



## On My Way Pre-K Year One Update

The Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning (OECOSL), under the direction of the Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), works alongside its partners in administering the State of Indiana's preschool pilot program, On My Way Pre-K. On My Way Pre-K awards grants to 4-year-olds from low-income families, so they may have access to high-quality Pre-K programs the year before they begin kindergarten. Eligible families may use the grant at any approved On My Way Pre-K program. Approved programs may be located in a public or private school, licensed child care center, licensed home, or registered ministry, as long as that program meets the quality requirements and is registered as an On My Way Pre-K provider. Families may choose from a program that is full or part-day, as well as from programs that end with the school year or continue through the summer.

OECOSL, in partnership with Purdue University, has been conducting a 4-year longitudinal study of the On My Way Pre-K program and has concluded the first full year of the study. A yearly reporting requirement is set in place to monitor the progress of the program while also making sure the study is being implemented as expected. With only one full year of implementation to date, the On My Way Pre-K program and study is still in an early implementation phase and not yet capable of fully evaluating effectiveness; however, the information presented here can be considered early feedback and should be used only to make adjustments that will lead to increased program effectiveness in the future. Year one of the evaluation begins to answer three main questions:

1. Does participation in On My Way Pre-K result in improved school readiness and better early school performance?
2. What is the rate of growth of children's early academic skills, from fall to spring of pre-K and fall to spring of Kindergarten?
3. What is the quality of On My Way Pre-K classrooms?

The original sample for the child outcome evaluation study comprised a total of 381 randomly-selected 4-year-old children located in 78 randomly-selected classrooms or homes. Two hundred eighty-two of the selected children were attending On My Way Pre-K in the Fall of 2015, and a comparison group of 99 children were selected from the CCDF voucher program and were attending a CCDF-approved center-based program that was either not participating in Paths to Quality ("Level 0") or was rated at the lowest quality level in Paths to Quality ("Level 1"). Participation in the evaluation study was voluntary on the part of the child, family, and provider which made identification of sample cases more challenging. FSSA appreciates the participation of those providers and families in the program who have assisted the agency in learning more about the services being provided.

### **Early evaluation of the On My Way Pre-K programs yielded the following feedback:**

- The children participating in On My Way Pre-K are among some of the most educationally needy Hoosiers. They entered their programs in the fall with lower skill levels than their like peers.

- Early evidence shows that children participating in On My Way Pre-K gained skills from fall to spring at a higher rate than their peers. These gains included several key aspects of school readiness: language comprehension, early literacy, executive functioning, and a reduction in behavior problems in the classroom. Most of these differences were statistically significant.

**Significant impacts are being seen for families who are participating in the On My Way Pre-k program:**

- Fifty-seven percent of the children attending On My Way Pre-K had not attended any child care or preschool program in the prior year.
- More than 25 percent of parents said if they had not gotten their child into On My Way Pre-K, they did not know if the child would have attended any early childhood program this year.
- When families who had children attending On My Way Pre-k programs were asked “Has having your child in On My Way Pre-K helped you \_\_\_\_\_,” the responses, included:
  - 51 percent responded that they had increased work or school hours.
  - 35 percent responded that they had been able to obtain new employment.
  - 33 percent responded that they were able to begin school or job training.

Overall, the feedback and research that has been conducted thus far is consistent with a conclusion that On My Way Pre-K has the potential to improve lower income 4-year-olds’ early learning skills and readiness for kindergarten, especially in language comprehension, early literacy skills, and classroom behavior.

OECOSL, in partnership with Purdue University, will continue this longitudinal study and is eager to share other emerging trends and areas for improvement throughout the course of the study. If there are any questions regarding the On My Way Pre-K program, please contact Nicole Norvell via email at [Nicole.Norvell@fssa.in.gov](mailto:Nicole.Norvell@fssa.in.gov).