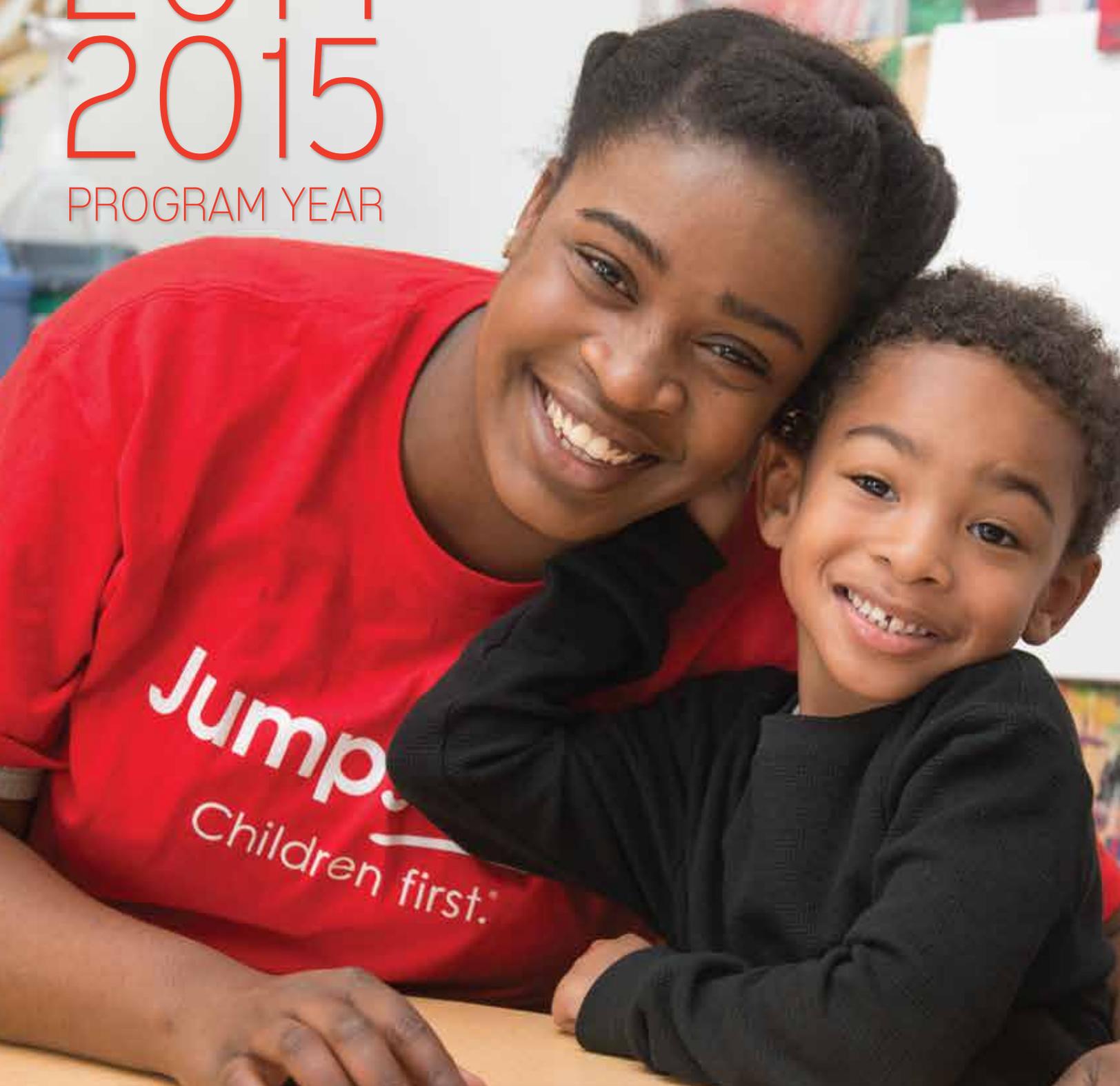


2014
2015
PROGRAM YEAR



Jumpstart
Children first.®

NATIONAL EVALUATION OF JUMPSTART
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Studies show that the **educational achievement gap** between children from *low-income* neighborhoods and their peers from more *affluent* neighborhoods is **sizable** and **statistically significant** by the time they enter kindergarten.¹

In fact, less than half of children born into low-income families are ready for kindergarten at age 5, **[48%]** compared to **75%** of children from *moderate* or *high income* families.²

Authors

Christine Patton

Misti Jeffers

BACKGROUND

Jumpstart is working to reduce the achievement gap by increasing the number of children from low-income households who are kindergarten-ready. The essential element of Jumpstart's supplemental early childhood education program is a caring, dedicated adult (i.e., a volunteer college student or older adult) who forms nurturing relationships that encourage children to thrive. These adults, called Corps members, are trained to use effective strategies and a research-based curriculum to develop children's language, literacy, and social-emotional skills. Jumpstart Corps members reduce the in-classroom child-adult ratio to three to one, allowing children to benefit from a more intensive and individualized learning experience. These learning experiences occur in two-hour sessions scheduled twice a week throughout the school year (approximately 20 weeks) in preschools and childcare programs in low-income neighborhoods. Jumpstart Corps members also spend up to six additional hours a week assisting teachers and working with children in classrooms, as well as engaging in other community service activities throughout the year.

EVALUATION DESIGN

To assess the impact of its program annually, Jumpstart collects data from children and Corps members. The data collected during the 2014-2015 program year were used to answer two major questions:

1. Did Jumpstart children demonstrate gains in language and literacy skill development over the course of the program year, as measured by the *Jumpstart School Success Checklist (JSSC)* and the *Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL)*?
2. In what ways did the Jumpstart experience benefit its Corps members?

PARTICIPANTS

Of the 11,297 children that Jumpstart served during the 2014-2015 program year, 6,599 were included in the evaluation sample. Fifty percent of children in the evaluation sample were male and 50% were female. Forty-two percent were identified as being Hispanic/Latino(a) and 30% as Black or African American. Forty-two percent of children came from homes in which only English was spoken (i.e., they are monolingual English speakers) and 35% were reported as being bilingual English-Spanish speakers.

Of the 4,089 Corps members who served, 2,586 were included in the evaluation sample. Twelve percent of Corps members in the evaluation sample were males. Thirty-two percent self-identified as Hispanic/Latino(a), 50% as White, and 23% as Black or African American.

MEASURES

Children were assessed on the *JSSC*, a teacher observational tool derived from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation's *Preschool Child Observation Record (COR)*, 2nd Edition.³ In addition to being assessed on the *JSSC*, a subset of children was also assessed on the *Test of Preschool Early Literacy (TOPEL)*, a widely-used norm-referenced assessment. Corps members were assessed on the *Pre- and Post-Service Corps Member Survey*, which is used to collect information about Corps members' satisfaction with the Jumpstart program and their attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs about early childhood development and learning experiences, leadership development, and civic engagement.

KEY FINDINGS: CHILDREN

Before the Jumpstart intervention, most children displayed limited language and literacy skills. Over the course of the program, a large percentage of children demonstrated gains and, at the end of the year, most children displayed average to strong language and literacy skills.

Before the start of the program year (the fall), Jumpstart children were more likely to display limited language and literacy skills. In fact, 65% of children had scores of 1 and 2 on the five-point scale of the *JSSC* (see Figure 1) and 47% of children had scores of 89 and below (out of a possible score of 144) on the *TOPEL*'s Early Literacy Index (ELI; a composite score obtained by combining the scores from the Print Knowledge, Definitional Vocabulary, and Phonological Awareness subtests) (see Figure 2). At the end of the program year (the spring), the pattern reversed; 73% of children had scores that clustered between 3 and 4 on the *JSSC* and 77% of children had scores between 90 and 130 on the *TOPEL* (scores that are considered to be average, above average, and superior).

Nearly all (90%) of the children in the evaluation sample made pre-post-intervention gains. Of the children who made gains, 60% made gains that were considered to be substantive (i.e., they made gains of one-point or more on the five-point scale of the *JSSC*). This pre-to post-intervention growth for children is important and likely predictive of their later success in learning to read and write.⁴

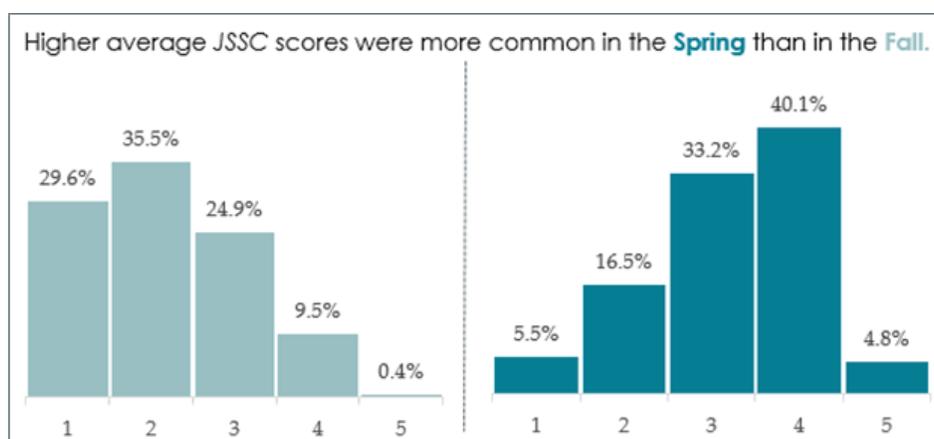


Figure 1. Distribution of children's fall (on the left) and spring (on the right) *JSSC* total scale scores. (Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.)

More than half of the children who received a below average score on the *TOPEL* in the fall received at least an average score in the spring.

One of the intended effects of Jumpstart is to close the achievement gap by helping to improve the language and literacy skills of children from low-income households, particularly those who demonstrate below average skills at the beginning of the year. On the *TOPEL*, children closed the gap if they received a below average standard score in the fall and made enough gains through the year to receive at least an average score in the spring. As depicted in Figure 2, on the ELI, almost half (47%) of children who were assessed received a below average, poor, or very poor score in the fall. Of those children, 56% received an average, above average, or superior/very superior score in the spring.

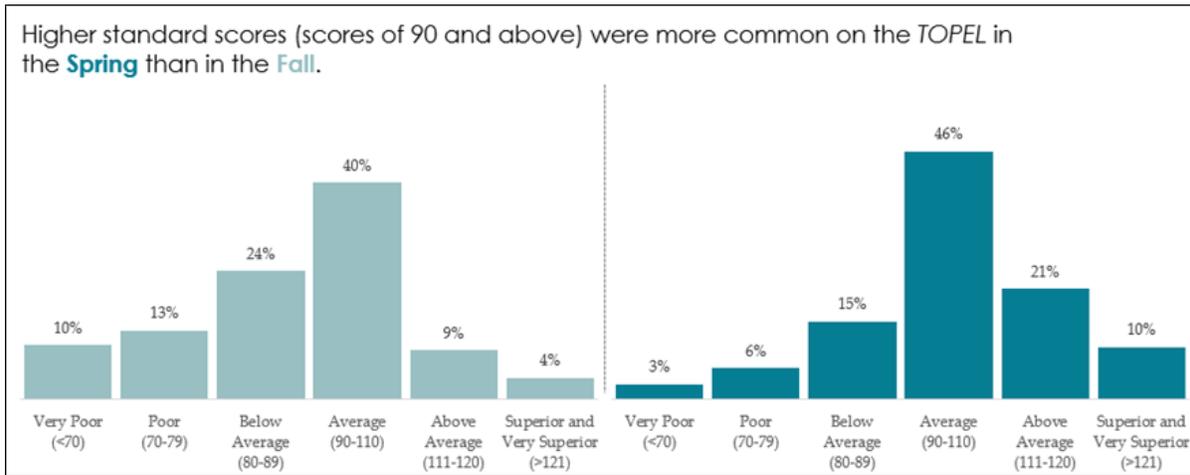


Figure 2. Distribution of children’s fall (on the left) and spring (on the right) TOPEL ELI standard scores. (Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.)

Bilingual children made larger fall-to-spring gains on the JSSC than children for whom English is their only language (monolingual children).

In light of research that indicates that children’s language background can affect their school readiness, Jumpstart explored whether differences in progress exist for children of different language groups. At the beginning of the year, children with a bilingual English-Spanish language background had lower average JSSC scores than children with a monolingual English background; at the end of the program year, bilingual children had slightly higher average scores than monolingual English-speaking children, indicating that they had closed the initial language and literacy gap with their English-only speaking peers. See Figure 3.

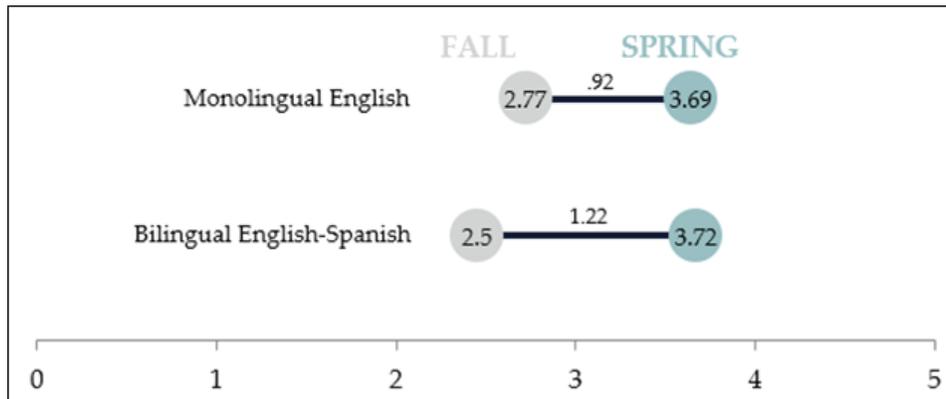


Figure 3. Average JSSC score gains by children with a monolingual English language background and a bilingual English-Spanish background. (Note: The gray dots indicate fall scores while the teal dots indicate spring scores. The black bars between dots and the numbers above the bars indicate the average gains in scores for each subsample of children).

KEY FINDINGS: VOLUNTEERS

In addition to measuring child outcomes, Jumpstart also evaluates the impact of its program on Corps members. For college Corps members, Jumpstart expects that at the end of their service, they will be positioned to build on the training and practice that they received during their service so that they can successfully transition into the workforce. Jumpstart also expects to support and inspire its Community Corps members (older adult volunteers).

Corps members are highly satisfied with their Jumpstart experience.

All Corps members were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the Jumpstart program – the training, materials, guidance, and support offered to them throughout the year, and the relationships that they formed. Corps members were highly satisfied with their experience, with no less than 85% of Corps members indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed with each statement in this section of the survey. A notable finding was that almost all Corps members who answered these items reported that they would recommend serving in Jumpstart to peers (96%). Further, 97% of Corps members agree their Jumpstart experience enabled them to build leadership skills.

Corps members demonstrated an increase in knowledge about early childhood practices.

Over the course of the year, Jumpstart Corps members displayed growth in their knowledge about early childhood practices by responding to a series of true-false statements (e.g., Reading storybooks and engaging children in activities focused on specific content topics in early childhood supports their later literacy skills.). In the fall, Corps members correctly answered an average of 15.3 questions about early childhood practices out of 21. In the spring, the number increased to 17.8 – a statistically significant difference equivalent to a little more than two questions. Additionally, 71% percent of Corps members who responded to the early childhood practices survey questions demonstrated an increase in knowledge from pre-service to post-service.

SUMMARY

The outcomes described in this executive summary and the larger national evaluation report reveal that Jumpstart is working to transform early education by having an impact on children and Corps members. During the 2014-2015 program year, Jumpstart served a diverse population of children and the results indicate that the Jumpstart program was effective for them; a large percentage of children received scores on the *JSSC* and *TOPEL* that indicate that their language and literacy skills are likely on-target for kindergarten. For Corps members, many of whom will enter the early education workforce, service with Jumpstart is proving to be beneficial – with Corps members gaining leadership skills and knowledge about early childhood education.

Visit jstart.org/about/reports-briefs to access the full report.

ENDNOTES

¹ García, E. (2015). Inequalities at the starting gate: Cognitive and noncognitive skills gaps between 2010-2011 kindergarten classmates. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from:

<http://www.epi.org/publication/inequalities-at-the-starting-gate-cognitive-and-noncognitive-gaps-in-the-2010-2011-kindergarten-class/>

² Isaacs, J. B. (2012). Starting school at a disadvantage: The school readiness of poor children. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/03/19-school-disadvantage-isaacs>

³ HighScope. (2003). *Preschool Child Observation Record: Observation items* (2nd ed.). Ypsilanti, Michigan: HighScope Press.

⁴ Some of the findings contained in this executive summary are displayed differently than they are in the full evaluation report. If you have questions about any of the findings, contact Christine Patton, Jumpstart's Director of Research and Evaluation at Christine.Patton@jstart.org.