



Helen Raikes, Willa Cather Professor, UNL
Lisa Richardson, Nebraska Specialist, Early Steps
Elsa Escalante, UNL Ph.D. Student
Sandie Plata-Potter, UNL Ph.D. Student

April 25, 2012



ESSS-E

Early Steps to School Success – Program and Evaluation



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND



Save the Children®

Purpose Today

- Overview of National Early Steps to School Success Program
- Closer Look at the Program Model
- National Evaluation
- Closer Look at the Evaluation

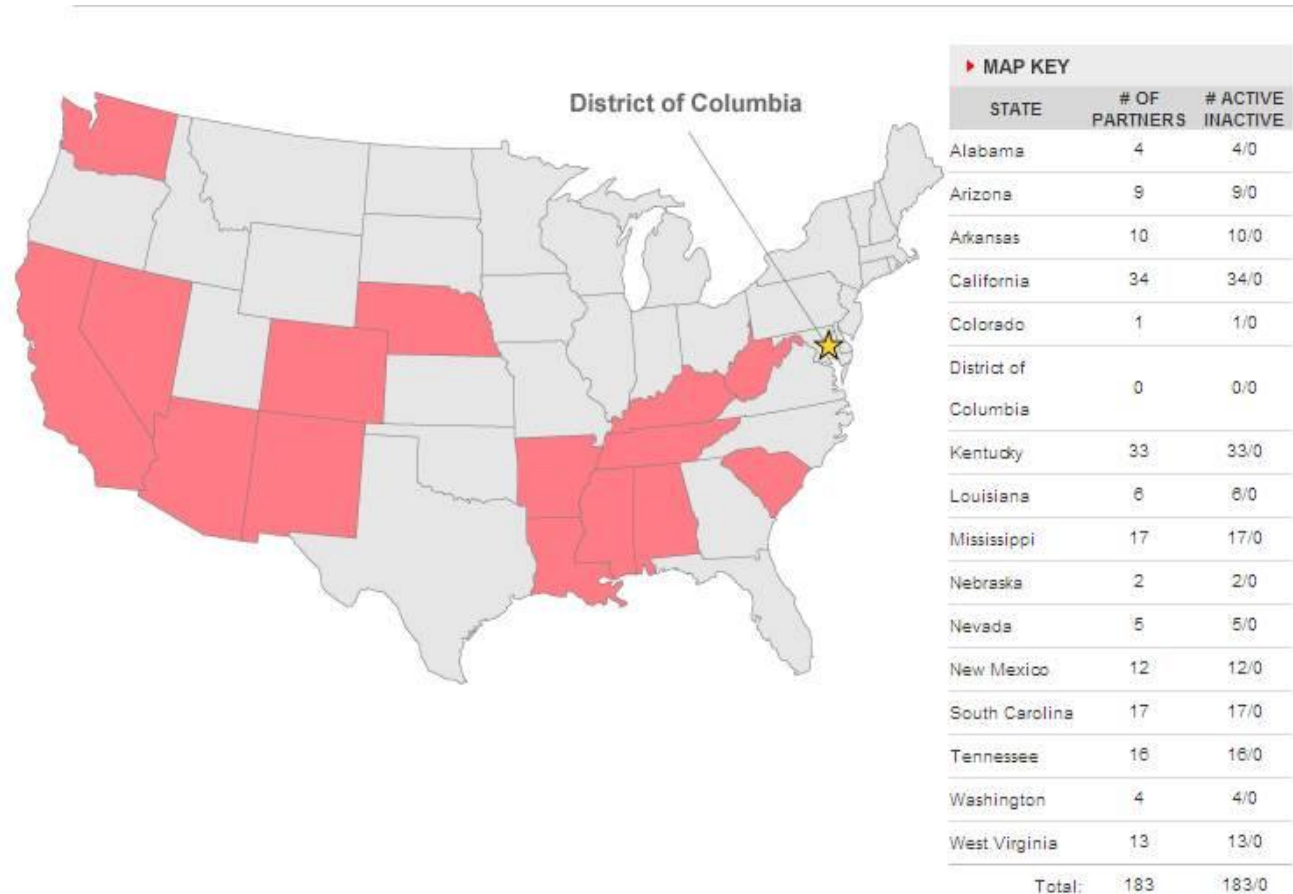
Why Rural America

- High % of poverty
- Isolation
- Lack of community resources
- Receive less per capita federal funds and private charitable funding than urban areas
- Access to skilled workforce
- Drug use/Alcoholism
- Education levels
- Seasonal/Migrant populations – keeping families
- Illiterate parents
- Lack of print/ books in home/small or no local library



U.S. Programs

- Early Childhood:
Early Steps to School Success
- *Nebraska Programs*
 - *Omaha*
 - *Lexington*
 - *Schuyler*
 - *Santee*
 - *Other Possible*



Early Steps Characteristics

- Early Steps is a language development and pre literacy program
- Early Steps provides services through home visiting and parent groups
- Early Steps works with children and families from pregnancy until the child enters kindergarten
- Early Steps is connected to the schools and other community partners

How is Early Steps Different?

- **Location:** Rural areas where there are few other early childhood supports
- **Community and school based:** building local capacity
- **Connections:** Home-school bond and strong school transitions
- **Continuity:** Provide a seamless delivery of services beginning from birth and continuing through children's entrance into school
- **Quality:** Birth to five curriculum; training and technical assistance
- **Flexibility in model implementation**
- **Affordability:** Average cost per child per year is \$1600

Early Steps Model



Model Design-Services

**Prenatal –
Age 3
Home Visits**

**Parent-
Child
Groups &
Book
Exchange**

**3-5 Year Olds
Center-based
Literacy &
Transition
Activities**



Implementing the Model

1. Home Visits

- Relationship-based
- Uses a parallel learning process between Coordinator/Parent and Parent/Child
- 1 hour in length
- 3 home visits/month (Nebraska only)
- Literacy & Language based that relates to ALL areas of development



Implementing the Model



2. **Regularly scheduled parent/child support and education groups in school**
 - Held at local school
 - Consists of: play groups; parent education; building connections with school personnel and community services
 - 1 hour in length
 - At least once per month

Implementing the Model

3. Positive Transition to School

- Parent/teacher meetings
- Child visits to school
- Teacher home visits
- Summer program before school entry



Implementing the Model

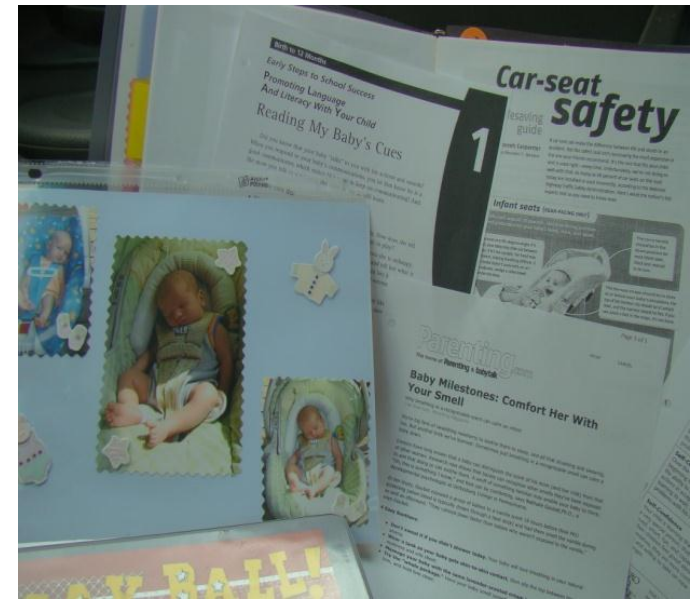
4. Book Bag Exchange

- All children 0-5 enrolled in ESSS participate in the Book Bag Exchange
- At home during home visits for 0-3
- For 3-5 year olds, we partner with local center-based early childhood agency –children enrolled in a program
- Regular distribution of age and culturally appropriate books
- Training for parents/caregivers in dialogic reading



Integrated Curriculum Materials

- Plan and Play Sets
- Parent/Child Groups
- Child Transitions into Public Schools
- Dual Language -- specific to the populations *Early Steps serves*
- Coordinator Guide
- Early Steps Program Specialist Guide
- Portfolio Templates
- Gather Round Book Activity Sets

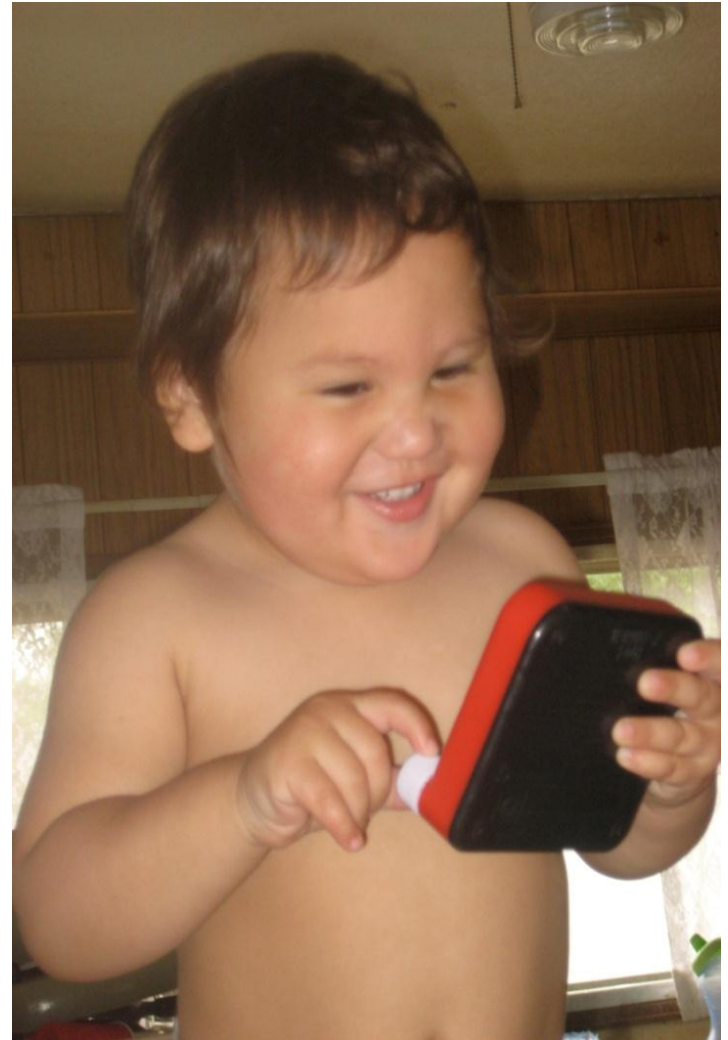


Training and Technical Assistance

- T & TA is carried out at the national, regional and local level.
- Average number of training hours per Coordinator is approximately 70 hours per year.
- Staff Development Competency Matrix

Descriptively ESSS Children are Doing Well!

- At 3 years of age, 84% of children tested scored average or above average for language development
- At 5 years of age, 90% of children tested scored average or above for language development
- As in an IQ test, the standard average for all children on the PPVT is 100. The average standard score for ESSS children is 96.4 (N=408)



National Research Team

- Helen Raikes, University of Nebraska at Lincoln;
- Brenda Jones Harden, University of Maryland College Park; and
- Rachel Chazan Cohen, George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.



Evaluation Goals

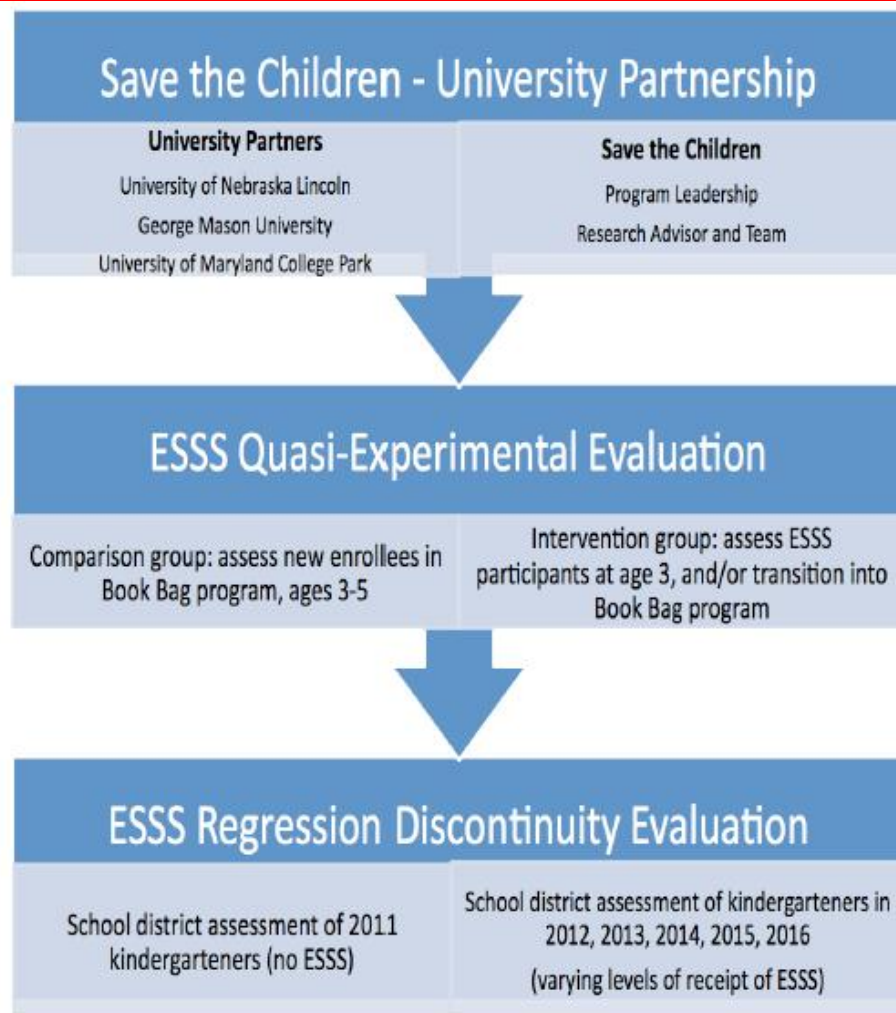
- 1) To evaluate the ESSS program in 20 newly implemented sites;
- 2) To determine if children participating in ESSS 0-3 regular home visits outperform their community peers in language and other areas at age 3.
- 3) To determine if the receptive language at kindergarten entry in the community is improving over time (a 6 year period).



Assessments

- Baseline Interviews—program and comparison
- Child comprehensive assessment—Age 3—program and comparison
- Child PPVT-IV assessment—Kindergarten entry—community wide

Design



- The evaluation will be based on two design approaches: a quasi-experimental and a regression discontinuity.
- Sites: Nebraska, West Virginia, South Carolina, Kansas, Colorado, Louisiana

Measures

| Title | Description |
|---|---|
| Bayley Behavioral Rating Scale | Scale of children's persistence/engagement and emotion regulation during assessment |
| Brief Infant / Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment | Parent-report questionnaire of children's (age 1-36 month) behavioral problems and social-emotional competence; provides clinical cut-off |
| Home Observation of the Environment | Quality of the home environment |
| Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test | Receptive vocabulary from age 2.5 to adult |
| Preschool Language Scale (English & Spanish) | Receptive language skills, as well as understanding and use of grammatical rules for children from birth to 6 years of age. |



Measures (Cont.)

| Title | Description |
|--|--|
| Two-Bag Assessment | Semi-structured videotaped interaction which examines parent and child behavior during book reading and free play tasks |
| Background Questionnaire | Demographic and background information about children, parent, and families |
| Center for Epidemiological Studies - Depression | Parent -report questionnaire of somatic and affective symptoms of depression experienced in the past week |
| Family Conflict Scale | Parent-report of openly expressed anger and conflict among families |
| Barnard Scale | Report of quality of parent-home visitor relationship, home visitor's professionalism, flexibility, cultural responsiveness, knowledge |
| Parent Questions about Home Visitor | Parent-report of quality of the home visits with regard to promoting children's early literacy |



Measures (Cont.)

| Title | Description |
|--|--|
| Content of the Home Visit | Home visitor report of time spent covering topics related to child development, parenting, parental wellbeing,, and referral to community resources. |
| Home Visitor Questionnaire | Demographic and education/ employment information about home visitor |
| Social Emotional Competence: Provider Questionnaire | Home visitor assessment of knowledge and comfort in working addressing social- emotional needs of young children and families |



Implications- Policy/Practice: Contributions

- True continuity model, birth through school entry.
- Affordable model.
- Adds onto Head Start, pre-k, quality early childhood.
- Partners with public schools—both in program and evaluation.
- Can show the effect of ESSS dosage.
- Can show the effect of program/s for a community over time.
- PPVT not a readiness measure but begins the conversation about school readiness in selected communities.



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