

Boston EQUIP

Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project

Profile of Head Start Programs

(Community Profiles 2001 Data)

Associated Early Care and Education, Inc. (formerly Associated Day Care Services) and a community-based advisory of early care and education providers, advocates, and policymakers established Boston EQUIP in 1995 in an effort to improve the quality of early care and education services in Boston. After completing its first survey of licensed center-based child care, family child care, public pre-school programs, and after-school programs, Boston EQUIP's advisory established a set of five benchmarks for quality improvement in the areas of accreditation, facilities, teacher education and training, teacher salaries, and parent engagement. Since that time, Boston EQUIP has surveyed Boston's licensed early care and education school-age child care programs three times – in 1997, 1999, and most recently in the winter of 2000-2001.

The following report summarizes the results of 2001 Boston EQUIP surveys from Head Start programs in Boston. A total of 17 Head Start programs responded to the survey.

Parent and Child Demographics

Although all Head Start families meet specific income guidelines, the children attending Head Start programs come from a variety of racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. In 2001, programs reported the following ethnic/racial make up of Head Start children:

Racial/Ethnic Background	Percentage of HS Children	Percentage of HS Teachers
Asian	5%	2%
African-American	40%	36%
Caucasian	11%	21%
Hispanic	30%	33%
Native American	<1%	<1%
Unable to Determine	9%	0%
Other	5%	7%

On average, programs report serving 73% single-parent families. On average, approximately 79% of each program's families earn under \$20,000 annually, and approximately 26% earn between \$20,000 and \$40,000 annually.

In each program, about 43% of families speak English as a second language. The table below shows a variety of languages and the average percentage of children who speak the language at home, children who speak it in the classroom, and teachers who speak the language per program.

Language	% children who speak it at home	% children who speak in classroom	% teachers who speak
American Sign Language	<1%	1%	<1%
Chinese	<1%	3%	2%
English	54%	65%	57%
Haitian-Creole	10%	4%	6%
Khmer	0%	0%	0%
Portuguese	1%	1%	5%
Russian	<1%	<1%	0%
Spanish	26%	22%	27%
Other	5%	4%	2%

Parents of Head Start children participate in programs at relatively high rates. Below is a selection of parent activities and median participation rates for parents in Head Start programs.

Activity	Median Participation Rate
Helping in Classroom	10%
Fundraising	10%
Participation on Governance Council	20%
Helping with Field Trips	30%
Joining in Celebrations and Holidays	50%
Facilities Renovation	<1%
Parent Groups	20%
Parent/Teacher Conferences	93%
Advocacy	10%
Hiring Staff	8%
Staff Evaluation	<1%

Serving Children with Special Needs

The Head Start programs responding to the 2001 Boston EQUIP survey serve an average of 14 children each who are involved with Early Intervention, and an average of 10 per program who have IEPs. On average, programs reported serving 12 children per program who required adaptations of the program. Of those 11% required physical modifications of the program, 22% required additional or different staffing, 29% required additional staff training, 32% required curriculum adjustments, and 7% required other adaptations.

Programs cited the following barriers to serving children with special needs:

Barrier	Percentage
Space Limitations	24%
Staffing	35%
Training	29%
Inadequate Resources	6%
None	41%

Head Start programs reported referring an average of 14 children per program for special needs services within the previous year. Of those, programs reported that on average 22% did not actually receive the services. In 22% of those cases, programs said services were not available. In 11% of the cases, scheduling conflicts prevented the child from receiving the services, and in 44% of the cases a parent refused the services.

Teaching Staff

Head Start staff are participating in higher education at significant rates. Head Start Directors reported that 56% of lead teachers, 66% of teachers, and 51% of assistant teachers had participated in training for college credit in the previous year. About half of the directors responding had themselves received training for college credit in the previous year.

As in other early care and education programs, Head Start is facing a challenge in recruiting and retaining qualified staff. Directors reported **37% turnover for full-time lead teachers**, 30% turnover for full-time teachers, 5% for part-time teachers, 22% for full-time assistant teachers, and 18% for part-time assistant teachers. The citywide average teacher turnover for all center-based early care and education programs was 28% for the same time period.

Directors gave the following reasons for staff departures:

Reason for Departure	% of teachers leaving for this reason
Maternity Leave	15%
Moving	11%
Position in Other Field	19%
Position in Related Field	15%
Work in Public Schools	7%
Change in Same Agency	0%
Lack of Benefits	0%
Lack of Hours	0%
Returning to School	4%
Disciplinary Reasons	11%
Salary	11%
Other	7%

Curriculum Development

Head Start programs used a variety of strategies to develop curricula. In most cases, program's reported that a curriculum or educational coordinator was responsible for curriculum development (71%), but 35% said curriculum was developed by a lead teacher, 29% by a teacher, and 27% said the director had curriculum development responsibilities. 18% of programs reported using a group process to develop curriculum.

94% of Head Start programs reported that preparation time was set aside specifically for curriculum development – an average of 4.3 hours per week. When asked what supports were needed in the area of curriculum development the programs identified the following priorities:

Curriculum Development Support	Percent identified as need
Funding for on-site consultation	47%
More educated and trained staff	59%
Training in Curriculum Frameworks	29%
Supplies for Implementation	35%
None	6%

Community Collaboration

Collaboration is critical to the success of Head Start and other early care and education programs. Head Start programs were asked to rate their collaboration with various members of the community on a scale from one to five, with five being the highest level of collaboration. They responded as follows:

Collaboration Partner	Rating on a Scale of 1 – 5
Public Schools	3.5
Other Head Start Programs	4.6
Local Government	2.9
Family Child Care	2.4
Child Care Centers	3.4
Business Community	2.3

For more information contact Associated Early Care and Education Boston EQUIP, 617-695-0700, x229, or go to www.AssociatedEarlyCareAndEducation.org.