Public Pre-Kindergarten: A United States Perspective

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What We Know from Prior Research about Pre-K for At-Risk Children

• The pre-k age is a developmentally sensitive period during which children's experiences can have profound and lasting effects on their cognitive and social-emotional functioning.

• High quality experiences could potentially enrich children's experiences in ways that will enhance their cognitive and social-emotional development and, potentially, their educational and life outcomes.

• The environments of many young children in the U.S. do not provide the predictability, stability, and experiences necessary for optimal development during this sensitive period, and things are getting worse.
POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES

POVERTY BY COUNTY, 2010

POVERTY IN THE U.S., 1960 - 2010

POVERTY BY RURAL, SUBURBAN, & URBAN LOCATION

PERSISTENT POVERTY: 1990 - 2010

Counties with Poverty Rates of 30% or more in 1990, 2000, and 2010

ABOUT THE DATA
This poster was produced by the National Council on Housing Assistance. The data presented is from the U.S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau uses a set of dollar value thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. Poverty status is determined for all people using household income before taxes, including those in group quarters, and includes individuals under 15 years old. For more information on poverty estimates, please visit the Census Bureau: www.census.gov or the Housing Assistance Council: 1575 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite A-200, Washington, DC 20005, 202-328-2633. www.housinginc.org.
Many are suggesting pre-k as the answer
U.S. Prekindergarten Programs

• Assumptions behind child focused interventions
  o Children enter school unprepared to learn
  o Poor children need more preparation to remediate “deficits” in skill development

• Background
  o Change in view of malleability of intelligence (J McVicker Hunt)
  o Early university based experimental programs
    • Perry Preschool
    • Darceee
    • Abecedarian
  o Rick Heber’s work in Milwaukee
  o Authorization of Head Start in 1964
  o Title 1 authorization amended to include prekindergarten 1986
  o State funding for scaling up pre-k since 1990s
  o USDOE invested millions in public school pre-k programs in 2014
Average cognitive impact at end of treatment

Average effect size in sd units

Perry Preschool

Abecedarian
Issues about Replicability today

• Both Perry and Abecedarian
  o Implemented in the 1960s and 70s
  o Small, focused, intense programs in a single location
  o Heavily guided by on site, invested researchers
  o Much more extensive
    • Abecedarian intervention from 6 weeks to age 5
    • Full working day not school day
  o Counterfactual has changed
    • Public kindergarten
    • Sesame Street

• Nonetheless these are studies cited to justify expanding pre-k intervention for poor children
Average cognitive impact at end of treatment

Average effect size in sd units


-0.50 0.00 0.50 1.00 1.50 2.00

Perry Preschool
Abecedarian
National Head Start

Head Start
Non Head Start
U.S. Research on Effectiveness of Publicly Funded, Scaled-Up Pre-K

• Two randomized controlled trials of scaled up programs (waiting list design)
  o Head Start Impact Study
  o Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K (TNVPK)

• Similar findings
  o Immediate, positive effects at the end of pre-k on easily measured skills, with stronger effects on early literacy
  o Immediate fade out of effects by the end of kindergarten
  o Longer term effects
    • HS Impact study found no effects by end of 3rd grade
    • TNVPK study found negative effects on achievement beginning in second grade and continuing in 3rd, more disciplinary infractions for those who attended pre-k.
Issues with Scaling Up Pre-K

• Lack of consensus on the goals for pre-k
  o Reduce achievement gap in the short term (kindergarten entry)
  o Reduce achievement gap in the longer term – NAEP scores in 4th and 8th grades
  o Reduce poverty, create better educated workers
  o Support families
• Lack of clarity on who should be responsible for young children
  o Public schools - increasingly
  o Health and Human Services
• How should pre-k relate to (broken) K-12 schools serving poor children

With no shared, coherent vision about the problem there is little clarity about what role pre-k should play in the U.S.
This afternoon we will focus on creating better classroom environments for children that may address some of these issues