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FOLDER TITLE:

Universal Preschool [3]

2013-0371-S

ms646

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
P4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
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b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
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CHILD CARE

Respondents were asked what type of arrangements they have for day care - the child goes out to a day care center or a sitter comes into the house.

Metro Chicago Information Center

Oct, 1998

out to center	53%
sitter comes in	6

Notes: based on those respondents who have preschool age children.

Universe: Local

Chicago, IL metro area

From: Metro Chicago Information Center

360 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 703

Chicago, IL 60601

(312) 580-2878

fax (312) 580-2879

Method: telephone

Sample size: 3116

BLACKS

I am going to read you several things the government in Washington might do to deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment among black Americans. For each one, please tell me if you favor or oppose each one. How about spending more money on the schools in black neighborhoods, especially for preschool and early education programs? Would you say that you strongly favor, favor, neither favor nor oppose, oppose, or strongly oppose spending more money on the schools in black neighborhoods?

Georgia Poll

fall, 1997

strongly favor	31.7%
favor	37.1
neither favor nor oppose	8.6
oppose	16.3
strongly oppose	6.3

Universe: State

Georgia

From: University of Georgia

Survey Research Center

Institute for Behavioral Research

114 Barrow Hall

Athens, GA 30602-2405

(706) 542-6110

fax (706) 542-6064

Method: telephone

Sample size: 387

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CHILD CARE

Which of the following policy proposals comes closest to your opinion about what the government should do to help families with young children? Statement A: Offer substantial tax credits to families with children so that one parent could stay home and raise the children instead of working. Statement B: Provide subsidized child care and universal preschool for all Americans so that both parents can work and improve the standard of living for their children.

NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll

Feb, 1998

tax credits	44%
subsidized child care and universal pre-school	43
both	6
neither	5
not sure	2

Notes: asked of one-half the respondents (Form A)

Universe: United States

From: NBC News

4001 Nebraska Avenue, N.W.

Washington, DC 20016

(202) 885-4788

Method: telephone

Sample size: 2004

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EDUCATION, General

I'm going to read five things that some say will help the state's public schools better educate students. Which one do you think should be the top priority -- raise funds to make class sizes smaller, raise the standards for graduation, give parents who want them tax breaks to help pay for more private and parochial school expenses, provide funds for more preschool programs, or provide funds for more computers in classrooms?

Minneapolis Star and Tribune

Aug 2, 1998

	total primary voters	DFL pri- mary voters	Repub- lican pri- mary voters	
smaller class sizes	42%	50%	32%	
raise graduation standards	21	21	23	
tax breaks for private and parochial school expenses	18	9	27	
funds for preschool programs		6	8	4
funds for computers in classrooms		6	5	5
no opinion	7	7	9	

Universe: State

Minnesota

From: Minnesota Star Tribune
425 Portland Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55488
(618) 673-7278

Method: telephone

Sample size: 1007

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WOMEN, Working

I'm going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. ~~A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.~~

General Social Surveys

~~1998~~

strongly agree	155
agree	611
disagree	863
strongly disagree	180
don't know	53
no answer	9
not applicable	961

Notes: number of responses reported

Universe: ~~United States~~

From: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research

P.O. Box 440

Storrs, CT 06268

(860) 486-4440

fax (860) 486-6308

Method: in person

Sample size: ~~2832~~

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COMPARING COSTS, SAVINGS, AND BENEFITS

Up to this point, we have examined the effects of early childhood intervention programs in terms of the benefits produced for children and their families. Some people may think that those benefits are enough to justify public expenditures on such programs. Others may appreciate the benefits to disadvantaged children but may be reluctant to raise their tax burden to accomplish such goals or may wish, at least, for broader favorable ramifications from an investment of public funds. In this chapter, we discuss some of these broader ramifications and show how some publicly funded early interventions may yield monetary returns in excess of their costs.¹

To begin, consider some of the benefits of early intervention programs to individuals other than the child and his or her immediate family. For example, a program that reduces the amount of crime committed by a treated child also lessens the victimization experienced by other people. These other people enjoy abated loss from crime, primarily in the form of decreased property losses and less pain and suffering. If a program reduces the incidence of unhealthy behaviors in later life, such as drinking in conjunction with driving, everyone's insurance premiums—in this case, for automobile and possibly health insurance—could go down. Benefits also accrue more subtly. For example, an entire classroom of schoolchildren is better off if those class members who are less cognitively able are

¹The cost-savings analysis reported in this chapter draws on previous assessments for both the Perry Preschool program (Barnett, 1993) and the Elmira PEIP (Olds et al., 1993). Our contribution beyond these earlier analyses are highlighted in the discussion that follows.

202-797-9145
Brocky S.

brought up to the level of the others. These indirect benefits that accrue to other individuals must be included when one considers the total value of such programs.

Benefits can also accrue to society at large. A principal recipient of such benefits is the government.² If a program results in higher earnings for a program participant, the government collects greater tax revenue. If a program participant is less likely to use welfare, the government's welfare outlays are reduced. Both ways, taxpayers are better off, either by receiving a larger collective benefit per dollar paid or, potentially, by receiving the same benefit from a reduced tax burden.

If it were possible to include and monetize *all* the benefits of a program, one could generate a complete cost-benefit ratio. However, monetizing many of the benefits of early childhood intervention is difficult or impossible. It is difficult, for example, to monetize the benefits of improved behavior or IQ, either for the child or for other members of the child's family or classroom. We cannot attach a monetary value to a mother's greater satisfaction with her relationship with her child. Neither can we determine at this time the monetary value to society of greater academic achievement on the part of children participating in early interventions. The same goes for many of the health benefits realized. Furthermore, benefits that can be monetized may result in future benefits that cannot. For example, if early intervention means that a child will be more economically successful as an adult (a monetizable benefit), that adult's children may not be exposed to the same stressors he or she was (a benefit that is difficult to monetize).³ In this chapter, we restrict ourselves to benefits that can be easily monetized.

Since the government is likely to be the funder for large-scale early childhood programs, it is interesting to ask whether public expenditures for such programs could be justified, at least in part, by the sav-

²"The government" is sometimes used as a term separate from, even set in opposition to, "the people." We do not intend that here. Throughout this chapter, "the government" should be understood as the agent spending the taxpayers' money on their behalf, or simply as the public accounts of the people.

³In some cases, benefits that cannot be easily monetized themselves (e.g., IQ gains) may be linked to other benefits that, when measured, can be monetized (e.g., higher earnings in adulthood).

ings to government they generate. If the savings generated by such programs are greater than their costs, government fiscal support for such programs may be considered a worthwhile investment of public funds. Thus, we devote most of our attention to costs and savings to the government, since we can more comprehensively account for those than we can for the costs and benefits to society at large. In the discussion that follows, we refer to this analysis as *cost-savings analysis*, to differentiate it from more traditional *cost-benefit analysis*. (The latter takes into account the benefits that accrue to other members of society, both program participants and nonparticipants.)

This is not to say that programs for which the measured costs are greater than the measured savings should not be funded by the government. Early childhood intervention programs might be deemed worthy even if their costs exceed their savings to government, because not all of their benefits can be monetized. For this reason, measured net savings to the government should not be the sole basis for deciding whether to fund a program or which of a set of competing programs to fund. However, positive net savings should help allay the concerns of those troubled by the potential budgetary burden of government-funded early intervention.

Our principal objective, then, is to determine if early childhood intervention programs have the potential to save more money than they cost. We do this by analyzing two programs documented in the literature that are amenable to such a cost-savings analysis. Those two programs are the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project (PEIP) and the Perry Preschool.⁴ That we judge only two program evaluations amenable to cost-savings analysis is worth some emphasis. It reflects the paucity of measured outcomes, the attrition problems, and other problems discussed in the review of the literature in Chapter Two.⁵ It also suggests the need for more comprehensively

⁴In the Perry Preschool case, our analysis is limited to adaptation of Barnett's previous cost-savings analysis (Barnett, 1993) for comparability with our Elmira PEIP estimates.

⁵This observation and similar assertions in this chapter and elsewhere in this report should not be taken as criticisms of those designing and carrying out programs we judged not amenable to cost-savings analysis. Designers and implementers of such programs may have had priorities other than scientifically sound cost-benefit evaluation or may have, in any case, done the best job possible considering available resources and other constraints.

and rigorously evaluated programs, a need we will take up in more detail in Chapter Four. That we have analyzed only two programs limits our ability to generalize the results; finding that these two programs save more than they cost obviously does not imply that dissimilar programs will do so. However, such a finding serves as proof of principle that programs generating a net savings do exist.

In this chapter, we first describe the criteria for selecting programs for this cost-savings analysis and show how the two programs selected meet the criteria (and how others do not). Then, we compare program costs to the government savings they generate in order to determine if public expenditure can be justified on the basis of a net savings to government. Finally, we additionally include some of the benefits to other individuals—those benefits that can be easily and incontrovertibly monetized. This leads us to a more comprehensive estimate of the monetary benefit to society of such programs than we get from our estimate of the benefits to the government alone. Even this more comprehensive estimate is still incomplete, however, since we are not able to monetize all of the benefits of the programs.

PROGRAMS SELECTED FOR ANALYSIS

As discussed in Chapter Two, while numerous early childhood intervention programs have been developed and tested, only a fraction of those have been evaluated in any fashion. Very few have been rigorously and thoroughly evaluated over long periods of time. Yet such an evaluation of the program is necessary for a defensible cost-savings analysis. Specifically, to implement our cost-savings analysis, we require that five criteria be met.

First, the evaluation must have an experimental design. It must measure the characteristics and behaviors of not only the treatment group but also a control group, i.e., a group comparable in all respects to the treatment group except that its members do not participate in the program. Should the groups then differ during or after the program in some measure of interest (e.g., time on welfare), that difference can be ascribed to the program. The ideal way to ensure an experimental design is to conduct a randomized trial. Subjects are assigned to the treatment group and the control group randomly. If the sample size is sufficiently large, this promotes the necessary similarity between the two groups.

There are other ways to evaluate program effectiveness. For example, one could measure the behavior of interest before the treatment and at some time thereafter. However, this type of evaluation is not applicable to an early childhood intervention program in which the subjects are developing children for whom the “before” value of the variable—time on welfare, in special education, etc.—is zero. One could also use a quasi-experimental design with retrospectively chosen control groups, although the inability to control for both observed and unobserved differences between treatment and control groups may bias such studies. While various statistical techniques are available to try to minimize these potential biases, we are not aware of any evaluations in the literature that employ these techniques and also meet our other criteria.

Second, the sample size must be large enough for true differences between the treatment and control groups to be recognizable with statistical methods. The larger the sample, the more likely that a measured difference of a certain size between the treatment and control groups will be judged statistically significant, i.e., the smaller the chance that the difference is a result of random variation. In practice, sample sizes are never large enough to totally eliminate the concern of sampling error, so we take the standard errors⁶ of our savings estimates into account in drawing inferences from them.

Third, sample attrition over time must be small, for two reasons. First, attrition brings down the sample size. Second, differential attrition can skew the results. For example, if many of the families with the lowest socioeconomic status do not complete the treatment or are not available for later follow-up, the treatment and control groups will not be adequately comparable.

Fourth, the program outcomes or potential benefits (such as reduction in welfare usage) that lead to cost savings must be measured in the evaluation. For obvious logistical and budgetary reasons, the evaluator of a program can measure only a limited number of outcomes. In many of the program evaluations described in the literature, outcomes that imply direct cost saving have not been measured. Theoretically, the cost savings could be estimated on the basis

⁶The standard error, or standard deviation, is a measure of the degree to which a set of numbers vary from their mean.

of the outcomes that *have* been measured. But this can be done only if there is a well-understood relationship between the measured outcomes and the unmeasured, cost-saving outcomes (e.g., between juvenile arrest record and time in prison as an adult). The selection of outcomes for inclusion in the evaluation is often based on the theory behind the program. For example, a program designed to improve cognition may measure the child's IQ. The program may also reduce welfare usage later in the child's life, but if that particular outcome is not measured, the cost savings associated with reduced welfare usage probably cannot be calculated (because of the lack of a clear relationship between IQ and welfare usage).

Finally, and most important, long-term follow-up of the subjects is required if savings are to be fully accounted for. Most of the benefits that generate monetizable cost savings occur long after the intervention has been completed. Adequate time between the intervention and the measurement of outcomes must have elapsed for the benefits of interest to have occurred. An evaluation that follows subjects for only a few months or even years cannot be used to predict long-term benefits, and thus cost savings, with any confidence. In practice, evaluation periods have not been long enough to capture all the lifetime benefits to program participants, partly because early intervention experiments were not conducted before the 1960s. For a cost-savings analysis, either the unobserved future benefits must be estimated from outcomes that have been observed or some long-term benefits must be omitted from the calculation, leading to an underestimate of the savings associated with the program.

Of the programs we identified in the published literature, only two meet all these criteria. They are the Elmira PEIP and the Perry Preschool program. While most of the other programs we reviewed in Chapter Two meet the first three criteria (design, sample sizes, and attrition), they are more problematic in terms of the remaining two criteria. For example, only the Early Training Project, Chicago CPC, Carolina Abecedarian, and Syracuse FDRP have follow-ups that are as long as that of the Elmira PEIP (through age 14, 15, or 19), and no other program matches the age-27 follow-up available for Perry Preschool participants. At the same time, with the exception of measures of crime and delinquency in the CPC and FDRP programs, these programs largely did not assess measures of other outcomes for the child or mother that can be readily monetized (e.g., em-

ployment, welfare utilization). While these types of benefits may be measured in future follow-ups, any estimates of savings based on current information would be incomplete. Thus, we have chosen not to undertake cost-savings analyses for programs where estimates of savings would be highly uncertain or clearly underestimated. However, as we note below, for the two programs we do analyze, concerns about the precision and comprehensiveness of our estimates of savings still remain, although to a lesser degree than would be the case for the programs we did not consider.

Both the Elmira PEIP and Perry Preschool program are described in detail in Chapter Two. Below, we emphasize those aspects of program design that permit fulfillment of the criteria given above or that are otherwise particularly germane to the cost-savings analysis.

The Elmira PEIP

As described in Chapter Two, the Elmira PEIP home-visits program helped infants and their mothers by providing parent education, social support for the mother, and referrals to social services starting in the prenatal period and continuing until the child turned 2. The program services were delivered through home visits to first-time mothers by trained nurses. The program cost on the order of \$6,000 (in 1996 dollars) per child. This paid for the average of 32 home visits that occurred during pregnancy and the first two years after birth.

The evaluation of the Elmira PEIP home-visits program was based on an experimental design, with mothers randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Subjects in the program have been followed to age 15. Attrition over that period has been on the order of 20 percent for the children, less for the mothers.

For purposes of analyzing the long-term follow-up results of the Elmira PEIP, Olds et al. (1997) report results for the full experimental group, as well as a higher-risk subsample. This latter group consists of women who, at the time of enrollment in the study, were unmarried and had low socioeconomic status (SES). In the results we present below, we separately evaluate savings for this higher-risk sample, as well as for the remaining experimental sample, which we

call lower-risk.⁷ The lower-risk group thus consists of two-parent families or higher-SES families. At the time of the age-15 follow-up, there were 100 families in the higher-risk group (i.e., treatment plus control) and 145 families in the lower-risk group. These represent adequate sample sizes. However, they are small enough that we still have to be concerned with the uncertainty surrounding the estimates of effectiveness and thus of cost savings.

A follow-up through age 15 is long enough to capture many of the cost savings generated by the program. (Table 3.1 lists the outcomes measured by the Elmira PEIP evaluation and those we monetize.) However, 15 years is not long enough to derive estimates of the child's lifetime employment or welfare utilization. For instance, since 15-year-olds have little employment history, there are no good early indicators on which to base predictions of lifetime employment performance. In contrast, criminal careers can be predicted for the children on the basis of arrest records of 15-year-olds.

Our cost-savings analysis builds upon an earlier assessment of the Elmira PEIP, conducted with data measured for children and their mothers when the children were 4 (Olds et al., 1993). Two years after the program ended, the cost-savings analysis showed government savings that just exceeded program costs for low-income families (a net savings of \$180 per child in 1980 dollars). For the sample as a whole, government savings did not exceed costs; rather savings to government provided only a partial offset to program costs. In both cases, the bulk of government savings resulted from reductions in the use of AFDC and other social welfare programs by the mother. The data available for our analysis of the children through age 15 permit an even more comprehensive assessment of longer-term savings generated by the program for both children and their mothers.

⁷As discussed in Chapter Two, at the time of the age-15 follow-up, the significant differences were primarily for the higher-risk families. We are grateful for the separate unpublished results for those in the lower-risk sample that were provided by David Olds.

Table 3.1
Outcomes Measured in Elmira PEIP

Domain	Mother/ Child	Outcome Description
Child development	Child	IQ at age 3 IQ at age 4
Parent development	Mother	Home environment at age 4 Reports of child abuse and neglect through age 15
Education	Mother	Years of education at age 4
Employment	Mother	<i>Months employed through age 15</i>
Welfare	Mother	<i>Months on AFDC through age 15</i> Months on Food Stamps through age 15 Months on Medicaid through age 15
Crime	Mother	<i>Arrests through age 15</i> Convictions through age 15 <i>Jail days through age 15</i>
	Child	<i>Arrests through age 15</i> Convictions through age 15
Health	Mother	Subsequent pregnancies and births through age 15 Months between 1st and 2nd birth through age 15 Substance abuse impairments through age 15
	Child	<i>ER visits, ages 25-50 months</i> <i>Hospital days, ages 25-50 months</i>

NOTES: Age references are to the age of the focal child. For annotated outcome tables, see Tables 2.2, 2.3, A.1, and A.3. Italics indicates benefits we monetized.

The Perry Preschool Program

The Perry Preschool program, also reviewed in Chapter Two, provided preschool classes to a sample of children in Ypsilanti, Michigan, when they were 3 and 4 years old. The program cost, measured in 1996 dollars and discounted to the birth of the participating child, were about \$12,000 per child.⁸ Program costs were associated with time spent in preschool (two and a half hours a day, five days a week,

⁸This is a weighted average that accounts for the fact that about 20 percent of participants attended only one year of the two-year program (Barnett, 1993).

for three-quarters of the year), as well as weekly (one and a half hour) home visits by the child's preschool teacher.

The Perry Preschool program evaluation is based on an experimental design with random assignment to treatment and control groups. The sample (treatment plus control) includes 123 children from 100 families. Subjects of the evaluation have been followed through age 27, with an attrition rate of about 9 percent. Again, the sample size is adequate to make estimates but not to eliminate substantial uncertainty surrounding the outcomes and the cost savings.

Evaluations of the Perry Preschool program provide estimates of the program results for participating children versus the control group in terms of education, employment and income, welfare, and crime (see Table 3.2 for the outcomes measured and those previously monetized by Barnett (1993) that are incorporated in our analysis). The long follow-up period, longer than that in the Elmira PEIP evaluation, permits estimates of welfare costs and taxes from increased employment that are generated during adulthood by children who participated in the program. In addition, Barnett (1993) provides estimates of projected savings, beyond age 27, as a result of higher taxes from employment, lower welfare utilization, and reduced crime.

Data from the Perry Preschool long-term follow-up have been previously used by Barnett (1993) to conduct a cost-benefit analysis based on data from the age-27 follow-up. Barnett's estimates, consistent with early cost-benefit assessments of the program, indicate that savings to government exceed program costs by a factor of more than 7 to 1. The largest component of savings is from reductions in crime, a large fraction of which is the estimated reductions in the intangible losses to victims of crime over the lifetime of the program participants. Other large savings components include taxes recovered over participants' lifetimes because of higher earnings, and reduced K-12 education costs.

In the analysis we report below, we have used Barnett's results to calculate savings, generated by the Perry Preschool program, from higher employment and reductions in the utilization of welfare, the

Table 3.2
Outcomes Measured in Perry Preschool

Domain	Mother/ Child	Outcome Description
Child development	Child	IQ at age 5 IQ at age 7 IQ at age 8 IQ at age 14
Education	Child	Achievement test score at age 9 Achievement test score at age 14 High school GPA at age 19 <i>Time in special education through age 19</i> <i>Years in educable mentally impaired programs through age 27</i> <i>Years retained in grade through age 27</i> <i>High school graduation rate by age 27</i> Postsecondary education credits by age 27
Employment	Child	<i>Employment rate at age 19</i> <i>Employment rate at age 27</i> <i>Monthly earnings at age 27</i>
Welfare	Child	<i>Received public assistance at age 27</i> <i>Received public assistance in last 10 years at age 27</i>
Crime	Child	<i>Ever arrested by age 27</i> <i>Lifetime arrests through age 27</i>
Health	Child	Teen pregnancies per 100 females through age 19

NOTES: Age references are to the age of the focal child. For annotated outcome tables, see Tables 2.2, 2.3, and B.1. Italics indicates benefits monetized by Barnett (1993) that we adjusted to 1996 dollars and rediscounted.

criminal justice system, and special education.⁹ For comparability with our analysis of the Elmira PEIP, Barnett's figures have been adjusted to 1996 dollars and rediscounted. On balance, these changes decrease estimates of both costs and savings. More important, our figures also differ from those reported in Barnett because we have elected, as discussed more fully below, not to monetize the reduction in pain and suffering for victims of crime. Thus, our esti-

⁹Barnett (1993) also includes savings to government from reduced use of adult education and the increased costs to government from greater participation in college. These two factors are small and nearly cancel each other out.

mates of the benefits to the rest of society are a more conservative figure than those reported by Barnett.

COMPARING PROGRAM COSTS TO THE GOVERNMENT SAVINGS THE PROGRAMS GENERATE

Early childhood intervention programs generate at least four types of significant savings to government:

- **Increased tax revenues.** These result from increased employment and earnings by program participants, including income tax at the federal and state levels, Social Security contributions by both the employer and employee, and state and local sales taxes. The Perry Preschool program measured the increased employment and income for the children in the evaluation through age 27, and Barnett (1993) projected future earnings and income through age 65. The employment and earnings measures in the Elmira PEIP are limited to gains experienced by the mother through age 15 of the child.
- **Decreased welfare outlays,** including Medicaid, Food Stamps, and AFDC, and general assistance (typically funded by counties). The savings to government include not only the reduced payments to recipients but also the reduced administrative expenses. The Perry Preschool evaluation took account of all of these factors, measuring welfare utilization effects for the children through age 27 and projecting future savings through age 65 based on Barnett's (1993) calculations. The Elmira PEIP measured changes in months spent on welfare by the mother (and child) through age 15 of the child.
- **Reduced expenditures for education, health, and other services.** Examples are special education, emergency room visits, and stays in homeless shelters. The Elmira PEIP evaluation measured emergency room visits when the child was between the ages of 25 and 50 months. The Perry Preschool program evaluation measured net education savings through when the child was in high school (i.e., savings due to lower special education expenditures and less grade repetition net of increased schooling costs due to greater educational attainment). To the extent that the programs reduce the need for other special services that were

not measured in the evaluations, the savings figure is an underestimate of the true savings to government.

- **Lower criminal justice system costs**, including arrest, adjudication, and incarceration expenses. On the basis of the measured outcomes, we can predict criminal activity and thus criminal justice expenditures for the lifetime of the subject; therefore, the estimate of criminal justice savings covers the entire lifetime of the children in the Elmira PEIP and Perry Preschool interventions. In addition, the criminal justice system savings for mothers in the Elmira PEIP are included based on treatment- versus control-group differences in arrests and jail days through when the focal child was 15.

Estimates of government savings in each of these categories can be derived from the outcome data collected in the evaluations of the two programs included in this analysis. (Note that some of the outcomes listed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, e.g., increased IQ, may result in savings or costs to the government, but these are not easily quantified and are not included here.) In the results that follow, all dollar amounts are expressed in 1996 dollars. Net present values are estimated as of the birth of the child using a 4 percent discount rate.¹⁰ The sensitivity of our results to the choice of the discount rate is addressed at the end of the chapter.

Elmira PEIP, Higher-Risk Families

Table 3.3 summarizes the costs and savings to government of the Elmira PEIP home-visit program for higher-risk families. These savings are estimated from benefits reported by Olds et al. (1994, 1997) and Olds (1996). The details of the calculations are outlined in Appendix A.

¹⁰By net present value, we mean the sum of the dollar amounts over all future years, discounted at a constant rate per year to take into account the fact that future dollars are worth less than today's dollars.

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Table 3.3
Costs and Savings: Elmira PEIP, Higher-Risk Families

	Dollars per Child			SE
	Due to Mother	Due to Child	Total	
Program cost			6,083	
Savings to government	20,384	4,310	24,694	6,420
Reduction in health services	*	115	115	56
Taxes from increased employment	5,683	'	5,683	3,681
Reduction in welfare cost	14,067	*	14,067	4,905
Reduction in criminal justice cost	634	4,195	4,828	1,900
Net savings			18,611	

SOURCE: Authors' calculations. See Appendix A for additional detail.

NOTES: * = not measured. All amounts are in 1996 dollars and are the net present value of amounts over time where future values are discounted to the birth of the participating child, using a 4 percent annual real discount rate. The standard error (SE) of individual line items in this table was estimated by multiplying the SE of the item's cost driver times the cost factor that converts the cost driver into estimated cost. For example, for welfare the cost driver is months on welfare, and the cost factor is the cost per month. The SE of the cost driver is estimated as one-fourth of the 95 percent confidence interval estimate of the difference between the treatment- and control-group outcomes. The SEs of the totals were approximated by the square root of the sum of squared SEs of the components. These estimates of the SEs are very rough, but they are sufficiently accurate to convey the level of uncertainty in the estimated program benefits caused by the small sample size.

The difference between the total savings (\$24,694)¹¹ and the cost (\$6,083) is the net savings to government (\$18,611). The overall amount of savings is over four times the cost of the program. So this program clearly pays for itself through the reductions it enables in future spending on existing government programs.

Over 80 percent (\$20,384) of the savings we can estimate is due to differences between the treated group and the control with respect to behavior of the mother during the first 15 years of the child's life. In particular, mothers in the treated group were employed more and used welfare less. The rest of the savings are from differences in the

¹¹We show all numbers to the nearest dollar, so that readers can follow our calculations without the impediment of rounding errors. Obviously, the level of precision shown is much greater than the data can support. Our conclusions do not depend on it.

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child's behavior (\$4,310), primarily due to less crime over his or her lifetime.¹²

The behavior of both the mother and the child has been observed for only 15 years. We have made no attempt to estimate the increases in the child's future income (and thus increases in tax revenue) or decreases in the child's use of welfare that may result from the child's participation in the program. Likewise, we have not attempted to guess at the possible increases in employment (and thus income and tax revenue) nor decreases in welfare usage by the mother after the child is 15 years old. We have also not monetized other beneficial effects of the program through age 15 of the child, such as those from reduced child abuse and neglect. Thus, the calculated net savings (\$18,221) is likely an underestimate of the true savings to government that can be credited to this program.

Figure 3.1 depicts the sources of government savings for the Elmira PEIP home-visit program for higher-risk families. Over half the savings to government result from reductions in welfare costs. The remainder is split evenly between increased tax revenues and decreased criminal justice costs.

Note that the program cost occurs at the time of the intervention, while the savings to government stretch out into the future. (In Table 3.3, the savings figure is a cumulative sum of those future savings, appropriately discounted.) In Figure 3.2 we show how those savings accumulate over time. The curves in the figure represent cumulative costs and savings through different years since the intervention, measured by the age of the child. Each point on a curve is the net present value (using a 4 percent discount rate) of the annual amounts up to that time. The home visits provided by the program stop after the child is 2 years old, so the cumulative cost curve levels off at two years.

¹²For convenience, we use average savings per child. For example, we do not mean to suggest that a typical child enrolled in the Elmira PEIP program would have cost the criminal justice system another \$4,195 without the program. Many of these children incurred no criminal justice costs during their lifetimes. But some incurred very large expenses, resulting in the average \$4,195 figure when those amounts are spread out over everyone.

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November 4, 1999

MEMORANDUM TO BETHANY LITTLE

From: Theresa B. Sirois

Re: **Preschool**

I. Background: Recent History of Early Childhood Education in the U.S.

(from The Debate over Child Care 1969-1990; Abbie Klein, 1992.)

Before 1971, the federal government's involvement with childcare was sporadic and narrow, with predominantly economic and welfare functions. The debate over federal involvement in such services was finally introduced during the 92nd Congress (1971-1972). For the first time, educational and social service elements of childcare were considered. Representative John Brademas sponsored the proposed Comprehensive Preschool Education and Child Day-Care Act of 1969. The act proposed a program of preschool education for all American children. Debate among Congress, childcare advocates and the Administration was intense. Finally, the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971 was passed as an alternative to Brademas' education-focused bill. The Act would have established a system of national child care.

In December 1971, President Nixon vetoed the Act, saying that the legislation, "would commit the vast moral authority of the national government to the side of communal approaches of child-rearing *over and against* the family-centered approach." Although congressional activity continued with hearings in 1974, 1977, and 1979, this veto was a benchmark of national comprehensive childcare politics. It caused a blockage in the movement for a pro-active federal policy for children and families.

The Carter Administration gave little support to push the issue. President Carter assistant secretary for Human Development Services, Arabella Martinez, argued that (1) American parents preferred home-based care; and (2) that the government supported increased standards, but did not want a new fragmented system of services that relied on categorization and bureaucratization.

After many aborted attempts to pass childcare legislation in the 1970's, the Reagan administration instituted a policy of privatization, deregulation and decentralization. The result of this action has been the problems we now experience with an extremely incoherent and variable system and minimal standards. Much of the disagreement that has virtually halted progress has been persistent rifts in the childcare community and or diverse society over who should deliver the service.

By 1990, the sheer size of the number of families with childcare needs had thrust the issue to the forefront. The Bush administration realized that this was no longer a problem that could be considered only for the poor and disenfranchised. Washington struggled with the aftermath of Reagan's policies. In the movement for the Act for Better Child Care, critical issues for delivery were stressed: availability, affordability and quality. This push enabled final compromise of the Congress and the White House on the Child Care and Development Block Grant of 1990.

II. Facts & Research on Benefits of Early Childhood Education

A. Statistics

- 4 2 {
- Today, 55 percent of American children age 3 to 5 are enrolled in preschool programs, an increase from 45 percent in 1996
 - Today, 79 percent of children in families earning over \$75,000 a year and 43 percent of children in families earning under \$10,000 attend some form of preschool.
 - 71 percent of American children whose mothers completed college attended preschool in 1996. Only 37 percent of children whose mothers had less than a high school education attended.
 - Enrollment has increased particularly among African-American children, from 45 percent in 1996 to 55 percent in 1997. This has been simultaneous with a significant increase in high school completion among Black students from 75 percent in 1980 to 83 percent in 1990.
 - The population of Hispanic children has increased more than any other racial or ethnic group, from 9 percent of the population in 1980 to 15 percent in 1998 (projected 1 in 5 American children in 2020 will be Hispanic). However, the number of Hispanic children enrolled in preschools has not increased, and high school completion rates have remained significantly lower than those of other ethnic groups (between 57-67 percent over past 20 years).
 - 42 states have preschool programs focused towards poor children. Georgia is the only state with universal preschool (see section III) which it finances with state lottery revenues.
- indicating as well child better study

B. Major findings from the "Carolina Abecedarian Study"

(Nov. 1999, The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center: UNC at Chapel Hill)

"The Abecedarian project was a carefully controlled study of the potential benefits of early childhood education for poor children. Children from low-income families received full-time high-quality educational intervention in a childcare setting from infancy through age 5. Each child had an individualized prescription of educational activities incorporated into games that focused on social, emotional, and cognitive areas of development with particular emphasis on language acquisition. The children's progress was monitored over time with follow-up studies conducted at ages 12, 15, and 21. The young adult findings demonstrate that important, long-lasting benefits were associated with the early childhood program."

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- Mothers whose children participated in the program achieved higher educational and employment status than mothers whose children were not in the program. These results were especially pronounced for teen mothers.
 - Young adults who received early educational intervention had significantly higher mental test scores from toddlerhood through age 21 than those who were untreated.
 - Enhanced language skills in the children probably increased the effects of early intervention on cognitive skills performance.
 - Reading achievement scores were consistently higher for individuals with early intervention. The differences between the groups remained large from primary school through age 21. Enhanced cognitive skills appeared to positively affect reading achievement.
 - Mathematics achievement showed a pattern similar to reading, with treated individuals earning higher scores. The differences were medium in contrast to the large effects for reading. Again, enhanced cognitive functioning appeared to positively affect results.

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- Those with treatment were significantly more likely still to be in school at age 21; 40% of the intervention group compared with 20% of the control group.
- A significant difference was also found for the percentage of young adults who ever attended a four-year college. About 35% of the young adults in the intervention group had either graduated from or were at the time of the assessment attending a four-year college or university. In contrast, only about 14% in the control group had done so.
- Young adults in the intervention group were, on average, two years older (19 years) when their first child was born compared with those in the control group (17 years), although the youngest individuals in both groups were comparable in age when the first child was born.
- Employment rates were higher (65%) for the treatment group than for the control group (50%), although the trend was not statistically significant.

The importance of high quality, educational childcare from early infancy is now clear. The Abecedarian study provides scientific evidence that early childhood education significantly improves the scholastic success and educational attainments of poor children even into early adulthood.

C. Major Findings from "The Cost Quality and Outcomes" study
(Aug. 1998; National Center for Early Childhood Development and Learning- NCEDL)

This is another study concluded that "quality care does mean better child outcomes". Researchers followed a group of children from age 3 in preschools through the early elementary years. The study focused on quality in the classroom and in teacher-student relationships.

- 1a • Children in preschool classrooms where higher quality practices were observed had better language and math skills than those in classrooms of lower quality. Children in higher quality classrooms had better reading skills during the first year of preschool, but differences were minimal after that.
- 1b • Each year from preschool to kindergarten, children with closer relationships to their preschool teachers had better language and attention skills, were more sociable, and showed fewer behavior problems.

Finally, the study makes a number of policy suggestions based on their findings noting that "if America wants all its children to be ready for school, it must improve the quality of child care experiences available in this country."

Conclusion
Section

- Federal and state funding for childcare should be increased.
- Subsidy systems and tax incentives should be reconfigured to tie higher program standards and teacher compensation.
- Accreditation programs should be expanded to preschool to raise quality and provide standards.
- Teacher certification and center licensing programs should be expanded and improved. This is an area severely lacking in standards in many states. Inservice training, relationship-building should be stressed.

D. Results from the Spotlight Series Survey of American Kindergarten Teachers

(July 1998; NCEDL)

The NCEDL surveyed nearly 3,600 kindergarten teachers to identify areas of concern and barriers to child transitions into kindergarten. They concluded that the expectations of kindergarten teachers are much higher than the actual skills of incoming kindergartners. The surveyors also noted that “while the survey focused on teachers and classrooms, ...the family, the education system, preschool programs, and the community are all responsible” all play a role in promoting the individual child’s readiness. Continuity and communication between the public schools and quality preschool programs, as well as between preschool and kindergarten teachers and parents is essential to ensure comfortable transition of young children into kindergarten.

Taking into concern a number of demographic variables and different teacher expectations that may distort results, the survey results revealed the following information:

- About 48 percent of children have moderate to serious transition problems. Teachers reported inadequate preparedness in following directions, academic skills, home environment, working independently, former preschool experience, working in a group, immaturity and communication skills.
- Barriers included inadequate time, information, and planning for communication with parents and children before they enter kindergarten. Universal preschool, particularly if housed in the public schools, would greatly facilitate kindergarten communication.

III. Best Practices

A. United States

In the United States' thoroughly decentralized and privatized system with minimal universally-accepted standards and expectations, it is difficult to assess our nation’s preschools. Certainly, as with grade schools and high schools, there are bad programs and there are good programs. However, we cannot simply continue to accept this fact as we have in the past. Standards in educational environment and teacher training are of the utmost importance, whether we achieve a universal system or maintain complete state authority. Below I have included a few highlights from Georgia’s universal pre-K program, established in 1993. Without a doubt, Georgia education authorities will be leaders in fashioning new goals for state standards and best practices at the National Research Council conference next April.

The Georgia Pre-kindergarten Program

- All four-year-old children whose parents are residents of Georgia are eligible to attend GA Pre-K.
- The program is funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education.
- The program Expected to serve about 62,500 children this school year (reaches a higher proportion of four-year-old children than any other state in the nation).
- The Goal of every Georgia Pre-K classroom is to provide four-year-olds with the learning experiences they need in order to prepare for kindergarten. The program’s school readiness goals are to provide developmentally appropriate preschool curriculum emphasizing growth

in language and literacy, math concepts, science, arts, physical development, and personal and social competence.

- The Program is voluntary for both families and communities and may be offered through public schools or private providers of preschool services.
- Georgia Pre-K programs usually operate on the regular school calendar for a full school day.

B. France:

Pre-elementary education is free and offered to all French and immigrant children ages 2 through 6. By the age of 3 years, if the family should wish it, every child should enter an "école maternelle" or a preschool housed in an elementary school. France has a strong tradition of pre-elementary education. (1960: 36% 3-year-olds and 63% four-year-olds entered; in 1980 respectively 90% and 100%) Today, practically all French children age 3 and up attend school.

- Parents also have the option of enrolling their child in a private preschool. (approx. 2 mill. in public preschool, 300,000 in private)
- All classes are taught by specialized educators who are recruited by the community.
- Every school is divided into three levels of child comprehension and maturation in order to accommodate different capacities of different children. Parents have the authority to choose into which section they place their child.
- Preschoolers spent about 26 hours in class per week.
- Beginning in 1995, the current curriculum and pedagogy for the "écoles maternelles" was designed with specific educational objectives and class structures. The larger goals of the assigned pedagogy are the development of the child as a whole person and preparation to enter elementary school. Specifics include: language acquisition including reading and writing, development of imagination, values, artistic abilities, hygiene, nutrition, basic scientific concepts (light, weather, plants etc), social education including meal etiquette and communication skills, life/death, emotions, senses... (The list is quite extensive).
- The Education Inspector is charged with the task of ensuring proper administration, standards and curriculum are met in every school.

A common criticism of the French education system is that the strictly-mandated goals and curricula limits educational freedom and creativity. In addition, many point out that the extremely hierarchic organization of the system works to perpetuate class inequalities in French society. However, for the most part at the preliminary level of preschool, children enter on a generally equal basis and have yet to experience the competition and weeding-out present in future years of French schooling. The three section capacity distinction may be problematic, but this is difficult to measure as parents are given choice as to where their child is placed.

Despite arguments about these sort of limitations, the French and other European universal preschool systems have had success in maintaining quality. However, it is important to remember when evaluating the American system against those of Europe that these countries are smaller and vastly more manageable. Regulation of the entire country of France is perhaps comparable to the regulation of the state of Texas alone. To ensure standards, an American preschool system must compensate for this decentralization with overarching rather than omnipresent authority.

IV. Barriers & Recommendations

→ Conclusion
Section

A. Establishing Standards

To achieve any progress in improving early childhood education in the United States, we must first lay a foundation of standards on which to base our plans and evaluations. The first, most basic step is defining an American conception of what constitutes “preschool”. Uneducational programs that are virtually child warehousing must be eliminated from our definition. Only programs that accomplish clear beneficial, educational goals for young children should be considered part of any universal preschool funding that are allocated. In European countries that have established universal preschool, continuity in standards is maintained through a government-mandated program, as well as by frequent supervision and evaluation by authorities. As a result of our privatized and decentralized system, our unclear definition of preschool is the cause of an abundance of criticism and concern among American parents and child development experts. Even though most programs conveniently label themselves “educational”, each should be evaluated by standardized criteria before they are supported. The suggestion of the “Cost, Quality Care” study to expand accreditation programs to cover early childhood education would be helpful in this sense.

The concerns of parents and child development experts about child warehousing and lack of standards are undeniably valid. It is estimated that over three-fourths of early childhood care and education centers in the U.S. are of below-average quality. This includes programs from all over the education and care spectrum including public, non-profit, for-profit, Head Start and religious centers. Parents fear that advertisements for centers that tout grand experiences for their young children are not reliable; and they are usually correct. Child development experts argue that the majority of centers do not provide the positive cognitive and social stimulation necessary for good or even normal child development. A recent article in the *Industry Standard* commented that if we want to accomplish universal early childhood education, our efforts to attain the highest quality in every center must be unyielding. Otherwise, as with most centers in our current system, programs that lack knowledge and resources will do more harm than good.

The establishment of universal standards is necessary for all aspects of early childhood education: research-based educator training and classroom curricula, environment safety, parental involvement, classroom resources, etc. These goals can be accomplished in many ways: conditional funding, accreditation programs, licensing requirements; however, this step must be the first and primary goal of any federal action in the direction of universally-available preschool for American children. Strict standards will be the key to achieving any of the goals discussed below.

In addition, because aspects of preschool such as teacher training, curriculum, and environment are all extremely interdependent, standards for all areas must be set and maintained for any one area to realize its full potential. For example, if educators lack knowledge in child development research and classroom methods that encourage social and cognitive benefits, even the best curricula will be undermined.

B. Professional Development & Teacher Training

1. All persons certified to teach in preschool centers should have a research-based understanding of early child development, theory of effective classroom strategies, and curricula that are beneficial for the education and care of young children.
2. In order to enhance social and emotional child development, early childhood educators should have thorough knowledge of how to develop strong, positive relationships with young children and with their parents.
3. Preschool staff should have a wide array of knowledge concerning mental and physical disabilities in order to facilitate early identification and intervention. Realizing and addressing such problems *before* children enter mainstream schools can mean the difference between a future of academic success and one of struggle and failures.
4. Finally, it is essential in our diverse society for educators to be trained in relating to children, parents, and families of diverse backgrounds and beliefs.

All of these elements must be incorporated into training and certification programs and requirements. All are essential to the administration of quality early childhood education programs. Proper professional development and teacher training should be a key condition to any funding that is allocated for expansion of state preschool programs. Again, this is a factor that will render any other positive qualities in a program useless and even potentially harmful. In many states, certification is a matter of a few days or even hours of lecture time and a brief examination. This is unacceptable when we are talking about placing these unqualified people (however well-intentioned) in a room with our very youngest and most impressionable children. It is unfathomable that we expect pediatricians to undergo years of extensive education to step into the room with young children for five minutes, and yet, in this country, we allow persons with practically no relevant knowledge to spend five or six hours everyday influencing our children. Research has shown that preschool educators have more influence on children's lives and social and academic success than any other teacher throughout education.

In a program of universal, voluntary preschool, the decision of standards in teacher training is a particular concern. While, within an established framework, state and local education authorities would most likely be responsible for organizing specifics about curricula, it is necessary to allow less freedom in teacher training. Due to the essential nature of all of the knowledge discussed above, states should not have leave to dismiss or impart such information without full commitment.

C. Curriculum

While, as I mentioned above, it is likely that an American universal preschool program would give at least partial freedom to states in forming their own curricula. However, it is still imperative that we provide mandatory guidelines with which states can work. These may include the following:

- All curricula should be based on the findings of scientific child development research: what works particularly well with young children to stimulate cognitive and social/emotional development.
- The primary academic priority of every program should be to foster literacy and language acquisition.

- The encouragement of social, emotional, relationship development should be a key aspect in all classroom activity. This can be accomplished through a wide variety of methods: games, role modeling, group work, or even holding a child on one's lap while reading
- Morals, values, character education in early childhood education should also be a main concern. In this sense, it is important to ensure that there is strong family and parental involvement in the program and in all decision-making. No school should reduce education to a simple cognition-based curriculum. We cannot ignore that children are the future society and, as individuals, schools owe it to children to address their needs as "whole" people. It certainly possible, particularly if we are providing guidelines to states, to focus moral and character education in such a way that it does not infringe upon the diverse family, religious, and cultural backgrounds of the students. The National Institute for Early Childhood Development and Education has found a possible focus in its "3 R's": "loving Relationships with parents and other adults build Resilient children who are Ready to succeed in school." Role modeling and relationships are a great focus for teaching children basic values such as respect and honesty.
- Motor skills are also an important element that every preschool curriculum should address. This is probably the simplest to incorporate considering the age group-always ready and willing to play.
- In addition, it is important that every program be given the freedom to work with its individual students. We need to remember that one size does not fit all in education. Different children learn in different ways and one teaching method might be successful with one child and not another. Teaching must be child-focused in order to provide quality preschool for every child involved.

D. Costs

We need reliable price estimates. Last month the Washington post article quoted that quality universal preschool would cost around \$5000 per child with over 1 million eligible. I have since read, in the process of my research, a number of different estimates. Regardless of what kind of numbers others are using, it is important to remember when we are thinking about cost that this is not a program that should be instituted unless it is full-fledge with strong funding. Relative to what other nations spend on preschool each year, we are severely behind in taking care of the minds of our youngest citizens. Again, programs that are not funded at a level that can provide high quality will do more harm than good. Young children not only deserve but *require* our full financial support.

One concern for funding is that, by contrast with other developed nations who correctly see the earliest times of life as the time for the largest investment, the United States has long been more concerned with upper-level education and college. It has been scientifically proven that the highest levels of learning go on during the preschool years. Therefore, it is time to be preventative, to set young children in the right direction *before* they are failing, dropping out, being delinquent in later years. It was also estimated in the same Post article that for every \$1 that is spent on high-quality preschool, \$3 is saved in future costs for learning disabilities, tutors, delinquency and other problems. Washington Monthly estimated that for every \$25,000 spent on

inmates in America's prisons, only \$4000 is spent on American students. And, this does not even consider the miniscule proportion of that \$4000 that is devoted to early childhood education. Children need to be stimulated so that they can grow intellectually, socially, and emotionally and be prepared to succeed in elementary school and later in life. This is not just science; it's economics.

E. Encouraging Family Involvement

Successful early childhood education should act as a family-support system, as extended family that with full parental consent and participation, cares for and helps to enhance child development in every area. Programs should be supports not only to working parents who need the freedom preschools can provide to put food on the table, but also as a support for each child within his or her own family context. Programs should educate and encourage young children with consideration and respect for individual family child-rearing values, particularly because the programs are working with such young and impressionable children. For this reason, it is essential that early childhood educators create and maintain a close working relationship with the parents families of their students. These relationships must be based on mutual trust. In addition, every effort must be made to facilitate parental participation. This may include extending or shifting school hours or possibilities for parent-teacher conferences. A major concern of many parents is that these children are simply too young to be taken out of the home; programs need to reassure them that their children will be given the same care, with respect for the parents' child-rearing values, in addition to quality educational experiences.

F. Opponents

One of the greatest obstacles that must be overcome to establish a program of universal preschool will be working with the many different interest groups in this field such as Head Start and child care to map out a delivery system. However, most groups agree that the system needs change to meet the needs of our children. It will not be easy. In order to work towards universal preschool and becoming a more child-friendly country, we need to make hard choices and say things that a lot of groups will not want to hear. We need to ask ourselves: if we are supporting for-profit centers, including childcare, and without regulation, are we really a child-friendly country? With Head Start still part of HHS, can we achieve the standards set in the Department of Education there or are we willing to let those children miss out? This will not be an initiative that can be accomplished without meeting a multitude of opposition, even within the preschool and childcare industries.

There are also a number of conservative arguments that will have to be addressed. Many believe that tax credits to make use of the current privatized system (whether quality or availability achieved or not) is a better answer than a large government program. In addition, many American parents will have concerns about private versus public responsibility in the lives of our youngest children. The United States has long had adverse attitudes toward much of family policy other than welfare-related programs. Diverse value-systems and our rugged work ethic provide strong momentum for argument against government "intervention" in the lives of children, particularly at such an impressionable age.

From: Jon Schur
 TO: David Berger + Roy
 August 5
 Klein

Preschool and other possible education themes for next week.

Making high-quality preschool available for all. The Vice President's call to make high-quality preschool universally available is by far the most significant, expensive, and potentially complicated, education proposal he has made. The Vice President's next statement about the details of his preschool initiative will need to address a range of issues that need a great deal of substantive analysis and political groundwork -- both to ensure a well-designed initiative and to ensure that the VP gets support for this initiative from key constituencies and possible validators. For this reason, I believe the best way to roll out his preschool initiative -- or even the VP's next more specific statement on preschool -- is to plan a major speech for the fall on preschool and work with variety of experts and key organizations to develop a strong, widely supported plan that is ready by then.

The following issues need to be addressed, and many involve important prior discussions with the early childhood and child care communities, the NEA and AFT, the Head Start community and others. It is also hard to imagine addressing a couple of these issues next week without providing the kind of detailed plan that would require more time and planning. Issues include:

- the overall cost and the number of kids likely to be covered;
- whether to make preschool free or provide require some kind of fee based on a sliding scale.
- whether to limit eligibility for the program by income or make it available to all families.
- what type of limitations would be placed on the type of institutions that could provide preschool under this program. Options include a) letting states make this determination; b) limiting participation to public schools; c) permitting states to issue contracts to some set of possible providers; potentially including public schools, private preschool programs, child care providers, and religious institutions; d) providing parents with vouchers; e) simply expanding the Head Start program to children in families with higher incomes.
- What kind of standards would be used to ensure quality preschool, and would those standards be established at the federal, state, or local level.
- The age of children covered -- cover 4-year-olds or 3 and 4-year-olds.
- Would states participating in this program be required to make preschool universal or could they use funding to simply expand current preschool programs.
- How to meet the needs of working families sending their children to preschool by ensuring child care for children before or after a 3-6 hour preschool program.
- How to ensure the quality of the teaching force given the current shortages of qualified early childhood instructors and aides and the need to hire hundreds of thousands of additional people to make this initiative possible.

One general framework might be: to provide states grants to expand preschool and work toward making it universally available. Modeled after the Georgia program, states could be required to establish standards for a state-supported public preschool program and provide contracts to public school systems, Head Start programs, or non-religious private child care and preschool providers willing to provide the state's preschool program. States could be asked for a 50% match. While Georgia's preschools are free, the federal initiative could permit states to determine how to make preschool universally available -- whether by offering free preschool or requiring some kind of fee based on a sliding scale that would make quality preschool affordable

for all families. States could also be given flexibility to determine whether to provide preschool for one or two years. Head Start funding would be maintained at current levels.

Pros:

- Draws on research about the importance of quality preschool
- Would close the gaps in preschool enrollment rates among different socio-economic and racial groups. Currently, 61% of 4-year-olds and 37% of 3-year-olds are enrolled in preschool. Children in families with annual incomes over \$50,000 participate in these programs at far higher rates than others, with 81% of those 4-year-olds in preschool (compared with approximately 50% of families under \$35,000) and 61% of 3-year-olds (compared with 27% of children in families with incomes under \$35,000. Latino children currently participate at far lower rates than White or African-American children, with 20% of Latino 3-year-olds and 49% of Latino 4-year-olds participating in preschool.
- This approach would be modeled somewhat after the Georgia program – the only state with a (short) track record creating a universal pre-K program.
- Would provide states considerable flexibility in how to administer this program.
- Would satisfy need of Head Start community to maintain
- Would help address some concerns of the public education community by avoiding a voucher program or providing funds to religious organizations.

Cons:

- Without further analysis, raises difficult-to-answer questions about the cost of this initiative and whether it meets the VP's call for universal pre-K
- may cause problems with the public school community by permitting private organizations to run public preschool programs.
- may lead to criticism that the VP is backing away from his call for faith-based institutions to play a role in providing social services.
- Doesn't provide clear answers about how this initiative will ensure a reasonable level of quality without tying the hands of states or communities to make their own decisions about standards.
- Could be criticized for focusing on middle-class and wealthier families instead of targeting funding more to children in low-income families – especially when only half of children eligible for Head Start are currently enrolled.
- Needs much more analysis to see if this program design makes sense and to get support from key constituencies.

ALTERNATIVES

Some alternatives for other new initiatives include:

- 1) An initiative to recruit qualified early childhood staff – particularly for high-need communities – to make possible the universal preschool initiative. This could be an expansion of the Teachers Corps already proposed by the VP.

2) A reading initiative. This could include an initiative to ensure that all teachers get trained in the new research about how kids learn to read. New funding could be provided to states that get serious about accountability for schools of education.

3) A new principals initiative. Because principals are a key to successful schools – and because high-poverty school districts are facing shortages of qualified principals – the VP could propose a) scholarships for people who agree to become principals in high-need schools, b) salary stipends for principals in high-need schools that demonstrate progress, c) the creation of a world-class principals' institute designed to recruit and train principals for high-poverty schools.

4) A teacher salary initiative. This could include grants to school districts to provide salary stipends for teachers in high-need schools and subject areas in exchange for a plan for teacher standards and accountability.

5) "Boot camps" and 1-year post-high school academies to prepare more minority students to succeed in and enroll in college. This would be based on a similar program established by the military.

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Kids need an early start



The keys to academic success for disadvantaged children may not be smaller class sizes, better-prepared teachers, tougher standards, more accountability, or greater choice — laudable as these goals may be. They may instead hinge on a single factor: preschool.

Because of their family environments, too many children come to school ill-prepared to learn. They lack language skills, social skills, and motivation. In Oxford, Miss., for example, Superintendent John Jordan reports that 5-year-olds sometimes arrive in kindergarten not knowing their own names — only their nicknames. Almost all experts now agree that a preschool experience or its first cousin — high quality, educationally-oriented child care — is one of the most effective strategies for improving later school performance.

Consider the emphasis on reducing class size. The evidence suggests that its major benefits come from the extra socialization that it allows teachers to provide to children in the early grades. Yet a more cost-effective solution is to provide these same children with appropriate experiences before they enter school. Ironically, by attempting to reduce class size, schools are competing for staff with child care and preschool programs — to the detriment of the latter.

What evidence is there that increased support for pre-kindergarten will have the hoped-for effects on school readiness? The best studies strongly suggest that children benefit greatly

from an early learning experience. High-quality programs have produced short-term gains in cognitive functioning and longer-term gains in school achievement and social adjustment. Recent reviews of the literature by the Rand Corporation, by Steven Barnett at Rutgers University, and by a team of researchers at the University of Wisconsin conclude that early interventions, especially with disadvantaged children, have produced a variety of positive results. Those results include higher school achievement, less retention in grade, a reduced need for special education at a later age, and less crime. The study estimates that the most effective programs create savings to the government of \$13,000 to \$19,000 per child above the cost of the pre-school programs themselves. The best results come from programs that begin early, include children from the most disadvantaged homes, and provide intensive education and other services over a lengthy period.

Critics of this literature have emphasized that the purely cognitive gains fade as children age, that the studies are not without their flaws, and that model programs are difficult to take to scale. These critics have tended to focus on IQ improvements and to ignore the improvements in school performance found by most studies. They also expect research to achieve an unobtainable level of certainty about effectiveness.

In the wake of welfare reform, Congress has appropriated substantial sums for child care,

Universal preschool education may be the best investment Americans can make in our children's education — and our nation's future.

by Isabel Sawhill

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Isabel Sawhill is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and director of the Brookings Roundtable on Children.

Done right, high quality child care and early education is a two-time winner: they enable mothers to work and insure that children from high-risk families are ready for school.

recognizing that if we are going to require low-income mothers to work, we must also provide them with a safe place to leave their children. This suggests a world in which both high-quality child care and early education are provided to low-income families. Done right, this would be a two-time winner: enabling mothers to work and ensuring that children from high-risk families were ready for school.

The importance of early education is increasingly recognized at the state level, where public funding of preschool programs is catching on, albeit at an uneven pace. Other countries have also recognized the need to educate children from an early age. In France and Italy, for example, nearly all children 3 to 5 years old are enrolled in publicly funded preschools.

Toward a New Federal Commitment to Early Education

Individual families and some states will undoubtedly continue to make such investments in young children. Some will argue that a federal role is unnecessary or even counterproductive. There is considerable sentiment in this country for keeping education, including preschool, as a state and local responsibility, and this tradition is deeply ingrained. But only the federal government can make sure that all children have equal access to a good education, regardless of the state or community in which they live.

Although providing medical care and retirement benefits to the elderly or even welfare benefits and food stamps to the poor are time-honored federal commitments, these programs are better thought of as picking up the pieces after the education system has failed. Any one state or community that neglects the education of its children imposes large costs on the rest of us.

There are three different ways in which the federal government could intervene:

1. *Provide federal funding while allowing states and local communities flexibility to use the money in diverse ways on the condition that they enroll more children in accredited facilities, target modest-income families, and use federal*

dollars to supplement, not supplant, state spending. Standards for accreditation could be established by states or by the federal government with the advice of professional groups and benchmarked over time against school-readiness scores. A block grant to the states would enable more of them to provide the kind of innovative programs adopted by a number of states in recent years. Georgia and New York, for example, have implemented universal pre-kindergarten programs. California is spending the \$750 million a year raised from a tax on tobacco to provide early childhood programs in every community. Some states, such as Indiana and Iowa, are transferring money from their welfare block grant to fund early childhood programs. Federal funding would both accelerate this state-led movement and even out the playing field for children across the country.

2. *Provide a more generous (and refundable) tax credit or voucher to lower-income families to be used only in accredited preschool facilities.* A tax credit would combine the federal support for education that liberals have supported with the parental choice and competition among providers that conservatives like. Unlike the first option, however, this one doesn't allow much scope for the investments in provider training and infrastructure that many experts believe are necessary and, in the absence of school choice, makes it more difficult to use the public schools as providers.

3. *Build on the existing system.* For example, the federally funded Head Start program could be expanded to serve all poor and near-poor children for at least two years. Head Start's part-day, part-year schedule should be extended to meet the needs of working parents. The current program serves less than half of all eligible poor children, most in part-day programs for one year, typically at age 4. Moreover, as educational historian Diane Ravitch has argued, Head Start lacks a strong educational component. In recent years, middle class and affluent families have enrolled their children in preschool programs in record numbers; twice as many 3- to 5-year-olds are enrolled among families with incomes above \$75,000 as among families with incomes

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Conclusion

Jill Stamm Innovator

A professor at Arizona State University and a national lecturer on infant learning and cognition, Dr. Jill Stamm is also president of New Directions Institute in Arizona. Her organization collects the latest neuroscientific research on brain development in infants up to age three. Her goal is to educate new parents and caregivers about the long-lasting importance of healthy, early brain development in young children.

Genes, environment, caregiving, and nourishment all play very important roles in brain development. New technologies such as PET scans and functional MRI have allowed us to watch the brain functioning in real time and to look at which areas of the brain are activated by specific kinds of stimulation and influences.

This new research attributes about 50 percent of a baby's unique brain function to nature, or genetics, and 50 percent to nurture, or the physical and emotional environment to which that baby is exposed.

When considering the nurture component, we have found that there are windows of opportunity for brain development from zero to three that you can't necessarily make up for later. The brain doesn't develop the way your feet grow: gradually, in regular increments from year

to year. The brain reaches 90 percent of its full adult size, capacity, and wiring by age three.

We now know that how a child is touched, nurtured, and spoken to in those early years makes a dramatic difference in how he or she functions later on in life. Violent, stressful, highly hostile environments have been shown to have a direct impact on the biological functioning of that child. Neurologists can actually pinpoint exactly which areas of the brain have been impacted because these areas do not develop normally. Such trauma can cause hyperactivity, compulsivity, and aggressive behavior. In later life, these children are far less able to either modulate their emotions or process information normally. The truth is that science is finally validating what our common sense has long told us.

At New Directions Institute, we are trying to reach parents while their children are still infants. Our first project works with teenage mothers. We train volunteers in the latest research on brain development. Then we match our volunteers with a teen mom who is at risk simply because she's young. The mother's only requirements for the program are that she stays in school and, by self-report, is substance-free. We match her with a mentor for one year.

The focus is specifically on the intellectual development of the child, getting the mother to realize the power she has to impact her baby's brain development; teaching her some straightforward techniques that will help her child develop a kind of emotional intelligence and attachment.

Most developmental interventions have concentrated on the child. Programs like Head Start are wonderful for the children who participate. But my belief is that it is a far wiser use of our resources to educate



Jill Stamm teaches young mothers the importance of early brain development.

the caregivers.

The public is only slowly learning about the new brain research and the importance of development from zero to three. Jim Hunt, the Democratic governor of North Carolina, is a leader on this subject. Three years ago, advocates for a program called Smart Start approached Hunt and convinced him of the importance of early development. Smart Start advocates translated this information, which is well-known in the medical community, into practical terms. State legislators were shown slides of PET scans, for instance, comparing the brain of an abused child with that of a nurtured child. The visible differences are compelling. Their bottom line: you can pay now or pay later. The first year, North Carolina allocated \$12 million; by last year, it was up to \$256 million. This kind of commitment to these first years of life is an intelligent investment in the future.

—Interview by Marilyn Snell

"The brain doesn't grow like your feet: gradually, from year to year. It reaches 90 percent of its adult-size capacity by age three. How a child is touched and spoken to in those early years makes a dramatic difference."

Solutions

Politics will argue for serving more children at a lower cost per child. But this is self-defeating — the inexpensive programs are usually ineffective as well.

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Below: Making today's children more productive and better able to use emerging technologies will have long-term economic payoffs.

below \$10,000. Although the original intent of the program was to give children from poor families a "head start," they are no longer getting one.

All of these options, if done right, would be expensive. For example, a high-quality, two-year program with full subsidies for families earning up to \$30,000 could cost as much as \$30 billion annually — about \$18 billion more than we are currently spending at the federal level. Politics will always argue for serving more children at a lower cost per child. But in the end this politically satisfying strategy is likely to be self-defeating because inexpensive programs are usually ineffective as well. The lesson from decades of research is that with limited resources, it is better to provide fewer children a quality program that promises to improve their school performance and later success than to spread the money more broadly.

Recent budget debates have emphasized the importance of using the \$2.6 trillion in

projected federal budget surpluses to "save" Social Security. But an investment in people, especially in young children, has as large or larger a payoff as investing in tangible capital. Rates of return to education have risen sharply since the late 1970s, and evaluations of early childhood programs suggest that they actually save the taxpayer money over the long haul.

Making today's children more productive and better able to use emerging technologies can create a much stronger economy than investing all of our resources in financial capital. Yet we are spending a tiny fraction of total federal resources on children under the age of five, a commitment that is likely to wane further given tight budget caps on discretionary spending. If we want to prepare for the retirement of the baby boom generation, we must not only save more both individually and collectively — we must invest more in the only people who will be around to pay the costs of that retirement: today's young children.

conclusion!





Excerpts from a paper presented during a "Kindergarten Transitions" synthesis conference by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) in early 1998 in Charlottesville, VA. Samuel J. Meisels of the University of Michigan presented data and surveyed current literature for his paper, "Assessing Readiness." His paper is expected to be part of a book to be published later by Paul Brookes Publishing Co. Inc.

How should we define readiness?

Readiness is a process that occurs over time and in context. It is not complete by the first day of kindergarten, nor is it something that can be evaluated by a brief, simple test. It is much more than a child's knowledge of a few skills that are displayed in the first few weeks of kindergarten, or behavior patterns that are consistent with those of compliant children who have unnaturally long attention spans. Readiness is a context-dependent process that requires a period of common schooling before it can be assessed meaningfully.

Pianta and Walsh (1996) say that children are ready for school when, "for a period of several years, they have been exposed to consistent, stable adults who are emotionally invested in them; to a physical environment that is safe and predictable; to regular routines and rhythms of activity; to competent peers, and to materials that stimulate their explorations and enjoyment of the object world and from which they derive a sense of mastery."

Fundamental to the attainment of these readiness skills is a sense of self that can only be developed over time and in interaction with trustworthy and caring adults.

The characteristics that equip children to be successful in school are formed early in life. Zero to Three: The National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families (1992) suggests that these characteristics include confidence, curiosity, intentionality, self-control, relatedness, and the capacity to communicate and be cooperative. These qualities are consistent with an approach to rearing and caring for children throughout their first years of life that reflect more than a preoccupation with simply establishing a fund of general knowledge, the ability to read or recite the alphabet, familiarity with shapes, numbers, or colors, or the skills of hopping, balancing, or skipping. Such skills and knowledge are very important for young children, but they are largely made possible by the characteristics listed above.

Assessing a child's readiness for school

By defining readiness as a relational, interactional construct that reflects a joint focus on the child's status and the characteristics of the educational setting, three conditions become prominent for assessing readiness. First, opportunities for interactions between teachers and children must occur in classroom settings. Second, these interactions must take place over time, rather than on a single occasion. Third, assessments should not be used as blunt instruments, in which one type of assessment is expected to perform the functions of others.

Performance assessment is an approach to assessment that is consistent with these conditions and that provides meaningful information about children's learning and development at the outset of schooling. Curriculum-embedded performance assessments assist teachers in helping children reach their potential in early childhood

(Continued on reverse)

and early elementary classrooms (see Meisels, 1997). Performance assessments are founded on the belief that learning and development can be assessed most accurately over time and in interaction with materials, peers, and other people. Teachers using performance assessments document children's actual classroom experiences and evaluate children's achievements in order to plan future educational interventions.

The conception of readiness proposed here incorporates many of the elements that contribute to a child's ability to learn, including the setting, context, and the conditions under which the child acquires skills and is encouraged to learn. Assessments of readiness must be correspondingly broad, accounting for the context in which the child learns, the opportunities the child has had to master information and acquire skills, and the achievements the child demonstrates.

All children do not have equal access to experiences that enable them to become successful learners before they enter school. Since most young children respond quickly to positive changes in their environments, assessments of readiness should occur once a child has entered a school environment and begun to interact with teachers, materials, and peers. These assessments should seek to take multiple factors into account by systematically documenting the child's learning over time and in context.

Performance assessments should

... **be integrative**, bringing together various skills into visible displays and demonstrations of behavior that occur during the context of instruction. In this paradigm, we expect to see children construct models, solve problems, and prepare reports that call upon a range of skills, experiences, and knowledge.

... **emphasize top-level competence.**

Performance assessments ask children to show what they can do, and teachers are expected to work with their students to help them achieve their best possible work--work that reflects their special talents or interest.

... **encourage meta-cognition and the capacity to articulate as well as reflect on performance.**

Through performance assessments, children evaluate their own work, and reflect on their own progress, rather than being passive recipients of instruction or compliant occupants of the classroom.

... **be guided by developmental standards**, embedded in the longitudinal character of children's work and captured by the continuous progress format of curriculum-embedded performance assessments. The standards also emphasize the continuity of curricular development between children at different ages, grades, and levels of functioning.
(see Calfee, 1992)

For more information

Meisels, S.J. (1997) Using work sampling in authentic performance assessments. *Educational Leadership*, 54, 60-65.

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NCEDL is administratively housed at UNC-CH. This project is supported under the Education Research and Development Centers Program. PR/award number R307A60004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed in these reports do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education. Permission is granted to reprint this; we ask that you attribute the author(s) of the study and the National Center for Early Development & Learning.

Excerpts from a paper accepted for publication by the Elementary School Journal. The paper, "Kindergarten Teachers' Practices Related to Transition to School: Results of a National Survey," is based on a sample of 3,595 kindergarten teachers. Teachers were asked about their use of 21 practices related to the transition of children into kindergarten in the 1996-'97 academic year and 15 barriers to implementing transition practices. This is a sister Spotlight to Spotlight #1, "Kindergarten Transitions," July 1998, also based on our national survey.

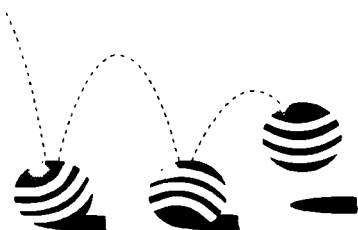
Teacher practices and transitions to school

Our national survey of kindergarten teachers reveals several key points. **First**, use of some form of practice to help children make the transition to kindergarten is nearly universal; 95% of the nation's kindergarten teachers endorsed the most frequently reported practice -- talking with the child's parent after school starts.

Second, although use of some form of transition practice is widespread, practices that involve school personnel having direct contacts with children or families are the least frequently reported, as are practices that involve contact with children or families before the start of school. The most frequently endorsed practices are those that take place after the start of school and/or involve low-intensity generic contact (e.g., flyers, brochures, group open houses).

Third, as schools (or districts) become increasingly urban and have higher percentages of minority and/or low-SES students, personal contacts with children and families before the start of school become less frequent (except for home visits) and low intensity, after-the-start-of-school contacts (such as flyers) are more common. Thus, children and families who may need the best form of transition practices are least likely to receive them.

Fourth, teachers identify a number of barriers to implementing practices related to the transition to school. The most common are that class lists are generated too late to make contacts with children and families before school starts, summer work is not supported, and a plan for the transition to kindergarten is not available in the school district. Teachers' perceptions that family characteristics are barriers occur with increasing frequency as schools become more urban, have a higher minority population, or are located in high-poverty districts.



"Ready schools" movement

By and large the endorsed practices do not conform to standards or principles that reflect the "ready schools" movement such as "Ready schools smooth the transition between home and school," or "Ready schools strive for continuity between early care and education programs and elementary schools" (National Education Goals Panel, 1998).

The practices teachers endorse most frequently do not reflect an emphasis on establishing connections, before school starts, among home, school, child care, and other contexts nor do they support continuity in the child's experience and promoting positive, supportive relationships among the persons involved in the child's care and education. Instead, they reflect a fairly low-intensity, nonindividualized, and impersonal approach that is unlikely to convey little more than information about what to bring on the first day of school or where to find the lunchroom. Although such information is important to helping the child and family negotiate the entry into kindergarten, it falls short of helping build the kind of supports for the child that can reduce the risk of school failure.

From the perspective of family-school relationships, the practices used most often in the transition to kindergarten signal a shift, in a negative direction, in the quality, nature, and depth of contact. Parent-teacher contact in elementary school is formalized, school-initiated, and involves a high proportion of information about the child's problems. In contrast, in preschools, parent contact with the school is often parent-initiated and involves family support. **The absence of transition practices and policies that conform to "ready schools" approaches may be a signal that entering school is itself a risk factor for many.**

(Continued on reverse)

Transitions in different groups

In urban, poverty, and high-minority areas, the public educational system often has problems capitalizing on families' existing resources and providing additional resources for education and child development. Our group comparisons reveal that the children and families who are likely to benefit most from personalized, proactive, and intense practices aimed at facilitating transition to kinder-

garten are the least likely to receive such practices. As schools became more urban or had a higher percentage of minority students, or districts had a higher number of families below the poverty lines, rates of implementation for the most intensive transition practices dropped and those for less intensive practices rose.

Implications and considerations

It is not surprising that the transition practices that reach backward in time, outward to families and pre-schools, and involve direct contacts are also those more teachers view as being difficult to implement.

Yet these barriers are not insurmountable, and in reporting on them teachers reveal potential methods for improving transition practices. For example, noting that class lists are generated too late or that a transition plan is not available suggests strategies for creating a more comprehensive approach to transition. Districts can experiment with ways to generate class lists and conduct kindergarten registration; they can commission kindergarten teachers, parents, and preschool teachers to formulate transition plans; and they can make transition a target for resources. In fact, in our efforts to enhance transition practices, it is precisely these kinds of innovations that have followed from discussions of barriers.

A cluster of barriers reflecting teachers' beliefs about parents and family factors reveals an area requiring considerable attention. In urban, high-poverty, or high-minority settings, kindergarten teachers report increasing concerns about contacting and visiting parents and about parents' abilities to bring their child to school or read materials sent home regarding transition.

These perceptions suggest an impasse between transition planning and practice. This impasse is not new. Yet it is precisely this impasse that is targeted by transition practices that build relationships between home and school early and before concerns arise that create tensions and mistrust between home and school.

Furthermore, the data on barriers across different levels of demographic indicators point again to the need for collaboration among parents, teachers, principals, child care providers, and others in the formation of transition practices that function effectively in a particular setting. In this way, transition practices can be a process by which a community ensures the successful entry to school for its members.

The results of this survey indicate that if the national goal of "ensuring that all children enter school ready to learn" depends in part on "ready schools," then there is considerable work to be done with respect to that aspect of ready schools that ensures "smooth transitions between home and school" and "continuity between child care and school experience."

If you want to know more:

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The authors of the paper on which this Spotlight is based are Robert C. Pianta of the University of Virginia and Martha J. Cox, Lorriane Taylor, and Diane Early of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. NCEDL is administratively housed at UNC-CH. This project is supported under the Education Research and Development Centers Program, PR/award number R307A60004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions in these reports do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education <www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/>, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, or the U.S. Department of Education. Permission is granted to reprint this; we ask that you attribute the authors of the paper and the National Center for Early Development & Learning.

Kindergarten Transitions

Summary of results from a national survey of nearly 3,600 kindergarten teachers by the National Center for Early Development & Learning. This survey identified teachers' areas of concern, looked at transition practices, and asked teachers what barriers they see to implementing more transitions practices. Project directors: Robert Pianta of the University of Virginia and Martha Cox of UNC-Chapel Hill.

No. 1 in the "NCEDL Spotlights" series. July 1998

Teachers: ^{6/10/98} 48% of children have transition problems

Teachers report that while 52 percent of children have a successful entry into kindergarten, 48 percent have moderate or serious problems. Nearly half of the teachers are concerned about many of the children entering kindergarten. Teachers are most frequently concerned about children's skills in following directions and academics. Here are the percentage of teachers who say that about half of their class or more enter kindergarten with needs in the following areas:

following directions	46%
academic skills	36%
home environment	35%
working independently	34%
formal pre-school experience	31%
working in a group	30%
immaturity	20%
communicating	14%

Transition into kindergarten

The most common practices teachers use to help children as they enter kindergarten are "a talk with parents after school starts," followed by "a letter to parents after the beginning of school" and "an open house after school starts." The least common practice was home visiting, both before and after the beginning of school.

Teachers report that a major barrier to their helping more with children's transitions into kindergarten is that class lists are generated too late. Lists are received, on the average, 15 days before the first day of school.

Another administrative barrier, say teachers, is that some recommended transition practices, such as those involving the parents before school begins, mean working in the summer for no salary. Other barriers include "no transition plan available" and that some transition practices "require too much time."

Context variables

Teachers report concerns less frequently in suburban and rural schools than in urban schools; in districts with lower poverty; and in schools with fewer minority students. Less experienced teachers report higher rates of general and specific transition problems.

Teachers' reports of concerns may reflect a mismatch between the competency of children and teachers' expectations. For example, white teachers perceive higher rates of difficulty by children in following directions, problems with social skills and immaturity in high minority composition schools, compared to teachers from other ethnic groups.

Teachers in schools with the greatest needs (higher poverty, more minority students, and urban) rely more heavily on group-oriented practices that occur after the beginning of school, than teachers in other settings.

Transition into first grade

The survey also looked at the transition between kindergarten and first-grade. Of 11 transition practices listed on the survey, over half of the teachers (57 percent) report having regular meetings with first-grade teachers to discuss continuity in the curriculum between kindergarten and first grade. And over half of the teachers (56 percent) report arranging for their class to visit a first-grade class.

However, less than 25 percent of the teachers report attending transition meetings, sending parents information on how placements in first grade are made, attending meetings to plan transitions for individual children, or planning transition activities for children with special needs. Child-focused transition practices such as having children visit a first-grade classroom or having a first-grade child visit the kindergarten classroom are being used more widely than practices that involve the parents in decisions about who will be their child's first-grade teacher and what the expectations are for first grade.

Conclusions and implications

- There is a poor fit between the expectations of kindergarten teachers and the skills of kindergartners.
- The nation has a long way to go in ensuring that all children come to school ready to learn, and ensuring that schools make the necessary provisions to reach out to their families.
- School administrators should consider earlier identification and classroom assignment of new students and a formal transition practices plan.
- Teachers are talking to teachers about transitions, but teachers are not reaching parents about their children's transition into first grade.
- Children have little facilitated contact with their future first-grade teacher. Contact is even less frequent in schools with high minority representation and in schools in high poverty areas.
- Kindergarten teachers in the U.S., on average, have many years of teaching experience at the kindergarten level and tend to be well-educated. Teachers need extra assistance and support to facilitate transition. More teachers should receive training in transitions.
- While this survey focused on teachers and classrooms, it is interactions in a larger context that are critical for a child's success during transition. In addition to the individual child's readiness and the kindergarten teacher's role, the family, the education system, preschool programs, and the community are all responsible for successful transitions.

Other survey results

- 25 percent of membership in kindergarten classrooms change during the course of the academic year.
- 47 percent of public school kindergarten teachers have a master's degree or higher.
- 78 percent of the teachers have a elementary education certification.
- Public school kindergarten teachers have an average of 11.5 years experience teaching kindergarten.
- 23 percent of the teachers said they typically receive information about ways to enhance transitions.
- 25 percent of the teachers say they had some specialized training for children's transition into kindergarten.



Summary of longitudinal results through kindergarten from the Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study" by the National Center for Early Development & Learning. Authors: Dick Clifford, Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Mary Culkin, Carollee Howes and Sharon Lynn Kagan. This study involved child care centers in four states and was conducted from 1993 to 1996.

Quality care does mean better child outcomes

Researchers followed a group of children from the time they were 3 years old in preschool through the early elementary years. Data were collected on how the quality of child care experiences when the children were 3 affected their language, academic (math and reading), and social skills through kindergarten. Researchers looked at two aspects of quality in the preschool year: observed classroom practices and teacher ratings of their relationship with each child.

Classroom quality:

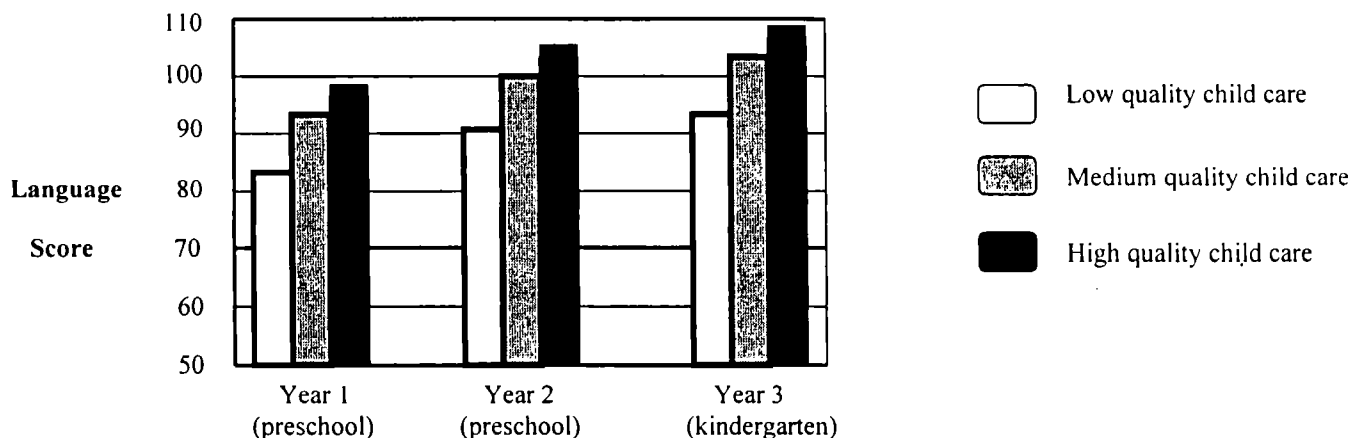
- Each year from preschool to kindergarten, children in preschool classrooms where higher quality practices were observed had better language skills than children in classrooms of lower quality.
- Children in classrooms with higher quality practices also had better math skills over this time.
- Children in higher quality classrooms also had better reading skills during the first year of preschool, but there were no differences in reading skills after that.

Teacher-child closeness

- Each year from preschool to kindergarten, children with closer relationships to their preschool teachers had better thinking/attention skills.
- Children with closer relationships to their teachers also were more sociable over this time.
- Children with closer relationships to their preschool teachers showed fewer problem behaviors -- this was especially true for boys. These children also had better language skills through kindergarten.

Key Findings

- **Over the 3-year period, child care quality affects children's development across the range of language, academic, and social skills.**
- **The quality of child care matters for all children, with similar effects for children from a variety of backgrounds.**
- **These effects are long term, lasting at least through kindergarten.**



Why we did the study

Children's child care experiences are playing an increasingly important role in their lives. In the US, about one-third of three- and four-year-olds with working mothers attend child-care centers and this number is growing. Child care in the US has often been below the standards for high quality recommended by early childhood professionals. This leads to questions about the effects of such experiences on children's development. Our study explored how child care quality in preschool relates to children's language, academic, and social skill development through kindergarten.

How the study was conducted

A random sample of 401 child care centers in California, Colorado, Connecticut, and North Carolina, including about 100 from each state, was recruited and visited in the spring of 1993. The sample was limited to centers providing full-time and full-year care, and the sample included a wide variety of early childhood programs. For this study, a sub-sample of 170 of these centers was used. Participants included 826 children in year 1, 560 in year 2, and 448 in year 3.

Four different measures of quality were gathered in each classroom during children's next-to-last preschool year (3-year-old year), including the classroom environment, teacher sensitivity, child-centeredness, and teacher responsiveness. A second aspect of child care quality was measured by teacher ratings of how close their relationship was with each child. Child outcome measures were gathered in the spring of each year, for the last two years in preschool and kindergarten. Individual assessments of children's language, reading, and math skills were conducted. Teachers rated children's classroom behavior, including cognitive/attention skills, sociability, and problem behaviors. In addition, parents provided demographic information, including maternal education, ethnicity, and family income.

Policy implications

- **High quality child care can benefit a variety of skills, including language, academic (math and reading), social, and thinking/attention skills.**
- **High quality preschool experiences can help prepare children for school.**
- **The need for high quality child care is important for all children.**

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Peisner-Feinberg and Clifford are at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Culkin is at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, Howes is at the University of California-Los Angeles, and Kagan is at Yale University.

Data derived from the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study, a comprehensive examination of child care costs, quality and effects on children through the early school years in four states. This project was funded by grants from the Carnegie Corp. of New York, the William T. Grant Foundation, the JFM Foundation, the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the USWEST Foundation, an anonymous foundation, and the Educational Research and Development Centers Program as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvements, PR/Award Number R307A60004, US Department of Education. Contents do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education, the Office of Education Research and Improvement, the US Department of Education, or any of the other sponsoring organizations. For more information, contact Loyd Little at 919-966-867 or email loyd_little@unc.edu. NCEDL is administratively based at UNC-Chapel Hill. This may be reprinted; we ask that you give credit to the author(s) and the National Center for Early Development & Learning.



Following are excerpts from "The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School," Executive Summary, June, 1999, by the Cost, Quality, Outcomes Study Team. Begun in 1993, the CQO study examined the influence of typical center-based child care on children's development during their preschool years and then subsequently as they moved into elementary school. The executive summary is available online at <www.ncedl.org>

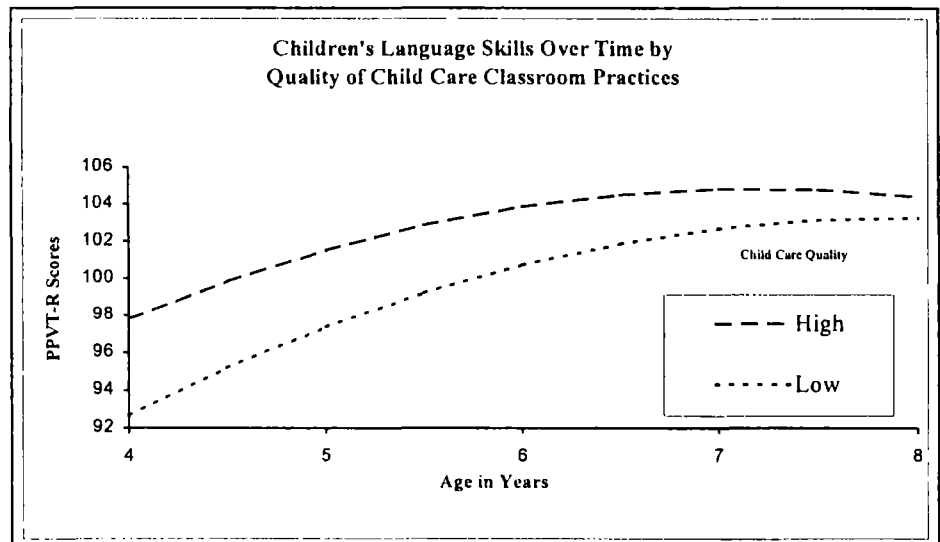
Benefits of quality child care persist into elementary grades

In recent years there has been increasing interest in the effects of preschool experiences—especially child care—on children's later performance in school. A substantial majority of preschoolers now participate in some form of child care before coming to school. In the CQO study, researchers in four states examined child care quality during children's next-to-last year in child care and continued to follow children for four more years, through the end of second grade. Here are summaries of the overall findings:

High quality child care is an important element in achieving the national goal of having all children ready for school. Children who attended higher quality child care centers scored higher on measures of both cognitive and social skills in child care and through the transition into school. Further, this influence of child care quality was important for children from a wide range of family backgrounds.

High quality child care continues to positively predict children's performance well into their school careers. The quality of child care experienced by these children before they entered school continued to affect their development at least through kindergarten and in many cases through the end of second grade. Child care quality was related to cognitive skills (language and math) and social skills, both of which are important factors in children's ability to take advantage of the opportunities available in school.

Children who have traditionally been at risk of not doing well in school are affected more by the quality of child care experiences than other children. For some outcomes (math skills and



problem behaviors), children whose mothers had lower levels of education benefited even more from high quality child care. Moreover, these influences of child care quality for children at risk were sustained through second grade.

The quality of child care classroom practices was related to children's cognitive development, while the closeness of the child care teacher-child relationship influenced children's social development through the early school years. Children who attended child care with higher quality classroom practices had better cognitive development through early elementary school, while children who had closer relationships with their child care teachers had better classroom behavior and social skills over this time period. High quality child care experiences, in terms of both classroom practices and teacher-child relationships, enhance children's abilities to take advantage of the educational opportunities in school.

(Continued on reverse)

Implications for practice and policy

There is one overarching implication from the study. If America wants all its children to be ready for school, it must improve the quality of child care experiences available in this country. The first phase of this study indicated that a majority of children in child care did not have access to high quality care. The current phase of research shows that this lack of quality care has negative effects on children's school readiness and development during the early school years. Below are a number of suggested ways of working toward the goal of high quality child care.

Fiscal strategies:

- The quality set-aside in the federal and state funds for child care is a wise investment and should be extended.
- Subsidy systems can be reconfigured to tie subsidy payments to higher program standards and to provide higher compensation for teachers.
- Tax incentives should be redesigned to encourage use of higher quality care and education.

System and program change strategies:

- Recent comprehensive attempts by states to provide preschool care and education experiences for children are well founded and should be greatly expanded.
- Programs which are accredited by national accrediting agencies tend to have higher quality. Efforts to expand use of such accrediting could prove useful in overall efforts to raise the quality of child care.
- Improvements and expansion of the teacher preparation systems will be needed.
- States should focus on improving licensing standards as a means of raising quality.

Professional preparation and compensation approaches:

- States should require higher minimum levels of training for teachers than are currently in place. Formal training is a key element for teacher preparation and should be required such as through some form of credentialling comparable to the K-12 system.
- Teacher preparation programs should include a greater focus on helping teachers develop skills in relationship building with young children.
- Inservice training is also important in building a high quality early childhood system.
- Teacher compensation issues are important to address so that these training initiatives will produce long-term improvements in child care quality.

If you want to know more:

Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C. (Eds.). (1997). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs, revised edition. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

CQO Study Team. (1995). Cost, Quality, and Outcomes in Child Care Centers, Public report. University of Colorado at Denver.

Peisner-Feinberg, E. S., Burchinal, M. R., Clifford, R. M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S. L., Yazejian, N., Byler, P., Rustici, J., and Zelazo, J. (1999). The children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study go to school: Technical report. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center.

West, J., Wright, D., & Hausken, E. G. (1995). Child care and early education program participation of infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

The authors of *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School, Executive Summary*, include Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Margaret Burchinal, Richard Clifford, and Noreen Yazejian, all at UNC-CH; Carollee Howes and Patricia Byler at UCLA; Mary Culkin and Janice Zelazo at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center; and Sharon Lynn Kagan and Jean Rustici at Yale University. NCEDI is administratively housed at UNC-CH. This project is supported in part under the Education Research and Development Centers Program, PR/award number R307A60004, as administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Other funders of this research include the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the William T. Grant Foundation, the JFM Foundation, the A. L. Mailman Family Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trusts, the USWEST Foundation, and the Smith Richardson Foundation. Opinions in these reports do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education <www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECIE/>, the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, the U.S. Department of Education, or any other sponsoring organization. Permission is granted to reprint this Spotlight; we ask that you acknowledge the authors of the paper on which this *Spotlight* is based and the National Center for Early Development & Learning.

Powerpoint PresentationPartners for Learning Kits (Materials available from Kaplan Press)

The Carolina Abecedarian Project



The Importance of Early Intervention

- Children are more likely than any other age group to be poor.
- After declining in the 1960's and 1970's, child poverty rates are climbing.
- Minority children are 3 times more likely than majority children to be reared in poverty.
- Poverty in early childhood has long-lasting negative consequences for cognitive development and academic outcomes.
- An enormous human resource is lost when children do not achieve to their highest potential.
- Early childhood education can make a critical difference in the later success of poor children.

The Abecedarian Intervention

- The Abecedarian project was a carefully controlled scientific study of the potential benefits of early childhood education for poor children.
- Children from low-income families received full-time, high-quality educational intervention in a childcare setting from infancy through age 5.
- Each child had an individualized prescription of educational activities.
- Educational activities consisted of "games" incorporated into the child's day.
- Activities focused on social, emotional, and cognitive areas of development but gave particular emphasis to language.
- Children's progress was monitored over time with follow-up studies conducted at ages 12, 15, and 21.
- The young adult findings demonstrate that important, long-lasting benefits were associated with the early childhood program.



Major Findings

- Children who participated in the early intervention program had higher cognitive test scores from the toddler years to age 21.
- Academic achievement in both reading and math was higher from the primary grades through young adulthood.
- Intervention children completed more years of education and were more likely to attend a four-year college.
- Intervention children were older, on average, when their first child was born.
- The cognitive and academic benefits from this program are stronger than for most other early childhood programs.
- Enhanced language development appears to have been instrumental in raising cognitive test scores.
- Mothers whose children participated in the program achieved higher educational and employment status than mothers whose children were not in the program. These results were especially pronounced for teen mothers.

Policy Implications

- The importance of high quality, educational childcare from early infancy is now clear. The Abecedarian study provides scientific evidence that early childhood education significantly improves the scholastic success and educational attainments of poor children even into early adulthood.
- Welfare reform has increased the likelihood that poverty children will need early childcare. Steps must be taken to ensure that quality childcare is available and affordable for all families. This is especially critical for poor families.
- Learning begins in infancy. Every child deserves a good start in an environment that is safe, healthy, emotionally supportive, and cognitively stimulating.
- Childcare officials should be aware of the importance of quality care from the very first months of life.
- Quality care requires sufficient well-trained staff to ensure that every child receives the kind of appropriate, individualized attention provided by the Abecedarian model.
- Future research should concentrate on identifying the specific learning techniques most effective for all groups and types of young children.
- Poverty is increasing among America's children. At the same time, more and more of them will require out of home care. We must not lose the opportunity to provide them with the early learning that will increase their chances for later success.



Acknowledgements

The age-21 follow-up of the Abecedarian study was funded jointly by

- The Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services (grant: MCJ-370632)
 - The National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Department of Education (OERI, grant: R306F960202)
 - The David and Lucile Packard Foundation (grants: 95-1796, 96-1752, 98-1047)
- Earlier phases of the research were primarily funded by a series of grants from:
- The Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Branch of the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development

■ The State of North Carolina

**Please see the Executive Summary for a more detailed report of the findings.
A Full Report will be available 2/28/00.**

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Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Updated October 1999

Powerpoint Presentation

Partners for Learning Kits (Materials available from Kaplan Press)

The Carolina Abecedarian Project



(Note: Graphics package accompanies this release. A Powerpoint version of the graphics package may be downloaded at < www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc > beginning at 9 a.m EDT on 10/18/99.)

Gains from high quality child care persist into adulthood -- landmark study

Study links quality educational child care starting in infancy with positive adult outcomes

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Poor children who received early educational intervention starting in infancy had higher scores on mental, reading, and math tests than children who didn't receive the intervention and, more importantly, these effects persisted until at least age 21, according to researchers.

"Our study provides scientific evidence that early childhood education significantly improves the scholastic success and educational achievements of poor children even into early adulthood. The importance of high quality, educational child care from early infancy is now clear," said Dr. Frances Campbell, principal investigator of the Abecedarian Project Age 21 Follow-Up at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

It is one of the longest-running and most carefully controlled such studies in America, having begun more than two decades ago, researchers said in a press conference today [Oct. 21]. The preschool program began in early infancy and provided year-round educational child care until kindergarten. The newest research now definitively links high quality infant/preschool child care with positive outcomes in the children as adults, researchers said.

Data also showed that more than twice as many children who received the intervention attended college than those who did not.

Furthermore, young adults in the intervention group were two years older, on average, when their own first child was born than those who didn't receive intervention.

"These data are significant," said Dr. Craig Ramey of the University of Alabama, director of the early intervention study, "not only for parents, but for policy makers seeking to make a difference in children from low-income families and for directors and administrators of child care programs."

Here are highlights of the study:

- Young adults who received early educational intervention had significantly higher mental test scores from toddlerhood through age 21 than those who were untreated.
- Enhanced language skills in the children probably increased the effects of early intervention on cognitive skills performance.
- Reading achievement scores were consistently higher for individuals with early intervention. The differences between the groups remained large from primary school through age 21. Enhanced cognitive skills appeared to positively affect reading achievement.
- Mathematics achievement showed a pattern similar to reading, with treated individuals earning higher scores. The differences were medium in contrast to the large effects for reading. Again, enhanced cognitive functioning appeared to positively affect results.
- Those with treatment were significantly more likely still to be in school at age 21 — 40% of the intervention group compared with 20% of the control group.
- A significant difference was also found for the percentage of young adults who ever attended a four-year college. About 35% of the young adults in the intervention group had either graduated from or were at the time of the assessment attending a four-year college or university. In contrast, only about 14% in the control group had done so.
- Young adults in the intervention group were, on average, two years older (19 years) when their first child was born compared with those in the control group (17 years), although the youngest individuals in both groups were comparable in age when the first child was born.
- Employment rates were higher (65%) for the treatment group than for the control group (50%), although the trend was not statistically significant.

"The degree of scientific control in this study gives us greater confidence that differences between the treated and untreated individuals can be attributed to the intervention itself, rather than to differences among treated and untreated families," said Campbell.

She said that the Abecedarian project differed from most other childhood projects in that 1) it began in early infancy whereas other programs began at age 2 or older, and 2) treated children had five years of exposure to early education in a high quality child care setting whereas most other programs were of shorter duration.

The project began with 111 infants from low-income families. Of those, 57 were randomly assigned to a high-quality child care setting and 54 to a non-treated group. The latest assessment of the children, who are now 21 years old and older, covered 104 of the original group.

Dr. Joseph Sparling of the University of North Carolina, who helped design the early childhood curriculum, said that each child had an individualized program of educational activities consisting of game-like actions that were incorporated into the child's day. "These activities were designed to enhance social, emotional, and cognitive development, but gave particular emphasis to language," he said.

Over the years, Ramey said, children in the intervention group scored significantly higher on cognitive tests than children in the control group. Through middle adolescence, the differences between the groups remained large for reading and large-to-moderate for math.

"The Abecedarian study began treatment in early infancy, emphasizing the importance of providing a learning environment for children from the very beginning of life. Every child deserves a good start in an environment that is safe, healthy, emotionally supportive, and cognitively stimulating," Campbell said.

She said, " Welfare reform has increased the likelihood that children in poverty will need early childcare. The educational stimulus value of these early caregiving years must not be wasted. More and more of America's children will need out of home care. This is especially true for poor children. We must not lose this opportunity to provide them the early learning experiences that will increase their chances for later success."

Acknowledgements

The age-21 follow-up of the Abecedarian study was funded jointly by

- The Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Department of Health and Human Services
(grant: MCJ-370632)
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- The Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Branch of the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development
- The State of North Carolina

The findings of the Abecedarian Project do not necessarily reflect the views of the granting agencies.

Researchers have placed the executive summary of the study and other information on the web site www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc.

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Notes to reporters:

This press release, graphics, biographies of the researchers, an executive summary of the Abecedarian Age 21 Follow-Up Study, and other information may be found at <www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc> This web site will open at 9 a.m. EDT on 10/18/99.

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Dr. Craig Ramey may be reached at his office at the University of Alabama: 205-934-8900. His email address is <Cramey@uab.edu>.

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**Please see the Executive Summary for a more detailed report of the findings.
A Full Report will be available 2/28/00.**

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Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Updated October 1999

The Condition of Education 1995 - August 1995

Overview

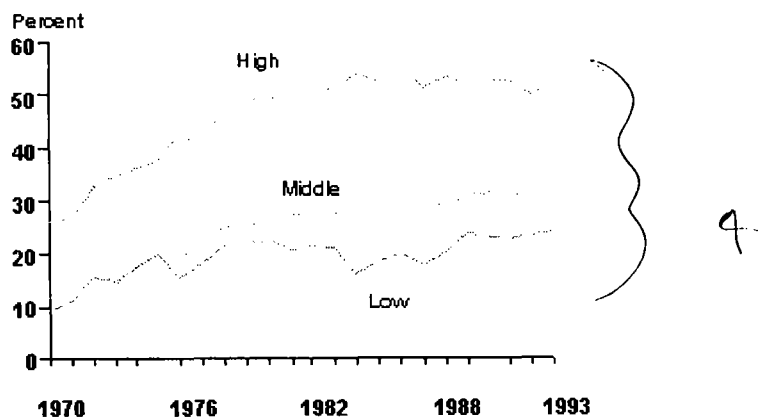
Access to preschool education

Today, many parents enroll their children in some form of preschool, which means that kindergarten is no longer the child's first experience with group educational programs. Many early childhood experts believe that children who have been involved in high quality group care or nursery school are better prepared for formal schooling. There is substantial evidence of the short-term effects (e.g., achievement test gains) of attending a high quality early childhood program, and there is some evidence of long-term effects (e.g., an increased likelihood of completing high school). [1] The National Education Goals stress the importance of access to quality early childhood programs. Goal 1 states, "By the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn." This goal underscores the role that children's early experience plays in preparing them for successful schooling. Thus, the first objective associated with this goal states that all disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare them for school. Differences in enrollment rates in early childhood education across family income and race/ethnicity may indicate differential access to this important educational resource. Differences in the knowledge and behaviors of students in these subgroups may be associated with variability in the quantity and quality of early childhood care and instruction.

Do enrollment rates in preschool differ by family income?

Children from lower income families have lower participation rates in preschool. In 1973, the enrollment rates in preschool for 3- to 4-year-olds from low income families was about 20 percentage points lower than those of their counterparts from high income families (15 versus 35 percent). By 1993, enrollment rates for children from both income groups had increased, and the gap between those from low and high income families widened to 28 percentage points (24 versus 52 percent) (*Indicator 2*). The Head Start program has substantially increased the proportion of low income children enrolled in preschool; however, in the early 1990s, it still served fewer than one-half (40 percent) of eligible 4-year-olds, and fewer than 20 percent of eligible 3-year-olds. [2]

Percentage of 3- to 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool



SOURCE: *Indicator 2*.

Do enrollment rates in preschool differ by race/ethnicity?