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**ESSS-E**

Early Steps to School Success – Program and Evaluation



# Purpose

- Overview of National Early Steps to School Success Program
- National Evaluation
- Preliminary Findings

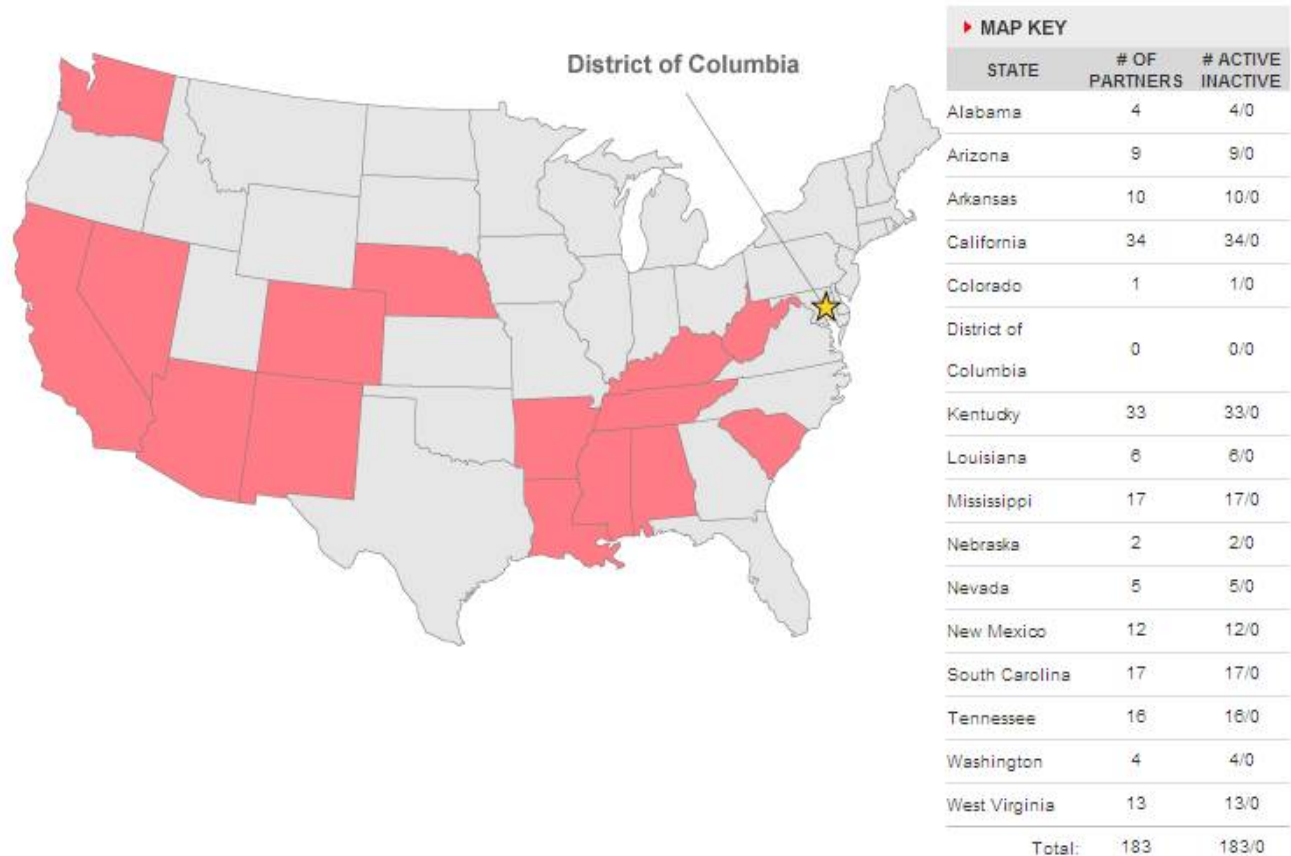
# *Early Steps: Why Rural America?*

- Save the Children is sponsor
- 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*
  - *Fremont*
  - *Columbus*
  - *Winnebago*
  - *Kearney*



# *Early Steps Characteristics*

- Early Steps is a language development and pre literacy program
- Early Steps provides services through home visiting, parent groups, and by supplying books
- 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

# *Descriptively ESSS Children 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 Evaluation 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.





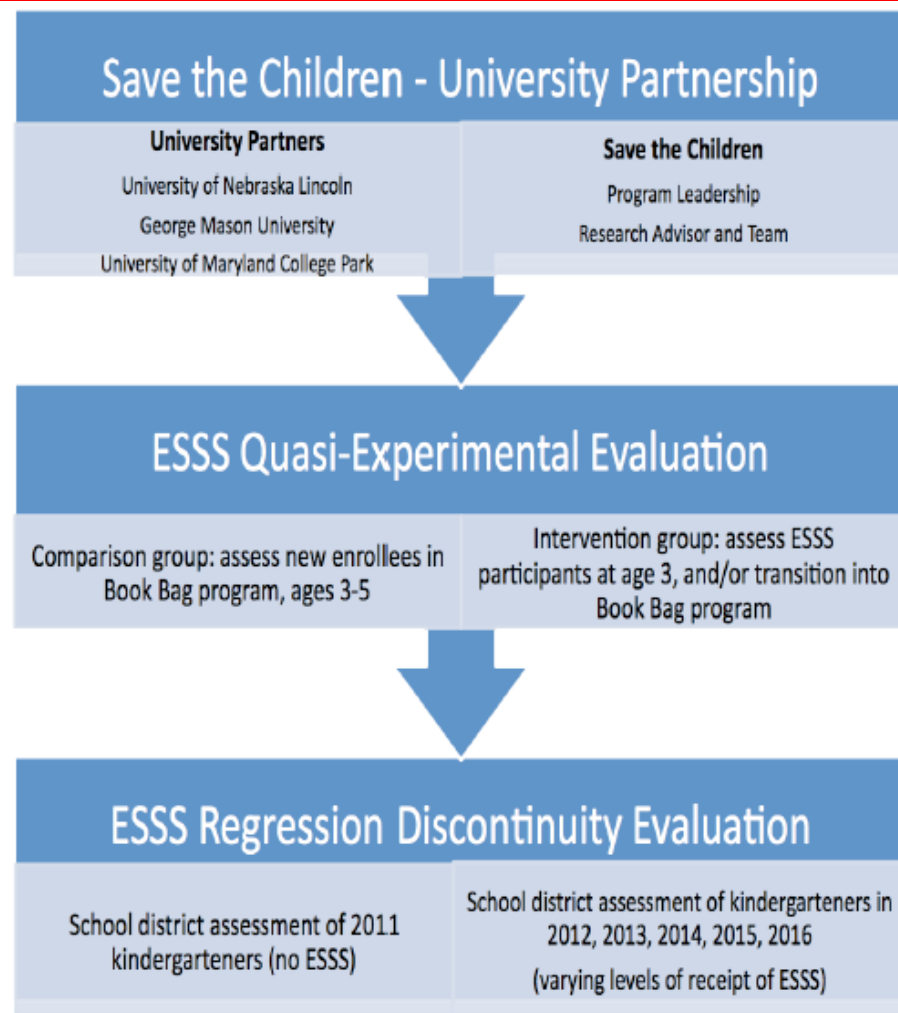
# Evaluation Goals

To evaluate the ESSS program in 20 newly implemented sites.

- 1) To determine if children participating in ESSS 0-3 regular home visits outperform their community peers in language and other areas at age 3.
- 2) To determine if the receptive language at kindergarten entry in the rural community is improving over time (a 6 year period). To determine if effects of community early childhood programs can be detected in kindergarten classes.



# Design



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

# *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 (0-3)

- Relationship-based
- Uses a parallel learning process between Coordinator/  
Parent and  
Parent/Child
- 1 hour in length
- Literacy & language based  
that relates to all areas of  
development



# Implementing the Model

2.

**Regularly scheduled parent/child support and education groups & book bags (0-5)**

- **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**
- **Books distributed to families.**
- **Regular distribution of age and culturally appropriate books**
- **Training for parents/caregivers in dialogic reading**



# Implementing the Model

## 3. Pre-K (3-5)

- All children 0-5 enrolled in ESSS  
For 3-5 year olds, we partner with local center-based early childhood agency –children enrolled in a program

*\*no 3-5 component with Hemera Regnant grant as of now*



# Quasi Experimental Study

To determine if children participating in ESSS 0-3 regular home visits outperform their community peers in language and other areas at age 3?

# Assessments

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



# Assessments

- **Bayley Behavioral Rating Scale**
- **Brief Infant / Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment**
- **Home Observation of the Environment**
- **Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test**
- **Preschool Language Scale (English & Spanish)**
- **Two-Bag Assessment**
- **Background Questionnaire**
- **Center for Epidemiological Studies -Depression**
- **Family Conflict Scale**
- **Parent Questions about Home Visitor Questions**

# Regression Discontinuity

To determine if the receptive language at kindergarten entry in the rural community is improving over time (a 6 year period).

- To determine if effects of community early childhood programs can be detected in kindergarten classes.

# Regression Discontinuity: Baseline Findings from 10 Rural Communities

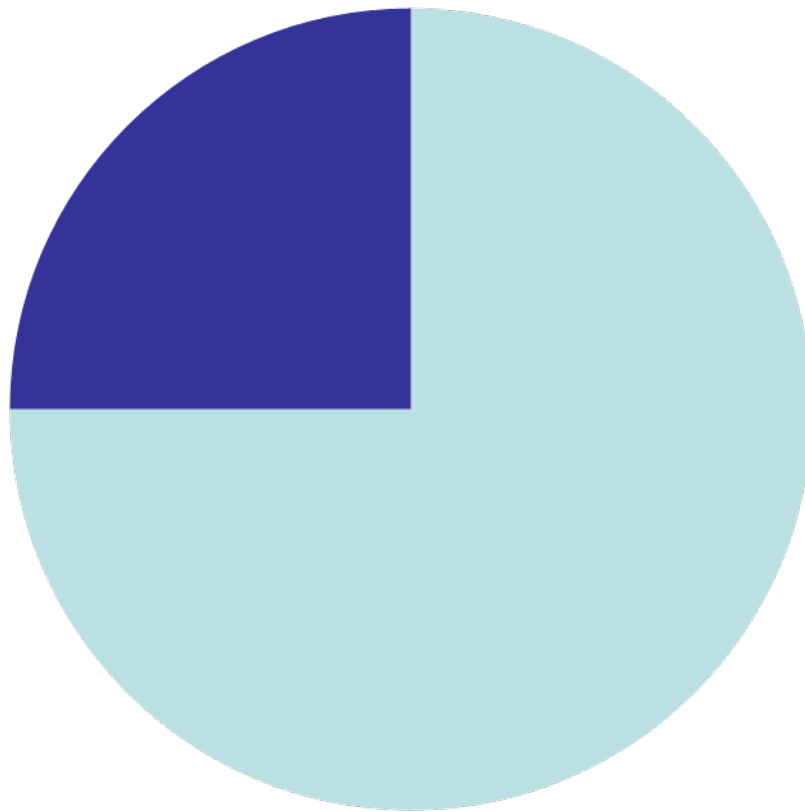
Making Strides in Great Plains Rural  
Communities-Early Findings:  
Early Childhood Programs  
Improve Kindergarten Entry Scores in  
Rural Communities

# Sample Overall

- N = 1,132
- All children assessed at kindergarten entry on the PPVT-4 in fall 2013.
- 10 Communities

# Free & Reduced Lunch

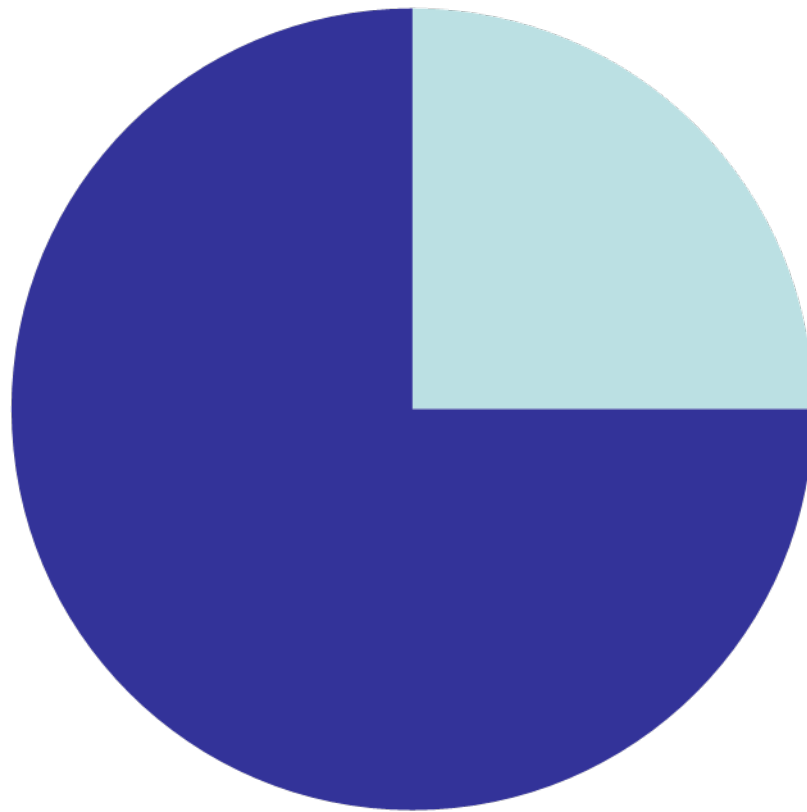
## Kindergartners



- Free/Reduced Lunch
- Exempt

# Limited English Language

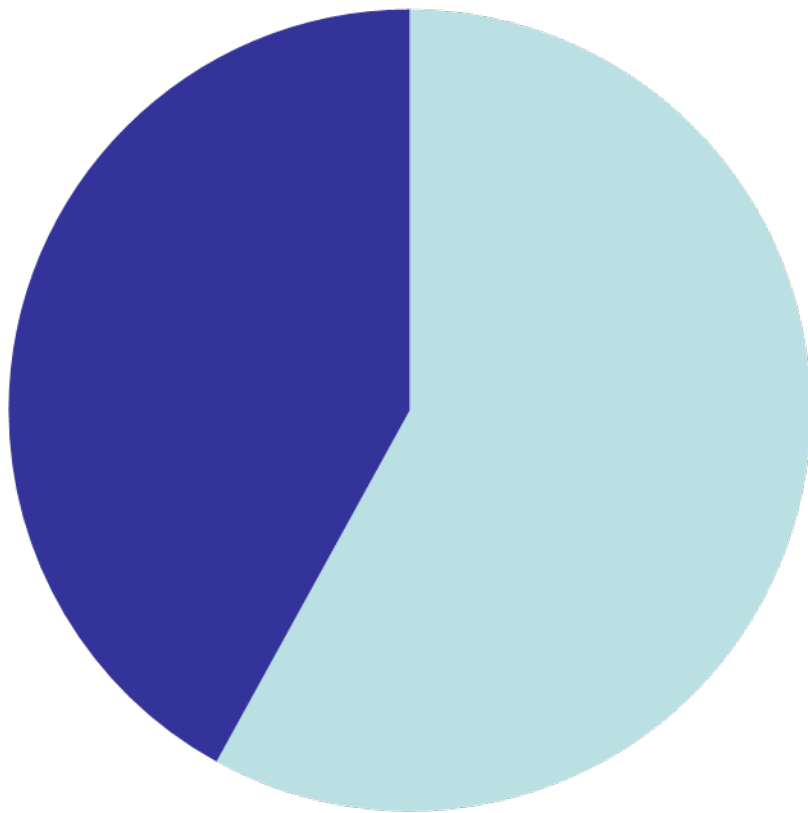
Kindergartners



■ LEP  
■ Not LEP

# School Based Pre-school or Head Start

## Kindergartners



- Participated
- Did Not Participate

# 10 Communities

- Center, Colorado (n = 57) = PPVT-4 = 87.0
- Del Norte, Colorado (31) = 100.6
- Monte Vista, Colorado (73) = 96.0
- Blanca, Colorado (18) = 100.7
- Mountain Valley, Colorado (5) = 116.2 (who does this combine with?)
- Parsons, Kansas (111) = 101.37
- Fremont, NE (362) = 95.3
- Schuyler, NE (124) = 81.3
- Pittsburg, Kansas (249) = 103.6
- Alamosa, Colorado (153) = 93.8



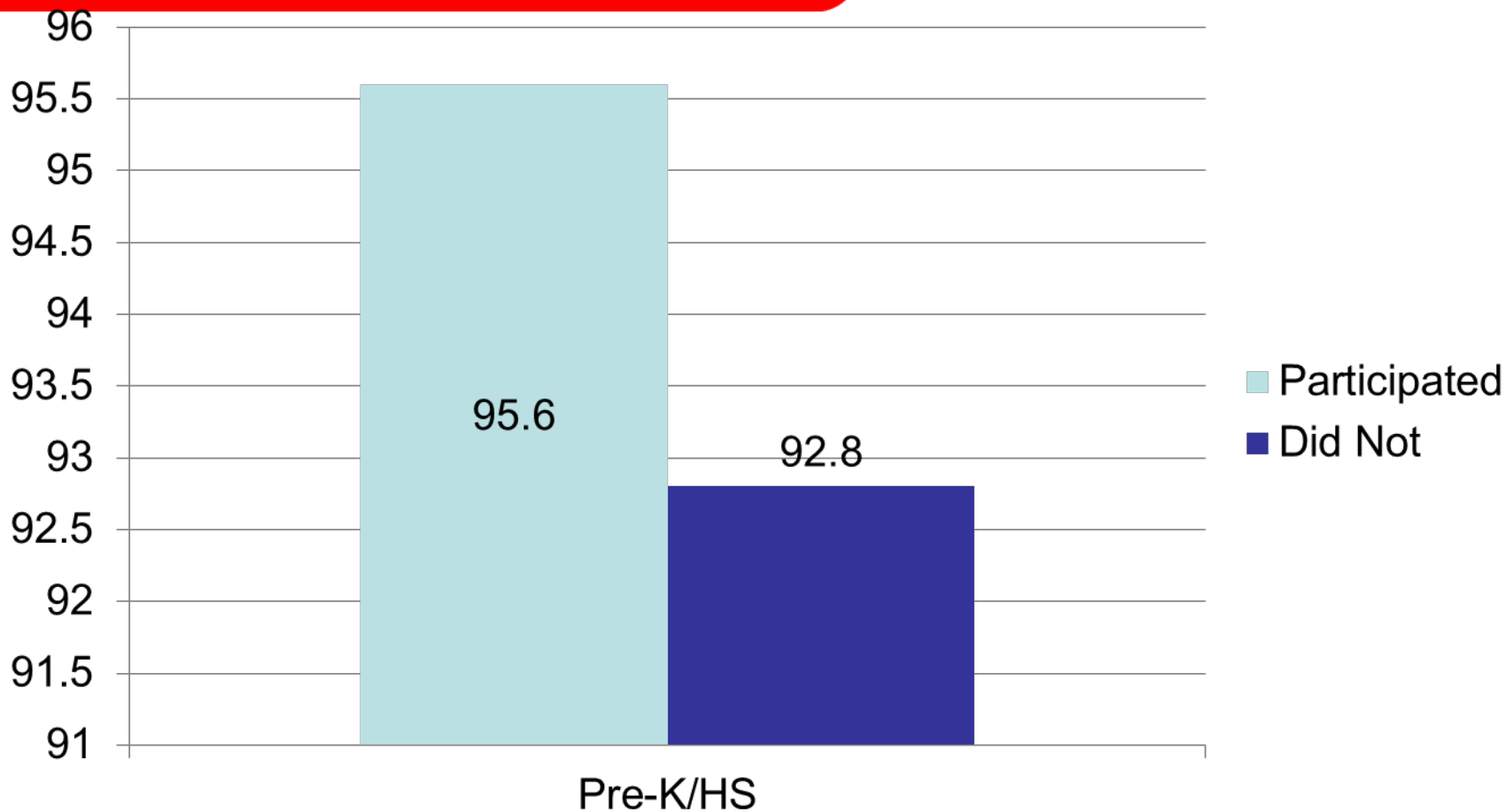
# Communities

- **Fremont, Nebraska**, is a community of 26,397, and is county seat of Dodge County, in northeast Nebraska, along the Platte River. Median age is 38 (compared to 43.7 for Nebraska at large) with 24% of the population under 18 years of age. Median household income in 2008-2012 was \$46,064, below Nebraska median income. The community is comprised of 89% Whites while Hispanics or Latinos make up 12% of the population with 7% born in another country and 13% speaking a language other than English at home. In 2010, Fremont gained national attention when residents approved a referendum that would ban illegal immigrants from renting or working in the town; the referendum was upheld in 2014. In the 2000 Census 95% of the population was White so there has been some change. For 2008-2013 14% of the population lives below poverty level; 19% has a bachelor's degree and 83% a high school degree. Midland University is located in Fremont and Metropolitan Community College has expanded to Fremont campus. There are major employers in agribusiness, food processing, fabricated metal processing and electronics manufacturing. The unemployment rate is 4%.
- **Schuyler, Nebraska**, is a community of 6,211 in Colfax County, in northeast Nebraska. It is a community of young persons—median age is 28.5 (compared to 43.7 for Nebraska at large) with 34% of the population under 18 years of age. Median household income in 2008-2012 was \$43,073, about \$7,000 below Nebraska median income. The poverty rate is 24%. The community is comprised of 65% Hispanics, and 57% are White. Fully 34% were born in another country and 65% of persons over 5 speak a language other than English at home. Schuyler's single largest employer is the Cargill beef-processing plant, with approximately 2000 employees. Other major employers include Schuyler Community Schools, with 245 employees, Alegent Health Memorial Hospital with 82 full time employees and QC Supply a manufacturer and distributor of farm and ranch supplies with 75 full-time employees. Twelve percent of residents age 25 and older have a bachelor's or advanced college degree. The largest number of adherents of congregations are Catholic.

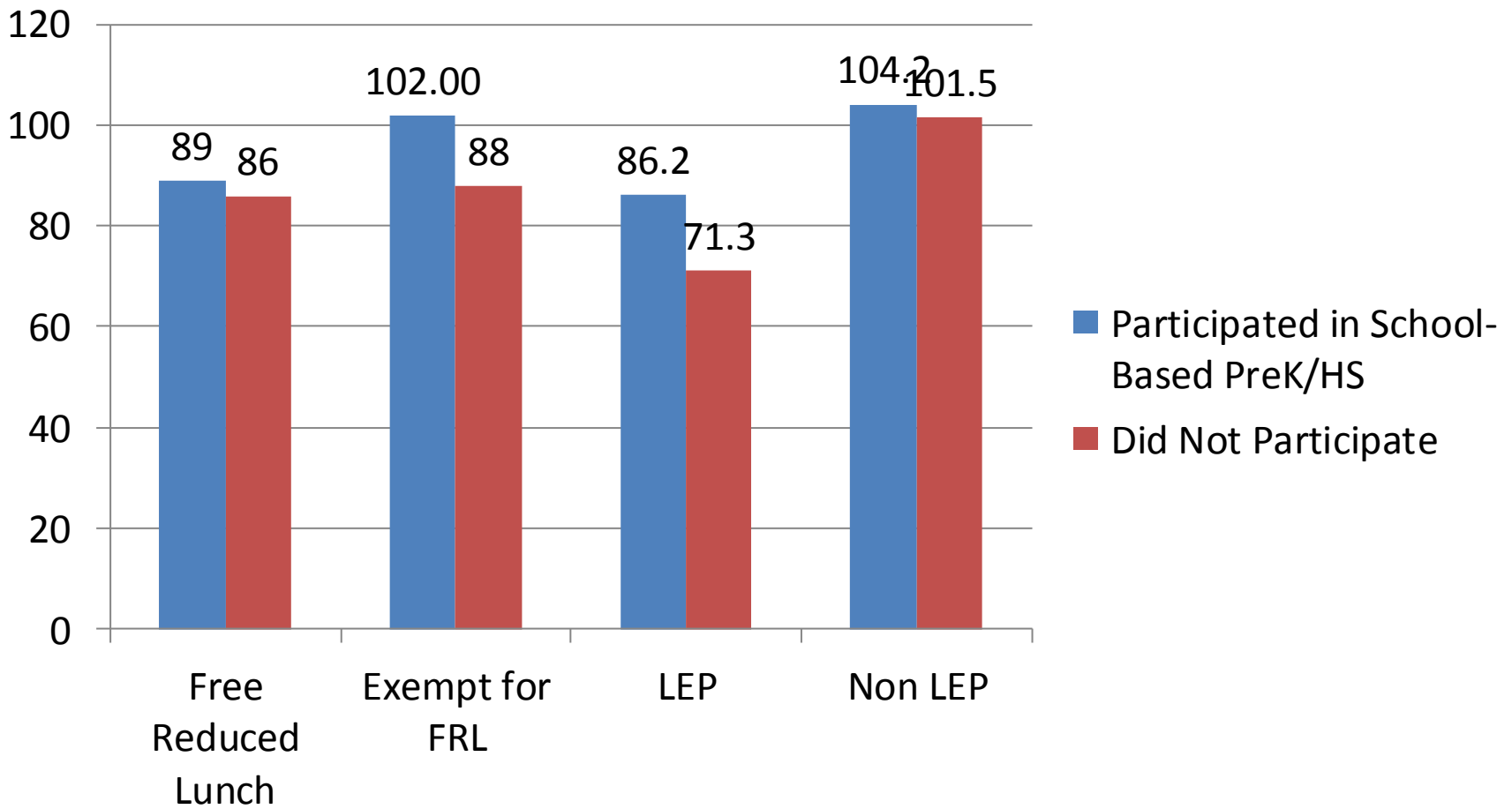
# Significant Factors on PPVT-IV Scores

- Free or Reduced Lunch  $F = 19.5^{****}$
- LEP  $F = 169.25^{*****}$
- School Based Preschool/Head Start  $F = 22.68^{****}$
- School Based Preschool/Head Start \* FRL  
 $F = 5.68^*$
- School Based Preschool/Head Start \* LEP  
 $F = 10.97^{***}$

# Participating in School Based Pre-K/HS vs. Not



# PPVT -4 Scores for FRL and LEP

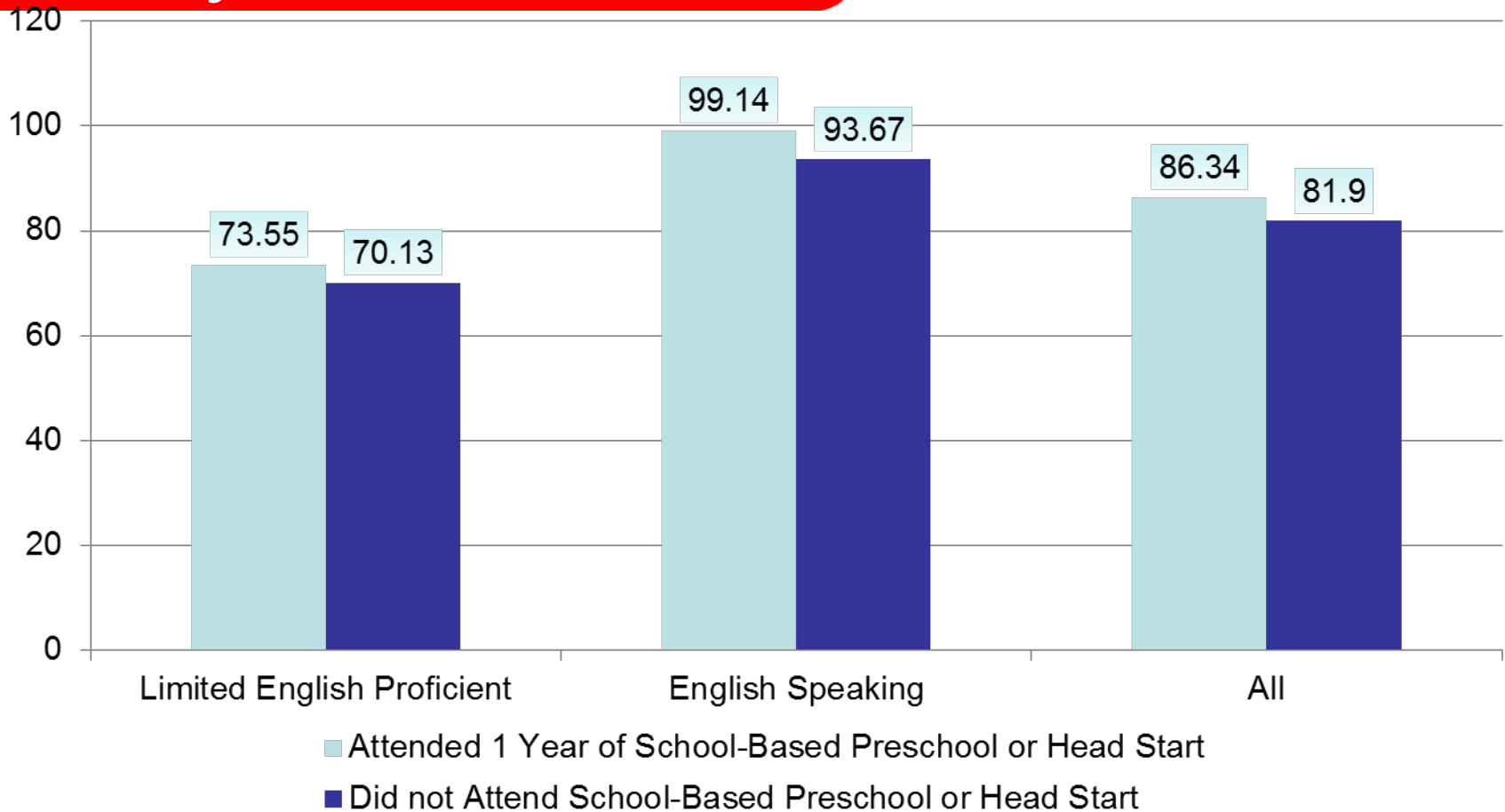


# Community PPVT at Baseline

Kindergarteners' PPVT Receptive Vocabulary Scores at Select Evaluation Sites

State	Site	Number of Kindergarteners Assessed	Assessor	Average Standardized PPVT Score	Range in Standardized PPVT Scores
<b>Kansas</b>					
	Arma	31	School Psychologist	105.13	55-132
	Iola	41	SLP Aides	103.59	80-125
	Parsons	104	SLP	88.92	61-116
<b>Kentucky</b>	Burning Springs	45	SLP	98.38	77-128
<b>Louisiana</b>	Wesley Ray	53	SLP, Behavior Interventionist	99.13	77-117
<b>Nebraska</b>					
	Fremont	294	SLP	99.39	20-128
	Lexington	180	UNK Students	86.28	50-125
	Schuyler	122	K Teachers	81.95	41-121
<b>South Carolina</b>					
	Bethune-Bowman	43	UMD Researchers, SLPs	91.12	68-115
	Bishopville	128	UMD Researchers and Teachers	96.09	64-134
	Foster Park	72	ECC, UMD Researchers and Teachers	97.22	68-118

# Kindergarten Entry PPVT Scores – Schuyler, NE



# Status Today- Completed

- Two years (of 6) of PPVT-IV at kindergarten entry completed.
- Baseline interviews with about half the sample.
- Comparison group interviews with about half the sample.
- Stay Tuned!

# Extra Slides



# Measures

Title	Description
<b>Bayley Behavioral Rating Scale</b>	Scale of children's persistence/engagement and emotion regulation during assessment
<b>Brief Infant / Toddler Social-Emotional Assessment</b>	Parent-report questionnaire of children's (age 1-36 month) behavioral problems and social-emotional competence; provides clinical cut-off
<b>Home Observation of the Environment</b>	Quality of the home environment
<b>Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test</b>	Receptive vocabulary from age 2.5 to adult
<b>Preschool Language Scale (English &amp; Spanish)</b>	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
<b>Two-Bag Assessment</b>	Semi-structured videotaped interaction which examines parent and child behavior during book reading and free play tasks
<b>Background Questionnaire</b>	Demographic and background information about children, parent, and families
<b>Center for Epidemiological Studies - Depression</b>	Parent -report questionnaire of somatic and affective symptoms of depression experienced in the past week
<b>Family Conflict Scale</b>	Parent-report of openly expressed anger and conflict among families
<b>Barnard Scale</b>	Report of quality of parent-home visitor relationship, home visitor's professionalism, flexibility, cultural responsiveness, knowledge
<b>Parent Questions about Home Visitor</b>	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



# *Early Steps Model*



# Implementing the Model

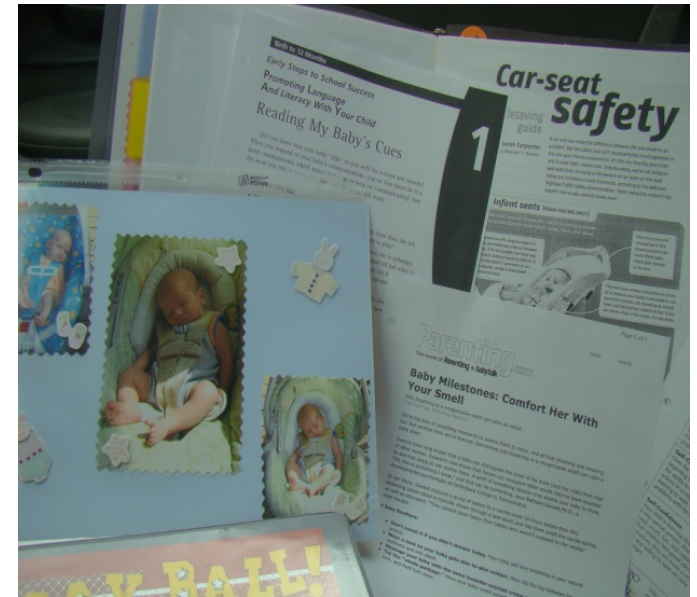
## 3. Positive Transition to School

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



# 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

# Assessments

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