

Head Start Effectiveness Research from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Head Start (2014) – “We find little evidence that quality matters to impacts of Head Start using the available quality measures from the study across two age cohorts, three quality dimensions, five outcomes, and several years. The one exception is that for 3-year-old program entrants low exposure quality, defined as less exposure to academic activities during Head Start participation, produces better behavioral impacts in the short-run than more exposure to academic activities. ***Even so, there is no indication that either high quality Head Start or low quality Head Start in any dimension leads to program impacts lasting into third grade.***”

Head Start (2012) – “***Looking across the full study period, from the beginning of Head Start through 3rd grade, the evidence is clear that access to Head Start improved children’s preschool outcomes across developmental domains, but had few impacts on children in kindergarten through 3rd grade.***”¹

Head Start (2012) – “***For children in the 4-year-old cohort, there were no observed impacts through the end of kindergarten but favorable impacts reported by parents and unfavorable impacts reported by teachers emerged at the end of 1st and 3rd grades.***”²

Head Start (2010) – “As with the 4-year-old cohort, there was no strong evidence of impacts on children’s language, literacy, or math measures at the end of kindergarten or at the end of 1st grade.”³

Head Start (2010) – “No statistically significant impacts were found for teacher reports of children’s school performance in kindergarten and 1st grade with the exception of a ***lower teacher assessment in kindergarten of Head Start children’s math ability [3-year-olds].***”⁴

Head Start (2003) – “Head Start is not fully achieving its stated purpose of promoting school readiness ... Indeed, these ***low-income children continue to perform significantly below their more advantaged peers*** in reading and mathematics once they enter school.”⁵

¹ Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study: Final Report <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/third-grade-follow-up-to-the-head-start-impact-study-final-report>

² Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study: Final Report <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/third-grade-follow-up-to-the-head-start-impact-study-final-report> Emphasis added.

³ Head Start Impact Study Executive Summary, p. 21

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/hs/impact_study/reports/impact_study/executive_summary_final.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ “Strengthening Head Start: What the Evidence Shows” <http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/2693/pdf>

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Head Start (1997) – “The body of research on current Head Start is insufficient to draw conclusions about the impact of the national program.”⁶

Head Start (1991) - Other researchers have found negative impacts on social-emotional development among Head Start participants. *In this case, participants had lower mean scores in communication, daily living skills, and social skills domains, and the total adaptive behavior score.*⁷

Head Start (1985) – “In the long run, cognitive and socioemotional test scores of former Head Start students do not remain superior to those of disadvantaged children who did not attend Head Start... Once the children enter school there is little difference between the scores of Head Start and control children. . . . Findings for the individual cognitive measures—intelligence, readiness and achievement—reflect the same trends as the global measure. . . . By the end of the second year there are no educationally meaningful differences on any of the measures.”⁸

NOTE: All emphasis is added.

⁶ GAO review of over 600 citations, manuscripts, and studies <http://www.gao.gov/assets/230/223877.pdf>

⁷ Yvonne B. Reedy, “A Comparison of Long Range Effects of Participation in Project Head Start and Impact of Three Differing Delivery Models,” Pennsylvania State University (State College, Pennsylvania) <http://bit.ly/26fU3RH>

⁸ Ruth McKey et al., “The Impact of Head Start on Children, Families, and Communities,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HHS 85-31193, Executive Summary, p. 1. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED263984.pdf>