

public policies to help Hoosier families achieve and maintain economic self-sufficiency.

GUEST BLOG: Did you know that Head Start programs in Indiana...?

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By Cheryl Miller, Executive Director, Indiana Head Start Association

For the past several years, there has been a conversation in Indiana focused on preschool. During those years, thousands and thousands of children have climbed onto buses and hopped into cars, on their way to Head Start. HEAD START – the preschool program that was developed over 51 years ago. HEAD START – the preschool program that has served millions and millions of children across the country since 1965. HEAD START – the program that provides some of the most comprehensive services to children and families (school readiness, health, mental health, nutrition, transition, transportation, and on and on). HEAD START – the preschool program that supports not only the children but their parents with a variety of services that enable parents to support their child’s development, understand their disabilities, enroll in educational programs, volunteer in the classrooms, and share in decision-making for the program itself. HEAD START – the program that brings in so much community support that programs can meet a federal requirement of a 20% match. HEAD START – a preschool program that continues to grow and flourish with new national standards, consistent increases in funding and recognition by leaders as “The Gold Standard of Early Childhood Education.”

Did you know that Head Start programs in Indiana...

- Provide services to approximately **19,000 children annually**
- **Employed over 3,300** persons in 2015
- Are mandated to conduct **on-going monitoring and assessment** of each enrolled child to demonstrate school-readiness outcomes
- Adhere to over **3,000 federal performance standards**
- Use **research-based curriculum** and best practice to deliver positive outcomes
- Use the National Centers for Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning's **Developmental and Early Learning Framework** that includes: Approaches to Learning, Language Development, English Language Development, Literacy Knowledge and Skills, Logic and Reasoning, Mathematics Knowledge and Skills, Science Knowledge and Skills, Social Studies Knowledge and Skills, Physical Development and Health, Social and Emotional Development and Creative Arts Expression
- Ensure children are healthy and ready to learn – **each child has a physical examination, dental examination, vision and hearing screening** and follow-up as necessary
- Have longstanding **community partnerships**
- Focus on **continuous professional development** for staff
- Have **62% of all teachers with a bachelor's degree**
- Served **2,102 children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** in 2015
- Had **85% of enrolled children in 2015 that were up-to-date** on the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) schedule for Indiana
- Hosted **21,090 parents as volunteers** in local programs
- Focus on **family engagement** in the child's education
- Use the **National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement's Framework** that includes Program Foundations (leadership, continuous improvement, professional development), Program Impact Areas (environment, family partnerships, teaching and learning, and community partnerships), Family Engagement and Child Outcomes
- Have **each developed school readiness goals** that will be measured to show that children do, indeed, leave Head Start ready to enter kindergarten and succeed. The goals were developed using the Head Start Early Learning Child Outcomes Framework, the Indiana State Early Learning Standards and the local school districts' kindergarten readiness goals.
- Participate in the state's Quality Rating Improvement System. In Indiana, the Quality Rating Improvement System is "Paths To Quality." Almost 90% of the Head Start and Early Head Start programs in our state have centers enrolled in Paths To Quality. *Of those programs, 88% have ratings of either "3" or "4", the highest ratings that are assigned. (Level 4 is the rating they receive if they are accredited by a nationally recognized entity.)*
- Are involved in national accreditation. **Almost 30% are accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.** Across the country, only 5% of all early childhood programs ever receive accreditation.

So as the conversation on preschool continues, it is imperative that Head Start continue to be an important part of the discussion. With a mixed delivery system, more children in Indiana can attend a high quality preschool, enter kindergarten ready to learn, and experience the success that we all want for all our children.

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Guest blogger Cheryl Miller is the Executive Director of the [Indiana Head Start Association](#). She has spent over 30 years with Head Start. Cheryl holds a master's degree in early childhood education from BSU. This is part two in IIWF's series on Head Start in Indiana. Read our first post, [Five Reasons Why Head Start Should Be Front and Center in Indiana's Conversation About PreK Expansion](#). Stay tuned for a future post on the research on Head Start and ways in which local Head Start programs are transforming communities in Indiana.