

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on describing aspects of the family and classroom environment that may support Head Start children's kindergarten achievement, drawing on data from the 2009 cohort of the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES 2009). Other FACES 2009 reports describe the characteristics of children and their families, classrooms, and programs as the children entered Head Start in fall 2009 (Hulseley et al. 2011) and during their first year in the program (Moiduddin et al. 2012) and child outcomes from program entry through program exit (Aikens et al. 2013). Another report takes a closer look at Head Start programs (Moiduddin et al. 2017). The current report extends the portrait of children, their family lives, and their classroom experiences to the spring of kindergarten. A related brief explores children's developmental progress and kindergarten environments in more depth (Aikens et al. 2017). This report focuses on the population of children who entered Head Start for the first time in fall 2009, completed one or two years of the program, and were attending kindergarten in spring 2011 or 2012. Additional information on the study design, instruments, and measures used for this report appears in the FACES 2009 data file user's manual (Malone et al. 2013) and an accompanying set of data tables (Kopack Klein et al. 2017).

Methods

FACES 2009 draws samples of 3- and 4-year-old children who are entering Head Start for the first time in fall 2009 and are expected to attend the program for one or two years before moving to kindergarten. Hence, in this report, Head Start exit refers to data collected in either spring 2010 (for most children sampled at age 4) or spring 2011 (for most children sampled at age 3), and the spring of kindergarten refers to data collected in either spring 2011 (for most children sampled at age 4) or spring 2012 (for most children sampled at age 3).

In total, 60 programs, 129 centers, 486 classrooms, 439 teachers, and 3,349 children and their parents participated in FACES in fall 2009. Of the 2,324 children enrolled in kindergarten, we interviewed 80 percent of their parents. Kindergarten teachers completed teacher child reports for 74 percent of the children. Direct assessments were completed for 86 percent of the children.

Data collection. This report draws on data from children, parents, and teachers at Head Start entry, Head Start exit (spring 2010 or spring 2011), and the spring of kindergarten (spring 2011 or 2012) as well as on Head Start classroom observations carried out at program exit. At each wave, parents and teachers were surveyed and children were administered a battery of direct child assessments. Data provide insight into children's home and classroom learning environments.

Population estimates. The statistics in this report are estimates of key characteristics of the population of children who entered Head Start for the first time in fall 2009, completed one or two years of the program, and were attending kindergarten in spring 2011 or spring 2012; of their parents and families; and of their Head Start and kindergarten teachers and classrooms. The data are reported at the child level and weighted to represent the population of children who participated in the study through kindergarten. Unless otherwise noted, all cited differences and coefficients are statistically significant at the $p \leq .05$ level.

Sample. Children participating in the study during kindergarten are a diverse group. At program entry, 39 percent of children who entered Head Start for the first time in fall 2009, completed one or two years of the program, and were attending kindergarten in spring 2011 or 2012 are Hispanic/Latino, 32 percent are African American, and 21 percent are White. Thirty percent of Head Start children live in households where a language other than English is the primary language spoken to them. Spanish is by far the most prevalent non-English language and the primary language spoken to 27 percent of children at home.

What is the nature of Head Start children's family and home supports for children's development into kindergarten?

Head Start actively supports parents in their role as children's first teachers because children's school readiness skills are built on a foundation of home experiences. Many aspects of the family and home environment can support children's learning. We use the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework as an organizing framework to describe potential family and home supports for children's learning, including family well-being, parent-child

relationships, families as educators and leaders, families as learners, and connections to peers and community. We describe these aspects of children's home environments at Head Start entry, Head Start exit, and kindergarten to understand how children's environments both change and stay consistent over time.

Family well-being. At least half of children's parents report that they are in very good to excellent health, and about two-thirds have health insurance; both these proportions are similar over time. The majority of children live in homes where parents report alcohol and tobacco are not frequently used. At Head Start entry, most children's parents report no symptoms of depression, but 16 percent report moderate to severe symptoms. From Head Start entry to Head Start exit, the percentage of children's parents who report no symptoms of depression increases. Exposure to violence and crime at Head Start entry is generally infrequent but still occurs for up to 11 percent of children or their parents. The majority of children live with parents who are employed, although unemployment rates increase over time, coinciding with the economic downturn. Across time, about two-thirds of children live in households whose parent-reported total household income is at or below the federal poverty threshold. At all three time points, most children live in rental housing and have not moved in the past year. Although the majority of children live in families that are food-secure at Head Start entry, 21 percent of children's parents report low food security (or reduced quality, variety, or desirability of their diet), and an additional 9 percent report very low food security (with food intake also reduced).

Parent-child relationships. Parents more commonly endorse warm and consistent parenting practices rather than harsh and directive ones. Their child-rearing attitudes do not change from Head Start entry to Head Start exit. The percentages of children whose parents reported spanking them in the previous week decreases between entry and exit and between exit and the spring of kindergarten. Although the majority of parents report using "time out" for discipline across waves, the percentage decreases between Head Start exit and the spring of kindergarten. Many children have regular family routines, with about two-thirds brushing their teeth nightly and about 90 percent having regular bedtimes over time. Just under half eat dinner together nightly with their families at each time point.

Families as educators and leaders. Head Start parents provide a variety of activities to support their children's learning. About three-quarters of children are read to three or more times a week at Head Start entry and Head Start exit, increasing to 81 percent by the spring of kindergarten. Most have access to children's books in the home, with the average number increasing from Head Start entry to exit. More than half participated in a variety of activities with family members in the previous week (such as being told a story or playing with toys or games). Participation increases between program entry and exit for most types of activities but is unchanged from program exit to the spring of kindergarten. Activities generally occurring outside the home (such as visiting a library) in the previous month are less common; generally 30 to 50 percent of children participate in such activities at Head Start entry, increasing somewhat by Head Start exit. Participation is maintained, with no change from Head Start exit to the spring of kindergarten. Children's physical activity is generally under two hours on a typical weekday. The percentage of children spending more than two hours playing outside increases from Head Start entry to exit, when it reaches about one-third.

The majority of children have some exposure to screen media. About one-fifth of Head Start children watch more than two hours of television on a typical weekday. Access to home computers is fairly common and increases from program entry to exit, as children increasingly watch videos or DVDs or play computer games.

Parents report that they participate in their children's Head Start classrooms in a variety of ways, most commonly by attending parent/teacher conferences and observing the classrooms. These patterns continue when children are in kindergarten. Small percentages of parents participate in leadership activities in the Head Start program, such as policy council and committee meetings.

Families as learners. Over two-thirds of children have at least one parent who has at least a high school diploma or GED, with no significant change over time. Close to two-thirds of the mothers of children who live with their mothers have attained that level of education, and about half the fathers of children who live with their fathers have done so. Furthermore, parent participation in ongoing education increases from 27 percent at program entry to 36 percent at exit. Among those who participate, about 14 to 17 percent report that

Head Start helped them locate or enroll in courses, classes, or workshops. Among those not enrolled, the most common reasons reported for nonparticipation are time constraints and lack of child care or other child-related reasons.

Connections to peers and community. At the end of Head Start and in the spring of kindergarten, the majority of children have parents who report that they can always find support to meet various needs, such as finding a ride to take their children to the doctor or finding someone to watch their children. Among potential sources of support, parents are most likely to report that they find family members very helpful.

At program exit, less than one-quarter of Head Start children's parents report that household members have obtained various community services. Among those receiving services, parents most commonly report that Head Start provided assistance to help them attend school or college, obtain help or counseling for family problems, or enroll in classes in English as a second language.

What is the nature of Head Start classroom supports for children's development into kindergarten?

This report also describes children's classroom environments, including learning activities and classroom quality, which have been linked to children's development. Head Start teachers report that they engage in a variety of language, literacy, and math activities in their classrooms daily or almost daily. On average, children's classrooms score in the minimal to good range for classroom materials and arrangement and for the quality of teacher-child interactions, as measured by the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). Instructional support is rated in the low range and emotional support and classroom organization in the middle range on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), a pattern consistent with those found by other studies.

How do supports related to learning activities compare across children's home and classroom environments?

Little research has examined whether children who experience strong support for learning at home experience similar levels of support in the classroom and vice versa. To compare home and classroom learning supports, we calculated the level of home and classroom learning activities (in

terms of the number of activities, although more activities are measured in classrooms than in homes) as reported by parents and teachers, respectively. Activity levels, indicating breadth, but not dosage or quality of the activities, provide information on language and literacy and math activities in both settings and cognitive/ cultural and other supportive activities in the home. During their time in Head Start, most children (90 percent or more) experience at least half of the home or classroom learning activities.

Head Start may influence children's environments indirectly through promotion of parent participation in home learning activities, in addition to directly providing classroom learning activities. Comparison of the home and classroom learning environments shows that the Head Start classroom tends to provide the same foundation for children, regardless of the level of home learning activities.

How are home and classroom learning activities and classroom quality during Head Start associated with children's kindergarten developmental outcomes?

Prior research has found associations between different aspects of the home and classroom environment and children's development, but patterns are not always consistent. We examined associations between home and classroom learning environments during Head Start and children's kindergarten outcomes. We found few associations between outcomes and home activities, classroom activities, and observed classroom quality. However, while not causal, the reported level of home language and literacy activities is associated with Head Start children's receptive vocabulary and phonetic skills into kindergarten. Observed classroom quality in terms of materials (that is, ECERS-R Provisions for Learning) is associated with receptive vocabulary in kindergarten, and the quality of teacher-child interactions (CLASS Instructional Support) is associated to math achievement. The limited associations detected between outcomes and learning environments may reflect the limitations of measures of learning environments, which rely on parent or teacher reports on only a few of all potential learning activities and which demonstrate restricted range. Furthermore, some activities are not fully aligned with all of the skills directly assessed, particularly for math, and the measurement of classroom quality is not domain-specific (that is, not specific to literacy and math). The lack of alignment in measurement may

underestimate possible associations between home and classroom learning environments and children's outcomes.

Nonetheless, this report provides a comprehensive picture of children's home and classroom environments that can be used to identify areas in which Head Start families may need additional support. Through extending our description of children's home environments into kindergarten, we gain a more complete picture of Head Start children's home and family environments over time. Understanding the role of children's home and classroom environments in supporting development can also support policy and programmatic decisions about how practices can foster children's school readiness in order to sustain development over the long term.