

## **Empirical Evaluation of the READY! for Kindergarten Program on Kindergarten Readiness Scores: Evaluating a Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Linguistic Sample**

REPORT ON KENNEWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT DATA 2005-2008

August 2009

*NOTE: This is a summary of the Washington State University/Thrive by Five WA study conducted by Dr. Paul Strand.*

The study explored data of 4241 children from 2005-2008 gathered in the Kennewick (WA) School District to determine if the entering Kindergarten Reading and Math readiness scores of children whose families were exposed to READY! differed from those who were not.

The results of statistical analyses revealed that such differences did emerge for the entire sample, and also for specific subsamples. With respect to the entire sample, children whose families were exposed to READY! outperformed children whose families were not exposed to READY! on both entering Kindergarten Reading and Math assessments. In fall 2008, 79% of children whose parents attended READY! classes met the standard for kindergarten, compared to 55% with parents who didn't, regardless of family income level. READY! attendees outperformed non-attendees in math readiness, too.

Similar differences were observed for ethnic subgroups including children listed as Caucasian and Latino, and also non-Latino minority children. Similarly, significantly higher entering Kindergarten scores were observed for READY! attendees compared to non-attendees for the subgroups of children receiving free-and-reduced-priced lunch and for children identified as qualifying for special education. The only finding that was contrary to this pattern of results was obtained for children identified as English Language Learners (ELL) because the sample size was not large enough for statistical significance.

Results also revealed a "dosage effect" such that greater session attendance predicted better Kindergarten assessment scores. "Developmental timing effects" were also observed such that attendance at the initial Age 2, Fall Session (the earliest session included in the study) was most predictive of later Reading and Math scores.

In sum, these results suggest that, on average, preschoolers exposed to READY! significantly outperform preschoolers unexposed to READY! Such conclusions are tempered, however, by the possibility of self-selection effects. Nevertheless, these are positive results for READY! and also for the assumption that early learning programs should target children years—not just months—prior to their entry into Kindergarten.