

Archived Information

Objective 2.1: All children enter school ready to learn.

Our Role. Federal programs that serve young children and their families, such as Head Start (including Early Head Start), Even Start, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Grants for Infants and Toddlers, Preschool Grants, and Title I, Part A, can help to accomplish this objective. Through the America Reads Challenge, the Education Department supports and encourages parents to read and talk to their children and include other practices to increase children's language development in their daily child care routine. States also provide important preschool services for children. Additionally, the Education Department provides leadership in early childhood education by supporting and disseminating research-based knowledge of effective policies and practices.

- Head Start provides comprehensive development services for low-income children ages 3 to 5 and social services for their families to prepare children to enter school ready to learn.
- Even Start provides low-income families with early childhood, adult, and parent education in order to achieve its objective to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy and help low-income children start school prepared to learn.
- IDEA Grants for Infants and Toddlers provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in order to help children enter school ready to learn, and IDEA Preschool Grants Program provides a free appropriate public education to 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children with disabilities.
- Title I, Part A funds can be used for preschool programs. Title I served about 260,000 preschool children in 1996-97.

Our Performance

How We Measure. Performance indicators for this objective track access to learning activities for children before kindergarten.

Indicator 2.1.a. Kindergarten and first-grade teachers will increasingly report that their students enter school ready to learn reading and math.

Assessment of Progress. Unable to judge progress, as only 1998-99 baseline data are available. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Kindergarten Class of 1998-99) found that 82 percent of children enter kindergarten with print familiarity skills, such as knowing that print reads from left to right. As children enter kindergarten for the first time, 66 percent pass reading proficiency level one (recognizing their letters); 29 percent pass level two (beginning sounds). In mathematics, 94 percent of first-time kindergartners pass mathematics proficiency level one (reading numerals, recognizing shapes and counting to 10); 58 percent pass level two (reading numerals, counting beyond 10, sequencing patterns and using nonstandard units of length to compare objects). These are baseline data, and they are for all children because there are no data on the number of children participating in Federally supported preschool programs.

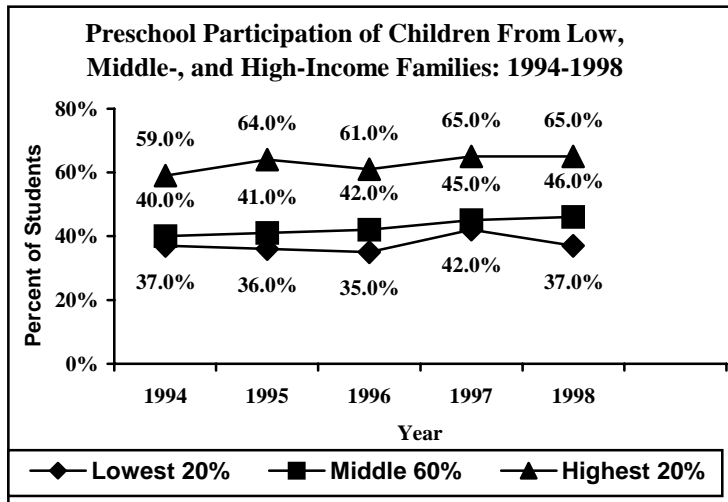
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99. *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 2001 **Validation procedure:** Data validated by NCES review procedures.

Limitations of the data and planned improvements: The ECLS-K study has a single baseline – kindergartners of the 1998-99 school year, and does not evaluate children by participation in Federally supported preschool programs. The assessment of incoming kindergartners of later years will not be a feature of the ECLS-K study.

Indicator 2.1.b. The disparity in preschool participation rates between children from high-income families and children from low-income families will become increasingly smaller.

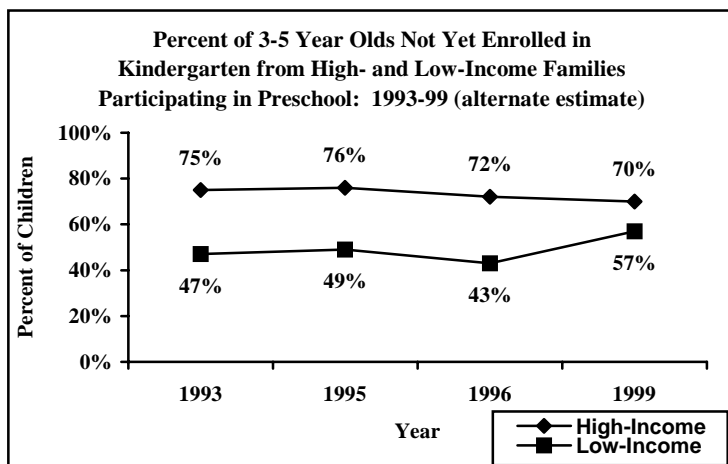
Assessment of Progress. Progress toward the goal is uncertain. The goal for 1999 was met according to one of the two available sources. While preschool participation is increasing for poor children, poor children are still less likely to participate in preschool programs than are higher income children. According to the National Household Education Survey, participation rates for children from poverty-level families increased from 44 percent in 1993 and 1996 to 52 percent in 1999. Non-poor children had higher rates of participation; in 1999, the respective rates of participation were 52 percent for poor children and 62 percent for non-poor children. Data for 2000 are not available.

Figure 2.1.b.1



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey, unpublished tabulations. **Frequency:** Monthly. **Next update:** Spring 2001. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** No known limitations.

Figure 2.1.b.2



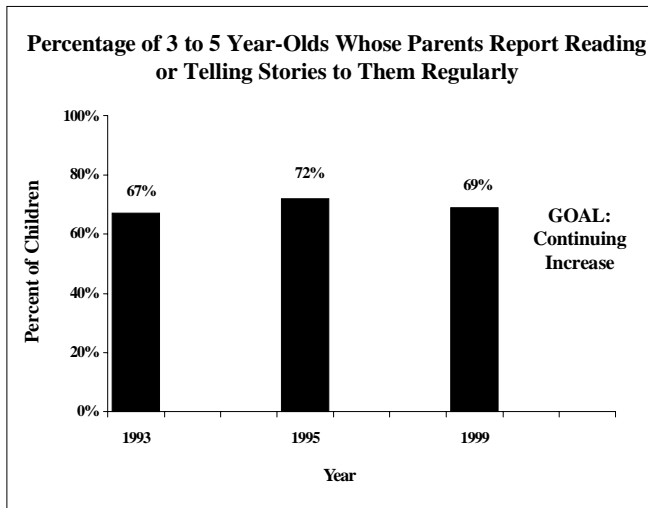
Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Household Education Survey, 1993, 1996, and 1999. **Frequency:** Every 3 years. **Next Update:** 2002. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by NCES's review procedures and *NCES Statistical Standards*. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** No known limitations.

Note: Data from two surveys are shown for this priority. The above figure shows data from the CPS, and the below figure shows data from NHES. High income is defined as a family income totaling \$50,000 or more a year; low income is defined as a family income totaling \$10,000 or less a year.

Indicator 2.1.c. The percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds whose parents read to them or tell them stories regularly will continuously increase.

Assessment of Progress. Progress toward the goal is uncertain, as the trend line both peaked and dropped. Data is collected every four years, most recently in 1999. The goal for 1999 was not met. Reading to children helps them build their vocabularies, an important factor in school success. Thus, frequent reading by parents to their children is an important activity in preparing children for school. Only two-thirds of preschoolers were read to or told stories regularly in 1993 (see Figure 2.1.c.1). By 1996, the proportion of preschoolers whose parents read to them or told them stories regularly had increased to 72 percent. In 1999, however, the figure was reduced to 69 percent.

Figure 2.1.c.1



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Household Education Survey, 1993, 1996, 1999. *Frequency:* Every 3 years. *Next Update:* 2002. **Validation procedure:** Data validated by NCES's review procedures and *NCES Statistical Standards*. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** No known limitations.