



On My Way Pre-K

RESEARCH FINDINGS

FINAL REPORTS INTRODUCTION BY JENN FINDERS, PH.D.
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Report Takeaways

Indiana's On My Way Pre-K program offers high-quality early learning to children from low-income families. The enclosed reports present data from two research efforts aimed at studying On My Way Pre-K and its effects. Results demonstrate that children who attend the program have stronger general school readiness, language and literacy skills in kindergarten than their peers with similar family incomes who attend lower-quality programs. These patterns are maintained in grades 3 and 4 standardized Math and English/Language Arts scores as children progress through schooling. Further, children who attend On My Way Pre-K perform on a par with national norms of higher-income children on at least one oral language and literacy skill prior to the start of kindergarten. Still, only 28-48% of children in On My Way Pre-K meet target benchmarks set for higher-income children on language, literacy and math skills. Together, findings indicate that On My Way Pre-K is working as intended by providing a more enriching learning experience than low-income children may otherwise have access to, and in turn, this gives them a greater chance of succeeding in elementary school. Findings also highlight opportunities to enhance the quality of program delivery to ensure children are receiving the strongest start to their education. Specifically, it may be beneficial to offer professional development to teachers that focuses on instructional quality to support the development of specific math, literacy and executive function skills.



Report Summaries

On My Way Pre-K Pilot Program Evaluation Report

Purdue University researchers from the Center for Early Learning have been conducting an ongoing longitudinal study of On My Way Pre-K to evaluate program effectiveness. They have followed a sample of 376 children who attended the program rated as Level 3 or 4 on PATHS to Quality, and 182 children who attended comparable programs that were either not participating in PATHS to Quality or were rated Level 1. All participating children were assessed on a variety of school readiness measures during the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten years and on the Indiana Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network Math and English/Language Arts tests in grades 3 and 4. Researchers examined whether children who attended On My Way Pre-K gained more skills than those in comparison programs. Indeed, children performed better than comparison children on general school readiness skills, such as identifying shapes, colors and numbers and language and literacy skills in kindergarten. The On My Way Pre-K students also tended to have higher performance on ILEARN English/Language Arts tests than the comparison children in grades 3 and 4.

However, children who attended On My Way Pre-K performed similarly to children in comparison programs on self-regulation, social and behavioral competence, executive functioning and mathematics in kindergarten. They also had comparable attendance rates, discipline records, and special education placements in grades 3 and 4. Importantly, parents were overwhelmingly satisfied with On My Way Pre-K and reported that the program allowed them to become more self-sufficient.

Report Summaries

Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Report

The Kindergarten Readiness Indicators assessment was implemented for the first time in On My Way Pre-K classrooms statewide in the spring of the 2020-2021 school year. The KRI measures oral language, literacy and math skills prior to kindergarten entry. Researchers from NORC at the University of Chicago analyzed KRI data from 1,608 students of the 2,476 students enrolled in On My Way Pre-K programs across the state of Indiana were assessed in the Spring of 2021. Approximately 78% of children in the sample qualified for On My Way Pre-K based on income eligibility. On average, children scored at or above national target levels on 29% of the language and literacy skills and 40% of the math skills that were assessed in the KRI. Approximately 5% of children scored at or above target levels on all four oral language and literacy skills and 25% scored at or above target on both math skills. Girls had higher OLL skills than boys; children attending home-based centers and children who were white scored higher on most skills as well. It is important to note that because the sample includes children who do not qualify for On My Way Pre-K, these patterns may not be representative of On My Way Pre-K students. Further, there is no way to compare these trends in children with other incomes and/or quality of pre-kindergarten experiences. In other words, we can only draw conclusions based on the national thresholds set by children from more advantaged backgrounds.