

**EVALUATION OF HUDSON  
EVEN START  
2001-2002 SCHOOL YEAR**

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# EVALUATION OF HUDSON EVEN START 2001-2002 SCHOOL YEAR

Prepared for:  
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# EVALUATION OF HUDSON EVEN START

## 2001-2002 SCHOOL YEAR

July, 2002

### SUMMARY

This is the third year of operations for the Hudson Even Start (HES) program. Local evaluations for the first two years included a description of the program, with strengths and opportunities for the improvement the first year, and a concentration on the Parent Observation Profile (POP – now known as PEP) the second year. This was the first year that the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) performed the local evaluation for HES. At the beginning of the year, CGR met with Even Start Coordinator Sophia Becker, Columbia Opportunities Executive Director Tina Sharpe, and Hudson Elementary School Principal Carol Gans, to discuss topics for the 2001-02 school year evaluation. The group's decision was to have CGR concentrate on three areas for the local evaluation:

- ❖ Analyze results from the second round of the “What Generates Even Start’s Success?” survey, first used as part of a regional evaluation of Capital District Even Start programs last year;
- ❖ Analyze ES-STARS data and compare them to state benchmarks; and
- ❖ Compare the school-readiness of three and four-year-old Head Start children in Even Start with Head Start children that are not, using data from the COR (Child Observation Record), conducted three times over the course of the school year.

### **“What Generates Even Start’s Success?” Parent Survey**

The parents’ survey, as conducted by Hudson Even Start (HES) this year, was only one of several qualitative and quantitative measures used in creating the regional report of the same title. CGR interviewed one of the authors of the regional study, in order to get a broader view of the data in this survey and in the other data analyzed.

- Highlights from this year's survey*
- ❖ Most parents join HES to learn English or attain their GED. Very few listed children's education, let alone parenting, as a primary goal.
  - ❖ Parents found certain things very valuable about HES, including: reading materials for them and their children, GED materials, transportation, social interaction (family nights, etc.), and referrals to other programs.
  - ❖ Parents noticed a change in the number of books in their home, the amount of reading, and their English capacity since joining HES. A substantial minority also noticed changes in parenting, had children in preschool, or felt they had improved their self-confidence.

*What do these results mean?*

HES has some great strengths, including flexibility, commitment to getting services and clients together, and a terrific approach to getting reading materials to children and adults. According to the authors of the regional study, it was one of very few capital region programs to get participants into meaningful ESL classes – thanks to strong support services, such as transportation and child care – and the only program to provide children's magazines, such as Ladybug, Spider and Click.

Two other major themes came out of the survey: parents are joining for adult goals, but are finding other services, such as parenting activities and preschool, valuable; and while ESL parents appear to feel they are achieving their original goals, the GED-motivated parents do not report direct success in this area.

*Next Steps*

HES expressed an interest in continuing to administer the survey annually, in order to find out how well innovations in the program are addressing issues of concern. For instance, HES has since added a GED tutor in order to address the ongoing adult education issue, and there are indications that this is helping some participants already. A survey next year would help assess if participants themselves feel any difference.

**ES-STARS**

CGR provided some thoughts and questions on the participant and program indicator data HES collects for the state, and presented them to Hudson staff in its mid-year report. Many of these questions were either resolved by the end of year data, or

provided Hudson staff with questions to pass along to state authorities.

The final data have already been analyzed and discussed by HES in its final report to the state, which was furnished to CGR. The main remaining task for CGR, then, was to look at these data in light of the “What Generates Even Start’s Success” survey, and note echoes and discrepancies.

The data, indeed, do support the findings of the survey in many ways, including the strong showing among ESL students. Interestingly, although the “Success” survey seemed to indicate little feeling of achievement among GED students, the STARS data seemed to show parents reaching state-set goals in almost the same numbers as the ESL students. Hudson has been continually working on its GED component, as noted above, and the STARS data seem to bear this out.

*Strengths:* Hudson appears to be passing most of the goals set by the state, often with flying colors. This includes the hard-to-reach parent education population as well as childhood literacy goals. It also provides more intense one-on-one services than the state requires and more training and preparation time to its staff than the minimum requirement. This would seem to benefit the clients of the program, as can be seen by its high retention rate.

*Opportunities for improvement:* The STARS data point out a couple of holes in Hudson’s program. Hudson has no assessment tool for adult writing, it has not yet assessed most of its six month to five-year-olds on auditory comprehension and expressive communication, and it needs to work on connections with the school, especially now that all children in target families are being served by the program. The Hudson Coordinator is aware of these issues and is putting in place plans to measure and/or meet these goals next year, as the situation requires.

### **Even Start/Head Start vs. Head Start Only**

The Child Observation Record (COR) was administered three times during the school year to all 47 Head Start children, 9 of whom are also in Even Start. The COR measures many of the areas of competence that should affect children’s school-readiness: initiative, social relations, creative representation, music and movement, language and literacy, and logic and mathematics. The

sample sizes are small, and limit the extent of any comparison. However, CGR has identified some areas of interest, which we hope will be of interest to those who know the children more intimately.

### Highlights

- ❖ Even Start/Head Start children performed less well than their Head Start-Only peers in general, but improved more rapidly over the course of the year.
- ❖ This improvement was mostly due to the performance of the four-year-old ES/HS children, who were quite weak to start and improved very rapidly. The Even Start/Head Start three-year-olds actually scored *higher* than Head Start-only three-year-olds and improved less rapidly (although they continued to outperform their peers even as of the last assessment period).
- ❖ All children performed differently by type of Head Start program: Children in the combined home visit / center preschool (Combo) programs (where most ES/HS children are) performed least well on the first assessment, but made stronger gains during the year than either the completely Center-based or Home-based children.

All in all, it looks like Head Start is a valuable addition to Even Start, particularly for the weaker-performing four-year-old group. Without more data – either qualitative (information about specific children) or quantitative (more children in the samples) – it is impossible to draw causal conclusions about Even Start’s effect on children’s performance in particular.

### Conclusion

Hudson Even Start is a program with many strengths, not the least of which is its openness to new ways to improve its program. Examples include: coordinating ESL classes with the LVA at the Center when ESL students would not attend traditional school-based programs; continuously working on getting greater participation by parents with GED goals; changing the way HES provided books to families based upon the regional evaluation’s determination that they should be treated as expendable resources; and providing flexible transportation and child care to make its other programs possible. Opportunities for growth include continued work on GED and measuring children’s outcomes.

Head Start appears to be a valuable addition to Even Start, but it is not possible to determine the relative effectiveness of the programs from a small study such as this one.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was the result of work by a number of people. First of all, HES Coordinator Sophia Becker was ideally active participant in this study. She was very generous with her time, especially given how little she has of it: she explained the details of Hudson's program, provided insight to our analysis, and took responsibility for getting the COR data from the Head Start for that section of the report. Tina Sharpe of Columbia Opportunities provided the COR data which was so necessary to the study. Carol Gans was helpful in guiding our research topics and in providing insight along the way. Gary Weiskopf, local evaluator of HES, provided guidance and background on the program. Finally, Janet Spitz, co-author of the regional Even Start evaluation, helped us understand Hudson within the "big picture" of local Even Start programs. We would like to thank all of them for facilitating our work on this evaluation.

## “WHAT GENERATES EVEN START’S SUCCESS?”

In the first half of the 2001-2002 school year, Hudson Even Start conducted a survey of its parents, using a survey instrument created and applied the year before by a regional evaluator. The parental survey was only one of a number of tools used by that evaluator in creating the “What Generates Even Start’s Success” report, but it provides insight into the types of services that parents look for and appreciate in Hudson’s program.

This report will discuss the results of this year’s survey, comparing it with last year and putting it into the context of the regional report as well. Hudson staff surveyed 24 parents this year, double the 12 surveyed in Hudson for the regional study. In many cases, parents had multiple answers to these open-ended questions, so the total number of responses will add to more than 24, and the total percentages will add to more than 100%.

### What did participants hope to get from Even Start?

The first question asked why parents decided to join Even Start. Generally, both this year and last, parents replied that they joined either to learn English (46%) and/or to get their GED (42%). This represents an apparently large jump in the number of parents joining for a general education degree, from only 17% last year. Only four (17%) answered that they joined to improve their children’s education or social skills. In addition, several mentioned bettering themselves (13%) or improving their education (8%).

**Table 1: Question #1 - Why Parents Joined Even Start**

	2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1) Why did you join the Even Start Program?	12	100%	24	100%
To learn English	5	42%	11	46%
To get GED	2	17%	10	42%
Children's education and socialization	2	17%	4	17%
Generally better themselves	2	17%	3	13%
Other adult education	3	25%	2	8%
Social / Cultural	2	17%	1	4%
Parenting	0	0%	1	4%
Get citizenship	0	0%	1	4%
Better job	2	17%	0	0%

Source: CGR analysis of “What Generates Even Start’s Success?” parent survey, administered during 2001-02 school year

Adult social interaction and parenting skills were only each mentioned once, and no responses mentioned getting a better job, although two responses had included this goal last year.

These responses are interesting in light of the trouble that the program has had in getting parents into adult education, compared with the relative ease of providing children's literacy services. According to Hudson staff, the English as a second language classes are very popular, but it is much harder to get parents to join GED classes. However, since nearly half of the parents are joining in order to achieve this goal, this area remains a strong priority for the program.

### What did parents find valuable?

The next set of questions ask what parents found valuable about the program. The second question asks what Even Start does that leads specifically to more reading, both for the parents and for their children. Parents responded that for both themselves and for their children, the biggest contribution toward increased reading is the presentation of the actual reading material itself. For themselves, 38% of parents responded that books and magazines lead to more reading, and GED materials helped 25%. Nobody

**Table 2: Questions # 2a and 2b - Most Valuable Reading Services**

	2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2a) <i>What services or resources did ES provide you with, that leads to reading for you?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Bringing books, magazines	6	50%	9	38%
GED materials	0	0%	6	25%
ESL / ELL classes	3	25%	6	25%
Home services	3	25%	4	17%
Help with reading	1	8%	3	13%
Family nights	0	0%	2	8%
Testing and spelling	0	0%	2	8%
2b) <i>What services or resources did ES provide you with, that leads to reading for your children?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Books and magazines (Click, Lady Bug, Spider)	5	42%	19	79%
Activities	2	17%	7	29%
Direct teaching and academic support	3	25%	4	17%
Reading to child	3	25%	2	8%
Family night	0	0%	1	4%

Source: CGR analysis of "What Generates Even Start's Success?" parent survey, administered during 2001-02 school year

mentioned GED materials in response to last year's survey. This seems to be a positive sign and may be due in part to the institution of the Plato system, a laptop-driven GED material preparation and testing system, between the two periods.

For children's reading, once again, books and magazines (like Click, Spider, and Ladybug) topped the list at 79% of responses, even more strongly than for adults. A distant, but important, second, appeared to be activities performed with materials brought by the home visitor, at 29% of responses. Direct teaching and academic support – such as help with homework, spelling, etc. – was also noted by 17% of parents. Having the home visitor read to the child, interestingly, only accounted for two responses this year (8%), while it accounted for three last year (25% of that smaller sample).

Question number three is a broader question, and addresses what services Even Start provides that help in other ways than just with reading. Nearly half (46%) of parents responded that transportation was very helpful, up from 25% of parents last year. Other important services Even Start provides are: social activities

**Table 3: Question #3 - What Other HES Services are Helpful?**

	2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
3) <i>What services or resources did Even Start provide, that helped you in other ways?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Transportation	3	25%	11	46%
Family night / social activities	4	33%	8	33%
Referrals and linkages to other programs (health insurance, WIC, schools)	1	8%	7	29%
Child care	2	17%	6	25%
Translation services	4	33%	4	17%
ESL	0	0%	2	8%
Help with job search	1	8%	2	8%
Communication with school	1	8%	2	8%
Nothing else		0%	1	4%
GED help	1	8%	1	4%
Parenting	0	0%	1	4%
Library	0	0%	1	4%
Help meeting life's challenges and improving social skills	4	33%	0	0%
"A moment of peace"	1	8%	0	0%

Source: CGR analysis of "What Generates Even Start's Success?" parent survey, administered during 2001-02 school year.

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such as family nights (33%); referrals to other programs, such as WIC and Questar (29%), up from 8% (only 1 respondent) last year; childcare (25%); and translation services (17%). Only a couple of parents mentioned ESL classes (probably because they had noted them in the second question), job search help, or communication with their child's school.

The author of the regional study did mention Hudson's particularly strong emphasis on providing the support services that enable adults to make use of their literacy services, and these answers bear that out: transportation and childcare have been critical to enabling adults taking ESL classes. Even referrals to other services may be seen as supporting literacy goals, since other services relieve crises, so that parents can focus effectively on long-term goals like literacy. The most often mentioned non-support service, social interaction, can almost be seen in a similar light: not only is effectiveness in this area likely to keep adults in the program even when they may become discouraged about reaching their goals at times, but it helps to build a network that strengthens families over time.

Questions 48 ask about how HES gets books into participants' homes, and how effectively. Relatively few (33%) made use of the library, and of those, only three used the library regularly (weekly or nearly weekly).<sup>1</sup> All responded that they had books and magazines in their homes. Nearly all (83%) responded that Hudson Even Start brought books into their homes by bringing those books and leaving them there, either on loan or permanently. Most families were hard-pressed to think of anything else the program could do to achieve this goal, other than bringing more books. This is something the Hudson program does particularly well: apparently not all of the programs in the regional evaluation even provided long-term loans of books, and Hudson was the only one in the area to distribute children's magazines.

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<sup>1</sup> One respondent did report using the library van, although Hudson does not have one. Hudson staff think this may be confusion over the fact that the transportation van parks at the library.

Question 9 is related, since family advocates are the ones who bring the books and help families to read them. Most families responded that they meet with their family advocate once a week (63%) and 17% met with an advocate twice a week. Both represent a slight drop over last year's results, although they are still very strong.

**Table 4: Questions #4-9 - Getting Books Into Homes**

	2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
4) <i>Does a library van come to your neighborhood? Do you use it? How often?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Used library van	2	17%	1	4%
5) <i>Do you go to the library? How often?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
No	0	0%	13	54%
Yes	5	42%	8	33%
once a week or 3 times per month	1	8%	3	13%
once in a while or as needed	2	17%	3	13%
6) <i>Are there magazines in your home? Books?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Yes	12	100%	24	100%
7) <i>What is the most important thing Even Start does, that puts books in your home?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Bringing books, magazines	9	75%	20	83%
Helping parent teach child	1	8%	2	8%
Reading to child	0	0%	1	4%
GED	2	17%	0	0%
Encouraging parent to read to child	2	17%	0	0%
8) <i>What else could Even Start do that would put books in your home, and get your family to read more?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Nothing	1	8%	5	21%
More books	3	25%	3	13%
ESL	0	0%	2	8%
Weekend classes	0	0%	1	4%
Library cards	0	0%	1	4%
Seemed to want more adult reading time with advocate	0	0%	1	4%
Extra reading help for child	1	8%	0	0%
9) <i>How often do you meet with your family advocate?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Once a week	9	75%	15	63%
Twice a week	3	25%	4	17%
One- two times a week	0	0%	3	13%
Three times a month	0	0%	1	4%

Source: CGR analysis of "What Generates Even Start's Success?" parent survey, administered during 2001-02 school year

## How had parents' lives changed under Even Start?

Finally, questions 10 through 12 dealt with perceived outcomes. Question 10 asked how participants' family lives were different, compared with a year ago. The biggest single response – 38% – was from parents who had learned more English. Other adult-oriented goals included getting learner's permits for driving (13%), having more confidence and self-esteem (13%), having more connections to other programs (8%), and having more social contacts (8%). The biggest parenting outcomes were that four parents (17%) noted they were interacting more with their children, and three felt that they had more help with them, while one noted that it was new for her to be working on parenting skills. In terms of children's outcomes, four parents (17%) had children in preschool, and one had a child in special education. Only one noted an increase in the children's learning, compared

**Table 5: Questions 10-12 - Results of Being in HES**

	2000-01		2001-02	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
10) <i>How is your family life different now that you work with Even Start, compared with a year ago?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Have learned more English	3	25%	9	38%
Have more interaction with their children	0	0%	4	17%
Have children in preschool	0	0%	4	17%
Have received their learner permit	0	0%	3	13%
Have more confidence, self-esteem, self-knowledge	0	0%	3	13%
Have more help with children	0	0%	3	13%
Have more knowledge and connections to other programs	0	0%	2	8%
Have more people to talk to	0	0%	2	8%
Has a child in special ed	0	0%	1	4%
Is in Questar	0	0%	1	4%
No changes	0	0%	1	4%
More books and activities for kids	0	0%	1	4%
Children's learning improved	3	25%	1	4%
Working toward citizenship	0	0%	1	4%
Better understanding of culture	0	0%	1	4%
Working on parenting skills	0	0%	1	4%
Better family life	2	17%	0	0%
Better interaction with child's teachers	1	8%	0	0%
11) <i>Are there more books now in your home, than a year ago?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Yes	10	83%	24	100%
12) <i>Are people in your home reading more than a year ago?</i>	12	100%	24	100%
Yes	10	83%	23	96%

Source: CGR analysis of "What Generates Even Start's Success?" parent survey, administered during 2001-02 school year



with three such comments last year, and none gave the vague “better family life” answer that two had noted last year.

Everyone claimed to have more books in their home than a year ago, in answer to question 11, and all but one participant claimed that their families were reading more.

## Survey Conclusions

The goals of Even Start are:

- ❖ Adult literacy, either generally or in English specifically
- ❖ Early childhood literacy and pre-literacy; and
- ❖ Parenting skills

It seems that Hudson’s Even Start program has several important strengths:

- ❖ English as a second language for adults: it is more effective than most programs in the region at getting parents involved in classes, partly because it provides support services that make those classes possible.
- ❖ Increasing overall reading, mostly by bringing books and activities into the home. This is of tremendous value, especially as many of the participants are still not in the habit of using the library.
- ❖ Parent-child interaction: although this result was not as strong, many parents mentioned this as a difference they have noticed from the prior year.

It is interesting that many of the parents joined with one primary goal in mind, but appear to have stayed for other reasons. Most of those with ESL goals seem to feel that they are receiving directly related services and making progress in that area. However, although many joined with GED or general non-literacy-specific adult education goals, these did not generally make an appearance in the services provided or in the outcomes section. This may be counterbalanced somewhat by the fact that very few parents entered the program with parenting or child-specific main goals, yet many apparently found those services very valuable.

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## ES-STARS ANALYSIS

Hudson Even Start has already done a fairly extensive analysis of its own STARS data. At the mid-year update, CGR presented mostly questions about the data that have either since been resolved or provided Hudson staff with information to report back to the state on indicators that didn't seem to be measuring the appropriate data. The main addition CGR brings to further analysis of these numbers is to put them within the context of the Success Survey.

### Parent Literacy

Table 6 shows outcomes on the indicators for parent literacy in the 2001-02 school year vs. the 2000-01 school year. Hudson appears to be meeting or exceeding state goals on most indicators. ESL students appear to be participating well, and 80% had one level gains on the NYSPLACE - a rate that well exceeds state requirements. Even GED students are doing well. Although the "Success" survey results seemed to indicate low participation among GED students, the same number of participants (10) was included in that indicator as in the ESL indicator. Of them, 60% succeeded in improving on the TABE by a one grade level gain, still above state requirements, and an increase from 20% last year. This could be due to increased efforts on the part of the Hudson program to reach this population since the administration of the last survey.

In addition, all who wanted to participate in job training or become employed have done so. Hudson staff note this may be a more difficult goal to achieve in the near future, as a couple of large employers are moving out of the region.

Fifty percent of parents with a GED goal and who scored above 9.0 on the TABE were supposed to get their GED during the period. According to the STARS database report, eight participants qualified for this indicator, but only one got a GED. In looking at the data mid-year, CGR pointed out to Hudson staff that it did not appear that there were more than three parents with scores over 9.0 in *either* reading or math, based upon the underlying data, let alone who scored 9.0 on *both*. There were

**Table 6. Parent Literacy**

	2000-01 (full year)		2001-02 (full year)				
	Goal	Actuals					
		Percent	Participants included in indicator	"Number of possible"	Total # of participant that made the indicator	Participants included in indicator	Percent
<b>Goals for 2001-02</b>							
1.1 Fifty percent of all parents who have completed at least a 100 hour block of parent literacy and who pre-tested at 0 - 8.9, on the TABE in math or reading, will demonstrate a one grade level gain as measured by the TABE in math or reading.	30%	20%	5	12	6	10	60%
1.2 Fifty percent of all parents who have completed at least a 100 hour block of ELL and who pre-test at levels 1,2 or 3 on the NYSPLACE will demonstrate a one level gain as measured by the NYSPLACE	33%	80%	10	14	8	10	80%
1.3 Fifty percent of the participating Even Start parents who have a goal of a High School Diploma or equivalent and who score 9.0 and above in reading and math on the TABE, will earn a high school diploma or equivalent during the program year.	50%	50%	2	1	1	8	13%
1.4 Fifty percent of Even Start participants, who have this goal, will enter into post-secondary education, job training or retraining during the program year.	NA	ND	ND		4	4	100%
1.5 Fifty percent of Even Start participants, who have this goal, will enter employment, or obtain career advancement or the military during the program year.	NA	ND	ND		20	20	100%
1.4 (2000-01 only) Twenty-five percent of ES participants will enter into post-secondary education, job training or retraining, Non-subsidized employment, or the military or obtain a career advancement during the program year.	25%	93%	27		NA	NA	NA
1.6 Thirty-five percent of the adults who score at or below Level 3 on the National Reporting System benchmarks for writing will improve one level after 100 hours of instruction.	NA	ND	ND	0	0	0	NA

Source: ES-STARS data For Hudson Even Start, school year 2001-02

eight participants noted as having scored over 9.0 on the TABE or already *having* a High School Diploma, but this didn't seem to CGR or Hudson staff as an appropriate measure of who would be eligible for obtaining a GED during the year. Hudson reported this issue to the state in its own final report.

As with all of the NYS ES programs, Hudson did not have an assessment tool in place to measure the improvement of adults on the National Reporting System benchmarks for writing, and thus could not provide data for indicator 1.6.

## Early Childhood Education

Where data are available, Hudson appears to do well preparing children to meet literacy goals. However, there were only data on whether school age children were reading at grade level – 82% were, compared with the state’s goal of 50%. However, Hudson is still struggling to assess all of its younger children on the PreSchool Language Scale.

There was a lower-than-expected percentage of children with better attendance in school than their peers. This may be related to the weakness Hudson has had in having Family Advocates linking with the schools. Hudson’s coordinator notes that the program plans to have stronger linkages in the hope that this will help.

**Table 7. Early Childhood Education**

Goals for 2001-02	Goal	2000-01 (full year)		2001-02 (full year)				
		Percent	Participants included in indicator	Actuals				
				"Number of possible"	# Achieving Standard	Participants included in indicator	Percent	
1.7	Fifty percent of all Even Start children age 6 months to 5 years old who score at the 50th percentile or below on either the auditory comprehension or expressive communication will increase their percentile rank on auditory comprehension and expressive communication as measured by the PreSchool Language Scale after one year of	50% (of children 12 months to 5 years)	19%	31	32	6	16	38%
1.8	Seventy-five percent of all Even Start children in school K through grade 3 will have attended school at the same or better rate as the building attendance rate.	75%	69%	16	16	8	16	50%
1.9	Ninety percent of all children from participating Even Start families, who are enrolled in Even Start by November 1 and who attend school, pre- K through grade 3, will be promoted to the next grade as reported by the child's school district.	90%	94%	18	16	13	13	100%
1.10	Fifty percent of children, who are enrolled in Even Start by November 1 and who are in school grades 1 - 3, will read on grade level or above as reported by the child's school district at the end of the year.	50%	75%	4	12	9	11	82%

Source: ES-STARS data For Hudson Even Start, school year 2001-02

## Parenting Education and Interactive Literacy

This is an interesting section of the STARS indicators for two reasons. First, almost none of the parents mentioned this being an area that attracted them to the Even Start program on the “Success” survey, yet several mentioned finding Even Start’s parenting skills and activities valuable. Second, Even Start’s previous local evaluator felt the Parenting Education Profile, or PEP (formerly POP), was too subjective to be useful, especially in measuring small increments of change over time.

However, from the information available, it looks as though HES parents are improving in interactive literacy and school support goals, and for both indicators they met the state goals.

**Table 8. Parenting Education and Interactive Literacy**

	<i>Goal</i>	<i>2000-01 (full year)</i>		<i>2001-02 (full year)</i>			
		<i>Actuals</i>					
		<i>Percent</i>	<i>Participants included in indicator</i>	<i>Number of families</i>	<i>Total # of participant that made the indicator</i>	<i>Participants included in indicator</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Goals for 2001-02</b>							
1.11	Fifty percent of parents who have participated in Even Start within the reporting year, will show demonstrate a 0.3 gain in supporting interactive literacy activities as indicated by the Parenting Education	75%	8	31	13	17	76%
1.12	Fifty percent of the parents who have participated in Even Start within the reporting year will demonstrate a 0.3 gain in supporting children’s learning in formal educational settings as indicated on the Parenting Education Profile.	50%	4	31	8	16	50%

Source: ES-STARS data For Hudson Even Start, school year 2001-02

## Program Indicators

Although these indicators existed for 2000-01, Even Start programs were not evaluated on them until 2001-02. These indicators measure both inputs and outcomes. For example, they track how many hours of instruction are offered to families, and how much training and preparation time the program gives Family Advocates. But it also measures turnover among staff and families. CGR did not receive the results of the staff turnover question (2.5), but on almost all the other categories, the data show Hudson is well above the state's required rates. The one exception was that Hudson Even Start accepted one new family that did not have low parental literacy levels at intake. Since their turnover is low and they have a small program, this meant that fewer than 95% of new families had low literacy levels at intake.

**Table 9. Program Indicators**

	Goal	2000-01 (full year)					
		Actuals		Actuals			
		Percent	Participan ts included in indicator	Offered	Total # of participa nt that made the indicator	Participan ts included in indicator	Percent
<b>Goals for 2001-02</b>							
2.1	The program offers integrated instruction in the home for a minimum of two, one-hour visits each month for each family.	NA		3		Visits per month	2.4 visits
				2		Hours per visit	1.9 hours
2.2	Ninety-five percent of the families enrolled in Even Start during the program year will have at least one participating parent with low literacy levels at intake.	NA		6 new enrolled, 5 at low literacy	5	6	83.3%
2.3	Ninety percent of families enrolled in Even Start during the program year will be at or below the poverty level at intake.	NA			6	6	100.0%
2.4	Even Start programs will retain fifty percent of the families for 12 or more months.	NA			23	31	74.2%
2.5	Even Start programs will retain fifty percent of the Even Start program staff for 24 or more months	NA		NA	NA	NA	NA
2.6	The program offers 60 hours per year of combined general professional development and individualized professional development for staff, who provide direct services to families.	NA		6.7 General; 1.5 Individual; 8.2 Total		Total avg. hours of training per month (1.3 general;	6.9
2.7	One hundred percent of the programs provide a minimum of 8 hours per month of shared planning time with the staff, who provide direct services to families to insure integrated instruction.	NA		Avg hours planning time per month per employee	113.7	9.7	11.7

Source: ES-STARs data For Hudson Even Start, school year 2001-02

On the whole, Hudson Even Start appears to be doing quite well meeting the state's requirements for services and outcomes.

## COMPARISON OF EVEN START/HEAD START CHILDREN WITH HEAD START-ONLY CHILDREN

### Head Start and Even Start Populations

As part of its local evaluation, Hudson Even Start asked CGR to look at the school-readiness of its three and four-year-olds. Since a number of Even Start children have been placed in Head Start, HES asked CGR to compare the children in both Even Start and Head Start to the children receiving Head Start Services only.

Hudson had more than 100 children in its Head Start program during the 2001-02 school year, not all of whom attended for the full year. CGR had full-year data for 66 children in Head Start:<sup>2</sup> 39 in a five-day per week center-based nursery school program, 9 receiving home visits and one-day per week of interaction with other children, and 18 in a combination program, receiving some home visits, but 3 days per week of group nursery school-type activities. Eight of the children in Head Start were also in Even Start, with seven attending Head Start's Combo program and one in the Home-Based program.<sup>3</sup>

CGR was initially asked to compare the school-readiness of Head Start students who participated in Even Start (Even Start/Head Start) with those who did not have that extra assistance (Head Start-Only). However, as discussed in the mid-year update, there are a number of issues that make this kind of direct comparison misleading.

First of all, the populations differ by definition. Head Start and Even Start enrollment eligibility criteria are somewhat different: Head Start requires only that children's families meet poverty guidelines; Even Start requires additionally that at least one parent

<sup>2</sup> There were 66 children in the sample analyzed for this report. Two more were received after most of the data had been analyzed. Since rerunning the analyses would have required a great deal of time, and since preliminary runs indicated that they would not affect the results substantially, they were not included. They are in CGR's final database, however.

<sup>3</sup> There were actually 12 Even Start participants in Head Start during the course of the year, but due to drop outs and late additions, only eight were in both programs for the whole period being analyzed.



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must have low literacy levels at intake. We might expect, therefore, that Even Start children would need more literacy assistance than their contemporaries. Thus, we cannot compare outcomes directly, as one might in a randomized study.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, the number of children is very small. Although the addition of new Head Start programs to the database improved this somewhat, the number of Even Start children who were in both programs for the full year is so small that the performance of a single child can affect the average for the whole. This is especially true for those analyses where we separated the groups into three-year-old and four-year-old populations. There were only three Even Start four-year-olds participating in Head Start for the full 2001-02 school year.

Finally, there are differences in the extent to which the different populations were distributed within the overall Head Start population. The general Head Start population was mostly comprised of four-year-olds (43 of 66), and mostly in Center-Based Programs (39 of 66). The two are connected: most four-year-olds in Head Start participate in a Center-based program (34 of 43). By contrast, most Even Start Children in Head Start were three years old (5 of 8), and almost all participated in Combo programs (7 of 8). In some ways, this made the most comparable groups the children from both programs that were both three and in a Combo program. However, this limited the number of cases yet further, as only 14 children total fit the criteria: four Even Start / Head Start children, and ten Head Start-Only children.

Table 10 shows the breakdown of Head Start students by participation in Even Start, type of Head Start Program, and gender, among other things. (For the sake of easy comparison, “four-year-olds” are all children born on or before 12/1/97, and “three-year-olds” are those born after that date, regardless of what age they were by the end of the school year.

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<sup>4</sup> Even Start is currently conducting a randomized study on the national level. An earlier study showed that during early participation in the program, Even Start children learned faster than their peers, but that after 18 months, there was not statistical difference, perhaps because many of those participants had left the program.

**Table 10: Participants in Hudson Head Start**

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Head Start &amp; Even Start</i>	<i>Head Start Only</i>
<i>Total</i>			
Head Start	66	8	58
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	34	5	29
Female	32	3	29
<i>Age</i>			
Three (>12/1/97)	23	5	18
Four (<=12/1/97)	43	3	40
<i>Type of Head Start Program</i>			
Home-Based H.S.	9	1	8
Combo H.S.	18	7	11
Center-Based H.S.	39	0	39

Source: CGR analysis of Hudson Head Start 2001-02 COR data

What these limitations mean is that this analysis is purely descriptive, and none of the conclusions are likely to be statistically significant. However, many of the observations we made were interesting to us, and we hope that, knowing the children, ES and HS staff may find them even more useful.

### Using the COR to assess school readiness

All of the children in Head Start are assessed for improvement in various school-readiness skills over the course of the year, using the High/Scope Child Observation Record (COR). This assessment tool was not in use in prior years, so longer time series data are not yet available. However, it was given three times over the course of the school year, and therefore provides some information about student improvement over that period.

The COR seems to be a useful tool for assessing school readiness. According to researchers at the National Center for Early Development and Learning, an adequate measure of school readiness should consider:

- ❖ Health and physical development;
- ❖ Emotional well-being and social competence;
- ❖ Approaches to learning;
- ❖ Communicative skills; and

❖ Cognition and general knowledge.

The COR measures all of these except health. In addition, one major hurdle for such assessments is that they cannot be conducted as standardized tests. Although test-taking skills differ from person to person, and can often mask other skills, pre-school children are particularly poor test-takers. The COR overcomes this hurdle since it is based upon longer-term observation of children by their own teachers and other adults who know them well, rather than on a test given by a total stranger.

National assessments of Head Start have used the COR among other measures to assess the effectiveness of the program in getting children ready for school.

## Results from first round of COR

The mid-year update furnished by CGR to Even Start Staff in March provided a snapshot of information about children in the programs. Several of the items we noticed seemed worth watching for future trends.

### *Even Start/Head Start vs. Head Start-Only*

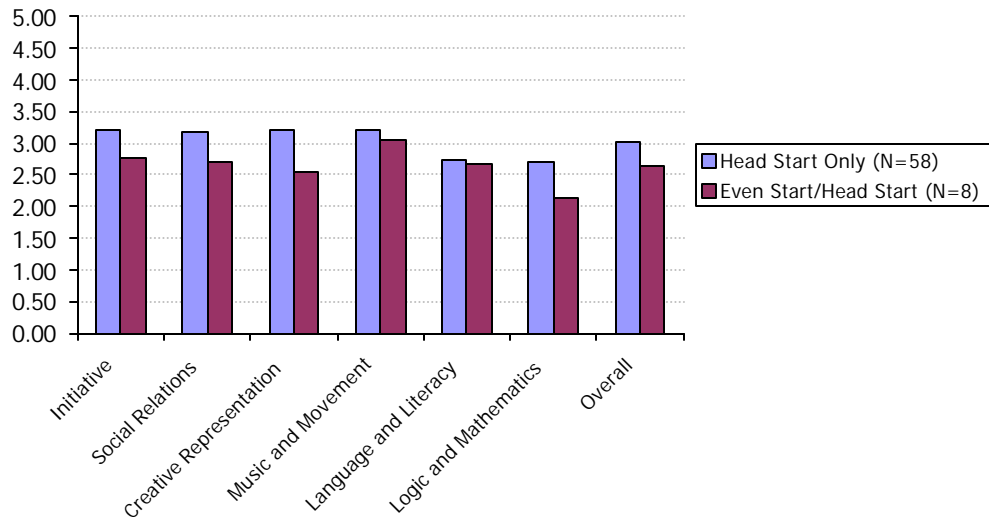
First, although Even Start children performed slightly lower than their contemporaries on the first round of the COR on average, the difference was not substantial. They tended to perform less well on initiative, social relation and creative representation, while being about the same on the measures of music and movement, and language and literacy.<sup>5</sup> (See Figure 1.)

The Even Start children's lower scores might have signified that the program was targeting the correct population, in that these children are more disadvantaged because of their parents' low literacy. (The age gap was less of an issue the first time we ran the numbers, as many of the four-year-old Center-Based children were not included in that sample.)

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<sup>5</sup> There may be slight differences in the data presented here vs. the mid-year report, as one of the Even Start children dropped out of the program before all three COR assessments, and was therefore not included in this final analysis.

**Figure 1. Performance of All Head Start-Only and Even Start/Head Start Children - Time 1**

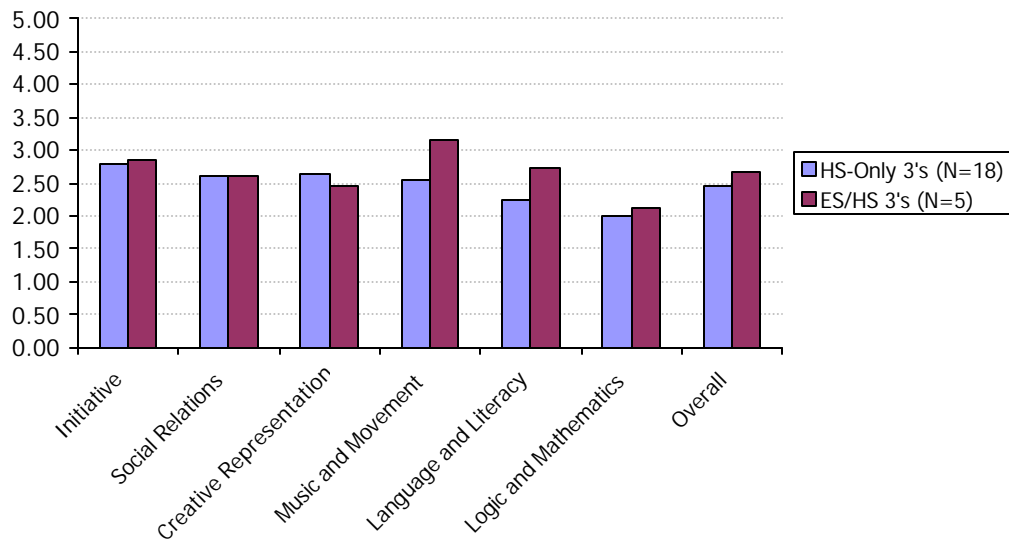


We then looked at performances by Even Start three-year-olds and 4-year-olds, compared with their contemporaries.

Three-Year-Olds

Interestingly, the three-year-olds in Even Start generally scored about as well on the COR as their contemporaries, and even outperformed them in music and movement and language and literacy. (Figure 2)

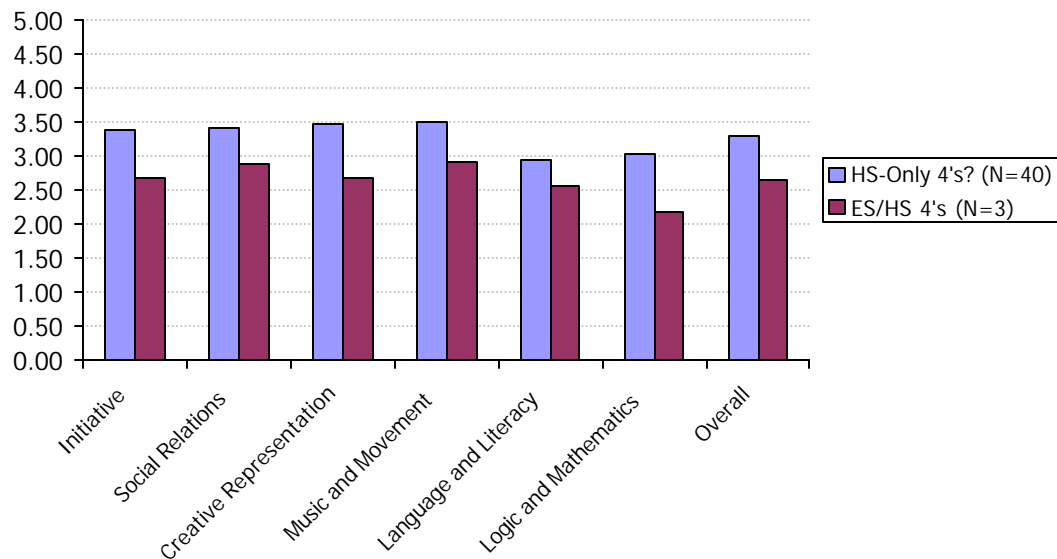
**Figure 2. Performance of Head Start-Only and Even Start/Head Start Three-Year-Olds - Time 1**



Four-Year-Olds

However, this was not true for the four-year-olds, who did worse on every measure of school-readiness. (Figure 3)

**Figure 3. Performance of Head Start-Only and Even-Start/Head Start Four-Year-Olds - Time 1**



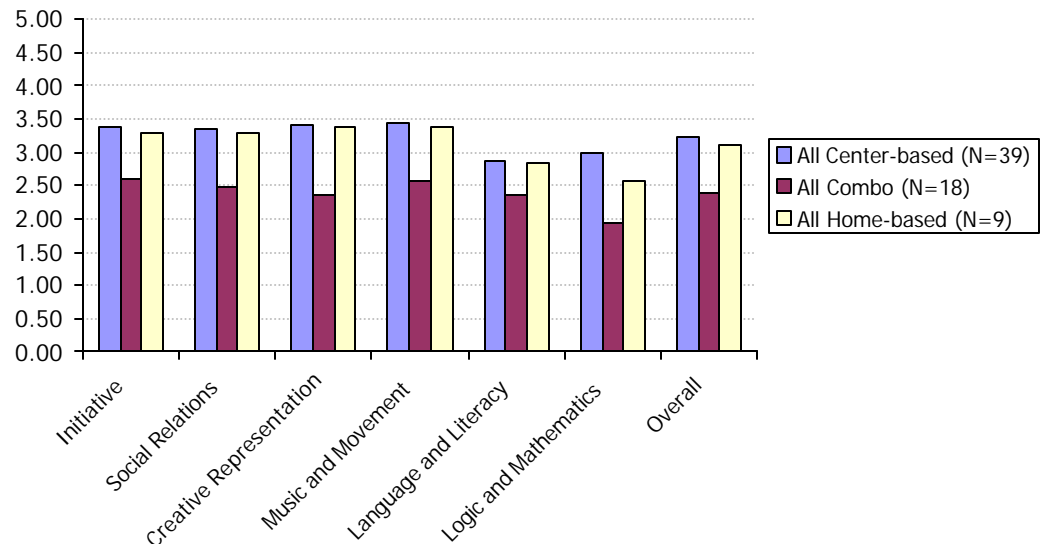
Interestingly, the 4 year old group of Even Start children performed about the same on the COR as the three-year-old Even Start children, in every category except logic and mathematics. The four-year-old non-Even Start group scored higher in every category by an average of over one point.

#### *Performance by Type of Program*

We also noticed a significant difference in the performances by different types of Head Start program. The Center-Based Head Start children tested highest on almost all measures than either of the other two groups, and Home-Based children did second best. It was the children in the Combo Head Start program that lagged. This seems counterintuitive: one might expect that group to score in between the two extremes. Since most Even Start children were in Combo programs, we wondered if this was indicative of a problem with the program or just a snapshot of the particular

children in each program as of the first assessment round. For example, some of the discrepancy (although not all) is doubtless related to the age of the children in the different programs. (See Figure 4.)

**Figure 4. Performance of All Head Start Children, by Program - Time 1**

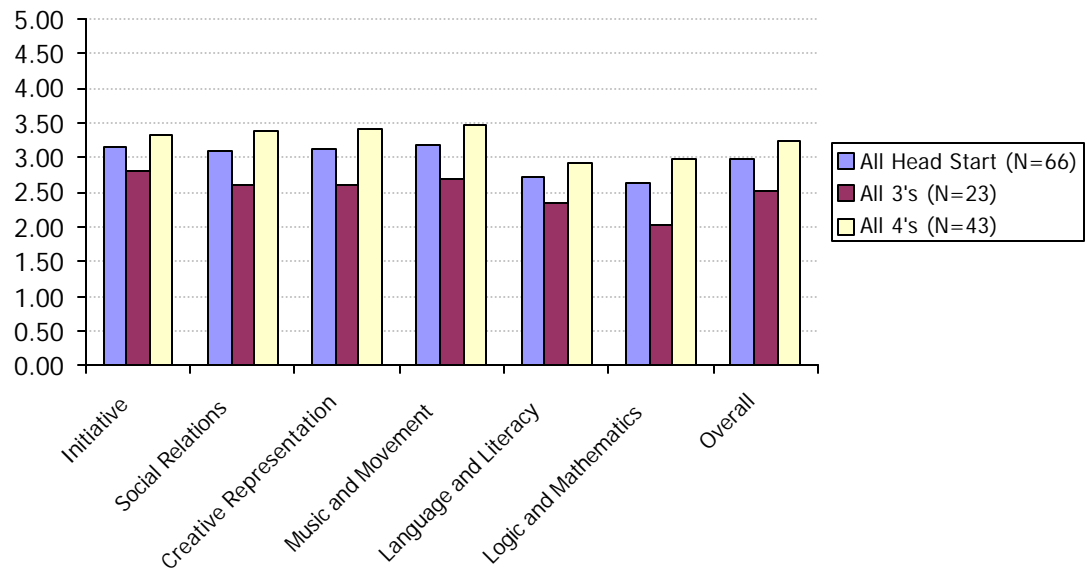


## Improvement During Year

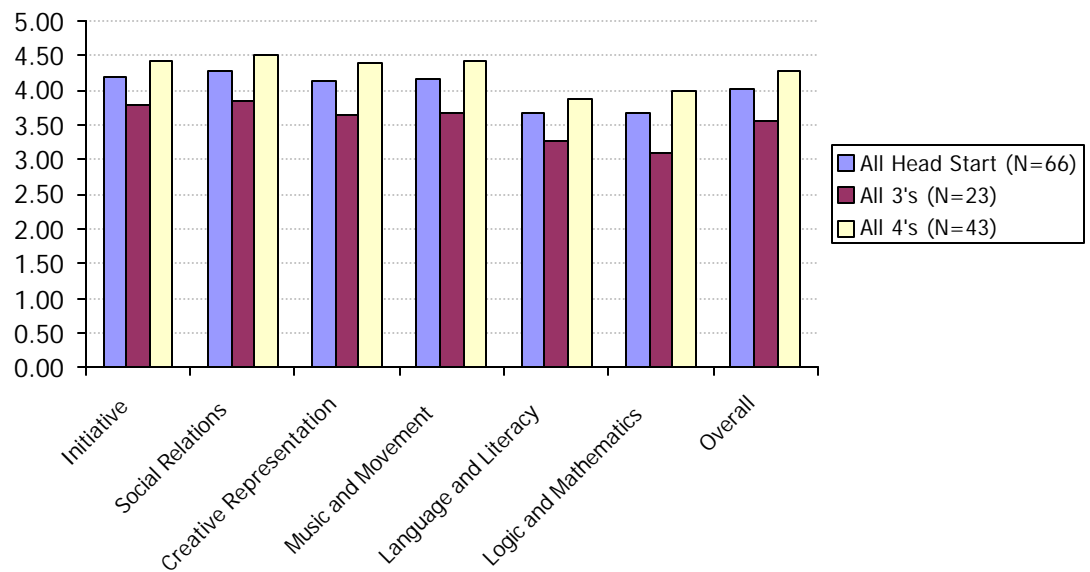
Since the mid-year update, Head Start has conducted the second and third rounds of COR assessments. Over the course of the year, children in Head Start improved by about a full point (on a point scale of 1-5). This was fairly uniformly true across the categories. Thus, the group's strength in movement and music continued, as did its slight relative weakness in the language and literacy and logic and math categories. These patterns held true equally for both age groups, although some of the base points were different. (The four-year-olds were relatively weaker in language skills, for example, throughout, despite gaining these skills at the same pace over the course of the year.)

Figures 5-7 show the first and last assessments, and the change by age for each category.

**Figure 5. Performance of All Head Start Children, by Age - Time 1**

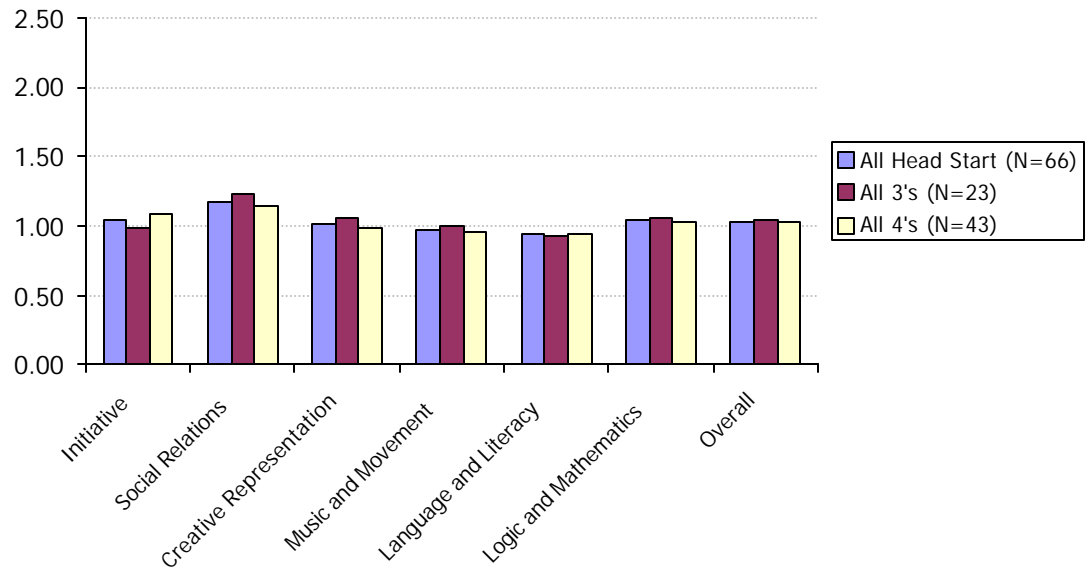


**Figure 6. Performance of All Head Start Children, by Age - Time 3**



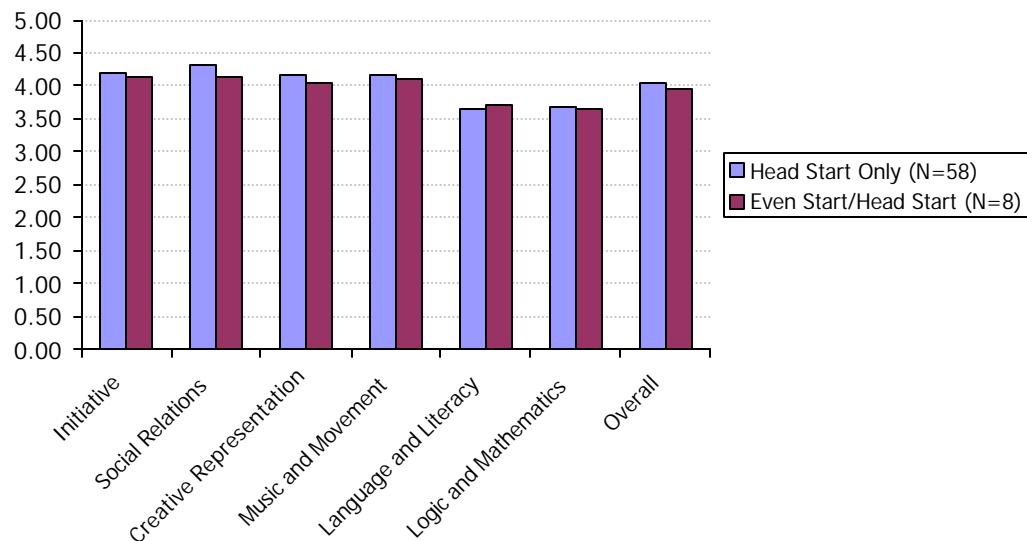
Interestingly, the difference between the three-year-olds and the four-year-olds at each test period was only 0.7 of a point, putting the average third assessment score of the three-year-olds slightly higher than the average first assessment score of the four-year-old group. This may indicate some difference between the individuals in the two groups, or it could be due to the fact that some of these skills deteriorate over the summer, with less regular interaction, or it could represent the fact that many of the four-year-olds in Head Start are beginning the program for the first time, and thus do not have the same benefit those beginning the prior year had.

**Figure 7. Improvement During Year, All Head Start Children, by Age**





**Figure 8. Performance of All Head Start-Only and Even Start/Head Start Children - Time 3**

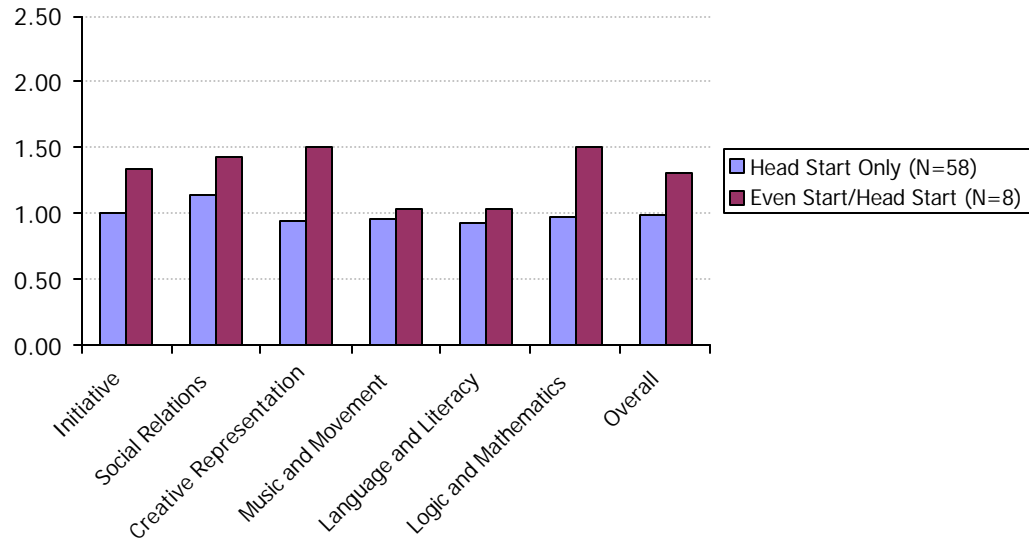


*Even Start/Head Start vs. Head Start-Only*

As mentioned above, a direct comparison of these two groups is somewhat misleading, given the population differences (parental literacy, most common age of child, etc.). However, we did find that, although the Even Start/Head Start children were slightly below their contemporaries as of the first assessment, they did catch up considerably over time. As Figure 8 shows, by assessment time 3, they were much closer to their contemporaries.

In fact, while the Head Start-Only group improved by about a point over the period, the Even Start/Head Start group improved by between 1-1.5 points between the two assessments. The group made particular gains in creativity and mathematics. (Figure 9)

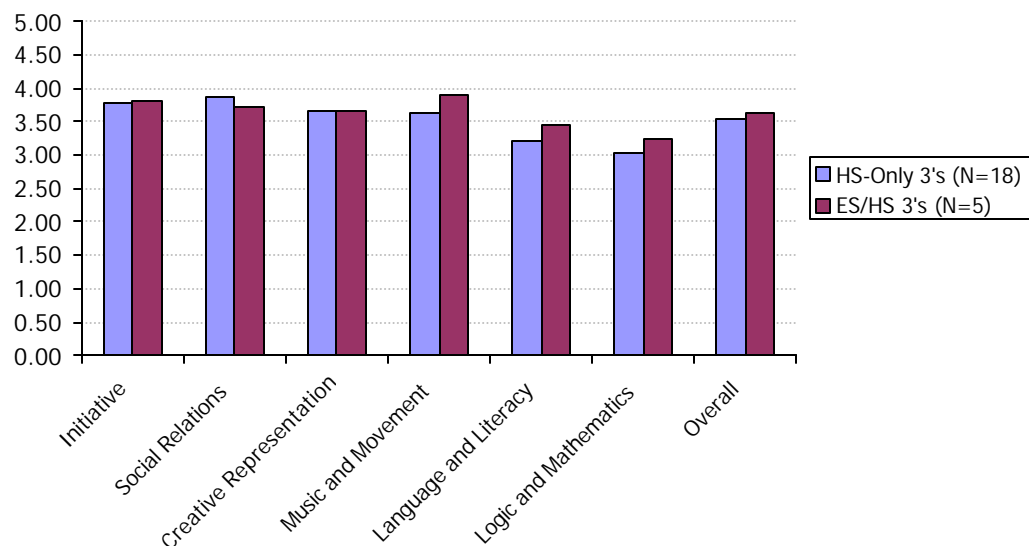
**Figure 9. Improvement During Year, All Head Start-Only and Even Start/Head Start Children**



Three-Year-Olds

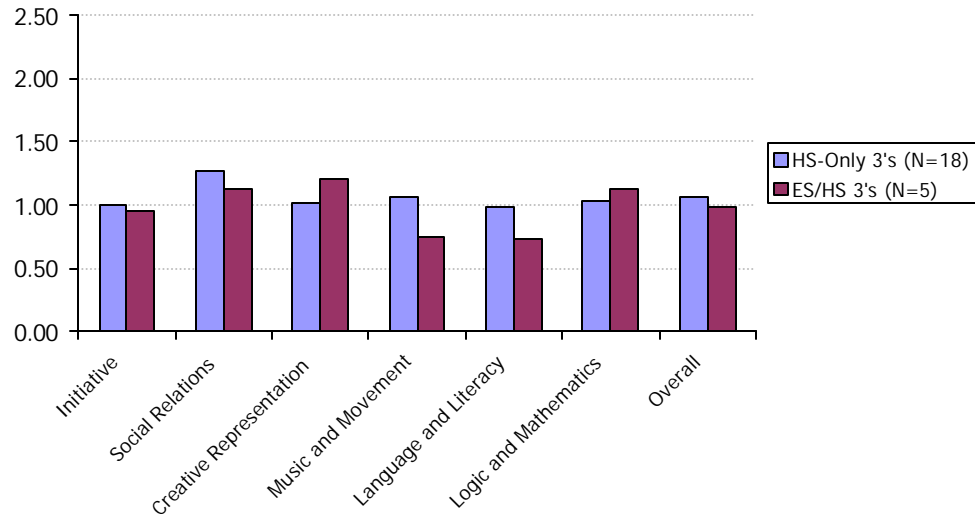
As mentioned above, Even Start/Head Start three-year-olds were generally at least as school-ready as their Head-Start-Only contemporaries. Perhaps not surprisingly, their peers closed that gap somewhat, although the ES/HS children continued to score slightly higher even in the third assessment. (Figure 10)

**Figure 10. Performance of Head Start-Only and Even Start/Head Start Three-Year-Olds - Time 3**



Improvement in the three-year-old group of Even Start/Head Start children was often less than a full point. (Figure 11)

**Figure 11. Improvement During Year, Head Start-Only and Even Start/Head Start Three-Year-Olds**



Four-Year-Olds

One of the main concerns raised by the mid-year report was whether the lower scores of the four-year-old ES/HS children indicated that ES children were losing ground over time. However, by the third assessment, the four-year-old ES/HS kids were actually outperforming their HS-Only peers. (Figure 12)

**Figure 12. Performance of Head Start-Only and Even-Start/Head Start Four-Year-Olds - Time 3**

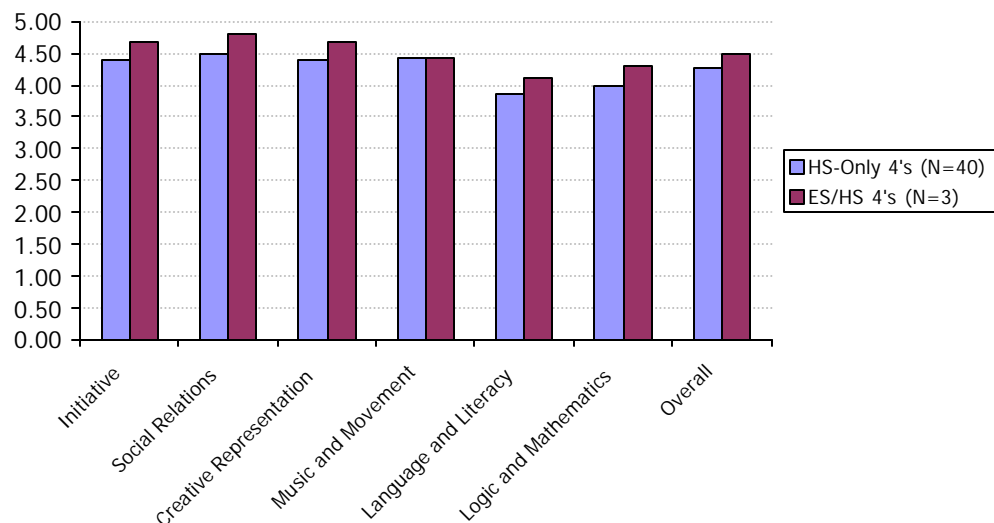
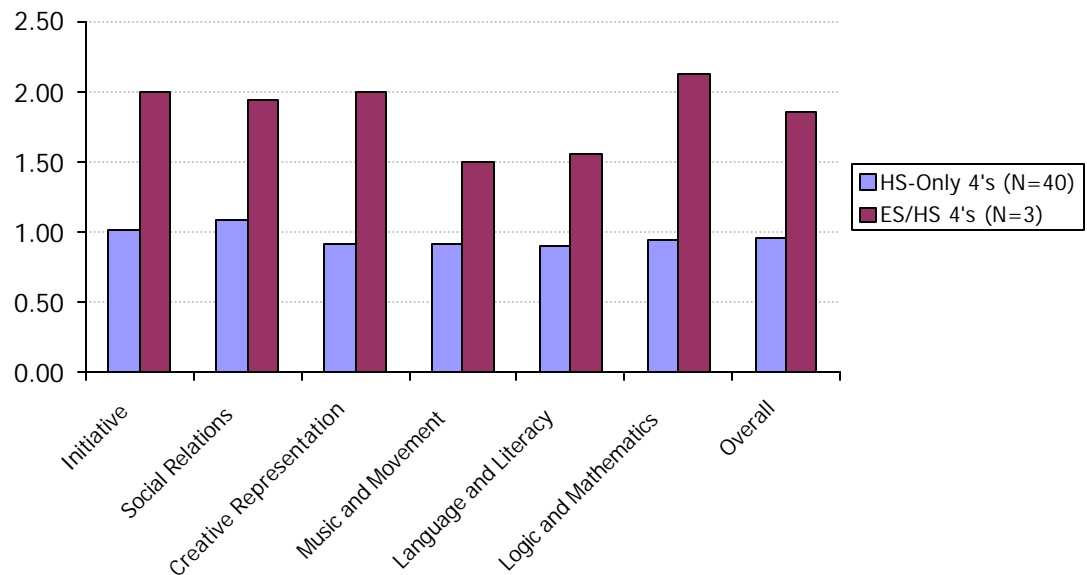


Figure 13 shows the major difference in improvement between the two groups. ES/HS children improved by between a half point and a full point *more* than the HS-Only children did during the same period.

It may be misleading to compare assessment scores by program without reference to age, given that most Center-based children are four and most Combo children are three. Yet to compare them only within age categories leads to the same small sample size issues we encounter with the Even Start data. There are only five three-year-olds in Center-based programs, and only four four-year-olds in Combo programs, and while the Home-Based group is fairly evenly split, there are only 9 children in it altogether.

**Figure 13. Improvement During Year, Head Start-Only and Even-Start/Head Start Four-Year-Olds**

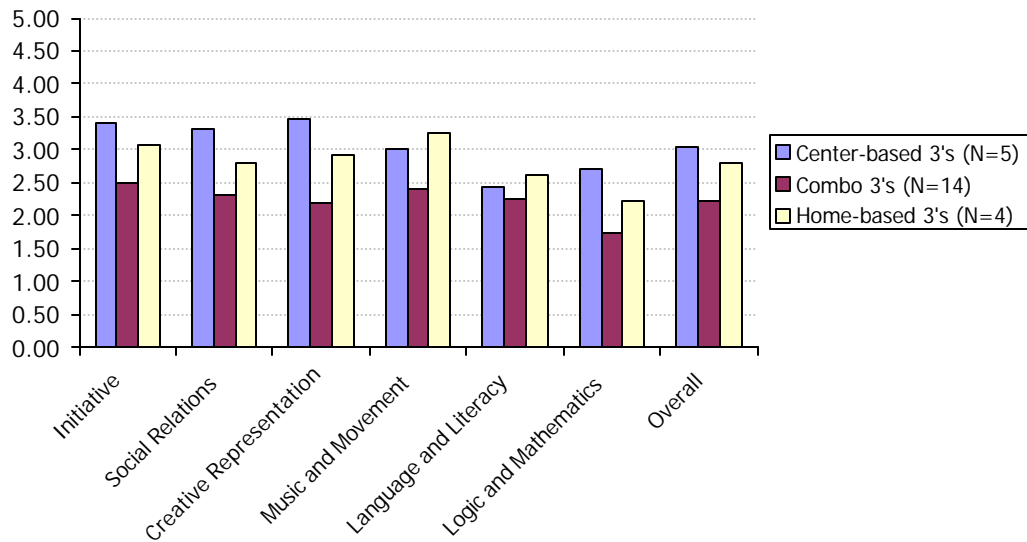


*By Head Start Program* It may be misleading to compare assessment scores by program without reference to age, given that most Center-based children are four and most Combo children are three. Yet to compare them only within age categories leads to the same small sample size issues we encounter with the Even Start data. There are only five three-year-olds in Center-based programs, and only four four-

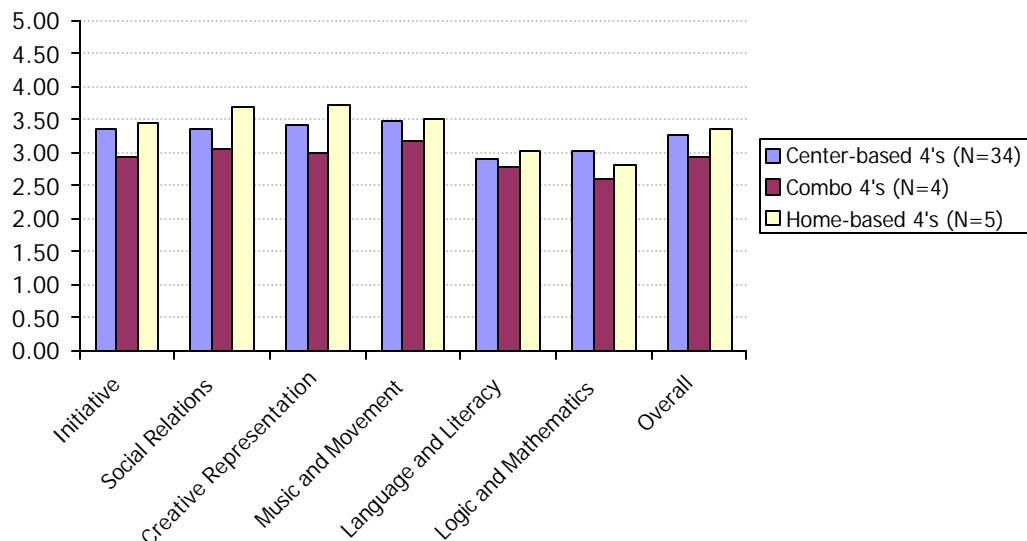
year-olds in Combo programs, and while the Home-Based group is fairly evenly split, there are only 9 children in it altogether.

Interestingly, the pattern of Combo children scoring lower on initial assessments held true even when the groups were split into separate threes and fours, with the differences being less pronounced in the four-year-olds. (Fig 14 and Fig 15)

**Figure 14. Performance of All Head Start Three-Year Olds, by Type of Program - Time 1**

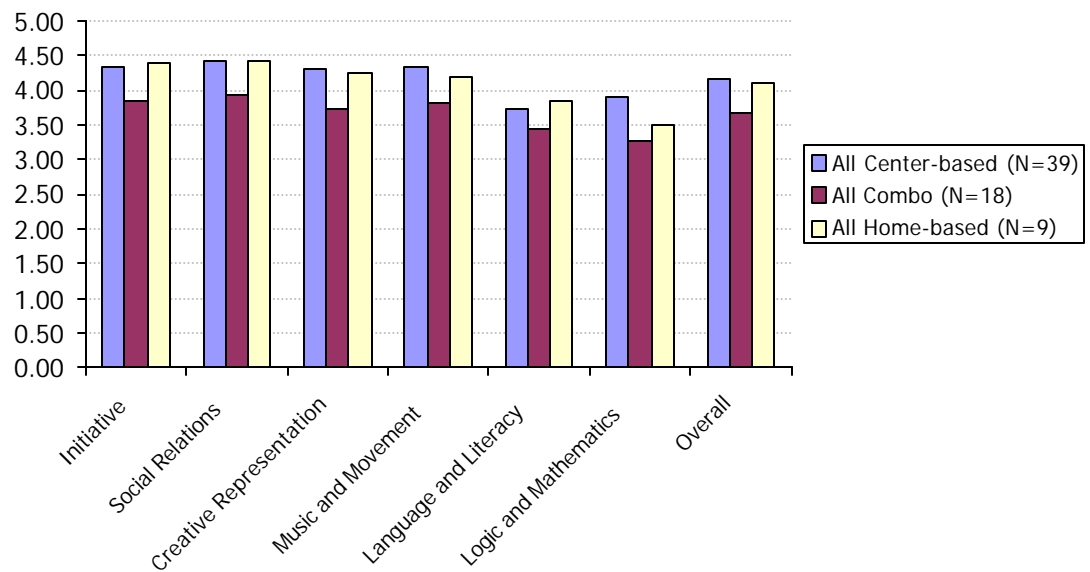


**Figure 15. Performance of All Head Start Four-Year-Olds, by Type of Program - Time 1**

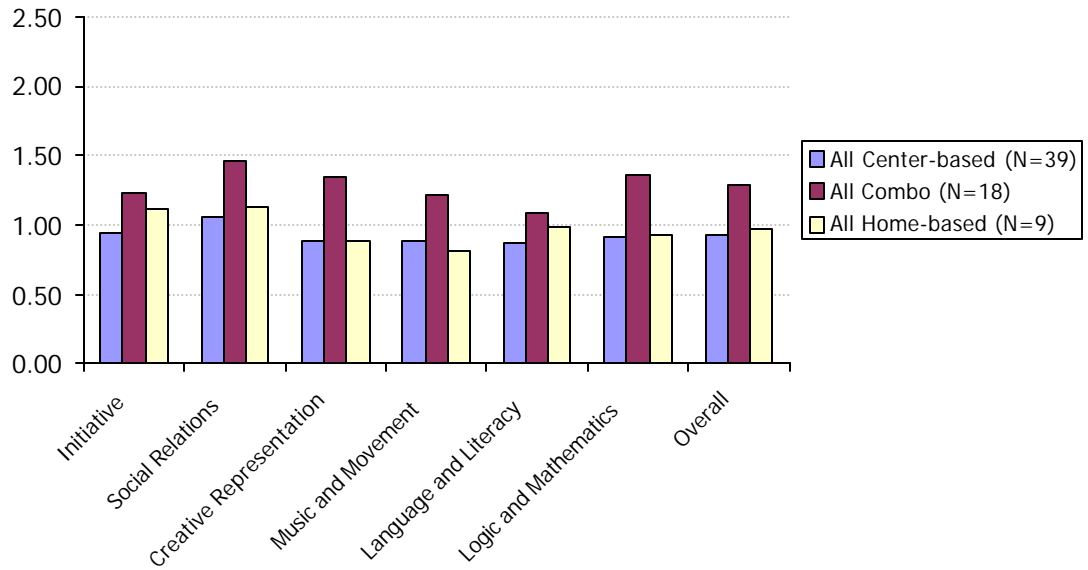


As Figures 16-18 show, the Combo children showed faster gains over the course of the year than their contemporaries (1.2-1.5 vs. 0.8-1.1). Both three and four-year-old Combo groups had much higher gains than their contemporaries in the other programs, with the four-year-old Combos actually ending up scoring higher than the other groups in some categories by the third assessment. (Four-year-old Combo gains were 1.4-2.3 vs. 0.7-1.2 for others.) Without knowing more about the way the COR was administered, it is impossible to know if this indicates that the group really made stronger gains, or whether it is due to some other factor, such as a change in those making the assessments or the way in which they did so.

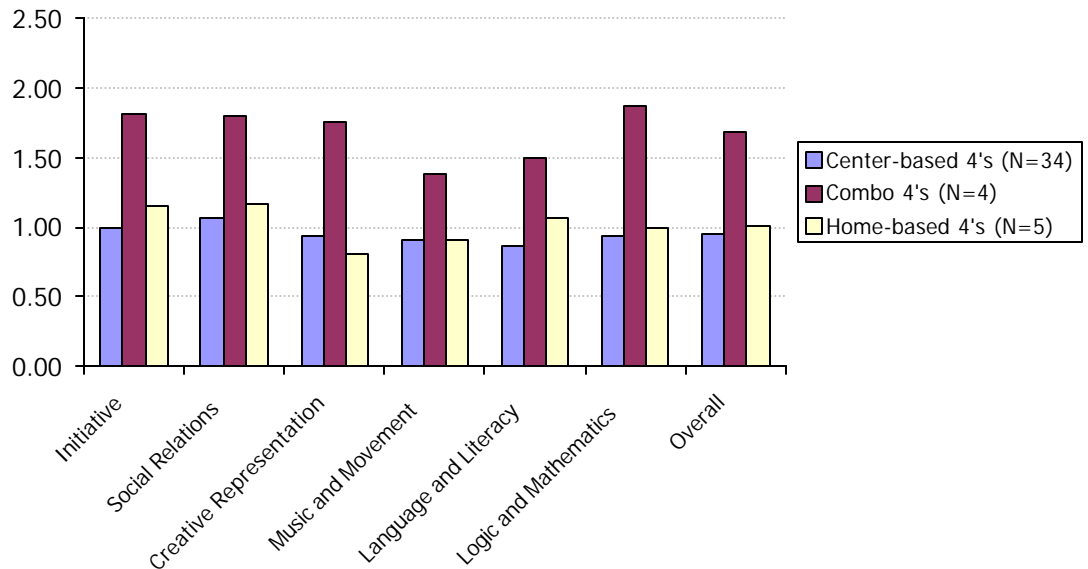
**Figure 16. Performance of All Head Start Children, by Age and Program - Time 3**



**Figure 17. Improvement During Year, All Head Start Children, by Program**



**Figure 18. Improvement During Year, All Head Start Four-Year-Olds, by Type of Program**



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**General Comments  
on COR Data**

It is difficult to draw any conclusions from these data without more information – either qualitative, in the shape of an understanding about the children involved, or quantitative, in the shape of larger randomized samples. Also, the lack of random assignment to the different programs introduces bias. Further, it is impossible to parse out the impact of the children’s increase in age and general development over time, as distinct from the impact of the programs on the children’s development. However, in general, it appears that children are improving their school readiness through both Head Start and Even Start. Not only do children on average improve over the course of the school year by more than the margin of difference between the two age groups, but lower performing groups tended to catch up over the course of the year.