

SUCCESS IN HEAD START

Improved School Outcomes for Children with Full-Day Experiences

Head Start is a federally funded preschool program offering comprehensive services with the goal of promoting early school success for low income children under the age of 5. **Iowa Head Start programs serve approximately 8,500 3-4-year-old children** annually through a statewide network of 18 local grantees. Until recently, Head Start provided only half-day programming. For families wanting full-day experiences for their Head Start children, this means enrolling in another program, and in Iowa this often means dual enrollment in the publicly funded Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program.

This data brief highlights work from I2D2 that integrated Head Start (HS) enrollment records with Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program (SWVPP) enrollment records to better understand outcomes for HS children who participated in part-time (HS only) vs. full-time (both HS and SWVPP) preschool experiences the year before kindergarten.

Compared to children participating in a half-day Head Start program, Head Start children with dual enrollment in Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs have:



*Results account for family demographics, birth risks, and fall assessment scores.

However, only 52% of Iowa's Head Start children are enrolled in both programs. Head Start families with lower income and Black or multiracial families were less likely to attend both.

Strong Partnerships Improve Child Outcomes

Despite the demonstrated academic and socio-emotional benefits of full-day experiences, currently **neither Head Start nor Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program offer full-day programming.**

This means some children are more or less likely to connect to both programs on their own.

Children enrolled in school districts that report strong partnerships with their local Head Start programs are more likely to enroll in both experiences. These partnerships help facilitate dual enrollment, have stronger communications among programs, and are more likely to share professional development opportunities with educators.

Main Takeaways

- Families in Iowa need full-day childcare. The child care shortage is severely affecting families. (see previous I2D2 briefs on the [Iowa Child Care Shortage](#) and [Preschool Access: Fill in the Gaps](#))
- There may be gaps in equitable access of full-day preschool options for lower income, Black, and multiracial families.
- In a state like Iowa where Head Start and Statewide Voluntary Preschool are offered as half-day programs, strong partnerships among these programs appear to be a solid step forward to strengthening children's' early learning experiences.

This brief is provided by I2D2, a program of Iowa State University and Early Childhood Iowa committed to putting the state's most informed, passionate, and data-driven resources to work ensuring all Iowa children are successful from birth. For more information about the findings presented here, please scan the QR code below or visit i2d2.iastate.edu



¹ Rouse, H.L., Choi, J.Y., Betancur, L., & Bruning, J. (2022). Data Brief #10 – Success in Head Start: Improved School Outcomes for Children with Full-Day Experiences. Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision-Making. Ames, IA.

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