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Long Term Effects of Lincoln’s Head Start Programs

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**Long Term Effects of Lincoln’s Head Start Programs**

**Katie Taylor and Kendra Woodburn**
**Dr. Carolyn Edwards (UNL) and Dr. Deila Steiner (LPS)**

With acknowledgments to the LPS District Office Staff

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**Methods: Sample**

Secondary data were used in this analysis. The attendance, school mobility, and Reading Recovery records were examined for children who started Head Start in 1992 and 1993. The sample included a total of 462 students.

The LPS graduation data were examined for students who were in Head Start between 1992 and 1993 (with two years of data missing from the LPS records).

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**Findings: Mobility**

### Mobility Data of 1992-94 Head Start Classes as the Children Moved Forward in School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of LPS elementary schools a child attended</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total years spent in LPS elementary school</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of LPS middle schools a child attended</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total years spent in LPS middle school</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Findings: Reading Recovery**

Reading Recovery was scored as ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ depending on the student’s participation in the program.

Dropout rates were calculated as the percentage of students who did not complete LPS high school, out of the total who started LPS high school.

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**Conclusions**

- The attendance levels of the Head Start students were very similar to those of the general LPS population (over 90% each year).
- The Head Start students were more likely than the general LPS population to participate in Reading Recovery in first grade. But Reading Recovery was not offered for Former Head Start and All LPS students come within 5 percentage points. This is encouraging, given the demographics.
- The Head Start students were more likely than the general population to participate in Reading Recovery in first grade. But Reading Recovery was not offered in all LPS elementary schools during its first few years, and only reached full implementation in 1997-1998. The former Head Start children were more likely to attend the schools where Reading Recovery was first offered, and so had a greater opportunity than many LPS students to get into the program. Notice how in 1997-1998, the figures for Former Head Start and All LPS students come within 5 percentage points. This is encouraging, given the demographics.
- The Head Start students who were still in the LPS system for high school showed higher dropout rates than the general LPS population. However, the majority of them did graduate, compared to the number who dropped out. Future research should examine the graduation rates of more recent former Head Start students.

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**Relevant Background**

Reading Recovery is a 1st-grade intervention program that helps low-achieving children make accelerated gains to reach the average range of reading performance in their class. Head Start began in 1965 as a summer program for low-income children and has since grown into a school-year national preschool program that enrolls more than 800,000 children per year and addresses academic, social, and health issues of children aged 3 to 5. Today, federal and state governments are placing ever more stress on evaluating child intellectual and social outcomes as a basis for making curricular and funding decisions about programs serving young children. Evaluation studies have found Head Start programs to be effective in producing short- and long-term intellectual and social gains for children in poverty, including higher self-esteem and social behavior for children at school entry; more positive school achievement and health issues of children aged 3 to 5.

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**Current Investigation: Questions**

- What were the attendance levels of children who attended LPS Head Start, compared to the rest of the LPS school population?
- What about their school mobility rates during the elementary and high school years?
- How likely were the Head Start children to need a special first grade intervention for reading (Reading Recovery), compared to the general first grade population?
- How likely were the former Head Start children to drop out of high school, compared to the rest of the LPS high school population?