State of Oklahoma
Pilot Early Childhood Program
Phase III Evaluation
2008-2009

Executive Summary

Prepared by:

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Prepared for:
The Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI) at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa has designed and conducted a multi-phase evaluation of the Oklahoma State Pilot Program to Expand and Enhance Infant/Toddler Services (State Pilot Program or SPP) since 2007. The first wave of the third phase of this evaluation was conducted during the 2008-09 school year. Utilizing a comparison sample design that includes State Pilot Program centers and typical child care centers in the same communities across the state, the goals of this third phase were two-fold:

1. To assess school readiness outcomes (language, cognitive, and social-emotional) for children enrolled in infant-toddler programs in the state;
2. To document the quality of infant-toddler programs in the state with both the current gold-standard (the Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised) and a new instrument that assesses implementation of best practices for infant-toddler care (the PITC Program Assessment Rating Scale).

This interim report includes preliminary results for 15 State Pilot Program centers and 7 community centers that participated in the first cohort of this study (i.e., those first funded in the first year of the program in 2006-07). The community classrooms were identified and recruited from lists of DHS licensed centers. Quality assessments were conducted in 39 State Pilot Program and 7 community classrooms. On average, two children were assessed per classroom, with one child in 31% of the classrooms, two children in 31% of the classrooms, and three to nine children in the remaining classrooms. However, as indicated in the table below, the number of children assessed varied by type of program, instrument administered, and time of year.

Table 1: Number of Children Completing Assessments by Program Type

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<th>SPP Centers</th>
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<th>Community Centers</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language Assessment</td>
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<td>Social-Emotional Assessment</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>25</td>
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Child Assessments
Separate paired t-test analyses were conducted for the State Pilot Programs and the community centers for the language and social-emotional assessments. In this analysis, individual change is documented as each child’s fall score is directly compared with his or her spring score. As illustrated in the graphs below, a similar pattern was found for language and social-emotional development with statistically significant changes for children in the State Pilot Programs but not the community centers. An inadequate sample size for Cohort One prevented analyzing the cognitive scores.

Specifically, language was assessed using the *Preschool Language Scale-4* (PLS-4; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2002). The PLS-4 is a standardized assessment of both expressive and receptive language. This instrument was individually administered by a member of the ECEI research team in a setting at the center but away from the classroom. This instrument has a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15 and scores between 85 and 115 are within the normal developmental range.

Group analyses indicated that children enrolled in the SPP sites and their peers enrolled in community centers did not differ on their overall fall language scores (SPP = 92.2; community = 94.1) or on their overall spring performance (SPP = 95.5; community = 95.9). However, an important comparison shown on the graph below is the amount of gain demonstrated by each group from fall to spring. The children enrolled in SPP sites showed a significant fall to spring gain (92.2 to 95.5; t(38)=-1.988, p=.05) but the community children did not (94.1 to 95.9; t (21) =-1.001, p=.33). It is also important to note that at the spring assessment, approximately 25% of the children in both programs had scores below the average developmental range.

![Language Scores by Program Type](image-url)
Social-emotional development was assessed using the *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment* (DECA; LeBuffe, & Naglieri, 1999). A high Total Protective Factor score on the DECA represents a measure of a child’s strong sense of attachment, initiative, and self-control. This instrument was completed by the child’s teacher providing a rating of each child. This standardized instrument has a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 so that scores between 40 and 60 represent typical development. Scores below 40 indicate an “area of concern” for children.

Group analyses indicated that children enrolled in SPP and community sites did not differ in their overall fall DECA scores. However, the two groups did significantly differ in the spring with the SPP children scoring significantly higher. Children enrolled in SPP sites showed a significant fall to spring gain (50.4 to 54.7; t(40)=-2.803, p=.008) while the community children did not (47.1 to 46.9; t (16) =.101, p=.92). In addition, at the spring assessment only 2% (n=1) of the children within SPP classrooms were identified as having a social-emotional area of need as compared with 25% (n=5) of the children in community classrooms.

![Total Protective Factor Score by Program Type](chart.png)
Classroom Quality
As illustrated on the graphs below, a similar pattern was found on both instruments measuring classroom quality. Generally, classrooms participating in the Statewide Pilot Program were of higher quality than those in typical child care centers. However, inadequate sample sizes for Cohort One preclude conducting statistical analyses for the measures of classroom quality. The majority of classrooms in this first cohort of Statewide Pilot Programs are from Early Head Start programs and must meet national performance standards which in many cases exceed state child care licensing requirements.

The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 2003) includes 32 child-related items for a total child-related score as well as seven subscale scores. Each item includes several specific scoring criteria and is rated on a scale from one to seven. Scores of five or higher represent good quality child care while scores of three are considered minimal and scores of one are inadequate. When using this measure of global quality, assessors rate the physical space, materials, activities, basic caregiving procedures, and to a lesser extent the interactions in the classroom. As can be seen on the graph below, the average total ITERS-R child-related score for the State Pilot Sites was 3.65 and 2.57 for the community sites.
The *PITC Program Assessment Rating Scale* (PITC PARS; WestEd, 2007) includes 27 items scored on a 0 to 4 scale and an average total score is created for the entire instrument as well as for five subscales. Scores are interpreted as—0.0 = minimal, 1.8 = adequate, 2.8 = good, and 4.0 = excellent. This instrument is a measure of best practices for relationship-based infant/toddler caregiving and was designed by the authors of the Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers (PITC) that was the basis for much of the professional development delivered through the State Pilot Program.

As shown on the graph below, overall total PITC PARS scores were 2.61 for the SPP sites (adequate to good) and 1.42 (minimal to adequate) for the community comparison sites.
Conclusions
While the results must be considered tentative due to the small number of community comparison sites, it does appear that children are having different and better experiences in the State Pilot Program classrooms than typical child care centers. SPP classrooms were found to be higher quality than community comparison classrooms and children demonstrated significant gains in language and social-emotional development in SPP sites over community sites. A second cohort of centers will be recruited for the 2009-10 school year and final results will be available next summer.

References


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