

Kindergarten Attendance and Readiness for Baltimore's Class of 2027

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This brief examines kindergarten readiness and attendance in kindergarten for children enrolled in publicly provided early education programs as well as similar children who entered kindergarten without enrolling in these programs.

Key Findings

1. Children who do not participate in publicly funded early education programs are less likely to be kindergarten ready and miss more school.

Children who enrolled in kindergarten without participating in early childhood programming were the least likely to be kindergarten ready and most likely to be chronically absent, i.e., miss more than a month of school.

2. Conversely, children enrolled in early childhood programs are more likely to be kindergarten ready and less likely to be chronically absent.

Children who attended Head Start followed by Pre-K, or Head Start for two consecutive years, were 3.6 and 1.3 times more likely be kindergarten ready than students not enrolled in these programs. Children who participated in one year of Pre-K were 3.0 times as likely to be ready. All groups were less likely to be chronically absent, or miss more than a month of school, compared to children who did not enroll in these programs.

Table 1
Kindergarten Readiness by Participation in Early Education Programs
Compared to Children Not Enrolled

| Program | Increased Odds of Being Kindergarten Ready |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Head Start for two years N=550 | 1.3* |
| Pre-K as 4-year-old N=2,300 | 3.0*** |
| Head Start then Pre-K N=839 | 3.6*** |

Source: BERC's Early Education Data Collaborative (Total N = 4,715).
*p<0.01, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.001

3. The most vulnerable populations benefit the most from publicly funded early education programs.

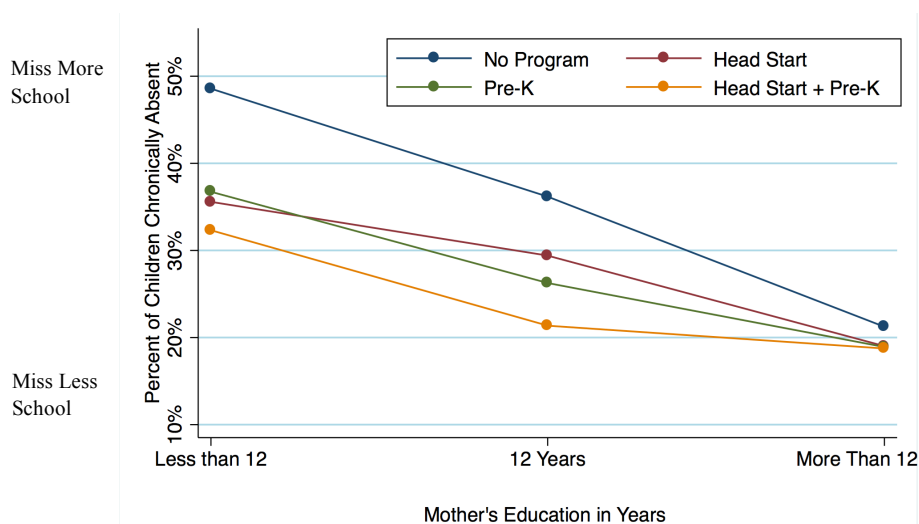
Nearly half of children who were not enrolled in Head Start or Pre-K and whose mothers had completed less than 12 years of schooling at the time of the child's birth were chronically absent. Similar children enrolled in Head Start, Pre-K or Head Start followed by Pre-K were significantly less likely to miss a month of school in kindergarten.

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Figure 1. Percent of Kindergartners Missing More than a Month of School by Program Enrollment and Mother's Level of Education.



Next Steps. Beginning in fall 2014, Head Start consolidated its programming to offer services only to three-year-olds, which allowed it to serve more three-year olds as City Schools served four-year olds. At the same time, Head Start and City Schools worked together to facilitate the transition of 4-year-olds to Pre-K. These findings suggest that this consolidation will yield increased numbers of students served and therefore increased readiness and attendance.

This brief represents the continued work made possible by the Early Education Data Collaborative, whose members include: Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore City Public Schools, The Ark, Baltimore City Head Start, Family League of Baltimore, and Maryland Family Network.

Methodology. Children were credited as attending each program if they were enrolled for at least 90 calendar days as a three- or four-year-old based on enrollment data provided by the programs. Children who did not participate in any program are the reference group. The analysis uses multilevel models of students within the census tract of their birth and controls for mother's education, child's birth weight, preterm birth, parity, mother's age at birth, mother's race/ethnicity, and whether the mother received financial assistance for medical care at time of child's birth.

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