Committee was established in 1998 in response to an increased emphasis on accountability and outcome-based evaluation. Additionally, as a significant number of programs participated in the National Head Start Association's Quality Initiative, they began analyzing their impact on children, families, and communities using more quantitative methods. The committee membership includes Head Start directors and staff, the researchers with whom they partner, the Florida State Head Start Collaboration Office Director, and university staff. The FHSA Research Committee is dedicated to its mission:

**To conduct, support, and disseminate research of high quality
that informs policy and practice and promotes
successful children, strong families, effective programs,
and healthy communities.**

The Research Committee meets annually to develop a strategic plan with goals and objectives. Members are organized in work groups to accomplish these goals. Over the past few years, members have focused on improving classroom instruction, creating materials for parents and other audiences regarding child outcomes, developing systems to measure family outcomes, improving the technology knowledge base within the state, and networking with other states within Region IV. Members of the FHSA Research Committee have presented at a number of state, regional, and national conferences including the American Educational Research Conference and the Head Start National Research Conference.

"I am pleased with my son's progress. The teacher was excellent; her patience, kindness, and communication were great. She sent home a daily log for my special needs child."

— Head Start Parent

Background

Three principles have guided Head Start services since the program's beginning:

- Comprehensive child development services
- Parent involvement
- Community-based services and partnerships



From its beginning more than forty years ago, the purpose of Head Start has been to promote school readiness by enhancing the social, physical, and cognitive development of children. Head Start was conceived as a comprehensive child and community development program that provides children and families with educational, health, nutritional, and support services. The cornerstone of the program is parent and community involvement and development. Head Start programs are designed to meet the unique needs of the families and communities they serve, but one goal is the same for all – CHILDREN FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES ARE GIVEN THE “HEAD START” THEY NEED to be successful in school and society.

To meet the needs of the children and families they serve, today's Head Start includes:

- **Head Start** programs serving three- to five-year-old children and their families in a variety of program settings;
- **Early Head Start** programs serving pregnant women and children ages birth to three and their families;
- **Migrant Head Start** programs serving children of migrant agricultural workers from birth to age five and their families; and
- **Native American Head Start** programs serving preschool-aged children of Native American tribes and their families.

“The staff showed me different ways to work with my child and to have a closer relationship with him.”

— Head Start Parent

Focus on Florida

Nationally, **Head Start** programs are administered by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Current funding for Head Start is nearly \$6.9 billion. Nearly **one million low-income children** and their families are served annually by Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant Head Start, and Native American Head Start programs in the United States. Head Start programs are operated by nearly 1,650 grantees which include **public, private, and faith-based organizations** in communities throughout the nation.

According to the 2007-2008 Head Start Program Information Report, **Florida** Head Start/Early Head Start programs including Migrant and Native American Head Start programs served over 39,760 children and their families in over 2,200 classrooms in more than 700 centers. These programs are provided by over ninety-five local public, private, and faith-based organizations in all sixty-seven counties in Florida. More than 2,300 classrooms provide Head Start and Early Head Start services through partnerships with private child care centers.

Nearly 94% of children were served in a full-time, center-based program for six hours a day or more. These children were taught by over 5,200 teachers and assistant teachers. Nearly 53% of lead teachers had a college degree including Associate, Bachelor's or post-graduate. More than 47% of teaching assistants had a Child Development Associate credential or higher.

Children in the Head Start programs were supported by more than 9,000 program and contracted staff that provided educational, health, social, nutrition, transportation, and other services to the children and families served by programs. More than 46,800 current or former Head Start parents volunteered their time to support programs.

Of the children served during the 2007-2008 program year, 50% were Black or African American and 34% were Caucasian. The remaining children were multi-racial, other races or unspecified. Additionally, more than 34% were Hispanic or Latino. Nearly 37% of children served were enrolled in the program for more than one year.

Children came to Head Start programs with a variety of home languages. The majority (64.3%) had English as their primary language and nearly 29% of children were from Spanish speaking homes. The remaining 6.7% of children came from homes in which the primary language was Central or South American, Caribbean, European or Slavic, Middle Eastern, or Asian.

Eighty-two percent of children served in Head Start/Early Head Start programs had health insurance. Of that number, 70% were receiving Medicaid, 7.89% had private health insurance, and 2.6% were receiving state child health insurance. Nearly 18% of children had no health insurance coverage.

Nearly 89% of the enrolled children were income eligible because their family income was below 100% of federal poverty guidelines. About 7% were admitted because their families were receiving public assistance. Nearly 4% of children were over income but were admitted because they had a disability or special need.

Why Does Head Start Work?

-  Head Start offers integrated **comprehensive services** to young children and their families to meet their specific and unique needs and interests not available in most early childhood programs.
-  Children served in Head Start programs are provided a **rich, stimulating, and appropriate classroom environment** that encourages social competence and improves educational outcomes.
-  Children served in Head Start programs are provided **health and nutrition screenings and services** to ensure early detection and treatment of health-related problems that may impede learning and development.
-  Family members are provided with an array of opportunities designed to **encourage their involvement in their child's learning** and promote **economic and personal self-sufficiency**.
-  Parents play a vital role in Head Start programs. They are recognized as their **child's first and most important teachers**. Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the program and to further their own education.
-  Parents also play an integral role in the **governance and leadership** of the Head Start program through their involvement in Parent Committees and Policy Councils.
-  To promote **community development** in neighborhoods served by Head Start programs, family members are provided opportunities to increase their own economic self-sufficiency through **employment and career advancement** within the Head Start program.
-  Head Start forms **partnerships** with other education and human service agencies to provide services to low-income families. A primary goal of Head Start is to link children and families with existing community resources to **eliminate the duplication of services** and avoid "reinventing the wheel." To achieve these collaborations, Head Start programs are often leaders in helping communities create neighborhood health clinics, one-stop human services agencies, job training, and other services.
-  Children and families in Head Start are provided the services necessary to smooth the **transition from preschool to kindergarten**. Head Start programs partner with public and private schools to share information on what a child knows and is able to do before the first day of kindergarten.
-  Head Start serves **children with disabilities in inclusive settings**, allowing them to participate in a high-quality preschool program that provides an enriching and accepting environment in which to learn.

Evidence That Head Start Works



“Teachers were wonderful, especially because of their hard work, persistence & understanding with our child’s difficult transition to beginning school.”

— Head Start Parent

Since its inception, Head Start has been one of the most researched and evaluated programs ever funded by the United States Congress. The evidence continues to mount—**Head Start works to improve child and family outcomes**. While the primary purpose for the assessment of young children in Head Start programs is to inform and improve classroom practice, the information gathered can also paint a clear portrait of what Head Start children know and are able to do as a result of their experiences in a high-quality, comprehensive child development program.

Recent *Head Start Family and Children Experience Survey* (FACES) data show that Head Start graduates, by the spring of their kindergarten year, were essentially at national norms in early reading and early writing, and were close to meeting national norms in early math and vocabulary knowledge. Reliable studies have found that Head Start children have increased achievement test scores, and that they experience favorable long-term effects on grade repetition, special education, and graduation rate. In addition, research has shown that adults who were Head Start children are self-sufficient and more stable economically. Findings from the *Early Head Start Impact Study* show that Early Head Start children on average had a higher cognitive development score and a higher level of social emotional development than their control group. For an extensive look at national research findings, visit the website of the National Head Start Association at www.nhsa.org.

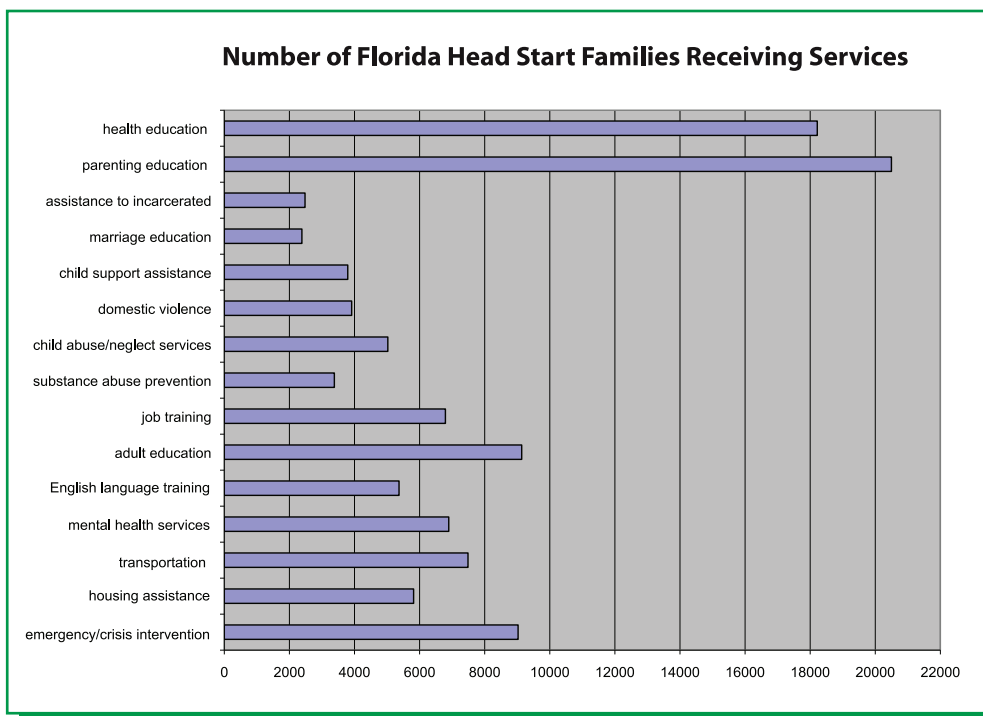
“This was a great experience for my child & me. The teacher, assistants, and family service staff are great. It was so rewarding to deal with such professionals.”

— Head Start Parent

Difficult Times

While the 2007-2008 program year predated this current national economic crisis, the families served by Florida Head Start Programs were already vulnerable to an economic downturn. The annual Program Information Report (PIR) data shows 89% of families met the income criteria of the federal poverty guidelines which were less than \$21,000 for a family of four. Less than 8% of families received Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) support. More than 64% of children lived in single parent head of household homes. More than 18,200 parents had not graduated high school. Over 1,080 families were homeless.

Florida Head Start Programs assist families by connecting them with resources and agencies. This graph demonstrates both the depth and breadth of services families were able to access with the support of their Head Start Program. The recession felt by Florida will put an even greater strain on the state's vulnerable families and the agencies that serve them.



“She is doing so well with the help of the teachers and staff at Head Start. I couldn’t have asked for a better place for my child to begin her journey to a better education and excelling beyond my expectations.”

— Parent from EVEC East Volusia Education Center Head Start

Florida Takes the Lead in Excellence



According to the National Head Start Association's (NHSA) Quality Initiative, Florida has 12 (52%) of the current NHSA Programs of Excellence. In order to reach this high level of achievement, programs must participate in a self study, maintain full compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards, and demonstrate their impact on the community.

National Head Start Association Programs of Excellence in Florida

- ① **Childhood Development Services, Inc., Ocala, FL**
- ① **Children First, Inc. Head Start/Early Head Start, Sarasota, FL**
- ① **Hillsborough County Head Start/Early Head Start, Tampa, FL**
- ① **Hillsborough County Public Schools Head Start, Tampa, FL**
- ① **Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency Head Start/Early Head Start, Miami, FL**
- ① **Mid Florida Community Services, Inc., DeLand, FL**
- ① **Palm Beach County Head Start/Early Head Start, West Palm Beach, FL**
- ① **Pinellas County Head Start/Early Head Start, Pinellas Park, FL**
- ① **Redlands Christian Migrant Association, Inc., Immokalee, FL**
- ① **School District of Charlotte County Head Start/Early Head Start, Punta Gorda, FL**
- ① **School District of Lee County Head Start/Early Head Start, Fort Myers, FL**
- ① **School District of Pasco County Head Start, Land O' Lakes, FL**

Florida's Head Start Research

Florida's Head Start Research — A Portrait



In 1998, the Florida Head Start Association became the first state association in the country to establish a Research Committee to take on a large-scale, rigorous and reliable assessment of child outcomes in Head Start programs. Through a unique partnership among the Association, Head Start programs, university researchers, and Assessment Technology, Inc. of Tucson, Arizona, the Galileo assessment instrument was selected as the assessment instrument for this project.

Galileo provides a comprehensive view of each child's growth in all **eight of the school readiness domains**:

- Language and Literacy
- Early Math
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Nature and Science
- Creative Arts
- Fine and Gross Motor Skills
- Physical Health Practices

These domains correspond to the domains established in the **Florida School Readiness Performance Standards for three- and four-year-old children**.

Galileo scales are highly reliable. Measures of internal scale consistency range from .92 to .97. Psychometric evidence is available to demonstrate that each scale is sensitive to the broad range of abilities found in young children.

An important feature of Galileo is that it provides a measure of a child's growth called the **developmental level** that is identical regardless of the domain being measured or the initial abilities of the child.

Galileo scales also use an **interval level of measurement**, a state-of-the-art mechanism that allows for consistent measurement of growth. It works in the same way as measuring growth in children's

Florida's Head Start Research

of Our Head Start Children's Outcome

height and weight. Any child who grows five inches has gained the same amount of height, whether the child is three feet tall or four feet tall.

Similarly, children who gain twenty points in developmental level are showing the identical amount of growth whether they begin the year with only a few skills or many skills in a domain. Developmental level scores are also identical across the eight readiness domains measured, so that a twenty-point gain on the Early Math scale means the same as a twenty-point gain on the Nature and Science scale. Thus, each developmental gain has a precise meaning.

In the fall of the year, **a four year old can be expected to score about 500 on each Galileo scale.** Head Start children generally start below this level but make tremendous strides through the year.

The benchmark of **fifty points in developmental level for expected gains** was set by the Research Committee in consultation with the developers of Galileo, since gains of this magnitude indicate a substantial level of growth. A fifty-point gain represents one standard deviation on the Galileo Scales—a level of growth anticipated after one year of program intervention. Florida's Head Start children gain more than fifty points in all areas.

The evidence presented in the following portrait is clear: **Head Start Works!**



“My family life changed because the program helped us with my daughter’s education, and now she is prepared to go to kindergarten.”

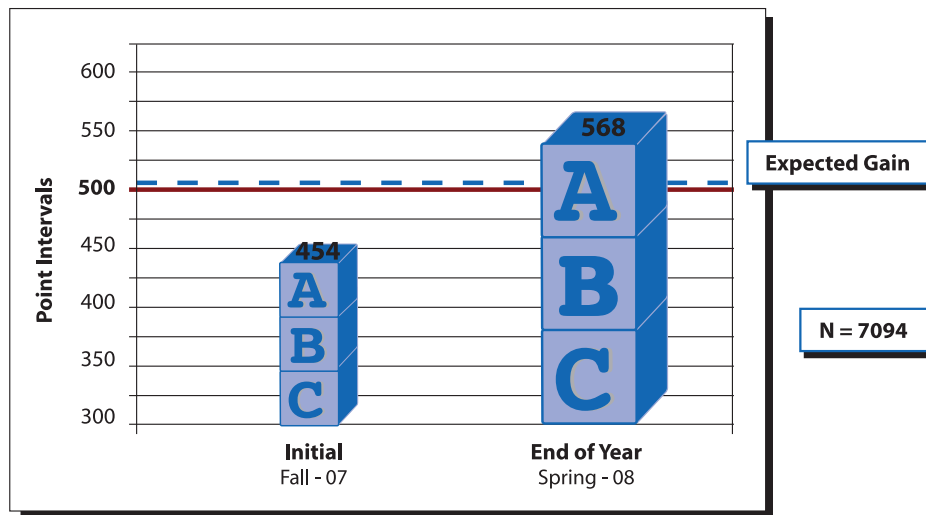
— Head Start Parent

Language and Literacy

Language and Literacy development is a precursor to later reading and language development. This area develops skills in listening and understanding spoken language, speaking and communication, phonological awareness, book knowledge and appreciation, print awareness and concepts, early reading and writing, and alphabet knowledge.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the Language and Literacy domain increased from 454 points to 568 points, a gain of 114 points and more than double the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Language and Literacy Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008



By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Language and Literacy** milestones, including:

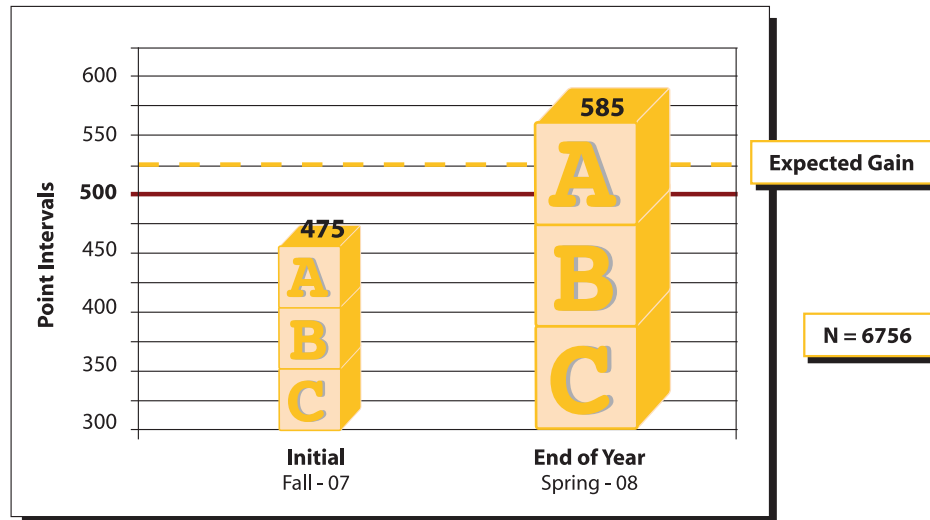
- 99% follow a simple one step direction
- 92% understand action words and negative words
- 85% use simple sentences to communicate with others
- 85% ask an adult for help at appropriate times

Early Math

As Language and Literacy skills are precursors to reading and language development, early math skills are precursors to later arithmetic and mathematical functioning. Early Math encompasses one-to-one correspondence, addition, subtraction, geometric shapes, and concepts of time.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the domain of Early Math increased from 475 points to 585 points, a gain of 110 points and more than twice the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Early Math Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008



By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Early Math** milestones, including:

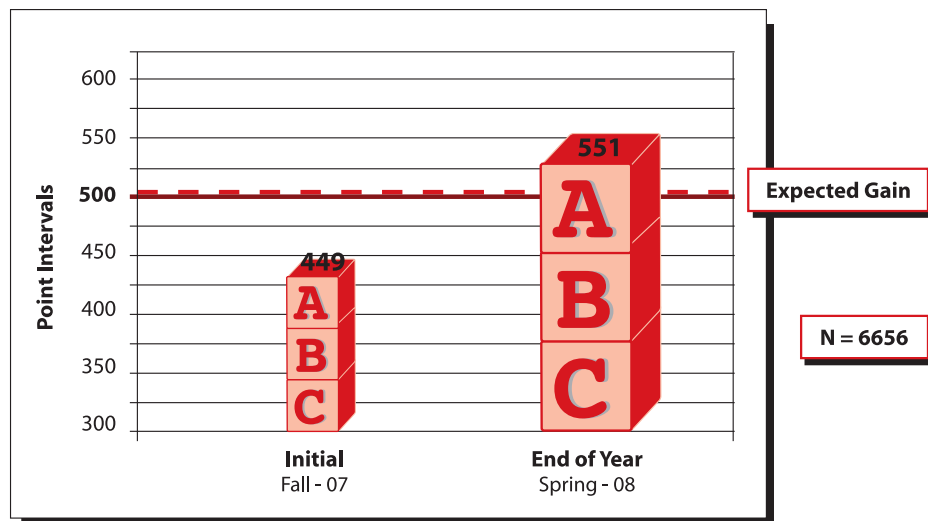
- 98% use one-to-one correspondence when counting objects
- 97% count to find how many are in a group up to five
- 95% match objects to an example
- 83% sort diverse objects based on a physical attribute

Social and Emotional

An important aspect of school readiness, social and emotional skills are critical to the future academic success of a child. Research shows that attention to the social and emotional aspects of learning and interacting with peers and adults may be especially important for low-income populations. The Social and Emotional domain includes understanding and following classroom rules, sharing with others, making friends, listening to adults and many other interactive skills.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the Social and Emotional domain increased from 449 points to 551 points, a gain of 102 points, more than double the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Social and Emotional Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008



By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Social and Emotional** milestones, including:

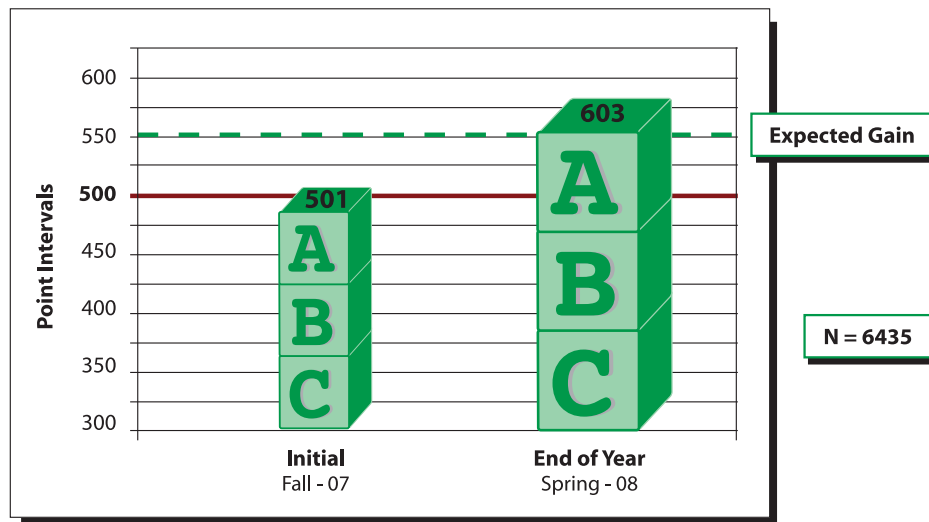
- 90% share a family routine or activity
- 88% identify family members and his/her relationships to each
- 87% share with a peer
- 85% talk about his/her interests

Approaches to Learning

Rather than measuring which skills have been gained during exposure to a quality preschool program, the Approaches to Learning domain describes how a child approaches gathering, organizing, and using knowledge. This scale includes 30 indicators that measure aspects of initiative, curiosity, engagement, persistence, goal setting, planning, and problem solving.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the Approaches to Learning domain increased from 501 points to 603 points, a gain of 102 points, more than twice the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Approaches to Learning Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008



By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Approaches to Learning** milestones, including:

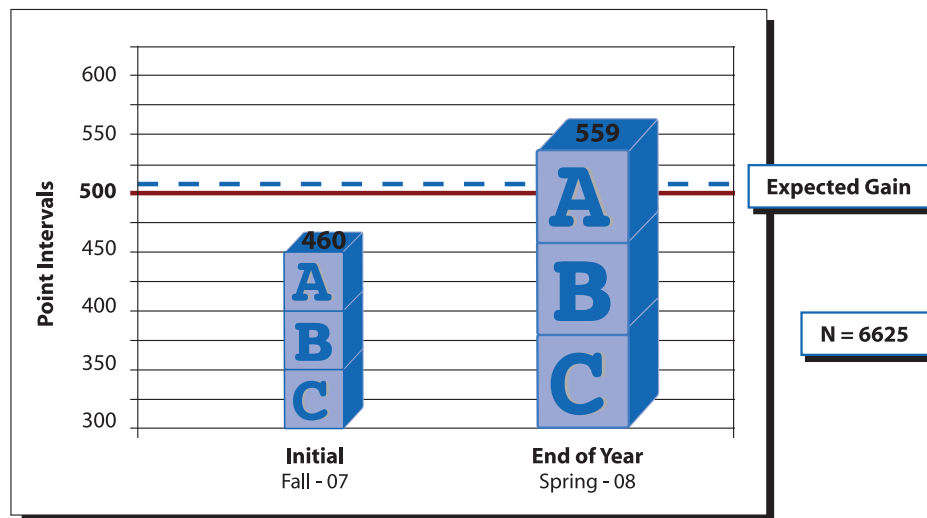
- 97% participate in an increasing variety of experiences independently
- 93% seek assistance from an adult when attempting to solve a problem
- 92% initiate preferred purposeful activities when playing in interest centers
- 92% complete a simple self-selected task

Nature and Science

Nature and Science is an often overlooked domain of school readiness. This domain includes skills that help children make sense of the world around them by using their senses and scientific devices to learn; observing, describing, and classifying living things and physical phenomena; making predictions; gathering and presenting data; explaining outcomes; and questioning and developing hypotheses. These lay the groundwork for future scientific reasoning and critical thinking.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the Nature and Science domain increased from 460 points to 559 points, a gain of 99 points, nearly twice the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Nature and Science Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008



By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Nature and Science** milestones, including:

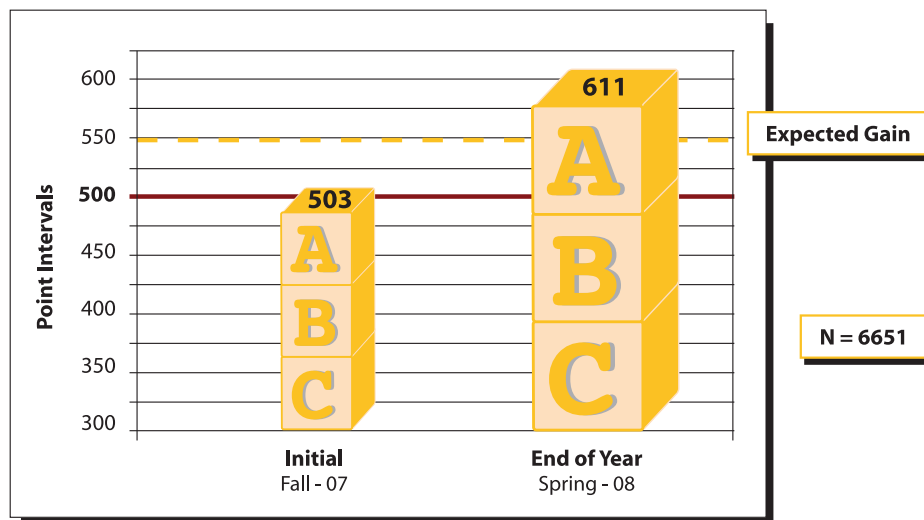
- 95% attempt to learn about objects by taking them apart and rebuilding
- 91% describe what an animal is doing as it is being observed
- 92% distinguish plants from animals
- 88% talk/draw about different weather conditions

Creative Arts

School readiness in cognitive areas is complemented and enhanced by readiness in the arts, including music, movement, dramatic play, dance, and visual arts. Creative arts offer new opportunities to apply language skills, small and large motor skills, and problem solving, thus making the transition from gaining to applying knowledge.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the Creative Arts domain increased from 503 points to 611 points, a gain of 108 points and more than double the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Creative Arts Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008



By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Creative Arts** milestones, including:

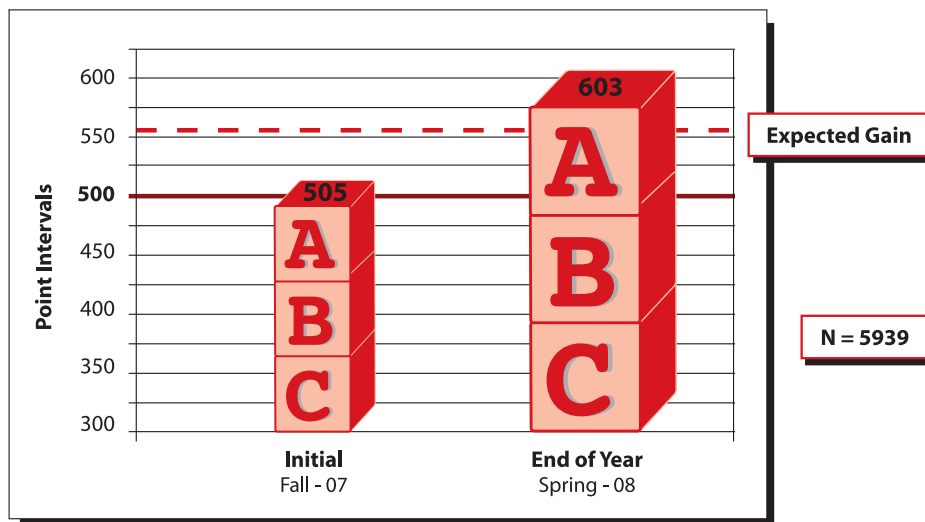
- 95% sing or hum a familiar tune
- 93% work with other children on a cooperative art project
- 89% take care of art materials/supplies
- 88% use movement to express feelings related to various songs or tunes

Fine and Gross Motor Skills

Fine and Gross Motor Skills are physical skills that allow a child to move with coordination and use tools with dexterity and control. Gross motor skills include children's movement and physical activity, a critical aspect of overall health and obesity control. Fine-motor dexterity and eye-hand coordination are small motor skills necessary for writing and penmanship later in school.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the Fine and Gross Motor Skills domain increased from 505 points to 603 points, a gain of 98 points, more than twice the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Fine and Gross Motor Skills Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008



By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Fine and Gross Motor Skills** milestones, including:

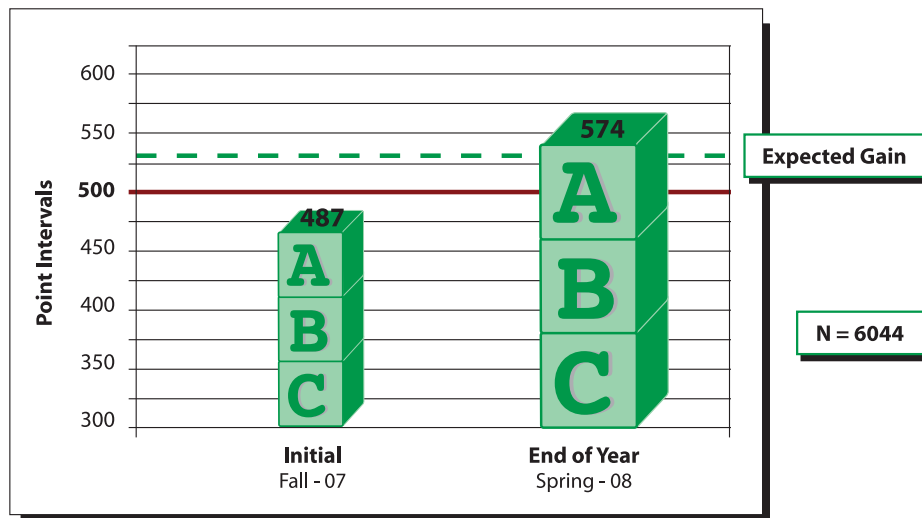
- 95% climb a short ladder
- 92% hold a crayon or pencil correctly
- 90% throw a ball a short distance with accuracy
- 89% string beads without assistance

Physical Health Practices

Physical Health Practices, as the name implies, are those skills that support the health of the child. Specifically, this domain includes eating practices, nutrition, hygiene, exercise, dressing, toileting, and health and safety practices. Though often taught as a secondary aspect of a preschool program, this area is an important part of the Head Start program and is addressed in Head Start performance standards along with all cognitive, social, and motor domains.

In 2007-2008, the developmental level of Florida Head Start children in the Physical Health Practices domain increased from 487 points to 574 points, a gain of 86 points, nearly twice the expected gain (50 points) for preschool children.

Physical Health Practices Developmental Gain 2007 - 2008

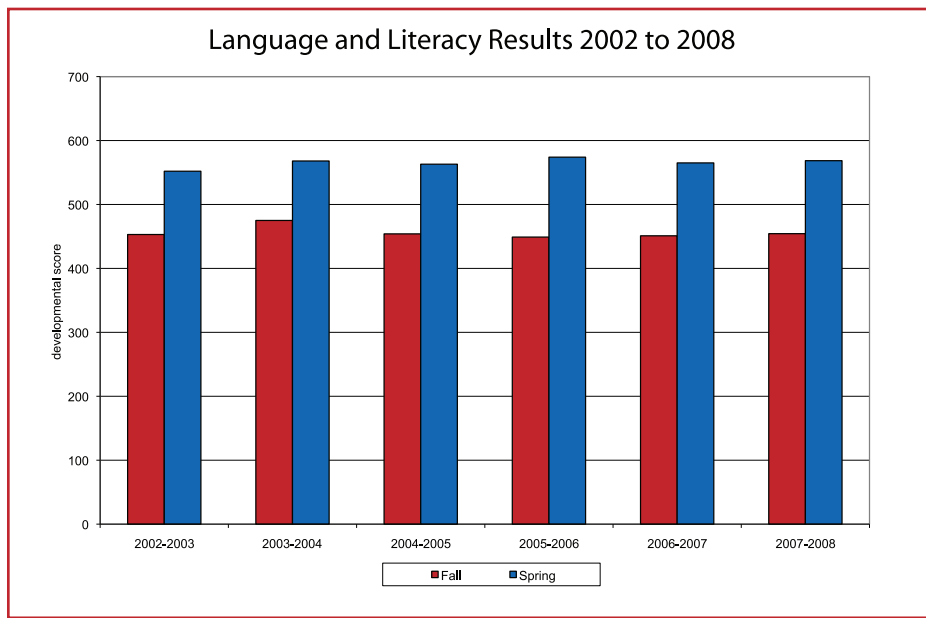


By the spring of 2008, Florida Head Start children had achieved many **Physical and Health Practices** milestones, including:

- 98% independently wash hands using soap and water
- 97% assist in clearing the table by removing his/her own dishes
- 89% actively participate in outdoor group games
- 88% independently select and eat a variety of food types

Consistent Results

For the past 6 years, the Florida School Readiness Data have been analyzed using the same procedure. Interval level developmental growth scores have been computed for each of the 8 Head Start readiness domains for children enrolled in a Florida Head Start Program for the “majority of the year” (*defined by having both fall data before October 31 and spring data after May 1*). The use of developmental growth scores allows us to compare readiness domains both within and across years, as each domain is centered at a score of 500 and a standard deviation of 50.

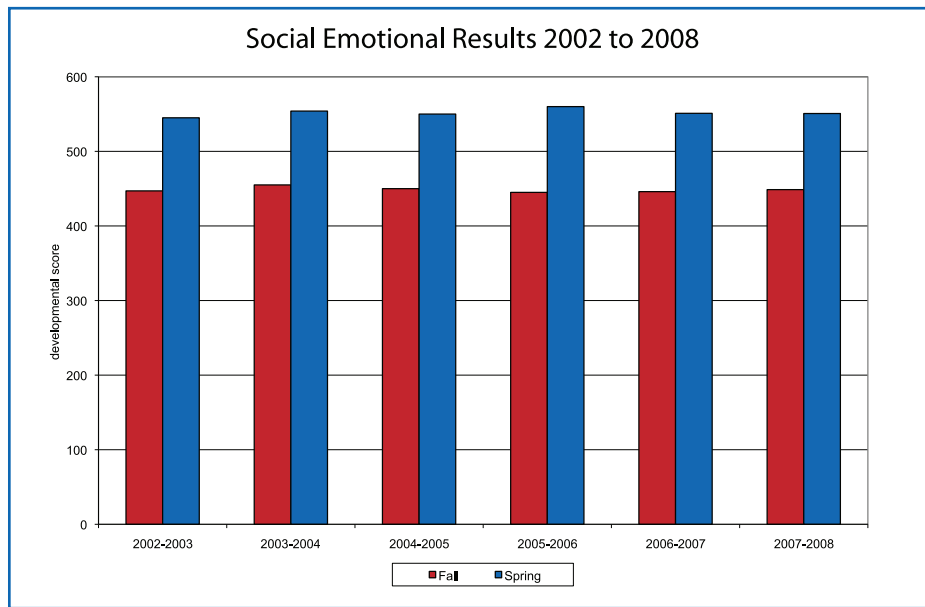


The 6 years of analyses clearly show that the data present an accurate portrait of our children’s patterns of strengths and weaknesses when they enter our program. These patterns are consistent with the extensive published research literature documenting that low income preschool children enter public school with weaknesses in academic and social/emotional domains that place them at elevated risk for poor educational outcomes:

- Children consistently arrive in the fall about 1 standard deviation below average in the Language and Literacy, Social Emotional, and Nature and Science domains.
- Children consistently arrive in the fall about ½ of a standard deviation below average in the Early Math domain.
- Children consistently arrive in the fall with only slightly below average scores in Physical Health Practices and average scores in the Creative Arts, Fine and Gross Motor Skills and Approaches to Learning domains.

For results in other domains go to www.fl-hsa.org.

Consistent Results



The analyses also show that Florida Head Start programs are highly effective in improving Head Start children's school readiness:

- For all 6 years, progress in all 8 readiness domains has been significantly higher than the expected 50 point gain with gains in most domains nearly double the expected gain.
- Despite entering the Head Start program significantly below average (500) in Language and Literacy, Social Emotional and Early Math, Head Start children are no longer below average (550) when they leave Head Start the following spring.

Finally, the multi-year data show how Florida programs have met the federal mandate to use child outcome data to improve program practices:

- Many Florida programs targeted the Nature and Science domain for increased focus after the 2002-2003 year data showed this domain to have the smallest yearly gain and to be the only domain where children completed the program below average (531).
 - The largest gain occurred between 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 in the Nature and Science domain.
 - For the past 5 years Florida Head Start children have completed the program with average Nature and Science developmental scores.
- Although gains in the critical Language and Literacy domain have been the largest in the past three years compared to the other seven readiness domains, this has not been at the expense of other readiness domains where large increases across the school year are also present.

Conclusion



Programs serving young children and families must provide high-quality and comprehensive services to adequately address all domains of a child’s development. These data clearly show that a comprehensive and high-quality preschool program will make a significant and meaningful difference in all 8 designated Head Start school readiness domains, improving the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of a child. In other words, HEAD START WORKS!

The use of assessment data for remote reporting is not nearly as effective as assessment data gathered throughout the year and used by teachers and staff who are working closely with the child. It is critically important that programs collect ongoing reliable and valid data to measure a child’s progress, inform classroom practice, and determine the impact of a preschool program. Teaching teams in Florida Head Start programs are using data collected through the Galileo assessment tool and other valid and reliable tools to modify each child’s educational experience and redesign classroom practice.

When teachers share assessment data with families, effective communication is facilitated and parents are empowered to support classroom goals through at-home activities that enhance their children’s readiness for school. Florida Head Start programs are successful in preparing children for later school success. In all eight (8) domains measured, Head Start children made gains greater than those expected. Though Head Start children entered the program far below their peers from higher income families, they made gains that bring them to or near the level expected of children their age.

“The program is excellent. Congratulations to all! I deeply appreciate it.”

— Head Start Parent

Recommendations

As a result of research efforts with Head Start programs over the past ten years, the Florida Head Start Research Committee is uniquely situated to provide recommendations regarding classroom practices, program operation, evaluation, and research within the early childhood arena.

A This report focuses on programs in Florida using the Galileo assessment instrument. While programs may use other valid and reliable assessments to measure their children's progress, it should be noted that similar analyses are not possible with some of these instruments because they lack interval levels of measurement and developmental levels that are consistent across domains. If programs want to use data to measure program impact and progress toward standards, they will need to use instruments with this criteria.

A It is imperative that programs consistently monitor assessment data for both reliability and timeliness in order to best inform classroom practice and program management. Real-time data, as provided by systems such as Galileo, allow staff to tailor instruction to each child's needs while he/she is participating in the program, maximizing each child's learning and development. Programs should use the data gathered to assist teachers in analyzing classroom practice and change practices as needed during the year to meet the needs of the children they serve. The data should help teachers intentionally focus their instruction on skills that help children succeed in school. Programs need to begin baseline as early in the year as possible and keep entering data as close to the end date as possible to provide the longest "treatment" time possible. If teachers stop entering scores in April, months of learning are lost.

A As programs implement ongoing monitoring procedures, they may find the need for continuing professional development in the areas of observation, assessment, and curricula. Programs need to ensure that both seasoned and beginning teachers are proficient in the skills necessary to provide reliable and valid child outcome data. Additionally, systems should be implemented to ensure this training takes place.

A Results of quality research efforts must be shared with families, policy makers, law makers and the Head Start community to inform decision making at all levels.

A The Committee encourages programs to access current Head Start/Early Head Start research available through the Administration for Children and Families Annotated Bibliography Research website which can be found at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb2/biblio/index.jsp>

A The Committee encourages other state Head Start Associations to work closely with their local programs and the National Head Start Association Research and Evaluation Department in developing a shared research agenda for improving program practices and increasing children's school readiness. As demonstrated in Florida, such efforts not only aid programs in improving practices and increasing children's school readiness, but also provide rich and powerful data to share with stakeholders and the broader community on Head Start's effectiveness.

Families Making a Difference

While programs have maintained a focus on improving children's school readiness skills, it is important to note that Head Start is a multi-generational program. Affecting lasting, positive changes for children means strengthening families. Head Start programs support families in goal setting and connect them to resources in their community. Head Start has always had a rich tradition of telling success stories like the one below, but also recognizes the need for more quantifiable data. The FHSA Research Committee has identified family outcomes as an important area of research. Several programs are currently developing criteria and methods to measure gains in family outcomes.

A short five years ago, I was feeling lost, alone, confused and overwhelmed. A single mother of four young boys, living in the local housing project, I lacked goals and direction. Not knowing where to turn and not having the energy to really care, I was in a really bad place.

I knew I needed a job to support my children, but had no child care. The fathers of the children weren't around to help or pay support and one of the fathers was in jail awaiting a prison sentence. I had no where to turn.

While asking around about child care opportunities, I heard about Head Start from a family member. This is the moment my children's life, as well as my own, began to change for the better.

Since that time, all four of my boys have gone through the Early Head Start/Head Start program; my youngest is enrolled in Head Start currently. This program has offered my family the lifeline it needed. It not only helped prepare my boys for kindergarten by providing a high quality child development experience, it provided me the support I needed to reach my goals. The Early Head Start/Head Start staff became a big part of my life. They provided support, encouragement, and helped me learn to set goals for my family and myself. I have become the parent that I always wanted to be. My boys are successful and have developed a love of learning.

I think the single most important thing the Early Head Start/Head Start Family and Community staff did for my family was to provide a family mentor. This mentoring relationship provided ongoing emotional support, community resources, and financial assistance in time of crisis. It provided weekend respite for my boys and allowed me to work on my personal educational goals. This family mentor will continue to be active in my family's life and has provided a male role model for my boys.

I was once a high school dropout; struggling to get by...I now have completed my GED and have begun taking college classes. I plan to become a probation officer and work with lost and troubled youth. I want to give to others, what the Early Head Start/Head Start program has given to me...*a sense of future and a realistic plan to achieve my goals, step by step*. You can not help but grow in Head Start...it makes all things possible.



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