



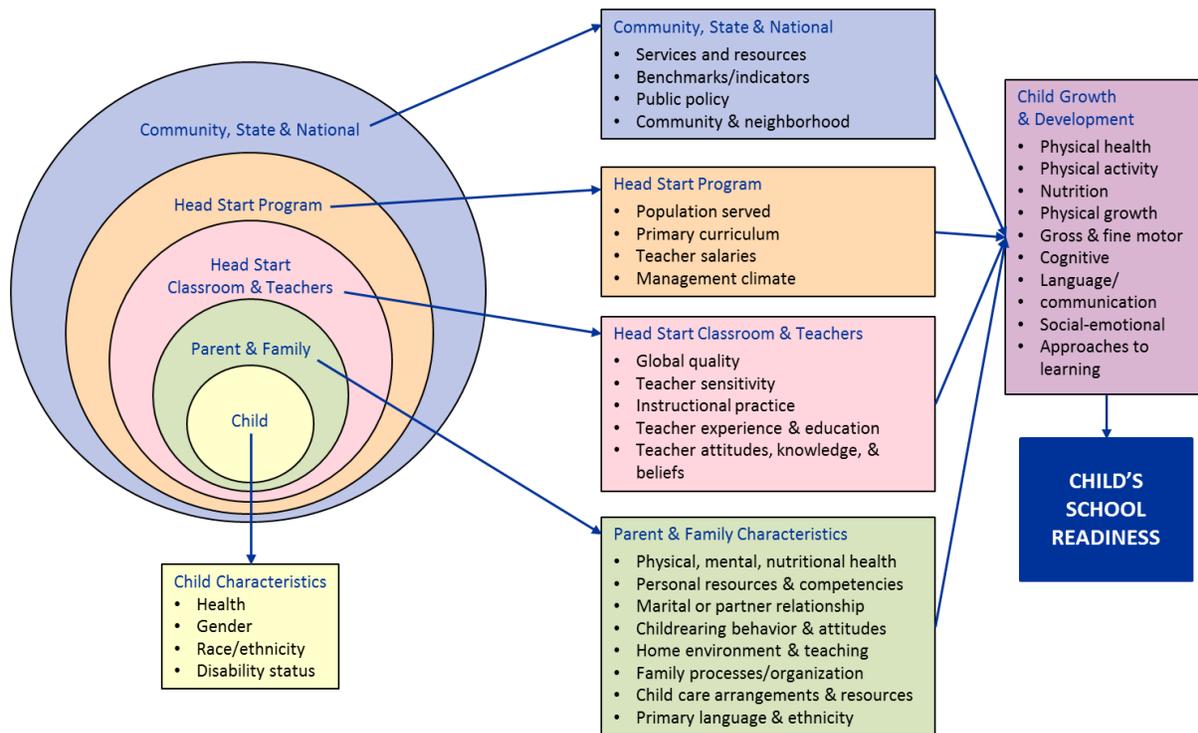
## Head Start Conceptual Model

### How Head Start is Intended to Impact School Readiness

When evaluating the effectiveness of programs, logic models help to illustrate how programs are intended to address specified outcomes. A logic model provides a visual representation of the causal relationships between specific program activities (inputs) and the program outputs and participant outcomes as well as the role of outside influential factors.

Although we could not locate a formal Head Start logic model, researchers working on the federally-sponsored Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) have developed a conceptual model which highlights the relationships between Head Start’s core program elements and stated goals.<sup>1</sup>

#### Conceptual Model for FACES 2009



The FACES model depicts a pathway in which community, state, and national environments, parent and family characteristics and child characteristics (outside influential factors) as well as the Head Start program, classrooms and teachers (program resources and activities), all contribute to the child’s growth and development and ultimately the child’s school readiness.

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## Long-term outcomes

Notably, the FACES conceptual model, Head Start legislation, and regulations all specify school readiness as the primary program goal rather than longer-term outcomes in adolescence or adulthood. Although some research finds that on average children who participate in early childhood education programs such as Head Start demonstrate better outcomes in adulthood (e.g. higher high school graduation rate, lower welfare use, better health outcomes<sup>2</sup>), these potential benefits are beyond the scope of Head Start's program goal of helping children become ready for school. For this reason, evaluations of Head Start's success that are based on long-term outcomes may fail to capture how well the program achieves its primary goal. Thus, proper interpretation of the logic or conceptual model plays an important role in evaluating a program and measuring its success.

## Subgroup outcomes

The FACES conceptual model includes child race/ethnicity, disability status, parent language and ethnicity, and community/neighborhood characteristics, recognizing that these factors play a role in achieving school readiness. Head Start legislation and regulations mandate specific attention to and support for diverse populations such as dual language learners and children with disabilities, both at the federal level (Office of Head Start) and at the Head Start agency level.<sup>3</sup> Despite the acknowledgment that these factors influence a child's school readiness (e.g. in the Head Start impact study subgroup analysis), the FACES conceptual model does not specify the *ways* or *mechanisms* in which they influence child outcomes. Research documents a racial/ethnic gap in school readiness (as measured by educational outcomes) which is not fully accounted for by family income.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is important to investigate these racial/ethnic disparities in an effort to understand the factors that drive them.

### Sources & notes:

<sup>1</sup> Aikens, N., Hulse, L. K., Moiduddin, E., Kopack, A., Takyi-Laryea, A., Tarullo, L., and West, J. (2011). Data tables for FACES 2009 *Head Start children, families, and programs: Present and past data from FACES* Report (OPRE Report 2011-33b). Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>2</sup> Currie, J. & Thomas, D. (1995). Does Head Start make a difference? *American Economic Review*, 85(3), 341-364; Garces, E., Thomas, D., & Currie, J. (2002). Longer-term effects of Head Start. *American Economic Review*, 92(4), 999-1012; Deming, D.J. (2009). Early childhood intervention and life-cycle skill development: Evidence from Head Start. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 1(3), 111-134; Johnson, R.C. (2010). The health returns of education policies from preschool to high school and beyond. *American Economic Review*, 100(2), 188-194. Ludwig, J. & Miller, D.L. (2007). Does Head Start improve children's life chances? Evidence from a regression discontinuity design. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122 (1), 159-208.

<sup>3</sup> National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness. (2013). *Serving Head Start's diverse children and families: What is the law? What are the regulations?* Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/serving-head-starts-diverse-families-laws-regs.pdf>; Ewen, D. & Neas, K.B. (2005). *Preparing for success: How Head Start helps children with disabilities and their families*. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Retrieved from <http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/0224.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Duncan, G. and Magnuson, K. (2005). Can family socioeconomic resources account for racial and ethnic test score gaps? *Future of Children*, 15(1), 35-54.