



April 2012

Resources

The State of Preschool 2011

from the National Institute for Early Education Research

This newly released analysis of preschool and pre-kindergarten funding data through the 2010-2011 school year paints a stark picture of the funding reality for early education. State funding for Head Start has decreased by 48% over the past ten years, and states across the country are on the whole enrolling more children in pre-K programs but providing lower quality. Find information for your state in the executive summary, linked above.

Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8

from NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media

This recent position paper from NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center explores the applications of media in early childhood education and makes a number of recommendations, notably that technology should be used when it is interactive, supports adult-child relationships and extends learning.

Supporting Our Youngest Children: Early Head Start Programs in 2010

from CLASP

The 2009-2010 year marked a dramatic increase in funding and enrollment for Early Head Start. This analysis of PIR data for that year offers a clear snapshot of the demographic characteristics, service models, and measurable health outcomes for that program year.

Research

Early Elementary Performance and Attendance in Baltimore City Schools' Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten

by Faith Connolly and Linda S. Olson for the Baltimore Education Research Consortium

Attendance is a strong indicator of academic success, and this study set out to explore how attendance during the pre-K and kindergarten years set students' patterns of attendance through third grade. By analyzing student attendance from pre-K to 3rd grade records and Head Start

enrollment records along with students' kindergarten entry evaluations and 1st to 3rd grade test scores, the authors found connections between types of early childhood environments, attendance patterns, and later school outcomes. Head Start alumni were found to have higher attendance rates by third grade than all of their peers, regardless of low-income status. The authors speculate that Head Start family engagement efforts may contribute to this outcome and recommend that the district learn from Head Start's work how to better promote parental engagement.

The Economic Power of Early Childhood Education in Wisconsin

by Rob Grunewald and Don Bezruki for the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute

As the economy has suffered, and budget cuts have threatened early childhood education and care, the argument about the long-term economic benefits of Head Start and Early Head Start has become an important one. This report from the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute clearly lays out familiar points about the value of Head Start in decreasing crime costs, increasing students' lifetime earnings, and benefiting the economy as a whole. In addition, the report explores how Minnesota has implemented a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) and a scholarship program to use market pressures to improve childcare quality. As Wisconsin prepares to move forward with its own QRIS model, lessons are drawn for improving provider quality and involving the business community.

It's Dinnertime: a Report on Low-Income Families' Efforts to Plan, Shop for and Cook Healthy Meals

from Share Our Strength

In support of their mission to eliminate childhood hunger, a goal Head Start shares, Share Our Strength commissioned a study to identify low income families' perceived barriers to healthy eating and cooking; to assess if participation in public nutrition programs influences behaviors; and to identify potential solutions. The study interviewed 1500 individuals from low or moderate-income families who make household decisions regarding grocery shopping, food budgeting and cooking. Notable findings include:

- The average low or moderate-income family eats dinner at home 4 days per week and eats fast food/ take-out for dinner an average of twice per week
- Families who participate in SNAP and WIC are more likely to eat dinner made at home 5 or more times per week
- 85% of families say that eating a healthy dinner is important, but over 40% of those who say healthy dinners are important do not actually provide them most days of the week
- 4 in 5 families say they are interested in learning more about cooking healthy meals
- Families with high food security report having the highest number of healthy meals in a typical week and also are more likely to make meals from scratch

- Basic budgeting and planning skills can help to improve healthy cooking and eating habits
- Price is often perceived as a barrier to healthy eating - 26% of families report skipping healthy purchases often or always due to price

Positively, 3 out of 4 low or moderate income families are interested or extremely interested in learning to prepare new and different meals and are interested or extremely interested in having their children learn more about how to make healthier food choices. These findings indicate the importance of programs that teach and promote healthy cooking and eating, among them Share Our Strength's [Cooking Matters](#).

The Development of Communicative and Narrative Skills Among Preschoolers: Lessons From Forensic Interviews About Child Abuse

by Irit Hershkowitz, Michael E. Lamb, Yael Orbach, Carmit Katz, & Dvora Horowitz in Child Development

April is Child Abuse Awareness Month, and as practitioners, Head Start teachers and staff are responsible for monitoring students and recognizing and reporting signs of abuse or trauma. To obtain accurate information it is necessary to understand how best to ask children of different ages about their experiences, so researchers Herskowitz, Lamb, Orbach, Katz, and Horowitz examined the responses of 299 preschoolers aged 3-6 who were suspected victims of child abuse and worked to identify age differences between their responses. The authors found that 3-to-4-year-olds responded more informatively to specific recall prompts ("What color car was it?") while children 5 and older were more informative with open-recall prompts ("Tell me about the car"). They conclude that even young children can provide information about events they experienced when asked specific questions. The results may inform how Head Start teachers pose questions when attempting to elicit information from students about their experiences, either positive and negative.

Know of other recent research that may be of interest to the Head Start field? Have other questions, comments or concerns? E-mail Emmalie Dropkin (edropkin@nhsa.org) with feedback.