

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 039 920

PS 002 920

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TITLE A Report on the Evaluation of the State Preschool Program Contrasted with the Westinghouse Report on Head Start.
INSTITUTION California State Dept. of Education, Sacramento, Office of Compensatory Education.
PUB DATE 12 Jun 69
NOTE 10p.; Paper is an edited transcription of a speech presented to the State Board of Education, Sacramento, California, June 12, 1969
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.60
DESCRIPTORS *Compensatory Education Programs, Preschool Programs, *Program Evaluation, State Programs
IDENTIFIERS California State Preschool Program, *Head Start

ABSTRACT

This document is an edited transcript of a preschool educator's criticism of the Westinghouse Report on the federal Head Start program. The following points are made: (1) evaluations should be planned at the time the program is planned and this was not the case with the Westinghouse Report, and (2) an evaluation program should measure the factors the educational program intended to improve. While the Westinghouse Report measured such factors as language development, learning readiness, and achievement, the objectives of Head Start are much broader and involve health, social, and emotional needs. Further, the report didn't test children right after they completed Head Start, but waited to see if learning gains were maintained a full year later. Since Head Start is a community program, it differs from one town to another in goals and methods and therefore can't be evaluated on a national basis. (MH)

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A REPORT ON THE EVALUATION OF THE STATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
CONTRASTED WITH THE WESTINGHOUSE REPORT ON HEAD START
PRESENTED TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, JUNE 12, 1969
(An Edited Transcription)

Introduction by Dr. Wilson C. Riles, Director
Division of Compensatory Education
California State Department of Education

By way of introduction I would like to point out one or two things we have learned in the last four years about this topic - Preschool Programs.

Compensatory educational programs were rather new in thrust and in legislation. Both Federal and State Legislation for these programs required an evaluation, or rather an objective evaluation. This has been a difficult task because we found that the agencies and the districts we work with were somewhat shy about evaluations, and I'll have to tell you why they were shy. They felt that evaluations or testing have traditionally been used to be critical of, or to sabotage, a program. There is still some feeling that, "You're not measuring me to determine how well I'm doing but you're measuring me in order to criticize." I think that unless the Board understands this, and the public understands this, we will run into barriers in promoting evaluations of educational programs.

What we have attempted to do in all of our compensatory educational programs, and we are meeting with some success, is to make it clear that any evaluations should be used primarily to improve the program, to determine the degree to which objectives have been met, and to show how we can better achieve the objectives. Evaluations also provide information to you and to other decision makers on what has happened in a program. With these two objectives for evaluation we can move forward to consideration of evaluation of our State Preschool Program.

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The Westinghouse Report is a prime example of how a report has been interpreted and used to discredit the Federal Head Start Program. First, the Westinghouse Report was a long range approach to determine how well children do who have had Head Start programs, nationwide. The Westinghouse Report studied the first children in Head Start for the first year - which was not a full year. As a matter of fact, for many of the children this was a summer program. These children were measured and compared to other children on how well they read in school. It seems to me that if any report is to be valid, it must measure what the objectives were in the first place. I can tell you that in the first year of Head Start the objectives were not to prepare the children for reading. In that first six to eight weeks Head Start provided health and dental examinations, provided nutrition and food services, and employed community people.

There is one major difference in the development of our State Preschool Program in California and the development of Head Start programs. In California the Department of Social Welfare contracts with the Department of Education to establish compensatory preschool programs authorized under State legislation, using Title IV Federal Social Security Act funds. We provide the educational components while the Department of Social Welfare and the various counties provide social services. The State law under which the California State Preschool Program was authorized; clearly defined objectives and these objectives were amplified by regulations set forth by this State Board of Education. I think when you see our evaluation of California's State Preschool Program you will agree that we started with an advantage. I didn't create this advantage, the Legislature created it and you created it. Once you have objectives, then you can evaluate. With these preliminary remarks I'll ask Mrs. Jeanada Nolan, Chief, Preschool Educational Programs, to briefly review the recent Head Start evaluation, as well as the evaluation of California's State Preschool Programs.

REPORT BY: Jeanada H. Nolan, Chief
Preschool Educational Programs
Division of Compensatory Education
California State Department of Education

My report will contrast our evaluation of the California State Preschool Program and the "Westinghouse" evaluation of the Federal Head Start Program.

There was considerable press coverage over the release of the Westinghouse Report of Head Start and this ranged from "negative" to "constructively objective." In California the reports were probably a little more objective and a little more constructive, and that may possibly have been because of the familiarity of the press with our own State Preschool Program.

I have to report to you on the Westinghouse Report from reports on the report, not from the report itself. I was advised that only four copies were made available to the national Head Start headquarters and I did not have access to any of those four copies. Some analysis is needed of the Westinghouse Head Start Report for us to see it in its proper prospective. This was an evaluation conducted by the Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University.

The evaluation was not planned at the time the program for Head Start was planned. The items evaluated by the Westinghouse Report appear to bear no relationship to the objectives or the strategy of the program when it was first initiated. Apparently it does not recognize that the Head Start Program varies all over the United States. The study appears to have a number of limitations. As already indicated, much of it was based on data from '65 summer Head Start children and was therefore based on many programs of a very short duration. The study apparently focused primarily on cognitive measurements and did not assess the adequacy or the

impact of the total range of services. We understand that much of it was conducted in small experimental or control groups and the measurements were taken one, two or three years after the children had left Head Start. In other words, there was no evaluation or measurement of the Head Start children in the sample for the year they were in kindergarten.

We need to recognize that Head Start is not so much an operational unit but is a concept. I quote from one of the reports, ". . . it is carried out in at least 700 different ways in at least 700 different communities." Also, we must bear in mind that there are few instruments relevant to the content of preschool programs and their multiple objectives. For evaluation to be optimum, the design must measure the objectives of the program and be planned when the program is planned. Evaluators are not yet certain what questions to ask since the overall objectives of Head Start and other compensatory preschool programs are so broad and are related to the total child, the family, social institutions and the community.

To recap the Westinghouse findings from the reviews which we read, we learned, generally, that the gains were not maintained. The evaluation was planned after the fact, and conducted at least one full year after the children left the program. The problem Westinghouse posed was - "Did Head Start make any intellectual or psychological difference on the children in Grades 1, 2 and 3?" Three kinds of tests were used, tests for Language Development, Learning Readiness and Achievement Tests.

In Language Development there was no significant difference shown between Head Start and non-Head Start children, after the time lapse, in Grades 1, 2 and 3.

In Learning Readiness tests, Head Start children scored better in a small but statistically significant way than children who had not had Head Start experience. This tends to confirm that preschool experience does send the child to school more alert, curious, eager and receptive to learning.

In the third test, the Stanford Achievement Test, which measures academic achievement, the two groups scored approximately the same. We must ask, however, where would the Head Start children have been if they had not had the Head Start experience?

The study did show that Head Start made the greatest difference, and did the most good, for the children who were most deprived and disadvantaged. The implications of this study and the recommendations for change as seen by national Head Start and announced by Secretary Finch are these:

1. That summer school programs, of six to eight weeks duration for preschool children, are insufficient to make enough impact; therefore, summer Head Start alone will gradually be phased out or absorbed into year around Head Start programs.
2. There is an indication that we are not starting early enough and that we need to reach the most deprived and disadvantaged children in infancy. Therefore, more Parent and Child Centers will be funded by Head Start for children under three.
3. That more Head Start and Title I funds be made available for Follow Through activities in order to provide the special features and special services available to preschool children as they go on in school, in order to help them to maintain their gains.

There is a rather sharp contrast between what is being done in California in the State Preschool Program and what Head Start does, theoretically, throughout the United States.

One reason why there is such a wide variation in Head Start Programs throughout the United States is that Head Start is a community action program. In California, the major emphasis in the State Preschool Program is on preparing the child for successful experience at school. We see community action, job training, and career development as secondary benefits in the preschool program.

Before presenting the report on our evaluation of the State Preschool program, I need to explain what many already know; that in California, Head Start and the State Preschool Program are not necessarily two programs but two funding sources, because in California by policy established by this Board, we encourage joint funding. In many projects in California we fund joint projects with Start so that Head Start children and the State Preschool children are all in the same program. Approximately one-fourth of the dollars available and committed in California for the State Preschool children are in jointly funded projects.

An evaluation of the program was conducted by the Preschool and Evaluation and Research bureaus. The design of the study was a pre and a post test on a 15% sample of matched cases using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. This test yields mental age and I.Q. scores. Because of normal attrition the final sample was 10% of the regular preschool population. The results showed dramatic and positive changes.

In the seven month period between the pre test and the post test, there was a mean mental age growth of fourteen months and a concomitant mean growth in I.Q. equivalents of seventeen points. (See copy of Evaluation Report attached)

In addition to this objective data, we feel that we have other positive results in the State Preschool Program, admittedly not studied by Westinghouse for Head Start. There are spin-off effects of preschool programs, such as the changes in behavior of children and parents as observed by teachers; changes in attitudes of parents, as expressed by them and by the school; and parents returning to school to complete their own education.

Last spring, in April of 1968, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare sent a Program Audit Review Team to California to study our State Preschool Program. A team of five persons spent a month in California visiting programs in San Francisco, San Diego, Central Valley, Alameda and Yuba Counties. They made a comprehensive report complimenting the program, offering some constructive suggestions, following which the Secretary of H.E.W. approved the State Preschool Program without time limit. We have also been advised that there are no upward limits on funding. These Federal funds are from Title IV A, Social Security Act, which authorizes services for AFDC and potential AFDC children and which has an open-ended appropriation. The Federal Government matches \$3 for every \$1 provided by the State of California.

In the summer of 1967 the Office of Compensatory Education and Lockheed Corporation conducted the SEAR study in California in which both parents and administrators identified preschool as one of the most desirable programs for building better home, school and community relations. We know from our program evaluation narrative reports and from observation that there is generally good parent participation in the State Preschool Program.

There is also clear evidence that we are providing deprived children with needed medical and dental services through referral. As a result of the Pre-school Program and the social services provided by the County Welfare Department, the children are getting the delivery of necessary preventive and corrective services, mostly from Medi-Cal.

There is evidence of a new relationship between former preschool parents and the school systems into which the children transfer. Many mothers, because of their experiences as paid teacher aides or volunteers, have been motivated to continue their formal education and training and are qualifying for Children's Center permits and subsequent employment. The value of the para-professional in the classroom has been demonstrated. Also, there is an increased awareness of the citizenry at large about the needs of the community and there is much community involvement in preschool programs. There is an affirmation by all, but educators especially, that all of the child's needs must be considered—health, nutrition, social and emotional needs along with the educational need. We, in the State Pre-school Program, put the educational needs first, as instructed in the legislation.

Now for our future evaluations. In State Preschool Programs last year there was a 15% sampling using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test; this year we are doing a 20% sampling, using the Lettys Caldwell Preschool Inventory, Revised. This evaluates vocabulary growth but tests "concepts" more than vocabulary. We are now working on developing satellite tests, which might be given to all the children in the future. For future evaluations, the questions we need to have answered are:

Will more preschool children stay in school when they get to high school?

Is it going to make an impact on the drop-out?

Has experience in preschool helped or forced institutional change?

We are not yet doing these kinds of longitudinal studies. What can we evaluate now which will be most meaningful? Perhaps the following:

Is their motivation greater?

Are they under-achievers, over-achievers or achieving at their expected level?

Are they ahead of similar groups of youngsters in the years past who did not have the advantage of preschool?

How can we improve the program?

We have a long way to go in evaluation. Of particular interest to us should be the recommendations by the Secretary of H.E.W.:

Encouragement for the replacement of summer Head Start Programs with full year programs. (Incidentally, in the State Preschool Program, we do not fund summer school programs only).

The greater use of Title I (ESEA) funds for Follow Through - the Office of Compensatory Education is moving in that direction.

The use of the ESEA and other Federal funds for programs comparable to Head Start. In California, preschool is frequently included as a part of the total comprehensive plan for an ESEA Title I Program.

The transfer of Day Care and Extended Day Care and other early childhood education programs operated by the Children's Bureau to the Office of Child Development in H.E.W., along with Head Start.

In our California State Preschool program we are not reaching all of the needy children. We are not even reaching all of the disadvantaged welfare children. We are reaching less than 15,000 of the 150,000 welfare or potential welfare recipient children as estimated by the State Department of Social Welfare.

In Head Start, Title I Preschool, Children's Centers and the State Preschool Program, we believe that about 50,000 of these children, or about one-third, are being reached. We do feel, however, that our state evaluation results show a very encouraging picture for those children who are reached, and for their families.

What is the direction for the future? About the time of the release of the Westinghouse Report, the President's message of April 9, 1969, in which he announced the transfer of Head Start, included this exciting hope and plan for the future: "There is a national commitment to provide all American children an opportunity for healthful and stimulating development during the first five years of life."

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