First 5 LA Universal Prekindergarten Child Outcome Pilot Study

Project Synopsis

The First 5 LA/LAUP Universal Preschool (UPK) Child Outcome Pilot Study will answer two important types of questions. In the first phase of the study, spring 2007, we will examine the feasibility, reliability, and validity of child development and classroom quality measures in the large, culturally and linguistically diverse population of children served by LAUP programs. The second phase of the study (fall 2007 and spring 2008) will answer questions about the quality, intensity, and overall implementation of LAUP programs and how these factors relate to comprehensive developmental outcomes of children that contribute to their school readiness by the end of their preschool experience.

The first phase of the study began in early 2007 with an in-depth review of measures of children’s developmental outcomes to select those that are most appropriate for the children and families served by LAUP, as well as those that are comparable to measures used in studies of similar populations and to national norms. We will sample LAUP centers and children in spring 2007, administer the child outcome measures, obtain ratings from children’s teachers, and interview the children’s parents. We will analyze the data to identify the cultural and linguistic appropriateness of individual items and measures and will propose a final group of measures for use in the fall and spring of 2007-2008.

The measures that we revise based on what we learn in the first phase of the study will be used as outcome measures of children’s development for the second phase of the study (fall 2007 and spring 2008). In addition to the comprehensive data on child outcomes (direct child assessments, parent reports, and teacher reports), we will collect information on classroom quality, program characteristics, teacher experience and qualifications, and parent satisfaction. Because we do not want to rely on a single method, we will use multiple sources of information, including teachers, parents, and administrative records, which programs already collect. Beginning in fall 2007, we will administer the revised child assessment battery, teacher ratings, and parent interviews. In winter 2007, we will conduct classroom observations with a representative sample of classrooms. In spring 2008, we will conduct follow-up data collection with the same participants (centers, children, teachers, and parents).

In addition to conducting psychometric analyses of child outcome measures (validity and reliability) in spring 2007, we will analyze changes in child development between fall and spring 2007-2008. We will also conduct analyses to understand how program, teacher, and classroom characteristics are related to child outcomes. Project reports will document the choice of measures and rationale for each, the recommendations for any modifications of measures for cultural or linguistic reasons, preliminary findings, and findings at the conclusion of the 2007-2008 program year. We will collaborate closely with the First 5 LA staff and Commission, LAUP, and the First 5 LA/LAUP Research Advisory Committee (RAC) throughout the research process and will conduct a series of briefings so that everyone is fully informed about the study’s progress and our findings.

For more information, you can contact Katie Fallin at First 5 LA (213-482-9489 or kfallin@first5la.org) or Anne Self at Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., (888-771-1192 or email UPKStudy@mathematicampr.com).