

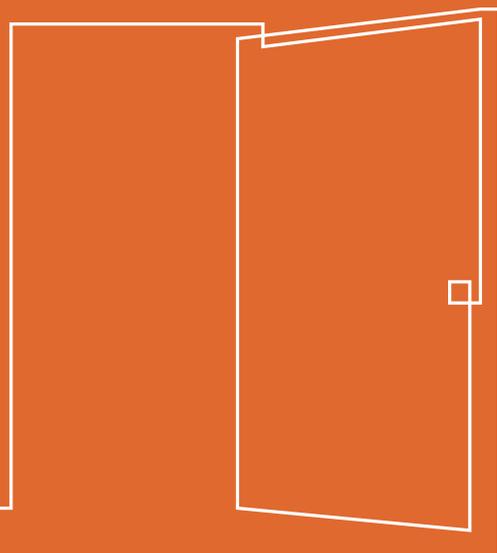
# PARTNERS FOR SUCCESS:

CASE STUDIES OF COLLABORATION  
BETWEEN HEAD START AND PRE-K



*Emmalie Dropkin*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, the national quest to maintain US leadership in the global economy has renewed interest in and debate about the role of education in America's economic competitiveness. Growing understanding of the relationship between early brain development and learning for children aged birth to five has become newly relevant to this debate. The reality of increased childhood poverty and the imperative to build pathways into the middle class add further urgency to finding solutions for vulnerable children and families.

In January 2013, President Obama invigorated the national discussion of early childhood care and education by including it as a key feature in his State of the Union address. Following the speech, the President released a proposal to expand early childhood care and education through significant new investments in home visiting, Early Head Start, and incentives for states to expand pre-kindergarten access. The proposal has sparked discussion and debate about the potential for universal access, the need for a comprehensive approach, and the best delivery mechanisms for early learning services.

To inform these discussions, valuable lessons can be drawn from existing early childhood care and education program collaborations developed by communities and states. Collaboration among programs across the early learning spectrum is necessary to fully realize a vision of greater access to high quality programs, and Head Start – the nation's oldest and most innovative early learning program – has many examples to offer. This report, with eleven case studies from states (CA, NJ, KS, MN, OR, WA, WV) and communities (Alexandria, VA; Chicago, IL; Harrisburg, PA; Manchester CT), illustrates four different models of collaboration between Head Start programs and pre-K partners from across the United States:

1. Expanding access through the blending of programs
2. Expanding access through parallel programs
3. Expanding services through the blending of funds
4. Parental choice

It is far from an exhaustive look at all states and communities, but it provides a glimpse into the effective collaboration that must drive the development of future early childhood care and education programming.

Several common themes emerge from examination of the four models:

1. **Collaboration between programs can improve children and families' lives** - Each case study describes a collaboration that enabled more children to be served and improved the quality of services. Ultimately, that is the indicator of successful impact for any effort.
2. **Leadership is critical** - Nearly every local or state Head Start representative interviewed described a superintendent, Mayor, principal, Early Learning Advisory Council or other leaders who were committed to creating and sustaining an effective partnership.

- 3. Relationships are essential** - When all team members have respect for each other and the common commitment to provide educational opportunities for children, partnerships have the potential to be successful.
- 4. Head Start's unique structure holds the system together** - Despite multiple funding sources, all of the partnerships described in the following report are only possible with the uniquely structured Head Start system of funding and accountability, which funnels money directly to local communities, enabling highly focused, locally appropriate, and responsive programs.
- 5. The most vulnerable children and families must be prioritized** - State and local priority should be to make sure that children with the highest needs have comprehensive services, and allow other children to have access when those services are necessary and/or feasible.

### *RECOMMENDATIONS:*

Expanding access to high quality pre-K cannot be accomplished through just one model. Each model studied emphasizes the importance of meeting diverse needs through local collaboration and coordination. States should build from existing, effective models, rather than supplant them. Therefore, in order to expand access to high quality pre-K and based on years of experience in early childhood care and education, NHSA makes the following recommendations to states developing their early learning systems:

- 1. Consider successful models for partnership and design mixed and diverse delivery systems that utilize existing providers to allow faster scaling, higher quality, and locally-appropriate programs.**
- 2. Facilitate the development of early learning systems by engaging strong, committed leaders and all stakeholders in thoughtful and deliberate pursuit of high quality for all children.**
- 3. Draw on Head Start as a valuable resource with deep knowledge of comprehensive health and development, developmentally appropriate instruction, parent and family engagement, rigorous standards and performance monitoring, meaningful coordination, effective teacher preparation and more.**

# INTRODUCTION

Children’s brains develop fastest during the first five years of life, shaped by their experiences, their environments, and the people who care for them. Children who are in enriching, developmentally appropriate settings with nurturing adults during this period are better prepared for success in school and in life. Such experiences have been proven to be most powerful for children in poverty, who may have limited learning opportunities elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Since 1965, Head Start and Early Head Start programs (referred to collectively as Head Start) have provided these opportunities to more than 28 million children.

In January 2013, President Barack Obama reinvigorated the national discussion of early childhood care and education by including it as a key feature in his State of the Union address, saying:

*Study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But today, fewer than 3 in 10 four year-olds are enrolled in a high quality preschool program. Most middle-class parents can’t afford a few hundred bucks a week for private preschool. And for poor kids who need help the most, this lack of access to preschool education can shadow them for the rest of their lives.<sup>2</sup>*

Following the speech, the President released a proposal to expand early childhood care and education through significant new investments in home visiting, Early Head Start, and incentives for states to expand pre-kindergarten access. These ideas have sparked discussion and debate about the potential for universal access, the need for a comprehensive approach, and the best delivery mechanisms for early learning services.

These are all important conversations that must continue as the President’s proposal and varied state initiatives move forward, but there are also valuable lessons that can be drawn from existing early childhood care and education programs and the systems they have developed to meet the needs of communities and states. Programs across the early learning spectrum must collaborate to fully realize a vision of greater access to high quality programs, and Head Start – the nation’s oldest and

most innovative early learning program – has much to offer. This report illustrates how Head Start programs collaborate with pre-K partners across the United States to expand access to high quality early learning for millions of at-risk children and to support them and their families in achieving greater success in school and in life. It is far from an exhaustive look at all states and communities, but it provides a necessary glimpse into effective collaboration that must drive the development of future early childhood care and education programming.

## HEAD START: A NATIONAL COMMITMENT

Since the summer of 1965, Head Start has represented a national commitment to children living in poverty – a commitment to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in school and in life if given a window of opportunity during the early years. The commitment has been sustained by every president since and has changed the lives of 28 million American children and their families. Today Head Start serves more than 850,000 three and four-year-olds each year, and Early Head Start serves nearly 120,000 pregnant women and children between birth and three.

For nearly fifty years, Head Start has embraced a culture of constant improvement and innovation and has set the bar for highly effective early childhood care and education. The following essential principles of the Head Start model have been tested and proven consistently in diverse communities across the nation:

- Parent/Family Engagement
- Comprehensive Services
- Performance Standards
- Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum and Instruction
- Birth to Five Model
- Priority for Serving the Most Vulnerable Children and Families
- Shared Governance
- Culture of Understanding and Respect
- Federal to Local Funding Structure

Head Start is distinguished by a culture of understanding and respect among the children, families, and staff in its community. This compassionate partnership offers children respite from often tumultuous and unstable circumstances and offers parents a sense of belonging, trust and empowerment. Head Start also partners with families to stabilize their lives and meet their potential. Together with the other elements, this understanding and respect ensures that the future success of children is never in doubt.

Decades of research have demonstrated clear benefits to Head Start children, both in the short-term and over the course of their lives. As a result of participation in Head Start, children:

- Have lower childhood mortality rates<sup>3</sup>
- Have stronger social-emotional development<sup>4</sup>
- Are more prepared for school<sup>5</sup>
- Require less special education<sup>6</sup> and are less likely to repeat a grade<sup>7</sup>
- Have parents who spend more time helping them learn<sup>8</sup>
- Are less likely to become teen parents or depend on social service programs<sup>9</sup>
- Are more likely to graduate high school and attend college<sup>10</sup>
- Are less likely to be involved with the criminal justice system<sup>11</sup>
- Are less likely to smoke<sup>12</sup> and more likely to be in good health as adults<sup>13</sup>
- Have higher incomes as adults<sup>14</sup>
- And achieve greater success in school and in life

Yet this success does not happen in isolation. Head Start programs partner with other early learning providers, other social service providers, local businesses, libraries, museums, and other organizations committed to early childhood education – especially, sometimes most importantly, with local public school systems.

## STATE PREKINDERGARTEN

State-funded prekindergarten programs have developed at different rates in different states; the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) reported that in 2011-2012, 52 state-funded pre-K programs served 1.3 million children, primarily four-year-olds, in 40 states.<sup>15</sup>

These programs vary considerably in their use of standards, staffing, comprehensive services, monitoring, funding, and more. Based on NIEER’s evaluation of state programs against a rubric of benchmarks, not only were some states regressing in their program quality and access as a result of state budget cuts, but “the vast majority of children served are in programs where funding per child may be inadequate to provide a quality education.”<sup>16</sup>

*As the President’s proposal moves forward and states begin to consider how their pre-K systems could evolve, Head Start should be a key collaborator both in system design and in service delivery.*

Research findings on the outcomes of state pre-K programs vary as well. Recent studies have shown that an Oklahoma universal pre-K program that had strong initial effects had smaller effects at third grade, limited to math and stronger from some subgroups.<sup>17</sup> Other research, however, has documented benefits of New Jersey’s Abbott Preschool Program through fourth and fifth grade in all assessed subject areas<sup>18</sup> and significant effects of Michigan’s Great Start Readiness Program on grade retention and on-time high school graduation.<sup>19</sup> The varied pre-K efforts in these states, and the research on their effectiveness, should inform the development or expansion of pre-K in other states.

Despite mixed results of existing pre-K programs, the evidence from child development research is clear that early intervention can have long-term effects when provided by a high quality program and provides significant return on investment.<sup>20</sup> Recognizing potential benefits to children, families, and communities and the need for far greater access, President Obama proposed a Preschool For All initiative in his Fiscal 2014 Budget. This plan would provide funding to states to create or expand pre-K offerings with all the features of high quality early learning and comprehensive services. While there is no explicit role for Head Start for four-year-olds laid out in this expansion plan, it indicates that states can subgrant funds to community partners to deliver services. Numerous states and districts already partner with

Head Start in this way, and so, as the President’s proposal moves forward and states begin to consider how their pre-K systems could evolve, Head Start should be a key collaborator both in system design and in service delivery.

## HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

School readiness has always been one of the components of Head Start, and most programs have long histories of working with local school districts; depending on its service area, a Head Start program may work with one to more than forty school districts. The 2007 reauthorization of the Head Start Act made these arrangements mandatory for Head Start programs, requiring Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between programs and their districts. These arrangements aim to ensure that at minimum children are able to transition smoothly from Head Start to kindergarten, but in many districts they are the basis for much deeper partnerships, with both Head Start programs and schools contributing to create stronger early childhood education opportunities in their local communities.

As a report from the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Pew Charitable Trusts’ Pre-K Now initiative laid out in 2007, Head Start and pre-K collaborations allow communities to improve quality across early childhood offerings, expand access to more children, improve coordination, streamline enrollment, and be more responsive to the needs of children and families.<sup>21</sup> As with any partnership between two or more systems with long histories, entrenched procedures, conflicting standards, and sometimes different missions, there are barriers to successful collaboration. Yet, the benefits for at-risk children have led many districts and states to commit to working together, often with great success.<sup>22</sup>

These partnerships may and should look significantly different based on the needs of a particular community – both Head Start programs and schools serve children in inner-cities, in frontier counties, on American Indian reservations and in migrant worker camps, and so their efforts have evolved to best meet children and families in the most efficient and effective ways possible. In addition to variation by local needs, there is variation based on local resources, standards, and will. Some Head Start programs serve additional students with

state pre-K dollars in center-based classrooms; some Head Start programs provide comprehensive services to children in blended pre-K classrooms in public schools; yet others blend Head Start and state funding to provide full-day full-year services to the most vulnerable children. Especially for the most at-risk children, who have been shown to benefit most from early learning opportunities,<sup>23</sup> expanding access is key to ensuring success in school and in life.

This report adds to the national conversation about how to provide greater access to early learning by examining in greater detail several models for collaboration that Head Start and state pre-K programs have developed in different states. In the coming years, states should consider how these alternatives or other innovative designs best meet the needs of their communities as they make decisions about expanding opportunities for early childhood education.

## COLLABORATION MODELS

Nearly all state early learning systems include Head Start as a key partner in order to provide services to a greater number of children and to provide more extensive services to the most vulnerable children; examples from eleven states are described here. This paper will explore four models for collaboration:

1. Expanding access through blending programs
2. Expanding access through parallel programs
3. Expanding services through blending funds
4. Parental choice

The case studies throughout this report may include features of multiple collaboration models but have been organized by their primary feature. For case studies that describe partnerships with a state pre-K program that also operates separately from Head Start, the features and summary describe only partnership classrooms. All classrooms funded even in part with Head Start funds are subject to Head Start monitoring based on the Head Start Performance Standards, including guidelines for Head Start eligibility based on family income below 100% of poverty, disability, homelessness, and/or foster care placement.

**MODEL 1: EXPANDED ACCESS,  
BLENDED PROGRAMS**

One common model for collaboration has sprung up where Head Start and state pre-K funding are used to serve children in common classrooms, either in Head Start centers or school-based settings. Through these

programs, additional children are able to access the Head Start model of whole child development and in some cases whole family support. In some places, like Oregon, the alignment of the programs happens at the state level, in the very legislation for pre-K; in the other, local case studies, the model has evolved through partnership between Head Start programs and school systems.

<b>CASE STUDY A: KANSAS EARLY LEARNING COMMUNITIES</b>	
Population Served:	Head Start eligible, Kansas Pre-K eligible (based on risk factors including poverty, developmental delay, limited English proficiency), Special Education preschool
Funding Sources:	Kansas Early Childhood Block Grant, Head Start, Kansas Pre-K, Special Education Preschool, Migrant Preschool, sliding scale fees, local option budgets/bond issue
Summary:	<p>The Kansas Early Learning Communities, now entering their sixth year, consist of nine school districts that have achieved full or partial integration of Head Start, the Kansas Pre-K program, special education preschool, and in some areas migrant preschool. This project was initiated by the Kansas Head Start Association under an early childhood block grant from the state, which supported the hiring of a part-time project coordinator, evaluation of the project, support for state-wide ELC meetings, and some funds to school districts.</p> <p>To get involved, school districts undertake a process of (1) consultation, (2) strategic planning, (3) implementation, and (4) sustainability planning. In each district’s ELC, the various preschool options are integrated as mixed classrooms, and their standards are cross-walked with the district following the highest standard in each area. For example, the Pre-K program has the highest teacher credential requirement, the special education program has the strongest inclusion requirements, and Head Start has the most extensive comprehensive and family services requirements – so all of these are met for all children. Details of implementation vary by school district, due to a strong focus on local control. In one location, ELC classrooms have been established at a Housing Authority; all other classrooms are located in schools.</p> <p>Evaluation is a key piece of the Early Learning Communities project, and a Collaboration Measurement Tool was developed by the University of Kansas to help assess the engagement of various partners in the ELC collaborations.</p> <p>While the ELC project currently operates in only a fraction of Kansas school districts, its success is leading to plans for significant expansion in coming years. Some schools involved are also working toward expanding comprehensive services to higher grades.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://kspreschoolpartners.org/what-ks-preschool-program-model">http://kspreschoolpartners.org/what-ks-preschool-program-model</a>

<b>CASE STUDY B: OREGON PRE-K (OPK)</b>	
Population Served:	Head Start eligible
Funding Sources:	Head Start, Oregon Pre-K
Summary:	<p>Since the inception of Oregon’s Pre-K program (OPK) nearly thirty years ago, state legislation has mandated the use of Head Start Performance Standards for determining eligibility, services, and other aspects of state pre-K. For families, state pre-K and Head Start look essentially identical: they enroll the same children, each serving about half, and all children receive comprehensive services using Head Start’s whole child model. Nearly all Head Start programs operate some slots through OPK, and only 8 sites have OPK without Head Start. Services are offered through the full range of Head Start providers, including both center-based and school-based locations. Head Start and OPK also collaborate with the state’s Crisis Relief Nurseries and home visiting programs.</p> <p>Through a partnership with the Head Start regional training and technical assistance system, Head Start and OPK are both monitored by regional Head Start T/TA. Due to Oregon’s commitment to high quality early learning, twice the number of children in poverty are able to access the Head Start model for comprehensive services.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=41">http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=41</a> , <a href="http://www.ohsa.net/">http://www.ohsa.net/</a>

<b>CASE STUDY C: CHICAGO PRESCHOOL FOR ALL (ILLINOIS)</b>	
Population Served:	Head Start eligible, all children
Funding Sources:	Head Start, State Pre-K, sliding scale fees (200-400% poverty), full tuition (over 400% poverty), Child Care
Summary:	<p>The City of Chicago holds a Head Start grant and “delegates” service delivery to both the public schools and numerous other agencies; in addition, state pre-K funding from the district is allocated among Chicago’s Head Start delegates to expand services at both school-based and center-based sites. Families are enrolled under one funding source or another based on income eligibility, and classrooms include students funded through either or both funding streams. Both half-day and full-day program options are available based on families’ needs; for full-day services, child care funding is used to extend the day.</p> <p>For pre-K students funded solely through Preschool for All, Head Start comprehensive services may be modified due to lack of funds and infrastructure for these supports.</p> <p>In Chicago, each funding stream has a particular intent, and by offering all of them within each agency, it’s possible to better match families’ needs to the best program option.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://www.cps.edu/Schools/EarlyChildhood/Pages/Preschoolprogramtypes.aspx">http://www.cps.edu/Schools/EarlyChildhood/Pages/Preschoolprogramtypes.aspx</a>

## CASE STUDY D: HARRISBURG PRESCHOOL PROGRAM (PENNSYLVANIA)

Population Served:	Head Start eligible, children up to 300% poverty
Funding Sources:	Head Start, Pre-K Counts (PA state pre-K), Kellogg Foundation (temporary), EITC
Summary:	<p>The Harrisburg Preschool Program (HPP) was begun under the leadership of a superintendent and began with 12 Head Start classrooms moving into school-based sites. Over time, these classrooms were merged with state-funded pre-K classrooms and evaluated through a grant from the Kellogg Foundation. Regardless of how their slots were funded, children received all comprehensive services and all classrooms met Head Start standards. State funds were used to support the higher certification requirements for pre-K teachers. In addition, a “progress monitor” who was not a direct supervisor was hired to oversee implementation of Head Start regulations.</p> <p>The advantages to this school-based program include access to school facilities, easier transitions for children, common professional development for all teaching staff, co-branded enrollment, and opportunities for parents to build relationships with schools. However, this model is also vulnerable to changes in leadership and funding; since 2010-11, the Board of Education gave up state pre-K funding, and the HPP is now run solely by the Head Start grantee, though many features of the partnership remain in place.</p> <p>The HPP evaluation found benefits for children’s academic scores through the fifth grade, as well as positive impacts on their engagement with school. In addition, since the HPP has been in existence, kindergarten teachers in their schools have begun home visits, and the value of engaging families is spreading.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://www.prevention.psu.edu/projects/REACH.html">http://www.prevention.psu.edu/projects/REACH.html</a>

## MODEL 2: EXPANDED ACCESS, PARALLEL PROGRAMS

A second model that has been developed in states with both Head Start and state pre-K funding uses Head Start providers to deliver both Head Start and pre-K services, but in separate classrooms. Again, additional children are able to access the Head Start model of whole child development and in some cases whole family support, though divisions remain between the groups of children, and services may be somewhat different.

<b>CASE STUDY E: WASHINGTON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ECEAP)</b>	
Population Served:	Head Start eligible, ECEAP eligible (110% of poverty)
Funding Sources:	Head Start, State funds, Title I, Child Care, Part C, tuition, private funders
Summary:	<p>Washington’s Department of Early Learning allocates funds for the state’s Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP) to school systems and local programs serving children in a variety of settings. The program is modeled on Head Start, serving children up to 110% of poverty with a similar cost per child and fewer but similar standards and comprehensive services. The programs are not in direct competition but allow services to reach a broader range and greater number of children and families. Some local programs braid additional funds from the Child Care Development Fund, sliding-scale tuition, etc. to expand enrollment or services further.</p> <p>Having one agency administer two programs can create barriers because of separate monitoring, data collection, and state oversight, but programs and school districts are working to find ways to overcome these divisions. Ultimately, collaboration between Head Start and ECEAP ensures high quality for both programs and necessary comprehensive services for a larger number of highly vulnerable four-year-olds.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://www.del.wa.gov/care/find-hs-eceap/">http://www.del.wa.gov/care/find-hs-eceap/</a>

**CASE STUDY F: VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE (ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA)**

Population Served:	Head Start eligible, Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) eligible (250% of poverty)
Funding Sources:	Head Start, State Pre-K (VPI), Child Care, TANF, tuition
Summary:	<p>Virginia’s pre-K funding is distributed to communities, which match the funds and allocate them to local providers. In the case of Alexandria, Virginia, funding is administered by the school system and some is allocated from the schools to the Campagna Center, a multi-purpose agency that has been the sole provider of Alexandria’s Head Start grant for nearly fifty years. Using the two funding streams, the Campagna Center maintains separate classrooms for Head Start and pre-K, all of which are located in schools. Within the classrooms, services look identical for all students, however family services are not required for pre-K students and children are referred for them only as needed. All classrooms are licensed and NAEYC-accredited. In addition, the Campagna Center’s classrooms partner with local special education preschool to ensure children with disabilities receive a full day of services.</p> <p>Through this model, children who are at-risk but not eligible for Head Start – those above 100% of poverty but below 250% - are able to receive services. Because both VPI and Head Start are administered by the Campagna Center, professional development and other staff opportunities are made more accessible to teachers for both programs, however the partnership places real demands on the Campagna Center to maintain clear differentiation of the administration of the two funding streams and to meet slightly different requirements for the programs. While there is theoretically a risk of competition between two similar programs, currently even in combination the funding streams cannot provide sufficient slots to meet the demand for early education.</p>
More information:	<p><a href="http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/">http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/</a>, <a href="http://www.campagnacenter.org/">http://www.campagnacenter.org/</a></p>

## CASE STUDY G: MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT

Population Served:	Head Start eligible, Part C eligible (special education)
Funding Sources:	Head Start, Part C
Summary:	<p>While some Head Start grants are directly held by school districts, in theory bypassing the need for partnership between two systems, collaboration with other early learning programs and braiding of multiple funding streams may still be required to provide the full spectrum of early learning opportunities. In places without state or local funding for pre-K, Head Start may be one of the sole providers of high quality early learning for children in poverty. In the case of Manchester, Connecticut, the local schools do not offer public pre-K, but the Board of Education administers both Head Start and special education preschool.</p> <p>In Manchester, eligible children are enrolled in half-day special education preschool, Head Start, or both and are served in one centralized facility. This ensures that special needs students, who are eligible for both programs, receive comprehensive services that can reduce their need for special education later— sometimes even by age four. It also becomes simpler for Head Start students with undiagnosed special needs to access support services. Classrooms operate separately based on program and meet different sets of standards.</p> <p>As in other models, close relationships with the school system make coordination and access to school-based resources easier and enable Head Start to directly engage with principals and schools in setting kindergarten expectations. In addition, the Board of Education surpasses the required matching funds for Head Start, providing rent, utilities, transportation, and partially covering staff health care costs.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://headstart.townofmanchester.org/">http://headstart.townofmanchester.org/</a>

## MODEL 3: EXPANDED SERVICES

While Head Start’s comprehensive, whole child model benefits at-risk children, no state has the funds to enroll all eligible children. In some states, partnerships allow programs to expand the services offered to families enrolled in either Head Start or pre-K.

In many places, the reality is that working families need full-day programs for their children but Head Start and pre-K funding may only support half-day services. In others, high-risk pre-K students also stand to benefit from the Head Start model, and state funding allows Head Start providers to extend additional services to them.

CASE STUDY H: CALIFORNIA STATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM	
Population Served:	Head Start eligible, Pre-K (200% of poverty)
Funding Sources:	Head Start, State Pre-K
Summary:	<p>In California, state funding for pre-K is distributed to both Head Start and non-Head Start programs to deliver services. The majority of Head Start programs in the state receive these funds and braid them with Head Start dollars to expand services. The nature of braiding varies, but typically a program offers a range of services: half-day pre-K, half-day Head Start, or enrollment in both for eligible working families who need full-day services. Eligibility for pre-K is broader than for Head Start, and allows children up to 200% of poverty to be served; however pre-K only students do not receive comprehensive services. For the highest risk families, this model is effective because it increases the support for both child and family by enrolling them in both programs.</p> <p>There is some variation between standards for pre-K and Head Start that programs must address: teacher certification requirements are higher for pre-K and Head Start requires lower adult-to-child ratios. Another recent challenge to the practice of braiding funds has been local and state cuts to early childhood education funding, which has undermined the ability of some programs to meet the needs of their communities.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/">http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/</a>

## CASE STUDY I: NEW JERSEY'S ABBOTT PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Population Served:	All children in 31 targeted "Abbott" districts
Funding Sources:	Head Start, State funding
Summary:	<p>In New Jersey, a court case mandated that children in the highest-poverty districts be given access to high quality early learning opportunities, which led to the development of a system of preschool and pre-K known as the Abbott Preschool Program. Funding is given to the targeted school districts to deliver full-day, full-year universal preschool for three and four-year-olds, with comprehensive services including nutrition, family services, etc. provided to all children. Some Abbott districts contract with local Head Start and child care providers to deliver services.</p> <p>Head Start partners in these districts receive additional funds per child to extend the school day and year and to meet Abbott requirements, including having teachers with BA degrees and lower class sizes than Head Start limits require. A recent evaluation study found that children who attended the Abbott Preschool Program showed significant benefits in reading, math and science through the fifth grade.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://nieer.org/publications/policy-reports/abbott-preschool-program-longitudinal-effects-study-apples">http://nieer.org/publications/policy-reports/abbott-preschool-program-longitudinal-effects-study-apples</a>

## CASE STUDY J: WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSAL PRE-K

Population Served:	All children
Funding Sources:	Head Start, State funding
Summary:	<p>Since 2002, West Virginia has been working toward universal access to pre-K for all three and four-year-olds. The design for this universal model requires that at least 50% of classrooms be operated in collaboration with community partners including Head Start; in 2012-2013, 74% of classrooms were operated through collaboration. Based on the state school aid formula, counties receive funds for each preschool age child, and administer them in different ways based on local needs and resources. In some counties partnerships with Head Start might fund transportation or blended classrooms in schools or enable Head Start to provide comprehensive services to children funded by pre-K.</p> <p>Ultimately this model dramatically expands access to early learning, but the degree of variation and the intersection of numerous sets of regulations and standards can complicate partnerships, as they can across the country. In West Virginia, partnership sites work to meet the highest standards, whether those are child care health service timelines, Head Start requirements for meals, or pre-K requirements for teacher certification. Other challenges include identifying children for Head Start enrollment when pre-K enrollment is universal and identifying a role for pre-K parents in Head Start leadership when their children attend mixed classrooms. Strong working relationships between counties and community partners are fundamental for success.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/universal-prek.php">http://wvde.state.wv.us/oel/universal-prek.php</a> <a href="http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/p2525.pdf">http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/p2525.pdf</a>

## MODEL 4: PARENT CHOICE

The growing role of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) in early learning has been intended to improve parents' knowledge of and access to quality early learning opportunities for their children. In Minnesota, the state has begun using vouchers to enable more parents to access high quality options for their three and four-year-olds; while not a partnership model in the same sense, this allows Head Start programs to reach a greater number of children through use of state funds.

CASE STUDY K: MINNESOTA	
Population Served:	Head Start eligible, Scholarship eligible (up to 185% poverty)
Funding Sources:	Head Start, Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, State funding, Part C
Summary:	<p>In Minnesota, Race to the Top efforts and state funds have been invested in scholarships for families to access to quality early childhood care and education for three and four-year-olds. Families below 185% of poverty can use scholarships toward enrollment in Head Start, child care, or other school readiness programs that have earned the highest rankings in Minnesota's quality rating and improvement system, Parent Aware.</p> <p>Head Start programs deliver services to scholarship students following the Head Start standards with all comprehensive services; in partnerships between Head Start and child care, scholarship funds support improved quality. However, scholarships do not meet Head Start cost per child, and do not fund program expenses beyond individual child costs, such as professional development or administration. While the model improves access to high quality, comprehensive programs and enables parental choice, funding is key. During the 2012-2013 school year, the low value of each scholarship made it difficult for some Head Start programs to find sufficient additional funds to maintain the enrollment of scholarship students and provide the complete whole child model that supports the strongest outcomes for the most at-risk children and families. At the time of this report, the legislature had failed to increase funding sufficiently in order to meet the cost per child for comprehensive services.</p>
More information:	<a href="http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/index.html">http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/EarlyLearn/index.html</a>

## REFLECTIONS

Clearly there is a diverse array of options for states working to create or expand early learning systems, and Head Start programs may be best equipped within those systems to meet the needs of children in poverty. Across the interviews conducted during the writing of this report, and in reflection on the case studies described here, several common themes emerge:

- 1. Collaboration between programs can improve children and families' lives.** Each case study here allowed the programs involved to serve more children and to improve the quality of services. Ultimately, that is the indicator of success for any effort.
- 2. Leadership is critical.** Nearly every local or state Head Start representative interviewed described a superintendent, Mayor, principal, Early Learning Advisory Council or other leaders who were committed to creating and sustaining an effective partnership. The Council of Chief State School Officers has documented the potential role for state leaders in developing state early learning systems<sup>24</sup> and the National Association of Elementary School Principals has articulated a role for principals in the development of an aligned system.<sup>25</sup> Leaders in these positions must be engaged in the process of collaboration with an inclusive team of early learning partners.
- 3. Relationships are essential.** Head Start programs, schools, and child care providers may have slightly different missions and histories, but when all team members have respect for each other and share a common commitment to providing educational opportunities for children, partnerships have the potential to be successful.
- 4. Head Start's unique structure holds the system together.** Despite multiple funding sources, all of the partnerships described in this report are only possible with the uniquely structured Head Start system of funding and accountability, which funnels money directly to local communities, enabling highly focused, locally appropriate, and responsive programs.
- 5. The most vulnerable children and families must be prioritized.** State and local priority should be to make sure that children with the highest needs have comprehensive services and to allow other children to have access when those services are necessary and/or feasible. Research suggests that when universal kindergarten was introduced, high-risk children who enrolled in public kindergarten instead of Head Start saw high school graduation rates decline.<sup>26</sup> Kindergarten programs largely lacked the extensive and comprehensive interventions available through Head Start. The partnership models described in this report all include Head Start as a provider of comprehensive services to the highest-need children; many also find ways to use state funds or other funding sources to extend these services to additional children. The President's proposal for early learning includes the idea of comprehensive services for children enrolled in pre-K, and this component is critical for achieving an effective new early learning system.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The central component of the President’s proposal for early childhood is to expand access to high quality pre-K. This cannot be accomplished through one model of pre-K due to existing capacity and the unique and varied needs of individual children and communities. Every model studied above emphasizes the importance of meeting those needs through local collaboration and coordination. Models for this collaboration and coordination already exist and states should build from them, rather than supplant them. Therefore, in order to expand access to high quality pre-K and based on years of experience in early childhood care and education, NHSA makes the following recommendations to states developing their early learning systems:

1. **Consider successful models for partnership while planning to create or expand early learning systems and design mixed and diverse delivery systems that utilize existing providers to allow faster scaling, higher quality, and locally-appropriate programs.**
2. **Facilitate the development of early learning systems by engaging strong, committed leaders and all stakeholders in thoughtful and deliberate pursuit of high quality for all children.**

### 3. **Draw on Head Start as a valuable resource with deep knowledge of:**

- **Developmentally appropriate curricula** and instruction for children in pre-kindergarten
- **Comprehensive health and development** needs of high-risk children and families
- Clear, meaningful, **evidence-based parent and family engagement** standards
- High quality through **rigorous standards and performance monitoring**
- **Meaningful coordination** between early learning programs and the K to 12 systems
- And effective **teacher preparation and early learning credentialing**

The President’s proposal is a bold new vision for the future of America’s educational system, one that has sparked excitement across the entire field of early childhood care and education. In these times of growth and change, there is much to be learned from the above models. As the voice of Head Start, NHSA stands ready and willing to help ensure the commitment to our nation’s most vulnerable children and families is kept and strengthened in the months and years ahead.

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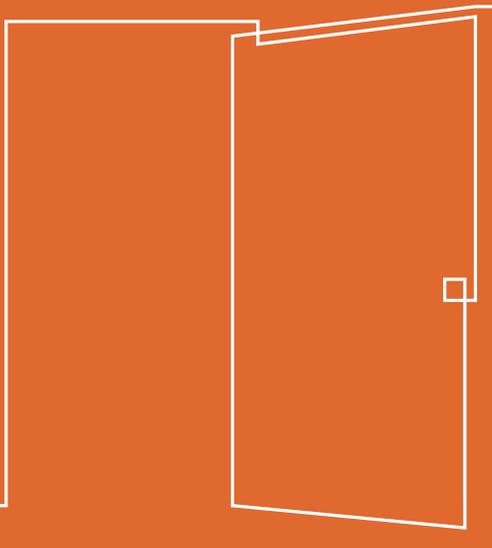
## NHSA VISION

*Because we believe that all children should reach their full potential, every child can succeed, we can impact the success of “at risk” children and quality early education fundamentally transforms children and families*

## OUR VISION IS

**To lead.** To be the untiring and unifying voice that will not be quiet until the most vulnerable children are served with the Head Start model of support for the whole child, the family and the community.

**To advocate.** To work diligently for policy and institutional changes that ensure that the most vulnerable children and families have what they need to succeed.



## NHSA MISSION

Our mission is to coalesce, inspire and support the Head Start field as a leader in early childhood development and education.



NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

1651 PRINCE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314  
703-739-0875  
WWW.NHSA.ORG