

Session # A-2

Title: What about quality matters for children's school readiness?

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Gladys Wilson, State Child Care Administrator, Florida

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SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION #1

Joanne Roberts, Wellesley College

Wendy Wagner Robeson, Wellesley College

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Relation between preschool quality and children's academic school readiness
2. What characteristics of pre-school programs make a difference in school readiness outcomes for children?

SAMPLES

Sample 1: low-income from 41 centers

Sample 2: longitudinal; 150 child care centers (mixed income, matches state distribution)

METHODS:

Observe classrooms and assess school readiness

Parent & Teacher Surveys

Multilevel model of academic readiness RESULTS:

Child level:

- home literacy environment is most significant predictor of academic readiness
- Poverty not significant in that the home environment and poverty are so highly correlated
- **POLICY IMPLICATION:** Encouraging positive home literacy environment is critical to academic readiness

Classroom level:

- Classroom quality accounts for about 20% of variance in children's academic readiness
- Classroom can have a large impact on children's school readiness
- Literacy and math environments and the quality of caregiver-child relationship were the most important quality indicators for academic readiness; Most significant predictors of academic readiness

Predicting academic readiness CONCLUSIONS:

- Variability in academic readiness is partially a function of the home literacy environment

- Overall quality of the classroom significantly predicted academic readiness
- Literacy and math environment of the classrooms and the caregiver-child relationships were strongest quality predictors

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- Social skills test – parent version and a teacher version
 - Parents’ scores and teachers scores are not highly correlated, but scales are a bit different; One not necessarily higher or lower scored
 - Boys tend to be showing higher levels of problem behaviors than girls
 - Depression looks like it is correlated with boys problem behaviors
- Question: Based on findings, recommendations for raising the floor for quality at little or no cost?
 - High number of teaching and learning opportunities in classrooms; Could turn simple things into learning experiences
 - Teacher training needed on management so that they can capitalize on teaching opportunities
 - However, have to have some money to pay for training
 - Quality of training is a big issue – some very poor training taking place
- Comment from audience member: Need to maybe improve quality of home environment instead of focusing on the child care center
 - Literacy environment of the home is particularly important: Can start by encouraging literacy in the home environment
 - Possible to improve home environment – have to believe that every parent wants what is best for their child
 - At NCCIC moving towards looking at family involvement and examining providers role; Need to address this issue

KEY POINTS

- Quality of Pre-K experiences predicts children's academic readiness
- Literacy and math environments, as well as caregiver-child relationships, are important components of Pre-Ks
- Quality of Pre-K is largely minimal. Science, math and literacy are areas that need attention
- Home literacy environment is critical. Parents need to be encouraged to read to their children
- Child assessments highly related. Assessments of school readiness may be able to be streamlined to reduce burden on teachers and students.

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION #2

Rosemarie Allen, State Child Care Administrator, Florida

Early childhood councils:

31 early childhood councils representing 57 counties

Each council has partners and collaborate on local level (e.g., county social services, public schools, Head Start, Resource and Referral, etc.)

EC council successes: Collaboration

- Increased partnership, CCCAP, CPKP & Head Start dollars used jointly to fund full-day, full-year programs
- Economic impact analysis of child care profession in multiple communities
- Professional development plans leading to credentials and college credit
- Participation in school readiness program

School Readiness quality improvement program

- Purpose: to improve school readiness of children 5 and under receiving care from provider whose facility serves children who will attend under-performing elementary schools that receive Title 1 federal funds

Participating Providers

- Must be licensed
- Must be near elementary school that have rating of low or unsatisfactory
- All participating sites received assistance in improving care through
 - o Use of enhanced educational materials
 - o Specialized teacher training
 - o Mentoring/coaching
 - o Increased parent involvement
- 5 factors make up quality rating, 0 – 4 stars
 - o To remain in program, sites must sustain rating of 3 or 4 or improve score on quality

Summary of first three years

Evaluation

- Success in improving quality of early care and education sites
- When program began, 63 % were low quality and 37% sites considered high quality
- By 3rd year follow up, 76% of sites rated high quality and number of low-quality reduced to 24%

Future Funding

- Legislature reauthorized continuation of School Readiness Program and

- awarded 2.2 million dollars per fiscal year
- Now 14 sites participating in program with 148 early care and education sites representing 464 classrooms

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Question: What forms of assistance have been associated with changes in scores?

- The greatest factor was the teacher mentoring and coaching

Question: How is state ensuring that children continue to receive a high-quality education once they enter kindergarten

- This is the challenge because some counties won't even allow students to be tracked once they enter the public schools
- Hope that parents will be empowered and will choose high quality elementary schools

- Data is important
- This is a complicated issue
- Impact of partnership and collaboration

KEY POINTS

- Local control is very difficult because each county is doing their own thing; However, counties are very diverse and so what is working in one community may not work in another
- Uniformity does not meet every child's needs
- By having program administered at local level, children's needs are better met
- Improving quality of learning environment and education level of teachers, but what is happening during transition to kindergarten
- Need more research on how we can collaborate during transition from pre-k to kindergarten to maintain high quality environments

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION #3

Gladys Wilson, CCDF Administrator , Florida

CCR&R – Unique in that housed at AWI-Office of Early Learning

- Positions CCR&R staff within close proximity to policy makers and staff of research and evaluation units

Early Learning Coalitions

- 31 Early Learning Coalitions
- Each coalition is unique, local governing board comprised of 18 members including Governor appointees (this has been very positive to have movers and shakers on the committees)
- Each of Florida's 67 counties represented by an early learning coalition

Coalition Plans

- Each year, coalitions submit plans for service delivery in areas
- Plans are outcome driven and must demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency
- Must implement a program of school readiness services that enhance the cognitive, social, and physical development of children
- Must give information on required element, current situation, action, activities, and outcomes
- Monitor whether plans are followed

Coalition Monitoring

- Teams go out to monitor and validate whether plans have been met
- Technical assistance is provided in areas in need of attention

Current Efforts to connect research and data, policy, and programming issues

- Performance-Based Funding
 - o Working with locals to determine what performance measures should be attached to additional funds to increase performance and service delivery by coalitions
- Data Quality Initiative
 - o Found out that data was not good
 - o In the process of cleaning data and feel more prepared to make data-based policy decisions
 - o Mission is to promote program effectiveness, planning, and decision-making at all levels by providing valid and reliable data to internal and external constituents
 - o Efforts to centralize early learning system

Future Efforts to Connect Research, Data, Policy, and Programming Issues

- Study of continuity of care
- Examine how services are being provided across the state – Are some areas getting better results than others
- Are certain service delivery models better than others?
- Examine whether or not to have benchmarks for coalitions

- Move towards a performance-based model: Look at school readiness as big business and we are smart about what we do
- Has service delivery model really made a difference?

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

- Do not have at state level, observation data, but some local counties have it
- In new system, making sure that observational data can be collected

KEY POINTS

- Need to allow for variability in plans for different counties
- Important to collect valid and reliable data if trying to establish performance-based funding
- Important to examine effectiveness of different models in various counties (e.g., local staffing patterns, service delivery standards, how parents get access to services).
- Need to set service delivery benchmarks for coalitions
- Ultimate goal will be to move toward performance-based contracts for all services