



What We Know About Early Education: Summary of Major Research Findings

The Abecedarian Project

The Abecedarian Project demonstrated that **young children who receive high-quality early education from infancy to age five do better in reading and math and are more likely to stay in school longer, graduate from high school, and attend a four-year college.** Children who participated in the early intervention program posted higher cognitive test scores beginning through age 21. Those who attended this high-quality early education program tended to wait longer to have their first child. Conducted by Dr. Craig Ramey, one of the nation's leading early childhood researchers, this was the first study to track participants in an early learning program from infancy to age 21. Based in North Carolina, this study tracked 111 low-income African-American families until participating children were age 21. Half of participants were randomly assigned to receive full-time early learning intervention services starting at infancy; the other received no educational services.

To read the executive summary online, go to: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~abc/>



Language and Literacy in Early Childhood

How parents and caregivers speak to kids significantly affects I.Q., literacy, and academic success later in life, according to University of Kansas child psychologists Betty Hart and Todd Risley. Their study found that the number of words and encouragements and the breadth of vocabulary heard by a child during the first three years of life can dramatically affect language development and even I.Q. Hart and Risley made close observations of 42 one- and two-year olds and their families for more than two years. From those observations, the researchers estimated children in professional families hear approximately 11 million words per year; while children in working class families hear approximately 6 million, and children in families receiving public assistance hear approximately 3 million words annually.

For more information on the Hart & Risley study see:

Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. (1995). *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children.*



Economic Return on Investment

Investing in quality early learning programs is the most efficient way to affect school and life success and to reduce social expenditures later, according to research by Prof. James Heckman, a Nobel laureate in economics from the University of Chicago. Returns are greatest for the most at-risk children. For that population in particular, quality early learning programs can result in reduced costs later on special education, remedial classes, and even incarceration. Heckman's research also shows early interventions for disadvantaged children "raise the quality of the workforce, enhance the productivity of schools and reduce crime, teenage pregnancy, and welfare dependency. They raise earnings and promote social attachment." Heckman contends, "The real question is how to use available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the very young."

To read more about Dr. Heckman's work in this area, go to:

<http://www.ounceofprevention.org/downloads/publications/Heckman.pdf>



The Science of Early Childhood Development

Young children who lack at least one loving and consistent caregiver in the earliest years may suffer severe and long-lasting development problems. This landmark study of scientific brain research shows environmental stress, even among infants and toddlers, can interfere with the proper development of neural connections inside the brain essential to a child's proper social and emotional development. This report recommends that early childhood programs balance their focus on literacy and numerical skills with comparable attention to the emotional and social development of all children. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* was published in 2000 by the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences.

To read *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* online, go to:
<http://books.nap.edu/books/0309069882/html/1.html#pagetop>



High/Scope Perry Preschool

By age 40, adults who participated as 3- and 4-year-olds in quality preschool were more likely to have graduated from high school, make higher earnings, hold a job and commit fewer crimes than those who didn't attend, according to this seminal study. In 1962, researchers began following 123 high-risk three- and four-year-olds and their families in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Nearly 60 of those children were randomly assigned to a high-quality early learning program; the rest received no preschool.

For more information on High/Scope Perry, go to:
<http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=219>



Chicago Parent-Child Centers

This study demonstrates that **young children who receive high-quality early education do better in school academically, are less likely to drop out of high school, be arrested, repeat grades or be placed in special education services.** In addition to increased earnings capacity by those who participated in the program, which served children beginning at age three, society saves more than \$7 for every \$1 invested in preschool. Conducted by Dr. Arthur Reynolds of the University of Wisconsin, the study followed 989 students enrolled in twenty Chicago Parent-Child Centers and a comparison group of 550 other eligible children who did not participate in the program until the children reached eighth grade.

For a cost-benefit analysis of the program, go to:
<http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/cbaexecsum4.html>

