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Why quality child care and early education matters

High Quality Child Care Programs Contribute to School Readiness

A new update to the Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers study found that the quality of child care matters for all children, and that children at-risk of school failure benefit more from quality child care than do other children. Perhaps most importantly, the study found that the quality of child care has a long-term effect on school achievement.

"Children attending child care classrooms with higher quality practices scored better in receptive language ability (i.e., understanding of language)...children who attended high quality child care had better language skills than children in low quality child care...Children in higher quality child care also scored better in math ability than children in low quality care. Further, the math skills of children in high quality care were better at all ages, from the preschool years through second grade...[C]hild care quality had even stronger influences for children at greater risk of school failure. For children with less highly educated mothers, better quality child care was even more strongly related to better math skills and fewer problem behaviors through second grade."

(Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Team, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, (1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School: Executive Summary*)

In a recent study from the National Research Council designed to identify successful strategies to improve the literacy skills of young children, the study found that quality preschool experiences were highly related to the development of language and literacy



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the development of language and literacy skills.

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"The Bermuda Day Care Study showed that quality of conversation in the classroom and amount of one-on-one or small-group interactions that children engaged in were highly related to language measures. Also, for low-income children at age 4, the quality of group book reading experiences was found to be correlated with kindergarten language and literacy measures."

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Background

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The study also found that the more time children spend in quality preschool settings, the higher their school achievement in later years, at least through the third grade.

"The number of months that children spend in preschool has been found to be related to achievement test scores in second grade, behavior problems in third grade, and school retention in kindergarten through third grade. Children with more preschool experience had higher achievement scores and fewer behavior problems and were less likely to be required to repeat a grade."

(Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns and Peg Griffin, Eds. National Research Council, (1998). *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, pg. 148-149)

Findings from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care demonstrate that participation in quality child care settings can improve mother-child relationships, while contributing to positive linguistic and cognitive outcomes. The study was able to show that lower quality programs have an opposite effect, contributing to less positive child development.

"Higher quality care was found to be related to: better mother-child relationships; lower probability of insecure attachment in infants of mothers low in sensitivity; fewer reports of children's problem behaviors; higher cognitive performance in child care; higher children's language ability; and higher level of school readiness." In addition, the study found that "the converse is also true. Lower quality care predicted: less harmonious mother-child relationships; a higher probability of insecure mother-child attachment of mothers who are already low in sensitivity to their children; more problem behaviors, lower cognitive and language ability and lower school readiness scores."

(Robin Peth-Pierce, *The NICHD Study of Early Child Care* (1998). National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)

Researchers from the National Center for Early Development and Learning followed a group of children from the time they were 3 through the early elementary years. They found that participation in quality early childhood settings led to better language and cognitive skills through preschool.

"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; and 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."

(Dick Clifford, Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Mary Culkin, Carollee Howes and Sharon Lynn Kagan, (1998). National Center for Early Development and Learning, UNC-Chapel Hill.)

After examining the outcomes from nine early intervention programs, RAND found that high quality programs have lasting benefits for school readiness, school performance over time and overall academic achievement.

"Although the IQ effects produced by early intervention programs may be short lived, there appear to be strong and longer-lasting benefits in terms of educational outcomes, such as academic achievement and other aspects of school performance."

(Lynn A. Karoly, et. al., (1998). *Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know about the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*, Rand)

Indicators of Quality

The new Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study shows that the long-term benefits of quality child care are closely related to classroom practices and the teacher-child relationship.

"[T]wo different aspects of the quality of child care experiences, classroom practices and teacher-child relationship closeness, influenced cognitive and socio-emotional development...While actual classroom practices, including materials, activities, and interactions, contributed most strongly to children's language and math development, early relationships with caregivers were the strongest predictors of children's social and behavioral skills."

(Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study Team, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, (1999). *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School: Executive Summary*)

The NICHD Study of Early Child Care has demonstrated that the generally accepted indicators of quality-staff/child ratios and provider education and training do contribute to positive outcomes for children.

"Children's outcomes were better when they attended classes that met the recommended child-staff ratios at 24 months and the recommended levels of teacher training and education at 36 months. Further, the more

recommendations met, the better the outcomes for school readiness, language comprehension, and behavior problems at 36 months."

(NICHD Early Child Care Research Network (n.d.). "When Child-Care Classrooms Meet Recommended Guidelines for Quality," NICHD unpublished manuscript)

Other studies have also found a relationship between the characteristics of quality programs and positive outcomes for children, regardless of child or family characteristics.

"Results of this study indicated that quality of child care was a modest to moderate predictor of cognitive and language development among African-American children at 12, 24, and 36 months of age, with child care being more related to overall levels of development rather than to rates of change over time. These results provide further evidence that the quality of the child's environment in child care plays an important role in cognitive and language development during the first three years and address questions about the potential impact of child care on patterns of development during early childhood...

As in other studies correlating child care quality and development among toddlers, and preschoolers, this study indicated that higher quality child care is correlated with significantly better cognitive and language development during the first three years of life. Even after adjusting for child and family characteristics, contextual analyses indicated that infants and toddlers in classes with better quality tended to have better cognitive and communication skills at one, two, and three years of age...Furthermore, these analyses provided more limited evidence that the rate at which children acquired expressive language skills was slower for children in poorer than higher quality classrooms."

(Margaret R. Burchinal, Joanne E. Roberts, Rhodus Riggins, Jr., Susan A. Zeisel, Eloise Neebe and Donna Bryant (1998). "Relating Quality of Center Child Care to Early Cognitive and Language Development Longitudinally," (presented at the 1998 International Conference on Infant Studies), Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, UNC-Chapel Hill.)

The National Center for Early Development and Learning study found that, over the 3-year period studied, the quality of care made a difference in the development of children from all backgrounds.

"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."

(Dick Clifford, Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Mary Culkin, Carollee Howes and Sharon Lynn Kagan, (1998). National Center for Early

Development and Learning, UNC-Chapel Hill.)

The *Cost, Quality* report (1995) found that "across all levels of maternal education and child gender and ethnicity, children's cognitive and social development are positively related to the quality of their child care experience."

"Children in higher quality classrooms displayed more advanced cognitive skills in two areas: language development and pre-math skills. They scored higher on individual assessments of receptive language ability, indicating that they had a better understanding of language than children in lower quality classrooms. Children in higher quality classes also had better pre-math skills...Children's understanding of language showed the strongest relationship to quality of all the outcomes measures studied, while a more moderate relationship was found for children's pre-math skills. Children in higher quality classrooms also evidenced better socio-emotional development.... While better quality care had a positive influence on cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes for all children, in two instances higher quality care had an even stronger positive influence on the development of children typically considered at risk for school failure. Better quality child care was even more strongly related to better language abilities for minority children compared to nonminority children. For children whose mothers had relatively less education, there was an even stronger relationship between being in higher quality care and having more positive attitudes about their child care and their own competence."

(Suzanne Helburn, et. al., (1995). *Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers*, University of Colorado, Denver)

In a study that specifically examined family child care providers and relative caregivers, the Families and Work Institute found that high quality care results in positive outcomes for children. As caregivers exhibited increased sensitivity and responsiveness, the quality of care increased.

"When the care children receive is sensitive, responsive, and of better quality, children are more likely to be securely attached to their providers and achieve higher levels of cognitive competence." Specifically, "children with more sensitive and responsive providers are more likely to be securely attached to their providers; children with more responsive providers are more likely to engage in high-level or more complex play with objects."

(Ellen Galinsky, et.al. (1994). *The Study of Children in Family Child Care and Relative Care*, Families and Work Institute)

Starting Points found a clear link between quality child care and positive outcomes for very young children. The relationship between the child and the caregiver helped children develop their cognitive skills in the most supportive environment, which in turn led to school

readiness and success.

"Quality child care enables a young child to become emotionally secure, socially competent, and intellectually capable. The single most important factor in quality care is the relationship between the child and the caregiver. Children who receive warm and sensitive caregiving are more likely to trust caregivers, to enter school ready and eager to learn, and to get along well with other children. The quality of caregiver-child relations depends in part on the sensitivity of the caregiver and in part on the ratio of caregivers to children, the number of children in a group, and the education and training levels of the caregiver. A quality program also attends to the basic issues of health and safety and emphasizes a partnership between parents and caregivers. Children who receive inadequate or barely adequate care are more likely later to feel insecure with teachers, to distrust other children, and to face possible later rejection by other children."

(Carnegie Corporation of New York (1994), *Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children*, Carnegie Corporation of New York)

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Free Preschool for All?

California Department of Education task force calls for quality, public programs for all three- and four-year-olds

By Leslie Weiss

Today, half of California's 1.1 million three- and four-year-olds attend child care or preschool. Within 10 years, all of them could be in publicly financed preschool.

In March, a task force of educators, parents, and child care professionals released a far-reaching report calling for "universal preschool" in California. Convened by state schools Superintendent Delaine Eastin, the task force set the goal of providing a half-day of high-quality preschool for every three- and four-year-old in California by 2008. In today's dollars, such a feat would cost \$5 billion a year.

It's an ambitious proposal, and at this point, the road to universal preschool is paved with more questions than answers: Where will the money come from? What qualifications will teachers have to have and how much will they earn? What will the preschool program be like? What facilities will be needed?

The battle is about to begin in Sacramento, where a pair of bills are headed for hearings in the Assembly Education Committee. AB 2332 and AB 2623, introduced by Sacramento Democrat Debra Ortiz (who served on the universal preschool task force), are based on task force recommendations. If passed by both houses, they could reach the governor's desk by late summer, and some publicly funded preschool programs could begin as early as next January.

Half-day only?

Thousands of working parents already contend with the logistical nightmare of getting kids from half-day kindergarten to child care. For such parents, half-day preschool could add two more years to the problem. Task force member Dr. Ellen Junn of the California Association for the Education of Young Children says the group wanted to suggest full-day preschool, but it wouldn't fit with the state's half-day kindergarten programs.

Instead, the task force proposes "wraparound" care--child care for the rest of the day, to be paid by parents in full or on a sliding-scale basis if funding for subsidies can be found.

"If we're going to link this to welfare reform or to employment in any form, we have to seriously link this to full-day programs," says child care consultant Karen Hill-Scott, co-chair of the statewide task force.

Footing the bill

To make preschool universal, the state would need to provide an estimated 1,500 additional preschool sites a year. California Department of Education (CDE) officials are hoping to start with \$500 million for the first year, with annual increases of \$500 million through the 10th year, when preschool would become universal.

Schools Superintendent Eastin would like all preschool funding to come from the state general fund and be covered by Proposition 98, which guarantees funds for education. The task force report proposes a combination of federal, state, local, and private funds. Adds Marjorie McConnell, a CDE child development consultant, "More than likely, programs will be asked to look at community resources to see what would be available to offset some of the costs." Without a doubt, financing will be one of the

hottest issues before state lawmakers.

Many styles

A hot issue for parents and child care providers, meanwhile, is the actual provision of care. Will family child care providers and private centers be left behind?

McConnell says a cornerstone of the universal preschool proposal is "diverse delivery"-- any child care provider who meets the state's standards will be certified to offer preschool. Hill-Scott estimates, however, that three-quarters of the child care workforce would need additional training to meet the recommended requirements--for preschool teachers, a bachelor's degree with at least 24 units of child development classes, plus at least 200 hours of experience.

Family child care providers, who often have children of their own, worry that they won't be able to manage the cost and time of returning to school. "What can you say when you measure your business against something you know is good for kids?" says Ruby Brunson, a task force member and past president of the Family Child Care Association of California. "I suggest to providers the only thing I can suggest--you must go out and get more education."

Hill-Scott notes that the task force report also calls for educator pay scales comparable to K-12 teacher salaries--a potential boon for typically underpaid child care providers. She adds, however, that there is likely to be a long lag period in which there aren't enough qualified teachers to meet the demand--much like the situation in primary grades since class-size reduction.

What will they learn?

Who will decide on educational standards and curricula for preschools? What is the role of local government? Of parents? Will programs be culturally diverse?

The task force recommends setting high standards for preschool programs and creating an accountability system to measure youngsters' progress. "Across the board, the people on the task force wanted to create a high-quality system," says Hill-Scott.

Few would disagree that quality care helps children's intellectual, emotional, and social development. There is often sharp disagreement, however, about the best approach, just as there is about early reading instruction, for example.

"There was a lot of concern that kids as young as three years old will be tested," says Rowena Pineda, who represented Parent Voices on the task force. Herself the mother of a three-year-old boy, Pineda adds, "At this point, I just want to make sure that he's getting the social skills that will be helpful for him--and that he's having fun."

The bills before the state Assembly both call for the creation of a commission on early childhood education, which would wade through these issues and develop a long-term phase-in plan. AB 2623 would start up programs in a cross section of communities around the state; AB 2332 would add onto currently operating state-funded preschools for low-income families.

Copies of the Universal Preschool Task Force report, Ready to Learn: Quality Preschools for California in the 21st Century, are \$8, plus shipping, handling, and sales tax. Call the CDE publications office at (916) 445-1260. A summary of the task force's recommendations is also available at www.cde.ca.gov.

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e-mail aac@4children.org
1201 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 444-7136



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Every day, 13 million preschoolers -- including 6 million infants and toddlers -- are in child care.

- Children enter care as early as 6 weeks of age and can be in care for as many as 40 hours per week until they reach school age. Very young children (those under 1) average more than 30 hours per week in nonparental care arrangements.
- Sixty-five percent of mothers with children under age six and 74 percent of mothers with children ages 6-13 are in the labor force. Almost 60 percent of mothers with infants (under age 1) are in the labor force. The majority (55 percent) of working women in the U.S. bring home *half or more* of their family's earnings.
- Child care arrangements of children younger than 5 with working mothers in 1994:

Child care costs are unaffordable for many families.

- Full-day child care easily costs \$4,000 to \$10,000 per year, at least as much as college tuition at a public university. One out of three families with young children earns less than \$25,000 a year.
- Even though some child care assistance is available for low-income families, funds are severely limited. Nationally, only 1 in 10 eligible children who need help are getting any assistance.

Child care helps shape children's futures, yet the quality of care for many children is inadequate.

- A national study of child care settings recently found that fewer than one child in 10 receives excellent care, while more than half of child care is "fair," at best. Eight percent of all child care observed was of poor quality.
- A recent Carnegie Corporation study confirmed that the quality of child care has a lasting impact on children's well-being and ability to learn. Children in poor quality child care have been found to be delayed in language and reading skills, and display more aggression toward other children and adults.
- Child care workers earn an average of only \$11,789 per year. In addition, child care workers tend to receive no benefits or paid leave. Hairdressers and manicurists must attend 1,500 hours of training at an accredited school in order to get a license, yet 39

states do not require child care providers to have *any* early childhood training prior to serving children in their homes.

For more information, call 202-662-3671, fax 202-662-3560, e-mail cdfchildcare@childrensdefense.org, or write to Child Care NOW!, 25 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20001.

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Culkin, Suzanne Helburn, Carollee Howes, Sharon Lynn Kagan, H. Naci Mocan, John Morris, Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Leslie Phillipsen, Jean Rustici, and Noreen Yazejian.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF THE STUDY

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 (West, Wright, & Hausken, 1995). The Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study, begun in 1993, was designed in part to examine the influence of typical center-based child care on children's development during their preschool years and then subsequently as they moved into the formal elementary education system. We have now followed these children through the end of second grade, four years after our initial contact with them when they were nearing the end of their next-to-last year in child care. The overall findings can be summarized in a few broad statements about the influence of center-based child care in America on children.

- **High quality child care is an important element in achieving the national goal of having all children ready for school.**

Our findings showed that the quality of children's experiences in typical child care centers affects their development while they are in child care and their readiness for school. Children who attended higher quality child care centers performed better on measures of both cognitive skills (e.g., math and language abilities) and social skills (e.g., interactions with peers, problem behaviors) 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.**

Our longitudinal analysis of children's performance indicated that the quality of child care experienced by 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 basic cognitive skills (language and math) and children's behavioral skills in the classroom (thinking/attention skills, sociability, problem behaviors, and peer relations), 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—children who often are at risk of not doing well in school—were more sensitive to the negative effects of poor quality child care and received more benefits from high quality child care. Moreover, for these children who attended typical child care centers, these influences of child care quality 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 (language and math skills) through early elementary school. Children who had closer relationships with their child care teachers had better classroom behavior and social skills (greater thinking/attention skills and sociability, fewer problem behaviors, and better peer relations) through early elementary school. It is no surprise that the nature of children's experiences in child care are important, but the results of this study confirm the lasting impact of these early experiences. 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.

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of major social reform in the areas of family welfare and public education in the US, children's experiences outside the home in child care are playing an increasingly important role in their lives. Recent estimates indicate that approximately 68 percent of 3-year-olds, 78 percent of 4-year-olds, and 84 percent of 5-year-olds are receiving some type of child care on a regular basis, which translates to more than 6.8 million preschoolers in child care (West, Wright, & Hausken, 1995). Thus, the task of fostering children's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development before school entry has shifted away from being solely the responsibility of families to being shared by families and child care providers. Given this shift, it is important to understand how differences in child care experiences affect children's development (both during their child care experiences and over time) and subsequent readiness for and success in school. While there are several studies that have explored the long-term effects of early intervention programs for children from low-income families, few have examined the effects for children of all incomes attending typical community child care programs as they make the transition from child care to school and on into the early elementary years.

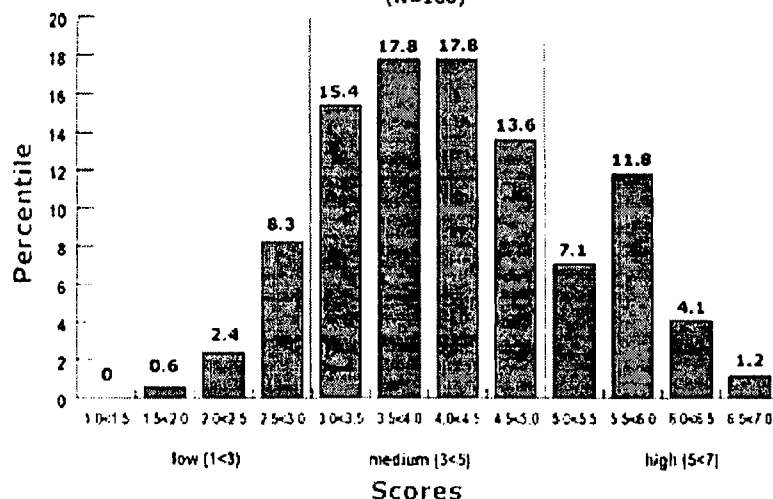
The Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study was initiated early in 1993 (for more details, see CQO Study Team, 1995). In the first phase of the study, we recruited a stratified random sample of 401 full-day child care centers, half for-profit and half nonprofit, in regions of four states — California (Los Angeles county), Colorado (the front range), Connecticut (the Hartford — New Haven corridor) and North Carolina (the Piedmont Triad area). Within each center we observed two randomly selected classrooms. Intensive data collection efforts documented the quality of services provided in these centers and the full range of costs associated with providing the services.

After collecting the data on costs and quality in these programs, we identified classrooms we had visited that enrolled children who would be entering kindergarten in the fall of 1994. Starting in the late spring of 1993, we selected a total of 826 children from 183 of these classes and gathered a range of data about their developmental progress. We followed these children over a four-year period, starting near the end of their next-to-last preschool year in child care and continuing until the children were nearing the end of second grade.

Our initial reports on the first phase of data collection were issued in 1995 and documented that the quality of child care occurring in these typical settings in the US was well below what the early childhood profession recognizes as high quality. Similar to the full sample, the average quality scores for the preschool child care classrooms from which we selected children for the longitudinal study were in the medium range. For the classrooms in the longitudinal study, the mean score on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) (Harms & Clifford, 1980) was 4.26, on a scale of 1 (inadequate level of care) to 7 (excellent care). A child care center which meets the definition of developmentally appropriate care put forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) would be expected to score in the range of 5 or higher. There was a broad range of quality scores as shown in Figure 1, with more than 11% scoring below 3 (minimally acceptable) and nearly one quarter scoring above 5 (good quality).

Figure 1: Child Care Classroom ECERS Scores

(N=166)



Children in classrooms scoring low on quality ratings were more likely to have mothers with lower levels of formal education. We found that children in lower quality classrooms scored lower on measures of cognitive and social development, even after taking into account differences in background factors known to be related to children's development. Given this wide range of quality in typical child care centers and the finding that children in lower quality classrooms were faring less well than their counterparts in high quality classrooms, we were concerned about the longer term impact of child care quality on children's performance as they moved into school. Would the effects of child care quality on children's development persist as they moved into elementary school settings or were they simply a short-term phenomenon related to the preschool years? We now have followed these children through the first three years of school, into second grade.

For most of our analyses, we measured two dimensions of child care quality: classroom practices and teacher-child relationships. Classroom practices were examined in the first year of the study with a variety of observational instruments that measured the quality of the child care environment, teacher sensitivity and responsiveness, and teaching style. Teachers rated the closeness of their relationship with each individual child to measure this dimension of child care quality. In order to measure the influence of subsequent experiences in child care and school (during the last year of child care, kindergarten, and second grade), classroom practices were measured with brief observations and teachers completed the same ratings of teacher-child closeness. Children's developmental outcomes were measured each year through individual assessments of language ability, letter-word recognition, and math skills, and teacher ratings of classroom behavior (thinking/attention skills, problem behaviors, and sociability) and peer relations (second grade only). (We did not collect classroom quality or child outcomes data during children's first grade year.) Our analyses also controlled for the effects of family background factors (maternal education, child gender and ethnicity) related to both selection of child care and children's development.

This report summarizes the findings of our research on the relation of child care quality to the developmental outcomes of children from the preschool years through the second grade. The overarching research question guiding our work was, "Do early child care experiences have long-term consequences for children's development?" The findings are reported in two sets. The first set, the longitudinal findings, looked at the influence of early child care experiences on children's development over the time period from the preschool years into the early elementary years. The second set, the second grade findings, looked at the influence of both early child care experiences and later school experiences in kindergarten and second grade on children's abilities in the second grade.

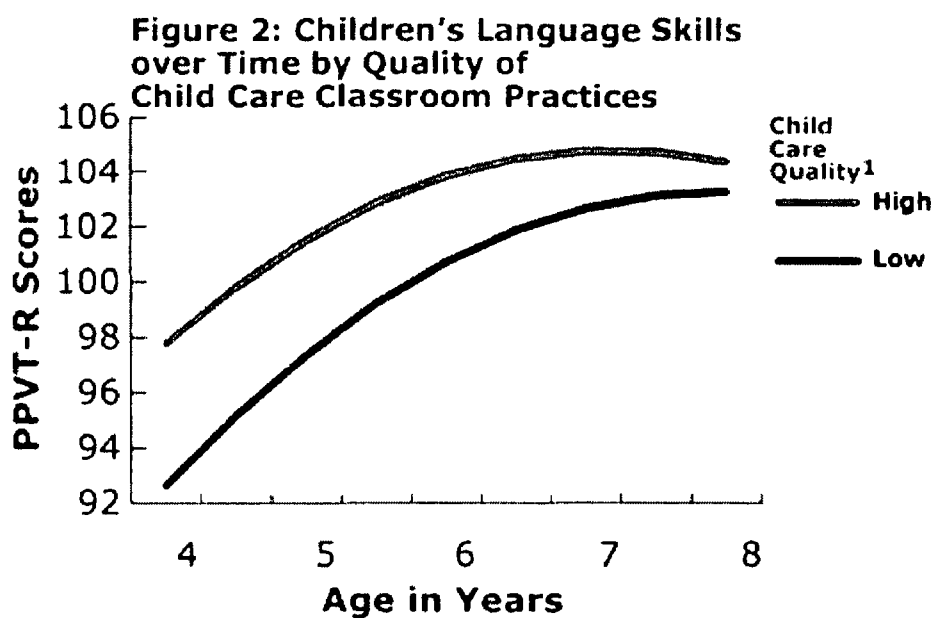
MAJOR FINDINGS FROM OUR STUDY

Longitudinal Findings: The Children Over Time

Our first set of findings looked at the relationship between child care quality and children's patterns of development from the preschool years through second grade after taking into account differences in background characteristics. We also examined whether child care quality related to outcomes differently for children from different backgrounds.

- **Finding One: Children who attended child care with higher quality classroom practices had better language and math skills from the preschool years into elementary school.**

Children attending child care classrooms with higher quality practices scored better in receptive language ability (i.e., understanding of language). For example, as seen in Figure 2, children who attended high quality child care (defined as the 75th percentile of quality scores) had better language skills than children in low quality child care (defined as the 25th percentile of quality scores). As the children moved to second grade, the difference between the language skills of children in high and low quality care decreased. Children in higher quality child care also scored better in math ability than children in low quality care. Further, the math skills of children in high quality care were better at all ages, from the preschool years through second grade. In contrast, there was no relation between letter-word recognition skills and child care quality.



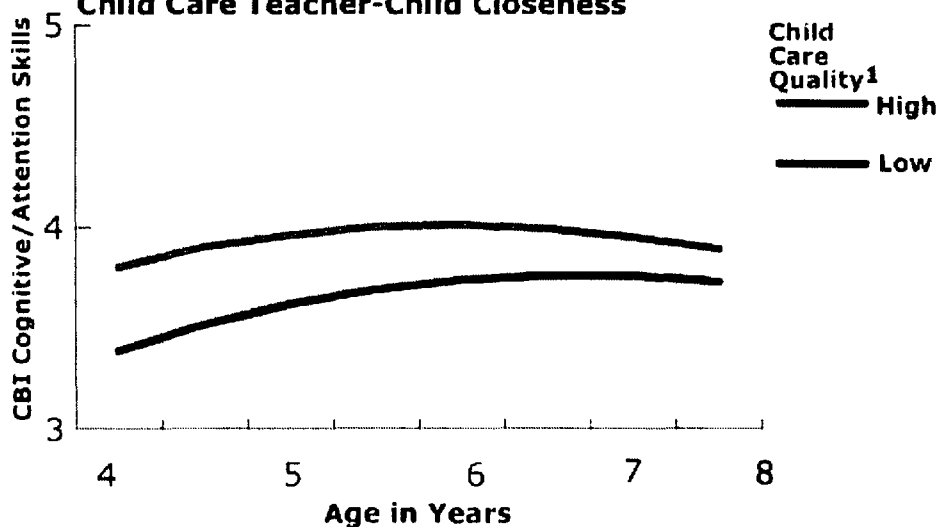
¹Note: High=75th percentile of quality scores;
 Low=25th percentile of quality scores.

- **Finding Two: Children with closer teacher-child relationships in child care had better classroom social and thinking skills, language ability, and math skills from the preschool years into elementary school.**

Children with closer relationships with their child care teachers had better classroom skills from the preschool years through second grade. They were rated higher in thinking/attention skills and sociability and lower in problem behaviors. For example, as seen in Figure 3, children with closer relationships with their child care teachers (defined as the 75th percentile of closeness ratings) had better thinking/attention skills than children who had less close relationships with their child care teachers (defined as the 25th percentile of closeness ratings). As the children moved to second grade, the differences between the skills of children with high versus low closeness with their child care teachers decreased, although these differences remained significant through second grade for

thinking/attention skills and problem behaviors. Children with closer relationships with their child care teachers also had better language and math skills from the preschool years through second grade, but this relation was not as strong. In contrast, children's letter-word recognition skills from preschool through second grade were not related to the closeness of child care teacher-child relationships.

Figure 3: Children's Thinking/Attention Skills over Time by Quality of Child Care Teacher-Child Closeness

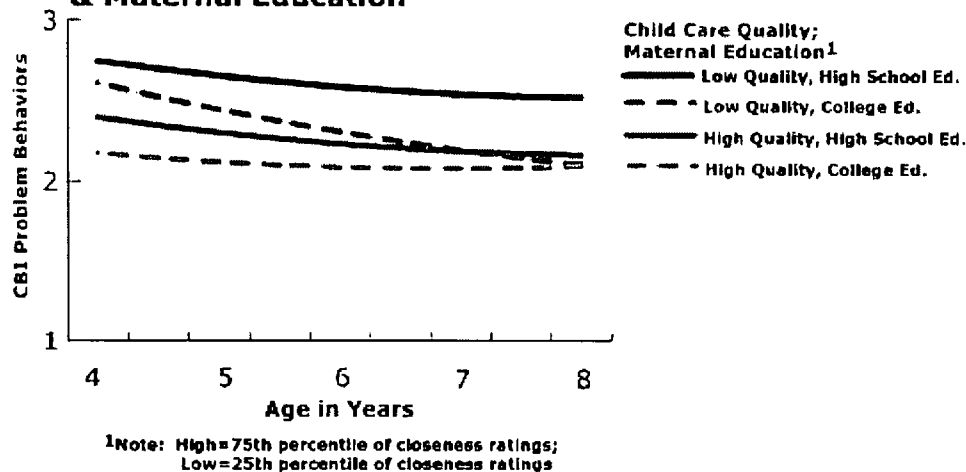


¹Note: High=75th percentile of closeness ratings;
Low=25th percentile of closeness ratings

- **Finding Three: Better child care quality was more strongly related to better math skills and fewer problem behaviors from the preschool years through second grade for children whose mothers have less education.**

We found some evidence that there was an even stronger effect of child care quality on the developmental outcomes of children whose mothers have fewer years of education. While better quality child care practices were related to better math skills for children through second grade, there were even greater differences in the skills of children with less highly educated mothers who attended high versus low quality child care. Similarly, for children whose mothers have less education, closer teacher-child relationships in child care were even more strongly associated with fewer problem behaviors through second grade. Figure 4 shows examples of the relation between children's problem behaviors and low and high teacher-child closeness—for children whose mothers have 12 years of education (a high school diploma) and for children whose mothers have 16 years of education (a bachelor's degree). For the children with more highly educated mothers, the influence of child care teacher-child closeness declined from the preschool years through second grade, while for children with less highly educated mothers, the effect of closeness remained consistent over this time period. There is no evidence in our data that quality related to outcomes differently on the basis of gender or ethnicity.

Figure 4: Children's Problem Behaviors over Time by Quality of Child Care Teacher-Child Closeness & Maternal Education



Discussion of Longitudinal Findings

In most areas of development that we examined, there was evidence for a modest continued influence of child care quality on children's abilities and skills through second grade. Long-term effects were found for receptive language ability, math skills, thinking/attention skills, problem behaviors, and sociability, indicating that children who experienced better quality child care were more advanced in their development continuing into the school years. While the relations between child care quality and children's development were modest, the findings of long-term effects, after taking into account child and family characteristics, are notable for several reasons.

Child care quality is important for all children.

First, these results were obtained on a sample of typical community child care programs in four regions of the US and included children from a variety of family backgrounds. While long-term effects of preschool experiences have been established for a variety of model early intervention programs for children from low-income families (e.g., Campbell & Ramey, 1994; Lazar, Darlington, Murray, Royce, & Snipper, 1982; Schweinhart, Barnes, & Weikart, 1993), our study showed that the quality of typical child care centers had long-term effects on children's development. In these community child care programs, higher quality care was associated with better developmental outcomes for children across the range of family circumstances.

Child care quality may be especially important for children at risk.

Second, in some cases, child care quality had even stronger influences for children at greater risk of school failure, who are presumably more similar to the participants in the early intervention programs. For children with less highly educated mothers, better quality child care was even more strongly related to better math skills and fewer problem behaviors through second grade. These findings extend the results of the early intervention studies, and suggest that child care experiences, in both the short- and long-term, have an even greater influence on some areas of development for children at greater risk.

The effects of child care quality are long term.

Third, child care quality continued to exhibit an influence on children's outcomes at least through kindergarten (for language ability and sociability) and, in some cases (for math ability, thinking/attention skills, and problem behaviors), through second grade four years later. These long-term findings cover a substantial portion of time in these children's lives. While there was some evidence of a diminishing influence of child care quality over time, this is to be expected given the variety of subsequent experiences in children's lives which also contribute to their development.

Two dimensions of child care quality, classroom practices and teacher-child relationships, are differentially associated with children's outcomes.

Fourth, our results showed that two different aspects of the quality of child care

experiences, classroom practices and teacher-child relationship closeness, influenced cognitive and socio-emotional development somewhat differently. While actual classroom practices, including materials, activities, and interactions, contributed most strongly to children's language and math development, early relationships with caregivers were the strongest predictors of children's social and behavioral skills (thinking/attention skills, sociability, and problem behaviors).

Second Grade Findings: The Children as Second Graders

Our second set of findings answered questions about the extent to which child care experiences affected children's abilities four years later, after considering the effects of subsequent experiences during this time period. These analyses examined children's outcomes in the second grade, also taking into account background characteristics. The first finding considered the quality of children's classroom experiences in kindergarten and second grade, while the second finding considered previous problem behaviors and child care and second grade teachers' ratings of teacher-child closeness and conflict.

- **Finding Four: Children who attended higher quality child care had better cognitive and social skills in the second grade, even after taking into account kindergarten and second grade classroom experiences.**

Child care quality during the preschool years was related to children's cognitive and social skills in the second grade, after considering background characteristics and the quality of subsequent experiences in kindergarten and second grade. As with the longitudinal findings, children's math skills related to child care classroom practices, while children's classroom behavior (thinking/attention skills, problem behavior, and sociability) related to child care teacher-child closeness. Similarly, better quality child care was more strongly related to fewer problem behaviors in second grade for children with less highly educated mothers. Children's language and letter-word recognition skills in the second grade were not related to child care quality.

- **Finding Five: Children who experienced more positive classroom climates in child care had better relationships with peers in second grade.**

Children rated higher on aggressive and disruptive behavior in the second grade were more likely to have been in child care classrooms with climates characterized by high levels of problem behaviors and low levels of teacher-child closeness. Similarly, higher ratings of social withdrawal in second grade were associated with child care classrooms characterized by high levels of problem behaviors. Children's prosocial behavior in second grade, on the other hand, was predicted by child care classrooms that involved greater peer interaction during play.

Discussion of Second Grade Findings

Children's cognitive and social competence in second grade can be predicted by the experiences they had four years previously in child care, after taking into account subsequent experiences in elementary school. While there was some evidence of an effect of child care quality on children's math achievement, most of the effect was seen in the social domain, in terms of second grade classroom behavior and peer relationships. The findings of a long-term influence of child care experiences on children's second grade outcomes are notable for two reasons.

The effects of child care quality on children's second grade outcomes hold after considering subsequent classroom experiences.

First, from their next-to-last year in child care through second grade (ages 4 to 8), children have experienced a variety of care and education settings, including the transitions to and experiences in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade. The findings of influences of child care quality on second grade outcomes, despite the variety of subsequent experiences, suggests the long-term importance of early experiences on children's development.

The social-emotional climates of child care classrooms as well as individual children's relationships with their teachers are important predictors of children's outcomes.

Second, our results indicated that social competence with peers was related to positive child care classroom environments (i.e., classrooms with close teacher-child relationships, low problem behaviors, and opportunities for children to play together) in addition to positive teacher-child relationships (both current and earlier relationships). These findings suggest that child care classrooms provide an environment for children to establish patterns of relationships that persist over time and over the transition into elementary school.

The longitudinal and second grade findings reported above mirror one another. The longitudinal findings provide evidence for the effects of child care quality on children's patterns of growth and development from the preschool years through the early elementary years. Correspondingly, the second grade findings provide evidence for the long-term effects of child care experiences on children's abilities four years later, after considering the effects of subsequent educational experiences between child care and second grade. Both sets of findings reveal that children who have more positive child care experiences during the preschool years have better outcomes through the elementary school years, after controlling for differences in background characteristics. Whether child care experiences are examined in terms of the global quality of classroom practices, the nature of teacher-child relationships, or the social-emotional climate, more positive experiences are related to better outcomes in both social and cognitive domains.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

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 the study indicated that the majority of children in child care do not have access to the level of quality recommended by child care professionals. The current phase of research shows that this lack of quality care is having negative effects on children's readiness for school and on their development during the early school years. Improving child care quality in the US will require a broad array of efforts including attention from federal, state and local officials in Education, Health and Human Services, and related agencies as well as the private sector. Below we list a number of suggested ways of working toward the goal of high quality child care. These suggestions are broken down into three broad categories — fiscal strategies, professional preparation/compensation approaches, and program/system improvements.

Fiscal Strategies

The first phase of the study demonstrated the link between the cost of services and the quality of care received by children in typical child care centers in the US. In order to raise the quality of care, attention needs to be given to the financing of child care.

- Increased investments in child care from both the public and private sector are needed. While progress has been made over the past decade, greater effort will be required to raise quality to the level called for in this report.
- The quality set aside in the federal and state funds for child care is a wise investment and should be extended. A broad examination of the use of the quality set aside should be undertaken to ensure that efforts are targeted to improving the quality of services as originally intended. The funds available for quality improvements should be expanded.
- Child care subsidies should be redesigned to offer incentives for providing high quality care. Subsidy systems can be reconfigured to tie subsidy payments to higher program standards and to provide higher compensation for teachers. Such approaches to subsidy systems provide good opportunities for improving the quality of care in all states.
- Tax incentives should encourage use of higher quality care and

education. The current federal and state tax credits have ceilings so low that families purchasing high quality care get tax credits for only a fraction of the real cost of services. These incentives encourage parents to choose the lowest cost services available, which are often of lower quality as well.

Professional Preparation and Compensation Approaches

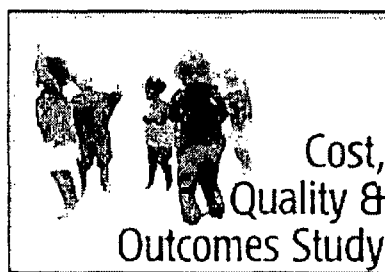
Findings of the first phase of the study suggest that the training and compensation of teachers who work in early care and education settings are important areas to target for improving quality. Our research indicated that the quality of child care was related to both the formal education levels and the specialized early childhood training of the classroom teachers. Similarly, teacher compensation was closely linked to the quality of services in child care. The findings reported here further underline the need to raise quality, indicating that these child care experiences continue to influence children's development through the early elementary years.

- Regulations at the state level should call for much 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 credentialing comparable to the K-12 system.
- A major new initiative to support teacher preparation programs should be implemented, similar to the federal initiatives to improve professional preparation for teachers working with young children with disabilities. In particular, 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. The current systems of training and technical assistance available to Head Start programs and programs serving children with disabilities could be used as models for extending support services to all early childhood programs in the country.
- Teacher compensation issues are important to address so that these training initiatives will produce long-term improvements in child care quality. As reported in our phase one findings, teacher salaries are so low that trained teachers leave the early childhood field in great numbers, resulting in overall lower levels of teacher qualifications and child care quality.

System and Program Change Strategies

Adequate improvement in the quality of care is unlikely to occur without improvements in the entire system. Attention should be paid to the infrastructure, including the regulatory system in states, the expanded use of program accreditation, and development of broader professional preparation opportunities.

- Recent comprehensive attempts by states to provide preschool care and education experiences for children are well founded and should be greatly expanded. The results of the study support policies focusing on early childhood care and education as a means of improving children's chances of being ready for school.
- 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.
- In order to improve the level of education and specialized training of child care teachers called for in the previous section, improvements and expansion of the teacher preparation systems will be needed.
- States should focus on improving licensing standards as a means of raising quality. As indicated in the first phase of this study, improvement in regulation of child care can have a positive impact on



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The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School

**Executive Summary
June 1999**

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Ellen S. Peisner-Feinberg, Principal Investigator
Margaret R. Burchinal, Biostatistician
Richard M. Clifford, Principal Investigator
Noreen Yazejian, Project Coordinator

University of Colorado Health Sciences Center

Mary L. Culkin, Principal Investigator
Janice Zelazo, Site Coordinator

University of California at Los Angeles

Carolee Howes, Principal Investigator
Patricia Byler, Site Coordinator

Yale University

Sharon Lynn Kagan, Principal Investigator
Jean Rustici, Site Coordinator

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The Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study was conducted by a team of researchers including Donna Bryant, Margaret Burchinal, Patricia Byler, Richard Clifford, Debby Cryer, Mary

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International Perspectives on Early Childhood Education: Lessons from My Travels



Lilian G. Katz

A version of this paper was originally presented at the President's Seminar: International perspectives on young children, their families, and early care and education at the Annual Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children; Toronto, Canada; November, 1998.

To hear this essay in its intended spoken form, you can download a recording of the author.

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Abstract

Noting that working with early childhood colleagues in other countries can be enlightening and enriching, this paper offers seven insights gained from the experience: (1) "What It Feels Like To Be a Teacher" discusses observations of student and teacher behavior and attitudes in classrooms in China, a Caribbean island, and India; (2) "Similarities across Countries" notes that teachers' roles may be more powerful determinants of their ideas, ideals, ideologies, concerns, and beliefs than are the larger political, social, and cultural contexts in which they work; (3) "Problems with Comparative Studies" discusses the difficulties inherent in comparing educational provisions and effectiveness across countries; (4) "The Spread of Ideas across Borders" discusses the influence of the British Infant School approach in the 1960s and 1970s, the influence of the innovative province-wide reform work of British Columbia, Canada, in the 1980s, and most recently the influence of the Reggio Emilia approach; (5) "Issues Unique to the U.S." explores interests that appear of concern only in the United States, such as the development of self-esteem in children; (6) "Self-criticism in the U.S." discusses one American habit — self-deprecation; and (7) "U.S. Leadership in Anti-bias and Multicultural Awareness" notes that the United States deserves a great deal of credit for leadership in addressing anti-bias and multicultural issues.

Introduction

My first overseas assignment in early childhood education was in 1974 when UNESCO asked me to conduct preschool training seminars in Barbados in the West Indies. At that time, I was too young and too inexperienced to be nervous about such an assignment. I reckoned that since it would take about 13 hours to get there, I would be able to think of what to do on the way! If I were asked to conduct a similar mission today, in a place about which I was so woefully ignorant, I would be deeply apprehensive—and rightly so! Since then, it has been my privilege to work with colleagues in Barbados many times, and I have also worked with our colleagues in more than 40 other countries—in some, many times over.

I find that the experience of traveling and working with colleagues in other lands is enlightening, instructive, and enriching—not so much because of what we see, but because what we see makes us think about things that we have not thought about before. Or perhaps it is simply that travel makes us think about something differently from the way we've thought about it before. In this article, I want to share seven hunches or hypotheses that have occurred to me in the course of these international experiences.

1. What It Feels Like To Be a Teacher

During my first visit to the People's Republic of China in 1978, I remember seeing some 40 three-year-old children sitting patiently and attentively on little chairs for a good 40 minutes, watching a small group of their peers performing a dance about the "bitter years" of life before Mao's revolution.

Observing this scene provoked several questions. Let me add that I am not here passing judgment on the desirability of what I observed, but on the reflections the scene provoked. Could something like this be seen in the United States? How is it possible, I wondered, for such young children to sit so attentively for so long? One possible hypothesis is that, compared to other aspects of their total environments, this event was highly stimulating. In other words, the stimulus value of a given event for a given individual is a function of the range of other events in his or her daily life. For these children, by comparison, the rest of their lives so lacks stimulation that this event was absorbing, if not entertaining. However, teachers of young children in North America have to compete with environments full of highly stimulating and exciting events, such as dozens and dozens of toys, video games, movies, television shows, colorful books, Barbie dolls, and much more.

During that same visit, I asked a teacher how she was able to get the children to be so attentive and compliant for such long periods of time. My question seemed strange to her! Her response was something like "of course they respond to my requests!" It was as though noncompliance was unthinkable! This observation provoked the hunch that an adult who expects compliance—indeed, takes it for granted—addresses children in such a way as to obtain it (i.e., with calm confidence and free of hostility). And because they obtain compliance so readily, they address the children with the full expectation that it will be forthcoming. Thus, there is a positive recursive cycle: the more confidently and optimistically we address children, the more likely they are to respond in a desirable way, which in turn strengthens the adult's confidence. According to this hypothesis, the negative recursive cycle can also be predicted: the more tentatively the adult addresses the child, the less likely he or she will respond in the way desired, leading to less confidence in the adult, and so forth.

I raise this issue not to press for authoritarianism or for greater or stricter adult control over children. It is of interest because I am constantly stymied by how many teachers in the United States *feel* powerless before very young children. They argue with me that they must use time-out procedures, "stickies," and other forms of bribery to get children to "behave." A U.S. teacher of 5-year-olds recently reported that when her pupils become rowdy, she reminds them that if they don't settle down, the class mascot tiger, whose smiling face graces the main blackboard in the room, "*will get angry with them!*" Wouldn't such forms of manipulation signal to children that the adult lacks authority, cannot be trusted to know what

to do, or to know what is right? I often wonder about an adult's willingness to depend on an imaginary creature in that way.

A few years ago, I visited a school on one of the Caribbean islands. Fifty-three 6- and 7-year-olds were working on the tasks of the morning, which were to punctuate half-a-dozen simple sentences and to complete a few simple addition problems. Every child was working—some more proficiently than others, of course. There were no children under desks, at the pencil sharpener, pinching or annoying others, or in any other way being rowdy or inattentive, as might be expected in such a crowded classroom at home.

How is that possible, I wondered? I don't want to imply in any way that what I saw was an ideal way to educate the young; the classroom was also considered much too crowded by educators within the country. Nevertheless, at least two hypotheses concerning how to account for the scene came to mind. One is that, based on what I knew about their country, teachers are never criticized in the presence of children. On the contrary, if one of these children were to complain at home about something in school, or about the teacher, family members—most likely all of them in unison—would urge the child to "mind the teacher" and get on with the work. I am not suggesting that there is no criticism of teachers; it is just not done in front of the children.

I am often amazed at what I hear adults say about teachers and schools in the presence of children in the United States. I do not want to imply that such criticism is never warranted; that is not the point of relevance here. While such indiscretion on the part of adults in front of children does not solve the problem at issue in the criticism, it may put children in the difficult position of having divided loyalties. Even more seriously, it may in some cases also empower children to be defiant. In these cases, the teacher's behavior is likely to result in further criticism.

Another hypothesis occurred to me as I watched the teacher explain the tasks, respond to occasional questions, and fairly successfully encourage children to proceed. It seemed to me that she was deeply convinced (rightly or wrongly) that what she was doing was right and was in the children's best interests. Feeling reasonably sure of the rightness of what he or she is doing surely helps a teacher to give children clear signals about what is expected and valued. My hunch is that such certainty and clarity encourages the children to carry on with the tasks in spite of their lack of relevance or interest, and deters resistance or defiance.

I am not aware of any research on how convinced U.S. teachers feel about the rightness of what they are asking of children. However, the abundance of curriculum approaches competing for adoption and presented to teachers through various media must surely raise doubts among many of them about the appropriateness of their own practices.

During a recent visit to India, I was taken to see a new state-supported school of which the local residents were very proud. In the first-grade classroom, there were 60 children—all boys. Only the teacher was provided with a desk and chair; all the children were sitting on the floor. The instructional materials were permanently attached to the walls. The teacher pointed to items on the wall displays with a long stick and asked questions. Many of the boys eagerly raised their hands to offer answers. All seemed to be attending to the ongoing instructional exchanges. How is it possible that no child was throwing bits of paper, talking to another, or otherwise off task or behaving disruptively?

One hypothesis is that already, at this early age, these boys are motivated by the belief (rightly or wrongly) that this experience offers them their only hope of a better life. It is difficult to imagine such a belief among most American 6-year-olds!

2. Similarities across Countries

When I am invited to speak to our colleagues outside of the United States, I always begin

with the caveat that the ideas and information I present are based largely on U.S. experience and research and therefore might not be applicable to the listeners whose traditions, constraints, and contexts may be very different. That having been said, however, I am always amazed at the similarities across countries. One hypothesis is that people who do the same kind of work across countries understand each other better than those who occupy different roles—even in the same fields—within a country. Get a group of teachers of 4-year-olds, or of teacher educators, or administrators, or government officials from various countries together, and they are likely to understand each other in many significant ways more readily than they will understand or be understood by those in other groups, even from their own countries. In other words, my hunch is that our roles may be more powerful determinants of our ideas, ideals, ideologies, concerns, and beliefs, etc., than is the larger political, social, and cultural context in which we work.

Another aspect of similarities across countries—at least in the field of early childhood education, is the similar low status, low pay, and poor or insufficient training that is commonly found. In many countries, those responsible for regulating staff requirements in the early childhood field point out that for any female, the care of young children "comes naturally"—it is "instinctive"—and caregiving and working with very small children does not require training and expensive qualifications! Of course, if we continue to talk to decision makers about how much children learn through play, and how they "construct their own knowledge," we may be confirming their idea that children do not need well-qualified and well-paid adults.

3. Problems with Comparative Studies

I recently came across a reference to early comparative research attributed to the 4th century, BC, to the effect that "Xenophon analyzed what he described as Persian education, thereby enabling the Greek reader to compare it with Spartan schooling" (Spaulding, 1989). But comparing educational provisions and effectiveness across countries—as in the case of the International Association for the Evaluation of Education (IEA) work reported on briefly by David Weikart in his presentation at the 1998 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) annual conference in Toronto—raises enormously complex questions. What are good and reliable indices of educational effectiveness across countries and languages?

To compare reading and spelling achievement across countries, particularly in the early years of schooling, is quite different from comparing achievement in addition and subtraction. To do the former would be fair only if accompanied by an index of grapheme-to-phoneme efficiency of each of the languages involved. Similarly, young children's understanding of the calendar may vary; in Chinese, for example, the names of the days of the week are linked to their number, unlike in English and other European languages.

Many of us have been stimulated by Tobin, Wu, and Davidson's work (1989) comparing preschools in three countries. But how did they select the three preschools? How representative of each of their countries are they? How much of what we learn about each of them is attributable to their host countries or cultures, rather than to the individuals responsible for the classrooms featured or to the populations they serve? These questions are often difficult to answer reliably. Basing practice on international comparative achievement scores is very risky.

4. The Spread of Ideas across Borders

A frequent observation from working in a variety of countries is the extent to which practices in our field are adopted across borders. In the 1960s and early 1970s, there was great interest in the United States in adopting the British Infant School approach to early primary education characteristic of much of England during the so-called Plowden years (which owed quite a bit to Dewey and Progressive Education). However, since the late 1980s, there has

been great readiness in the United Kingdom to adopt (indiscriminately, I might add) many U.S. practices purported to raise standards of achievement, for example, extensive testing of children in the form of what the English call "attainment targets." More recently, the United Kingdom has adopted practices such as the "literacy hour" and the "numeracy hour" in efforts to raise levels of achievement nationwide. These "innovations" would have been unthinkable during the Plowden years.

In the mid-1980s, many of us were eager to learn from the innovative province-wide reform work of British Columbia, Canada. It is my recollection that in the United States, the rethinking of state curriculum guidelines, age grouping practices, and student-parent-teacher conferencing in Nebraska, Iowa, Kentucky, and elsewhere was based in considerable part on what we were learning from north of the U.S. border.

In the United States in the 1990s, one of the strongest movements across borders has been intense interest in the magnificent and stunning preprimary schools of the small northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia. Thousands of us have visited Reggio Emilia; numerous conferences, an electronic discussion list [[REGGIO-L](#)], the impressive national newsletter *Innovations* (sponsored by the Merrill-Palmer Institute in Detroit), and several books are all examples of the extent to which many of us continue to be inspired by the impressive achievements of Reggio Emilia.

But I note here that in the course of the lively discussions and enthusiastic support for Reggio Emilia practices and, in particular, through efforts to adopt their ideas in the United States (as in the Model Early Learning Center in Washington, DC), I have heard no shrill or strident criticism or rejection of this movement on cultural grounds. Why haven't Reggiophiles been accused of cultural irrelevance or hegemony or imperialism with respect to ethnic and culturally diverse groups? Why have the questions raised by scholars like Jipson (1991) and Delpit (1988) about appropriate practice, for example, not been raised in discussion of adopting the Reggio Emilia approach in various parts of our country? Could it have something to do with the fact that the ideas come from Europe rather than from the usual bastions of mainstream American thought? I am puzzled by this situation!

5. Issues Unique to the United States

I often wonder about problems that seem unique to the United States; issues that I am *not* asked to talk about in other countries. For example, outside of the United States, rarely am I asked to talk about the development of self-esteem or about classroom management issues. Of course, self-esteem is unlikely to be an issue in a country that is struggling with high infant mortality, starvation, or safe water supplies. It might be called an issue of luxury!

Furthermore, I can't remember ever seeing a teacher outside of the United States say something to a group of young children like "I like the way X is sitting!" I have seen teachers in other countries say things like "Please turn around and sit quietly" without hostility or apology, seemingly with the full expectation of compliance. Furthermore, in other countries, I see almost no "Disneyfication" in classrooms! I did see some smiling animals on the walls in Greece a few years ago and a Mickey Mouse cut-out posted on a wall in a day nursery in India last year, but these occurrences are relatively rare outside of the United States.

Are these differences simply related to the larger cultures in which they occur? Do they say anything about the assumptions we make about the nature of children or, as the Reggio Emiliani put it, about differences in the "image of the child" in these countries? Do these differences matter?

The preoccupation with self-esteem so marked in the United States (and so misconstrued, I might add) is of special interest to me (see [Katz, 1995](#)). What are some hypotheses to account for it? One may be that still today, with all its faults, the United States offers a remarkably open society. In the United States, status (or esteem) is not ascribed at birth as in

many other societies; it has to be achieved. One of the expressions I was taught long ago as an English child was "Bless the squire and his relations and always know your proper stations!" But deep down in the U.S. psyche, it is believed (or fantasized) that anyone can be anything he or she wants to be; a sort of "Where there's a will there's a way!" philosophy. So we use questionable expressions like "success for all," "realizing the child's full potential," and "schools for success," rendering these terms meaningless. The meaning of an open society is not that everyone can be in first place (if only he or she would try hard enough) but that *all are equally worthy of the good life*. Indeed, the goals of schools should not be to make every child into a scientist, engineer, doctor, CEO, or lawyer, but to make sure that whatever occupations they ultimately enter into *are not predetermined by gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, class, or other characteristics ascribed at birth*. This means that education has to include high on its list of goals the ability to lead a satisfying life (which, in my view, would have to include a lot of emphasis on aesthetic values and all the arts).

Americans are, I think, unique in believing that every problem has a solution without acknowledging that every solution creates new problems, some of which may be worse than the old ones!

6. Self-Criticism in the United States

But now you see one of the most typical of American habits—that of self-deprecation! We Americans are always ready to say things like "the trouble with our culture is" or "in our culture" something is wrong, implying that others are better. We rarely acknowledge that most of our problems can be found or matched elsewhere. Surely, much is wrong in the United States, and there will always be great need to improve the quality of life of all members of our society. But are there better societies that you can point to with real confidence? Indeed, all cultures have biases, prejudices, and some social classes or social hierarchies. For some reason, such social divisions are difficult to remove or to change.

People never wish to disinherit themselves: whatever they feel contributed to their success, they also want for their children; whatever they believe prevented their success, they don't want for their children. Furthermore, it may be that identification of and wariness or suspicion of "outsiders" serves as an important basis for feeling like "insiders," and therefrom an important and perhaps necessary sense of belonging is generated. These phenomena are not unique to the United States.

A discussion not long ago with some colleagues started off with appreciation for the way that in some cultures—particularly the southern European and Latin American cultures—adults readily respond warmly and openly to unknown small children, and decrying its absence at home. In these other cultures, we noted, adults approach small children in the streets and buses, smile at them, inquire about their ages, names, and so forth, and easily express warmth and affection toward them. Such spontaneous expressions of warmth toward small children would be highly unlikely in North America (and in some European countries as well). But note that all of these expressive and affectionate countries are also marked by strong "macho" traditions! Are these two cultural patterns related? Is machoism and idolization of motherhood related in some way? Is it reasonable to hypothesize that the greater the equality (of opportunity, of education, of legal rights, etc.) of the two sexes, the less children are seen as manifestations of precious innocence and objects of spontaneous affection?

Surely Americans are the experts in frequent open criticism of their own schools, as I have already suggested above. This trend has certainly emerged in other countries, perhaps spontaneously, rather than learned from us. Such criticism, however, does not solve any educational problem that I can think of. There is no evidence that constant criticism of schools and teachers raises any school achievement level or any teacher's competence. On the contrary, my hunch is that it is demoralizing to schools and teachers, which in turn may further depress effectiveness, and in turn bring on further sharp public criticism.

One of my hunches about all this self-disparagement is that other countries, particularly European countries, are more successful at hiding their failures than are Americans. I remind you also that in international comparative studies of science and math achievement, it has often happened that the former U.S.S.R. has been ahead of the United States. What shall we make of their great competence and educational successes? Compare the current average quality of life in the former U.S.S.R. and in the United States, and we might ask ourselves what these comparative scores really mean.

The United States is the only country that I know of that has had a long and deep historical commitment to the common school: free community-supported schooling for every one of its children. This commitment is increasingly under threat for a variety of understandable reasons. It is sad to watch this trend, and I hope we can pull together as educators and communities and restore faith in what can be accomplished when communities invest in common schools for all their children.

7. U.S. Leadership in Antibias and Multicultural Awareness

Finally, as I work with our colleagues all around the world, I am proud of what I think we as a country, and the NAEYC as an organization, deserve a great deal of credit for: leadership in addressing antibias and multicultural issues. I have no doubt that the United States, through this organization among others, has already and continues to contribute greatly to increasing awareness of and action on behalf of discriminated groups. We still have a very long way to go—here and elsewhere. But never underestimate the power of ideas—bad ones as well as good ones!

Let's keep up the good work for the sake of the children. The best way to influence others is to do the best we can! It may very well be that what we do speaks more loudly than what we say.

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Author Information

Lilian G. Katz is a professor of early childhood education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she is also director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary &

Early Childhood Education. She is a past president of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and recently served as the chair of the board of directors of the National Society for the Study of Education (U.S.). Dr. Katz is author of more than 100 publications including articles, chapters, and books about early childhood education, teacher education, child development, and parenting. She has also served as editor for several publications, including *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* and *Early Childhood Research & Practice*.

Lilian G. Katz, Ph.D.
Professor of Early Childhood Education and Director, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary
and Early Childhood Education
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Children's Research Center
51 Gerty Dr.
Champaign, IL 61821-7469
Telephone: 217-333-1386
Fax: 217-333-3767
Email: l-katz@uiuc.edu

E C R P

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Collaborations for Strengthened Early Childhood Education in the Next Century

**Statement of
Mary Jean LeTendre
Director, Compensatory Education Programs
U.S. Department of Education
August 9, 1999**

Good evening. My name is Mary Jean LeTendre. I am the Director of Compensatory Education Programs at the U.S. Department of Education. Among its programs, the Office of Compensatory Education Programs administers the Title I and the Even Start Family Literacy programs. Both programs provide services to young children. It is an honor to appear before you as you collect information on how Head Start, public schools, childcare providers, and other members of the early childhood community, can best serve children and families in the next century.

In his State of American Education address this past February in California, Secretary Riley emphasized that in the early years of childhood the nation has "the most potential to make the greatest gains." His statement reflects the evidence from a growing body of research on the linkages between quality early childhood environments and a child's future academic success--research that reinforces the importance of building strong ties between the early childhood community and schools as we move into the 21st century. As we look to the future, we must encourage greater collaboration among Title I schools and other early childhood or family literacy programs in the communities they serve, be they Head Start programs, Even Start programs, other publicly funded preschool or family literacy programs, or child care.

The National Research Council's report Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children, documents what the early childhood community has known for a long time -- high quality, literacy-rich early childhood environments lay the foundation for a child's future success in school. Poor early education programs can hinder children's cognitive and language development. As a result, some children are unprepared to learn to read, which is the foundation for later learning and success. More recent research indicates that young children living in poverty -- the children that Head Start, Title I, and Even Start are most concerned about--have the least access to high-quality programs but receive more benefit from high-quality programs than do their advantaged peers. Additionally, such children are more vulnerable to harm from poor programs.

If our programs work together, building on the strengths we all bring to the table and incorporating the best of what research tells us supports child development, we may be able to broaden our reach in ways that result in higher-quality services for more children. Head Start and the Child Care Bureau have begun working to coordinate programs at the local level to create more full-day programs for children. We must encourage schools to be part of that effort. Everyone must have information on the types of competencies that children need to make a successful transition to kindergarten and on the policies and practices that will help ensure that the development and learning gains in the early childhood years are sustained and enhanced when children reach school. Collaboration is especially important in high-poverty areas where Head Start and Even Start participants will be attending Title I schools.

We also need to let communities know of additional ways to expand and enhance early childhood opportunities through other joint funding options where, for example, Title I pays for the teachers, and Head Start, Even Start, or other early childhood programs provide the wrap-around services to enable full-day programs. The Administration's proposal to reauthorize Title I contains new language clarifying that Title I funds may be used to jointly operate and fund preschool programs with Even Start programs and Head Start programs or state-funded preschool programs.

Title I funds also can be used to provide preschool services directly to eligible preschool children, through any Title I school or through a contract with a local Head Start agency, a partnership operating

an Even Start program, a state-funded preschool program, or a comparable public early-childhood program.

Another important area for collaboration is professional development. The training and education of early childhood educators are directly related to the quality of the early education they provide, and the quality of their service, in turn, is directly related to children's readiness for school success. The Title I and Even Start statutes currently permit joint professional development. Additionally, the president's bill to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act proposes a new Early Childhood Educator Professional Development initiative to help equip early childhood educators with the tools they need to facilitate young children's language and literacy development.

When collaboration occurs, children and families benefit. For example, in Newport News, Virginia, Title I funds "First Step," a literacy-based pre-K program that collaborates closely with the local Head Start programs. The two programs refer children to one another, and operate joint parental involvement activities. In Webster Groves Missouri, The Family Learning Center family literacy program, originally funded by Even Start, is now supported by Title I, Head Start, Parents as Teachers, and a state early childhood grant. This collaborative enterprise has resulted in significant outcomes in the areas of adult literacy, child development, and parenting skills for the area's most disadvantaged families. The Even Start program in Taylor, Texas collaborates with Head Start, Early Head Start, Title I, the local community college, and the local public library to provide literacy services primarily to low-income Hispanic families. Because of the strong collaborations this project is able to offer day and evening services, so that more fathers and working parents can participate in adult education and parenting classes. The early childhood education component emphasizes the full range of services for children's language development, emerging literacy, and school readiness as well as their academic, social, and emotional growth.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, the public schools, Head Start, child care, special education, and other public-private entities have forged a partnership to operate "Bright Beginnings"-a program that provides the county's most vulnerable four year-old children with a literacy-rich, resource-rich, full day experience focused on language and literacy development.

The school district, in conjunction with its partners, has developed its own curriculum, content standards, and performance expectations that set high standards for every child's learning and development. The program uses nationally recognized early childhood principles, and has developed prekindergarten standards in the areas of social and personal development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, creative arts, physical development, and technology.

Supported primarily through Title I funds (85%), Bright Beginnings serves over 1900 children and plans to reach all 4,000 children in the district who need high-quality preschool programs in order to be ready to succeed in school. All teachers are early childhood specialists. Families may attend Even Start programs, and parenting education classes, and receive materials that are designed to engage them actively in their young children's learning and development.

These examples show what is possible. The challenge for the 21st century is to bring together parents, the early childhood community, and schools so that every child acquires the foundation necessary to succeed in school and in life.



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Arguments in Support of ECCD

The World's Young Children Need Attention

"At least 12 of every 13 children born (92 per cent) in 1991 will live to see their first birthday. When that survival statistic is compared with the 1960 figure of 5 for every 6 children born (83 per cent), it is clear that an important advance has been made in child survival over the three decades. Projections for the year 2000 show that 19 of 20 children born (95 per cent) are expected to survive to age one. Still many international organizations and some governments continue to place almost exclusive emphasis in their programming for children on further reducing mortality, with little attention to the healthy development and general welfare of survivors.

What will happen to 'the twelve who survive'? Many of the same conditions of poverty and stress that previously put children at risk to die now put them at risk of impaired physical, mental, social and emotional development in their earliest months and years. Delayed or debilitated development in the early years can affect all of later life. It can also be prevented. And, because children are amazingly resilient, it can be overcome. But overcoming early difficulties is not only inefficient, it requires greater commitment than most people in privileged positions have been willing to give, up to now. As a result, millions of children will be deprived of their right to healthy and normal development. They will fail to live up to their potential and will be further thwarted in their attempt to escape from the persistent cycle of poverty. Many of the survivors will lead lethargic, unproductive, unrewarding, and dependent lives."

(From R. Myers. 1995. *The Twelve Who Survive*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press)

One and a half billion children will be born in the decade of the 1990s (UNICEF, 1990). The great majority will be born in what are commonly referred to as "developing countries". Increasingly, due to economic conditions, children in these countries (and within the so-called developed countries as well) will be born into poverty and situations that threaten their chances for optimal human growth and development. Over the past ten years significant efforts have been made to improve the situation of these children by providing a variety of early childhood programs which support the child's development. However, much work remains to be done..

Worldwide the quality of the environment in which millions of children are growing up is inadequate by any number of criteria. Overcrowding, lack of potable water and sewage facilities, lack of adequate food, and inadequate caretaking characterize the environments of many young children. Frequent infection (most commonly diarrhoea) and malnutrition account for over 50% of infant deaths in developing countries. These statistics are likely to worsen as the numbers living in urban areas increase, which they will. It is estimated that by the year 2000, urban populations in the developing countries will increase from the 1 billion in 1980 to 2.1 billion. This represents a 110 per cent increase, compared with a projected increase in the world's population during that same time period of 38 per cent. Thus a further expansion of urban slum and squatter settlements is inevitable.

Children everywhere deserve to thrive. "As more infants survive, and as social change accelerates, a moral and social imperative grows. We must respond to the question, 'survival for what'? The obligation mounts to anticipate which children are likely to be debilitated and delayed in their social, [physical], and intellectual development, and to do all in our power to prevent that from happening. In so doing, we will also be increasing the chance of survival to age five and beyond, for these disadvantaged survivors to age one are also the children who will be more likely to die before age five. Who is caring for these children? How is that care given? What is their early life like? What can be done to enhance their growth and development and to help them not only to survive, but also to realize their individual and social potential." (R. Myers, *The Twelve Who Survive*, xix)

Why Invest in Programmes of Early Childhood Care and Development?

Early Childhood Programmes can offer benefits to individual children, to families, to communities, and

to society.

Before you can build a house, it is necessary to lay foundation stones to support the entire structure. Embedded within their family, their community, and their cultural values, very young children (from birth to eight) need to be supported in the development of the physical, mental, and social abilities that will enable them to survive and thrive in later years. The successful education of the child during her or his years of schooling and participation of that child in society as an adult depend to a great degree upon the foundation stones laid during the pre-school years.

Learning and development begin at conception. In the early years, children learn fundamental skills and develop in ways that are crucial to the success of their future education and indeed the rest of their life. They learn to walk and coordinate their movements. They learn to talk, acquiring relatively sophisticated language skills. They learn some basic thinking skills, as well as the ability to connect thought to language to action. They develop a sense of self-control and self-confidence (or a sense of failure). They learn how to relate to others and what behaviour is culturally acceptable. They develop (or suppress) their sense of curiosity.

Scientific findings from a variety of fields have demonstrated that support of early development yields rich benefits not only in immediate ways for the child and its parents, but also over time in terms of the child's ability to contribute to the community. Interventions in the early years of childhood offer an extraordinary opportunity to avoid or moderate learning problems, and to bring lasting benefits to individuals and society.

For individuals, areas where early intervention can have an impact include:

- **Brain development.** During the first two years critical brain structures develop that affect children's ability to learn. If the brain develops well, learning potential is increased and the chances of failure in school and life are decreased. Programmes that provide proper nutrition and support stimulation of a child's senses enhance the structure and organization of the brain.
- **Nutrition, health and the ability to learn.** Children with consistent, caring attention are better nourished, less apt to be sick, and learn better than children who don't receive such care. Neglected children are more prone to sickness and malnutrition and are less equipped and motivated to learn. Programmes that support families and teach them how to provide consistent, healthy care are helping children develop the readiness to participate in school and the community.

Support for young children does not merely refer to establishing preschools or infant classes. *It refers to all the activities and interventions which address the needs of young children and help to strengthen the contexts in which they are embedded: the family, the community, and the physical, social, and economic environment.* This is a very different way of thinking about education, and basic educational strategies than is conventional when discussing the needs of primary and secondary students.

For society the benefits of early childhood interventions include:

1. **Increased economic productivity.** Interventions that support young children's physical and mental capacities lead to increased enrollment and improved progress and performance in school. School performance in turn is linked to increased economic productivity.
2. **Cost savings.** Early childhood investments can reduce costs and improve the efficiency of primary schooling. Children who are better prepared physically, mentally and socially for school have an easier transition from home to school. Therefore, drop-out and repetition rates are lower and the need for remedial programmes is reduced, cutting costs.

Effective early childhood programmes can also bring cost savings in areas other than education: health care costs can be cut through preventive measures in programmes which help reduce disease and accidents (Evans & Shah, 1994); the social costs of delinquency and related problems are cut as children stay in school longer (Schweinhardt et al., 1992); and absenteeism is reduced when parents, assured of proper care for their children, can devote their time to the job (Galinsky, 1986).

3. Reductions in social and economic inequalities. Poverty and/or discrimination can inhibit development in the early years. By failing to intervene to support positive growth and development, governments tacitly endorse inequalities. This is certainly true if no special effort is made to assist those who have been discriminated against and if early childhood programmes are available only to those who can afford to pay for them. Investments in early childhood development have been shown to modify inequalities rooted in poverty and social discrimination by giving children from disadvantaged backgrounds a fair start in school and in life. Studies suggest that these children benefit more from early intervention programmes than their more-privileged peers.

4. Reductions in gender inequalities. All children have a right to develop to their full potential. Attention to young girls often lags behind attention to boys, beginning and reinforcing a long cycle of discrimination. Gender-linked disparities in attitudes and expectations and in patterns and practices of early care and development need to be examined. There is evidence that early attention to gender can produce changes in the development of the girl child and in the way families perceive the abilities and future of that child. Furthermore, early childhood programmes can also benefit women and older siblings by freeing them from constant child care responsibility so they can learn and seek better employment and earnings.

5. Strengthened values. Transmission of the social and moral values that will guide all of us in the future begins in the earliest months of life. In societies where there is a concern that crucial values are being eroded, a strong incentive exists to find ways in which those values can be strengthened. Early childhood programmes can assist in that effort by strengthening parenting skills and by providing environments within which children can play and give attention to culturally desirable values.

6. Social mobilisation. In many locations, lack of experience in the political process made it extremely difficult to mobilise people for actions that will be to their own benefit. In such circumstances, focusing a programme on young children as a point of common interest can be an effective rallying strategy and serve as an entry point for broader community development.

7. Community and family benefits. Community improvements in health, sanitation and nutrition that benefit children are also likely to benefit parents, families and the community at large. These community and family benefits are evidenced by parents' improved self-confidence, the emergence of leaders, and by increased organisation and social action in communities.

In sum, the benefits of investing in early childhood care and development can be extraordinarily high.

8 Arguments in Support of ECCD

A SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENT. Scientific research demonstrates repeatedly that the early years are critical in the development of intelligence, personality, and social behaviour. There are long-term effects associated with a variety of early intervention programmes.

A HUMAN RIGHTS ARGUMENT. Children have a right to live and to develop to their full potential.

A MORAL AND SOCIAL VALUES ARGUMENT. Through children, humanity transmits its values. That transmission begins with infants. To preserve moral and social values--or to change them for "the better"--one must begin with children. Values such as living together harmoniously or appreciating and protecting the environment begin to take hold in the pre-school years and can be promoted through child care and development programmes.

AN ECONOMIC ARGUMENT. Society benefits economically from investing in child care and development through increased productivity of children, by freeing caregivers to earn and learn, and by saving social costs in such areas as school repetition, juvenile delinquency and the use of drugs.

A SOCIAL EQUITY ARGUMENT. By providing a “fair start”. It is possible to modify distressing socio-economic and gender-related inequities. The girl child can be a particularly important beneficiary.

A SOCIAL MOBILIZATION ARGUMENT. Children provide a rallying point for social and political actions that can help to build consensus and organisation for the common good.

A PROGRAM EFFICACY ARGUMENT. The success of other programmes (for example, survival programmes emphasizing health and nutrition, or primary school education, or women-in-development programmes) can be improved by incorporating an element of early childhood care and development focussing on healthy mental and social development. This is because sound psycho-social development increases the chances of survival, makes educational programmes more efficient by reducing repetition, and supports programmes focussed on the productive role of women.

CHANGING SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CIRCUMSTANCES. The increasing survival of vulnerable children, changing family structures and childrearing practices, rural-urban migration, and growing participation by women in the paid labour force are increasing the need and demand for more and better and different ways to care for and insure the well-being of young children.

Some of these arguments will be more relevant to one situation than to another, but all are potentially important in any setting. Taken together, they provide a compelling case for making a heavy investment in programmes to improve care and enhance development in the early years. Both knowledge of the child development process and examples of concrete programme experience are available to be drawn upon to create and operate such programmes. What remains is for enlightened leaders to make the commitments that are needed for action.

Related Documents:

Investing in Early Childhood Development Programs in Latin America: toward Definition of an Investment Strategy. By Robert G. Myers. Originally prepared as a report to the World Bank in 1993, this paper examines the arguments for investment in ECCD with a special focus on Latin America, and on the World Bank. Special attention is given to investment concerns.

A THEORETICAL BASIS FOR INVESTING IN EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT Review of Current Concepts by Cassie Landers

The Development of Young Children: Why we Should Invest and Some Suggestions About What Can Be Done by Robert G. Myers.

Effects of Early Childhood Intervention on Primary School Progress and Performance in the Developing Countries: an update by Robert G. Myers. A paper prepared for a seminar on “The Importance of Nutrition and Early Stimulation for the Education of Children in the Third World” Stockholm, 6-9 April, 1988.

Effects of Early Childhood Intervention on Primary School Progress and Performance in the Developing Countries by Robert Halpern and Robert G. Myers. Prepared for the Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, USAID, April 1985.

Preparing Children For Schools And Schools For Children by Robert Myers and Cassie Landers A Discussion Paper prepared for the Fifth Meeting of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development UNESCO, Paris 4 - 6 October, 1989

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Early Childhood Care and Development.

E-mail: info@ecdgroup.com

Child Development Theory

The Child: Key Needs from Conception through the Early Years

In terms of physical, intellectual, emotional and social well-being, the period from conception to age 6 is the key to subsequent growth, development and ultimate productivity. Pre-natally through the sixth year there are several distinct stages. They include: intra-uterine, intrapartum (the birth itself), postpartum (birth to 1 month), early infancy (the first six months), late infancy (6-12 months), toddler (1 to 3 years), and the pre-school child (3-6 years of age). Children have different needs, depending on where they are within these stages.

In order to create a programme for young children, it is critical to have more specific information on their needs. A delineation of developmental differences is provided by Donohue-Colletta (1992) for three age groups. She defines the needs as follows:

Infants (birth to 1) need:

- protection from physical danger
- adequate nutrition
- adequate health care
- adults with whom to form attachments
- adults who can understand and respond to their signals
- things to look at, touch, hear, smell, and taste
- opportunities to explore the world
- appropriate language stimulation

Toddlers (1-3 years of age) need all the above and also require:

- support in acquiring new motor, language and thinking skills
- a chance to develop some independence
- help in learning how to control their own behaviour
- opportunities to begin to learn to care for themselves
- daily opportunities to play with a variety of objects

Children ages 3-6 (and above), in addition to the above, also need:

- opportunities to develop fine motor skills
- encouragement of language through talking, reading, singing
- activities which will develop a positive sense of mastery
- opportunities to learn cooperation, helping, sharing
- experimentation with pre-writing and pre-reading skills

A wide variety of inputs is required to support children's growth and development. An important thing to note is that all the inputs require someone to interact with the child. Very young children are not capable of obtaining what they need on their own.

Characteristics taken from:

Donohue-Colletta, N. *Cross-Cultural Child Development: A Training Course for Program Staff*.
Richmond, VA: Christian Children's Fund, 1992.

For a more in-depth description of child development, 0-6 see:

Thinking with the Heart and Feeling with the Brain, by S. Anandalakshmy. Written March 1, 1997.
posted April 5, 1997.

Fifth National Lecture in Child Development, Lady Irwin College, Delhi University, New Delhi, India.

A discussion of play in childhood as the means of getting the emotional and cognitive parts of the brain to function together. The paper also contains some material on concepts of early development from traditional Indian sources, presented for the first time in Child Development.

Infancy, by Marc H. Bornstein and Helen G. Bornstein

Early Childhood Development from two to Six Years of Age by Cassie Landers

Related Internet Site: [gopher://tinman.mes.umn.edu:4242/11/ChildCare/ChildDevel](http://tinman.mes.umn.edu:4242/11/ChildCare/ChildDevel) . A description of children at various stages of development, in English and Spanish. Although the child development descriptions are focussed on U.S. standards (for example in the typical weights and sizes to be expected of children at various stages) and are set in a U.S. context, it contains a good summary of general developmental characteristics. Also offers sample caregiver/parent activities to help support each phase of a child's growth.

Child Development Principles

The term used by the ECCD community to describe children's development is *holistic*. What this means is that the child's development cannot be compartmentalised into health, nutrition, education, social, and emotional variables. All are interwoven in a child's life.

Those within the ECCD field hold firmly to a belief that early childhood experiences for children, at whatever age, should be planned around the child's developmental abilities. Support for this position comes from international literature on how children develop and learn. Specifically:

Development begins pre-natally and learning is occurring at birth.

Too often the assumption is made that learning begins when children enter the formal school system. In fact, significant learning takes place before the child enters school. Therefore, attention to the developmental and learning needs of children should begin with pre- and post-natal interventions and be continued thereafter.

Development has several inter-related dimensions.

These include physical, cognitive, social, spiritual and emotional development, each of which influence the other and all of which are developing simultaneously. Progress in one area affects progress in others. Likewise when something goes wrong in any one of those areas it impacts all the other areas. For example, children who are malnourished are not able to learn; children with learning problems frequently have low self-esteem, etc. Developing a programme based on an understanding of holistic development means taking the whole child into consideration, providing attention to the child's health, nutrition, cognitive, and socio-emotional needs. Therefore interventions should provide integrated attention to the child, including attention to needs for protection, food, health care, affection, interaction and stimulation, security provided through consistency and predictability, and play allowing exploration. All of these elements should be present to support the child's development.

Development proceeds in predictable steps and learning occurs in recognized sequences, within which there is a great deal of individual and social variability in children's rates of development and styles of learning.

It is important for adults to use methods that fit with the child's growth pattern, not only in the cognitive area, but also in the affective, perceptual and motor areas. Activities should provide the child with a

developmentally appropriate challenge. There is no value in presenting concepts and tasks before a child is developmentally ready to understand them. Integrated interventions promoting social, emotional and spiritual development as well as cognitive learning can take advantage of varied forms of learning, consistent with the culture, even while taking into account the fact that there are recognized sequences and activities that facilitate learning.

Development and learning occur continuously as a result of the child interacting with people and objects in his or her environment.

The role of adults (at home and in other settings) in supporting children's learning is to provide children with opportunities to work with concrete objects, to make choices, explore things and ideas, experiment and discover. Children also need opportunities to interact with peers and adults in a safe environment that provides the child with security and acceptance.

Given the importance of the environment in promoting children's learning, it is also possible to focus interventions on changing the child's environment. For example, increasing family income, upgrading health and sanitation in the community, and enhancing the social and political milieu will affect children's growth and development.

Children are active participants in their own development and learning.

Learning and related development involve the child's construction of knowledge, not an adult's imposition of information. The skills which are the basis for constructing knowledge improve with practice. It is important for children to have opportunities to construct their own knowledge through exploration, interaction with materials and imitation of role models. Therefore interventions should include opportunities for children to learn by doing, to be engaged in problem-solving, and to develop language and communication skills. ECCD programmes should not put undue emphasis on rote memorisation and learning the 3 Rs. Opportunities for active involvement should abound, whether at home in everyday chores or in more organised settings outside the home.

In sum, building ECCD programmes on a holistic understanding of children's growth and development suggests a using a broad concept of early childhood development: addressing the whole child within the context of the family and community. The early childhood years are perceived as the basis for learning life-long skills and attitudes. Activities and programmes planned for parents and young children should not focus solely on providing children with school survival skills, but should emphasise the development of the child's sense of intellectual, motor and moral autonomy, initiative and self esteem. Emphasis should be on **how to learn** (i.e. positive attitudes to learning and thinking skills) rather than **what to learn**.

Related Internet Site: http://www.wpi.edu/~isg_501/nsushkin.html Development Theories. A description of Piaget's stages, as well as other developmental psychologists' epistemologies.

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Overview of Early Childhood Care and Development

Early Childhood Care and Development: A Definition

Children do not just grow in size. They develop, evolve, and mature, mastering ever more complex understandings of the people, objects and challenges in their environment. There is a general pattern or sequence for development that is true of all children. However, the rate, character, and quality of development vary from child to child. Culture influences development in different ways, and the goals for children differ from culture to culture.

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) refers not only to what is happening within the child, but also to the care that child requires in order to thrive. For a child to develop and learn in a healthy and normal way, it is important not only to meet the basic needs for protection, food and health care, but also to meet the basic needs for interaction and stimulation, affection, security, and learning through exploration and discovery.

ECCD activities are those that support young children appropriately and seek to strengthen the environments in which they live. ECCD includes working with parents to strengthen parenting skills, working with siblings and other family members to recognize the specific developmental needs of younger children, working to provide or strengthen day care options, developing preschools and other early childhood education programs that address the child's needs in holistic ways, as well as striving to bolster the community in its economic, physical, and moral support of families and young children.

ECCD: A relatively new field of international focus

ECCD is a relatively new field and combines elements from the fields of early childhood education, infant stimulation, health and nutrition, community development, parent education, sociology, anthropology, child development, and economics. International ECCD arose from the recognition that these elements all interact within a young child's life. If we want to support young children and help them to thrive, then we need to understand the many facets of their development, and also address the contexts in which they are living.

When discussing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), it is important to have a common understanding of what is meant by the term. There are three parts to the phrase: *early childhood* -- *care* -- and *development*.

Early Childhood...

As it is currently used internationally, *early childhood* is defined as the period of a child's life from conception to age eight.

There are two reasons for including this age range within a definition of ECCD. First, this time frame is consistent with developmental psychology's view of the continuum of children's development. Children below the age of eight learn best when they have objects they can manipulate; when they have chances to explore the world around them; when they can experiment and learn from trial-and-error within a safe and stimulating environment. At about the age of nine they begin to view the world differently. They can

manipulate ideas and learn concepts mentally and are less dependent on objects. Thus in terms of learning theory, the birth through age eight time period presents a developmental continuum.

Second, the international definition of early childhood includes the early primary years (ages six- eight) because of the importance of the transition for children either from home or from a pre- school programme into the primary school. If pre-school programmes for children are to be effective, there needs to be some interface between what happens in the pre-school and lower primary school. This does not mean that early childhood programmes should become formal experiences for young children. Rather, there is a need for early primary teachers to become more aware of the experiences, skills and knowledge that children bring with them into the primary school if they have had an early childhood programme experience.

Care...

In the 1980s, the term ***care*** was added to the phrase early childhood development. This was in recognition of the fact that young children need care and nurturing. They need attention to their health and nutrition, their evolving emotional and social abilities, as well as their minds. The term ***care*** was chosen, rather than ***education***, to move policy makers and program providers away from thinking exclusively in terms of pre-schooling.

Development...

In the definition of ECCD being used throughout this Web site, ***development*** is defined as the process of change in which the child comes to master more and more complex levels of moving, thinking, feeling and interacting with people and objects in the environment. Development involves both a gradual unfolding of biologically determined characteristics and the learning process. ***Learning*** is the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, habits and values through experience and experimentation, observation, reflection, and/or study and instruction. Both the child's physical growth (the child's health and nutrition history and current health and nutritional status) are crucial in the child's overall development. The child's current developmental status either facilitates or inhibits future learning. Thus learning is part of the development process. (Myers, The Twelve Who Survive 1992; 1995)

In many cases, the terms ***care*** and ***development*** also refer to the arrangements people make for their children. Day care, community or programme development, and child care are issues to look at in addressing the needs and supporting the healthy growth of young children.

Some Key Principles and Beliefs of ECCD

- Learning begins at conception. From the moment of conception important developments occur that affect the brain, the physical body, and the chemistry of the child. These all have an impact on that child's ability to learn, to thrive, to grow and be healthy.
- The first 6 years of a child's life form the foundation for all later development. Developmental psychologists have demonstrated that in the early years a child develops all the basic brain and physiological structures upon which later growth and learning are dependent. Emotionally and socially, as well, the child develops many of the abilities upon which later social functioning is based.
- Attention to young children from the beginning can help to prevent later difficulties. Good nutrition, nurturing, mental stimulation and interactions for infants are the best preventive measure for avoiding developmental delays and disturbances.
- Development and learning occur as children interact with people and things in the environment. Therefore, we can foster learning and development by making the environment more supportive. That involves creating a healthy environment, and providing space and things and opportunities to help

children to learn through play, whether at home or elsewhere. It involves enabling parents and other caregivers to encourage, nurture, stimulate, talk to and play with their children.

- Children learn and develop better if they are actively involved. Children learn in part through constructing their own knowledge. Therefore, we can help children develop and learn through exploration and imitation, whether that is at home in everyday chores or in more organized settings outside the home.
- Physical, mental, social and emotional development and learning are inter-related. Progress in one area affects progress in the others. Therefore, we need to pay attention simultaneously to physical development (through health and nutrition), mental development (through education and stimulation), social-emotional development (providing affection, and opportunities for social participation), and spiritual development. A holistic and integral approach needs to be taken.
- Children live within a context -- family, community, culture-- and their needs are most effectively addressed in relation to that context. Support to the family and community can help children, support to children can help the family and community.
- Support of early development yields rich benefits not only in immediate ways but also over time.

All young children deserve to be cared for, nurtured and supported in their development. Unfortunately, a great number of the world's children are at risk of delayed or debilitated development, due to poor nutrition, unsanitary conditions, poverty, difficult circumstances, and untenable living situations. There are many forms of intervention aimed at addressing the needs of children and families at risk : non-formal, parenting programs, preschool, home visit programs, health education programs, etc.

Related Papers from the Archives

INTERNATIONAL EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT: WHERE WE STAND AND THE CHALLENGES WE FACE by Judith L. Evans, Secretariat, Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development Paper presented at the National Consultation on ECCD organized by the National Inter-agency Committee on Early Childhood Care and Development. November 11-12, 1994, Quezon City, Philippines

ENHANCING EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT: ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMME STRATEGIES by Cassie Landers. A briefing note presented to the Workshop on Early Child Development UNICEF, Cairo October 9, 1990

TRENDS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: PERSPECTIVE FROM THE DEVELOPING WORLD by Cassie Landers.

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The Consultative Group on
Early Childhood Care and Development.

E-mail: info@ecdgroup.com

ECCD Role in Basic Education

Basic Education is commonly perceived as primary education. This is a tragic misperception. As we have said elsewhere, development begins with conception and learning begins at birth. In the first 6 years, before a child normally reaches primary school, essential foundations are established in the child's physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual development. Thus basic education begins with the child's birth, and with the parents of that child even before the child is born. It continues not only through a child's preschool and primary school years, but throughout that child's life as he or she continues to need basic skills, understanding and information to operate in a constantly changing world.

To strengthen basic education worldwide, an international initiative was launched in 1990 at the World Conference on Education For All, convened in Jomtien, Thailand by UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, and the World Bank. The conference brought together some 1500 people representing 155 governments, 33 intergovernmental bodies, and 125 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), institutes, and foundations. Organized in response to the widespread concern over the deterioration of education systems during the 1980s, the Conference concluded with the unanimous adoption of the "World Declaration on Education for All" and endorsed a "Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs." Through these two texts, the world community renewed its commitment to ensuring the rights of all people to education and knowledge.

In specific reference to Early Childhood Care and Development, the EFA World Declaration affirmed in article 5, Broadening the Means and Scope of Basic Education, that:

- "The diversity, complexity, and changing nature of basic learning needs of children, youth and adults necessitates broadening and constantly redefining the scope of basic education to include the following components:

Learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes, as appropriate."

Two things were unique about the EFA initiative:

1) The breadth of its definitions of what is needed to make education available to all.

In addition to calling for universal access to schooling for all children, the declaration reaffirms that "every person - child, youth and adult - [should] be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs." These include "both essential learning tools, such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving, and the basic learning content (knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning." The declaration reflects its grounding in the realities of people's diverse needs by affirming that: "the scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably changes with the passage of time."

The Declaration affirms the importance of early learning, by stating that "learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programs, as appropriate."

2) Its focus on action.

Countries were encouraged to formulate specific plans and policies based on the Framework for Action. To maintain the momentum generated at the WCEFA, an International Consultative Forum on EFA was established to promote and monitor the EFA goals and to facilitate information-sharing among countries, agencies and NGOs. The Forum Secretariat, based at UNESCO headquarters, is charged with global monitoring and promotion activities, and with

organizing further meetings, publishing a bulletin, and maintaining a database on EFA indicators and activities. (See International Initiatives for information on these).

As part of the action initiative, the Consultative Group Secretariat and most of the CG sponsoring members have played an active role in promoting EFA-inspired policies and projects supporting young children, and their families and communities.

In a follow-up meeting in New Delhi, India, 1993, a group of institutions and individuals concerned with early childhood learning and development met in order to identify key themes and collaborative actions to pursue following the Forum. Because of their efforts ECCD was placed firmly on the EFA agenda. In addition, lines of action were identified (and refined at further meetings in the following year, and working groups were set up to promote actions in each of these realms.

These lines of action are presented and discussed in the article: Creating the Foundation Stones for Education for All: Action Initiative in Early Childhood Care and Development by Robert G. Myers, published in the CG's Coordinators' Notebook, Issue 14, focussing on the Education For All Initiative.

Related articles:

Educating Younger Children: a Broader Vision by John Bennett, Coordinator of Early childhood and Family Programmes UNESCO. From Coordinators' Notebook, Issue 14

Case Studies Presented at the EFA meeting in New Delhi by Judith L. Evans and Robert G. Myers.
Venezuela - Family Daycare Homes Program: Massive Extension Plan. ECCD in Kenya; The Philippines - Parents as Learners Program

Related Resources - EFA resources.

EFA WEB SITE

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Global Initiatives To Address the Needs of Children

In the past few years, the plight of the world's children has received some significant attention in various world forums. Advocates for children, families, and women have tried to raise awareness among policymakers, the media and governmental bodies of the ways that children are suffering and being put at risk as a result of financial, social and environmental decisions (or lack of decision-making) in both the Majority and developed worlds.

Unfortunately, the youngest children, those below school age, are often greatly overlooked in international efforts to improve the education and welfare of the world's at-risk populations. Many efforts to improve "basic education" for example, focus on primary schooling and older. Many efforts to help women become integrated into their local economies often fail to take into account the intersecting needs of the young children in these women's lives. International initiatives frequently address only the health concerns of very young children, ignoring their social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, for example, while promoting the improved welfare, nutrition and safety of all children, does not address to any significant extent the particularly precarious situation of very young children, for whom at-risk situations threaten their lifelong developmental prospects.

One ongoing concern of the Consultative Group, and its participating organisations, is to bring the needs and concerns of very young children to the attention of policymakers, decision-makers, programme providers, the media, educators, researchers, and others. In this section of the Early Childhood Care and Development Web Site, we offer information on several international initiatives, with specific reference to their provisions concerning young children (0-8) and their families.

[The Education For All Initiative \(EFA\)](#)

[The Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[The Children's International Television Accord](#)

[The International Summit for Children](#)

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Early Childhood Care and Development.

E-mail: info@ecdgroup.com

The World Declaration on Education For All

Meeting Basic Learning Needs

In 1990 an important conference, titled the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA), was convened in Jomtien, Thailand by the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP. The conference brought together some 1500 people representing 155 governments, 33 intergovernmental bodies, and 125 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), institutes, and foundations. Organized in response to the widespread concern over the deterioration of education systems during the 1980s, the Conference concluded with the unanimous adoption of the "World Declaration on Education for All" and endorsed a "Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs."¹ Through these two texts, the world community renewed its commitment to ensuring the rights of all people to education and knowledge.

Two things were unique about this initiative:

1. *The breadth of its definitions of what is needed to make education available to all.* In addition to calling for universal access to schooling for all children, the declaration reaffirms that "every person - child, youth and adult - [should] be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs." These include "both essential learning tools, such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving, and the basic learning content (knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning."

The declaration reflects its grounding in the realities of people's diverse needs by affirming that: "the scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably changes with the passage of time."

The Declaration affirms the importance of early learning, by stating that "learning begins at birth. This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programs, as appropriate."

2. *Its focus on action.* Countries were encouraged to formulate specific plans and policies based on the Framework for Action. To maintain the momentum generated at the WCEFA, an International Consultative Forum on EFA was established to promote and monitor the EFA goals and to facilitate information-sharing among countries, agencies and NGOs. The Forum Secretariat, based at UNESCO headquarters, is charged with global monitoring and promotion activities, and with organizing further meetings, publishing a bulletin, and maintaining a database on EFA indicators and activities. (See Related Resources for information on these).

As part of the action initiative, the Consultative Group Secretariat and most of the CG sponsoring members have played an active role in promoting EFA-inspired policies and projects supporting young children, and their families and communities.

This issue of the Coordinators' Notebook offers an introduction to the Education For All initiative, and a survey of what has been done (and needs to be done) to address the education needs of young children and their families. We are reproducing below some excerpts from the original "World Declaration on Education For All" and "Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs." John Bennett's article, "Educating Young Children: A Broader Vision" examines the implications for young children and their families of the broader definition of basic education set forth in the Declaration. Robert Myers' report on the follow-up efforts to Jomtien, presents a summary of actions to date, and actions scheduled for the near future to promote greater attention to early childhood and family development worldwide.

The newest CG publication, a booklet titled "Meeting Basic Learning Needs" will be sent along with this issue of the Notebook. (More copies are available upon request from the CG Secretariat). It lays forth the basic arguments in favor of early childhood programming, outlines effective programme strategies

and structures, and presents several relevant case studies.

World Declaration on Education For All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs

PREAMBLE

More than 40 years ago, the nations of the world, speaking through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, asserted that "everyone has a right to education". Despite notable efforts by countries around the globe to ensure the right to education for all, the following realities persist:

- More than 100 million children including at least 60 million girls, have no access to primary schooling;
- More than 960 million adults, two-thirds of whom are women, are illiterate, and functional illiteracy is a significant problem in all countries, industrialized and developing;
- More than one-third of the world's adults have no access to the printed knowledge, new skills and technologies that could improve the quality of their lives and help them shape, and adapt to, social and cultural change; and
- More than 100 million children and countless adults fail to complete basic education programmes; millions more satisfy the attendance requirements but do not acquire essential knowledge and skills.

At the same time, the world faces daunting problems, notably: mounting debt burdens, the threat of economic stagnation and decline, rapid population growth, widening economic disparities among and within nations, war, occupation, civil strife, violent crime, the preventable deaths of millions of children and widespread environmental degradation. These problems constrain efforts to meet basic learning needs, while the lack of basic education among a significant proportion of the population prevents societies from addressing such problems with strength and purpose.

These problems have led to major setbacks in basic education in the 1980s in many of the least developed countries. In some other countries, economic growth has been available to finance education expansion, but even so, many millions remain in poverty and unschooled or illiterate. In certain industrialized countries, too, cutbacks in government expenditure over the 1980s have led to the deterioration of education.

Yet the world is also at the threshold of a new century, with all its promise and possibilities. Today, there is genuine progress toward peaceful detente and greater cooperation among nations. Today, the essential rights and capacities of women are being realized. Today, there are many useful scientific and cultural developments. Today, the sheer quantity of information available in the world -- much of it relevant to survival and basic well-being -- is exponentially greater than that available only a few years ago, and the rate of its growth is accelerating. This includes information about obtaining more life-enhancing knowledge -- or learning how to learn. A synergistic effect occurs when important information is coupled with another modern advance -- our new capacity to communicate.

These new forces, when combined with the cumulative experience of reform, innovation, research and the remarkable educational progress of many countries, make the goal of basic education for all -- for the first time in history -- an attainable goal.

Therefore, we participants in the World Conference on Education for All, assembled in Jomtien, Thailand, from 5 to 9 March, 1990:

Recalling that education is a fundamental right for all people, women and men, of all ages, throughout the world;

Understanding that education can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world, while simultaneously contributing to social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance, and international cooperation;

Knowing that education is an indispensable key to, though not a sufficient condition for, personal and social improvement;

Recognizing that traditional knowledge and indigenous cultural heritage have value and validity in their own right and a capacity to both define and promote development;

Acknowledging that, overall, the current provision of education is seriously deficient and that it must be made more relevant and qualitatively improved, and made universally available;

Recognizing that sound basic education is fundamental to the strengthening of higher levels of education and of scientific and technological literacy and capacity and thus to self-reliant development; and

Recognizing the necessity to give to present and coming generations an expanded vision of, and a renewed commitment to, basic education to address the scale and complexity of the challenge;

proclaim the following

World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs

Education for All: The Purpose

ARTICLE 1 MEETING BASIC LEARNING NEEDS

1. Every person -- child, youth, and adult -- shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and the basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning. The scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met varies with individual countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time.

2. The satisfaction of these needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a responsibility to respect and build upon their collective cultural, linguistic, and spiritual heritage, to promote the education of others, to further the cause of social justice, to achieve environmental protection, to be tolerant towards social, political and religious systems which differ from their own, ensuring that commonly accepted humanistic values and human rights are upheld, and to work for international peace and solidarity in an interdependent world.

3. Another and no less fundamental aim of educational development is the transmission and enrichment of common cultural and moral values. It is in these values that the individual and society find their identity and worth.

4. Basic education is more than an end in itself. It is the foundation for lifelong learning and human

development on which countries may build, systematically, further levels and types of education and training.

Education for All: an Expanded Vision and a Renewed Commitment

ARTICLE 2 SHAPING THE VISION

1. To serve the basic learning needs of all requires more than a recommitment to basic education as it now exists. What is needed is an "expanded vision" that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices. New possibilities exist today which result from the convergence of the increase in information and the unprecedented capacity to communicate. We must seize them with creativity and a determination for increased effectiveness.

2. As elaborated in Articles 3-7, the expanded vision encompasses:

- Universalizing access and promoting equity;
- Focussing on learning;
- Broadening the means and scope of basic education;
- Enhancing the environment for learning;
- Strengthening partnerships.

3. The realization of an enormous potential for human progress and empowerment is contingent upon whether people can be enabled to acquire the education and the start needed to tap into the ever-expanding pool of relevant knowledge and the new means for sharing this knowledge.

ARTICLE 3 UNIVERSALIZING ACCESS AND PROMOTING EQUITY

1. Basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults. To this end, basic education services of quality should be expanded, and consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities.

2. For basic education to be equitable, all children, youth and adults must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.

3. The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated.

4. An active commitment must be made to removing educational disparities. Underserved groups -- the poor; street and working children; rural and remote populations; nomads and migrant workers; indigenous people; ethnic, racial, and linguistic minorities; refugees; those displaced by war; and people under occupation -- should not suffer any discrimination in access to learning opportunities.

5. The learning needs of the disabled demand special attention. Steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system.

ARTICLE 4 FOCUSING ON LEARNING ACQUISITION

Whether or not expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development-- for an individual or for society -- depends ultimately on whether people actually learn as a result of those opportunities, i.e., whether they incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills, and values. The focus of basic education must, therefore, be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrolment, continued participation in organized programmes and completion of certification requirements. Active and participatory approaches are particularly valuable in assuring learning acquisition and allowing learners to reach their fullest potential. It is, therefore, necessary to define acceptable levels of learning acquisition for educational programmes and to improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement.

ARTICLE 5 BROADENING THE MEANS AND SCOPE OF BASIC EDUCATION

The diversity, complexity, and changing nature of basic learning needs of children, youth and adults necessitates broadening and constantly redefining the scope of basic education to include the following components:

- *Learning begins at birth.* This calls for early childhood care and initial education. These can be provided through arrangements involving families, communities, or institutional programmes, as appropriate.
- *The main delivery system for the basic education of children outside the family is primary schooling.* Primary education must be universal, ensure that the basic learning needs of all children are satisfied, and take into account the culture, needs and opportunities of the community. Supplementary alternative programmes can help meet the basic learning needs of children with limited or no access to formal schooling, provided that they share the same standard of learning applied to schools, and are adequately supported.
- *The basic learning needs of youth and adults are diverse and should be met through a variety of delivery systems.* Literacy programmes are indispensable because literacy is a necessary skill in itself and the foundation of other life skills. Literacy in the mother-tongue strengthens cultural identity and heritage. Other needs can be served by: skills training, apprenticeships, and formal and non-formal education programmes in health, nutrition, population, agricultural techniques, the environment, science, technology, family life, including fertility awareness, and other societal issues.
- *All available instruments and channels of information, communications and social action could be used to help convey essential knowledge and inform and educate people on social issues.* In addition to the traditional means, libraries, television, radio and other media can be mobilized to realize their potential towards meeting basic education needs of all.

These components should constitute an integrated system -- complementary, mutually reinforcing, and of comparable standards, and they should contribute to creating and developing possibilities for lifelong learning.

ARTICLE 6 ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

Learning does not take place in isolation. Societies, therefore, must ensure that all learners receive the nutrition, health care, and general physical and emotional support they need in order to participate actively in and benefit from their education. Knowledge and skills that will enhance the learning environment of children should be integrated into community learning programmes for adults. The education of children and their parents or other caretakers is mutually supportive and this interaction should be used to create, for all, a learning environment of vibrancy and warmth.

ARTICLE 7 STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

National, regional, and local educational authorities have a unique obligation to provide basic education for all, but they cannot be expected to supply every human, financial or organizational requirement for this task. New and revitalized partnerships at all levels will be necessary: partnerships among all sub-sectors and forms of education, recognizing the special role of teachers and that of administrators and other educational personnel; partnerships between education and other government departments, including planning, finance, labour, communications, and other social sectors; partnerships between government and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups, and families. The recognition of the vital role of both families and teachers is particularly important. In this context, the terms and conditions of service of teachers and their status, which constitute a determining factor in the implementation of education for all, must be urgently improved in all countries in line with the joint ILO/UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Teachers (1966). Genuine partnerships contribute to the planning, implementing, managing and evaluating of basic education programmes. When we speak of "an expanded vision and a renewed commitment," partnerships are at the heart of it.

Education for All: the Requirements

ARTICLE 8 DEVELOPING A SUPPORTING POLICY CONTEXT

1. Supportive policies in the social, cultural, and economic sectors are required in order to realize the full provision and utilization of basic education for individual and societal improvement. The provision of basic education for all depends on political commitment and political will backed by appropriate fiscal measures and reinforced by educational policy reforms and institutional strengthening. Suitable economic, trade, labour, employment and health policies will enhance learners' incentives and contributions to societal development.

2. Societies should also insure a strong intellectual and scientific environment for basic education. This implies improving higher education and developing scientific research. Close contact with contemporary technological and scientific knowledge should be possible at every level of education.

ARTICLE 9 MOBILIZING RESOURCES

1. If the basic learning needs of all are to be met through a much broader scope of action than in the past, it will be essential to mobilize existing and new financial and human resources, public, private and voluntary. All of society has a contribution to make, recognizing that time, energy and funding directed to basic education are perhaps the most profound investment in people and in the future of a country which can be made.

2. Enlarged public-sector support means drawing on the resources of all the government agencies responsible for human development, through increased absolute and proportional allocations to basic education services with the clear recognition of competing claims on national resources of which education is an important one, but not the only one. Serious attention to improving the efficiency of existing educational resources and programmes will not only produce more, it can also be expected to attract new resources. The urgent task of meeting basic learning needs may require a reallocation between sectors, as, for example, a transfer from military to educational expenditure. Above all, special protection for basic education will be required in countries undergoing structural adjustment and facing severe external debt burdens. Today, more than ever, education must be seen as a fundamental dimension of any social, cultural, and economic design.

ARTICLE 10 STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

1. Meeting basic learning needs constitutes a common and universal human responsibility. It requires international solidarity and equitable and fair economic relations in order to redress existing economic disparities. All nations have valuable knowledge and experiences to share for designing effective educational policies and programmes.

2. Substantial and long-term increases in resources for basic education will be needed. The world community, including intergovernmental agencies and institutions, has an urgent responsibility to alleviate the constraints that prevent some countries from achieving the goal of education for all. It will mean the adoption of measures that augment the national budgets of the poorest countries or serve to relieve heavy debt burdens. Creditors and debtors must seek innovative and equitable formulae to resolve these burdens, since the capacity of many developing countries to respond effectively to education and other basic needs will be greatly helped by finding solutions to the debt problem.

3. Basic learning needs of adults and children must be addressed wherever they exist. Least developed and low-income countries have special needs which require priority in international support for basic education in the 1990s.

4. All nations must also work together to resolve conflicts and strife, to end military occupations, and to settle displaced populations, or to facilitate their return to their countries of origin, and ensure that their basic learning needs are met. Only a stable and peaceful environment can create the conditions in which every human being, child and adult alike, may benefit from the goals of this Declaration.

We, the participants in the World Conference on Education for All, reaffirm the right of all people to education. This is the foundation of our determination, singly and together, to ensure education for all.

We commit ourselves to act cooperatively through our own spheres of responsibility, taking all necessary steps to achieve the goals of education for all. Together we call on governments, concerned organizations and individuals to join in this urgent undertaking.

The basic learning needs of all can and must be met. There can be no more meaningful way to begin the International Literacy Year, to move forward the goals of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons (1983-92) the World Decade for Cultural Development (1988-97), the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (1991-2000), of the convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women and the Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, and of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There has never been a more propitious time to commit ourselves to providing basic learning opportunities for all the people of the world.

We adopt, therefore, this ***World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs*** and agree on the ***Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs***, to achieve the goals set forth in this Declaration.

Footnotes

[1] UNESCO, 1990, see Related Resources.

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Presented by:
The Consultative Group on
Early Childhood Care and Development.

e-mail: info@ecdgroup.com