



## *Florida Head Start Association*

*803 S. Woodland Blvd*

*Deland, Florida 32720*

*Phone: (386) 736-1325 Fax: (386) 736-1996*

*www.floridaheadstart.org*

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Contact:

Dr. Elizabeth Karas

239-332-2512

Dr. Daryl Greenfield

305-284-3255 ext. 0

Dr. Marce Verzaro-O'Brien

800-882-7482

### REPORT INDICATES FLORIDA HEAD START PROGRAMS SUCCESSFULLY PREPARE CHILDREN FOR SCHOOL

Tallahassee, FL—The Florida Head Start Association's Research Committee has released a report entitled "A Portrait of Our Head Start Children's Outcomes." This report documents the accomplishments of over 10,000 four-year old children served in Florida Head Start programs during the 2002-2003 program year.

The data were gathered using the Galileo System for the Electronic Management of Learning developed by Assessment Technology, Incorporated of Tucson, AZ. The system includes a research based assessment tool with established validity and reliability which measures children's learning in all eight Head Start domains.

The analysis of the data indicates that Florida Head Start children exceeded the expected 50 point gain in one year in all eight domains assessed. The benchmark of 50 points for expected gains was set by the Research Committee in consultation with the developers of Galileo since gains of this magnitude indicate a substantial level of growth. The 50 point gain represents one standard deviation on the Galileo Scales. "The gains reflected in this report are significant and clearly show that our Head Start programs are helping the children they serve enter school ready to succeed," says Dr. Daryl Greenfield, a University of Miami researcher.

According to Dr. Elizabeth Karas, Chairperson of the Florida Head Start Association Research Committee, "The Florida Head Start Association research initiative reflects the kind of leadership that is exemplified by the Head Start community. The scope and significance of this initiative builds on Head Start's history of success in using data to help ensure that the needs of our children and families are being met. Moreover, Florida Head Start programs are using these data as part of their on-going self-assessment and improvement activities."

Dr. Marce Verzaro-O'Brien, Director of Training and Technical Assistance Services at Western Kentucky University and member of the FHSA Research Committee says, "As is well known, the effective evaluation of any good early childhood program requires the use of multiple research-based measures of children's learning. Consequently, as the federal government implements its National Reporting System, it will be essential to recognize, utilize, and build upon data emanating from initiatives such as the Florida Portrait. To this end, the FHSA is pleased to share its evidence that our programs work."

Dr. Karas notes that "As the Florida Legislature drafts legislation to guide the development of Voluntary Universal Prekindergarten in Florida, it is essential that current data on children's learning and program impact be used to inform policy decisions. Data such as the Florida Portrait can provide a valuable resource in helping Florida lead the way in high quality early childhood education."

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