

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: TRANSLATING PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE INTO PRACTICE AND POLICY

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Early Childhood Education in the United States



Presentation Overview

- Science and Early Childhood Education
- Early Childhood Education Expansion
- Recent Federal Initiatives
 - Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grants
 - Preschool Development Grant
 - Early Head Start Child Care Partnership
- Indicators of High Quality Early Childhood Programs

Presentation Overview

- **Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education -**
Quality Early Childhood Education Brochure for Parents
(High Five)
- What Parents Need to Know - Providing Scientifically
Based Information

Science and Early Child Education¹

- Healthy child development is important for the overall well-being of the child as well as that of the society.
- Brains develop over time and early experience matters.
- The interaction between genes and environments shape the architecture of the brain.
- The brain and developing abilities are built from the bottom up.

Science and Early Child Education¹

- Cognition and socio-emotional development are interconnected across the lifespan.
- Toxic stress has a negative effect on the overall development of the child.
- Quality *Early Childhood Environments* can support growth and development of all children.

What We Know

SRCD Report - Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education²

- Children benefit from having stimulating and supportive interactions with teachers and from the effective use of curricula.
- Access to **Quality Preschool** benefits all children -middle-class children, children from low income families, children with special needs as well as dual language and native language speakers.

SRCD Report - Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education²

- Access to comprehensive services add an increased benefit for children when targeted.

Quality Early Childhood Education Matters



Early Childhood Expansion

- Head Start

- Childcare

- Universal Pre-K

Federal Initiatives to Increase Access to Quality Early Childhood Education



Recent Federal Initiatives

- Race to the Top - Early Learning Challenge Grants
- Preschool Development Grant
- Early Head Start Child Care Partnership

Quality Early Childhood Education

High Quality Preschool Program means – an early learning program that includes structural elements that are evidenced-based and nationally recognized as important for ensuring program quality, including at minimum –

Indicators of High Quality Programs³

- (a) High staff qualifications, including a teacher with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a bachelor's degree in any field with State approved alternate pathway, which may include coursework, clinical practice, and evidence of knowledge of content and pedagogy relating to early childhood, and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;\
- (b) High-quality professional development for all staff;
- (c) A child-to instructional staff ratio of no more than 10 to 1;

Indicators of High Quality Programs

(d) A class size of no more than 20 with, at a minimum one teacher with high staff qualifications

(e) a full –day program

(f) Inclusion of children with disabilities to ensure access to full participation in all opportunities;

(g) Developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and evidence-based curricula, and learning environments that are aligned with the States Early Learning Guidelines and Standards, for at least the year prior to kindergarten entry;

Indicators of High Quality Programs

- (h) Individualized accommodations and supports so that all children can access and participate fully in learning activities;
- (i) Instructional staff salaries that are comparable to the salaries of local K-12 instructional staff;
- (j) Program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;
- (k) On-site or accessible **Comprehensive Services** for children and community partnerships to promote families' access to services that support their children's learning and development; and
- (l) Evidenced –based health and safety standards

Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education
Quality Early Childhood Education Brochure for Parents
(High Five) Project

Purpose:

- To provide parents with evidence-based knowledge and guidance to support their choice of an early childhood program for their child.

Administrators - Program and Education Directors

Five questions to ask the administrator:

- 1. Can I spend some time in the classroom in which my child might be placed next year?
- 2. What is your approach to handling difficult behavior?
- 3. How are parents typically involved in your school?
- 4. What are some of the ways you communicate with parents?
How will I know what my child is doing during the day?
- 5. What are the three most important skills with which children leave your school?

Teachers

Five questions to ask the teacher:

- 1. Describe your classroom on a typical day? (Tap into instructional activities, approach to teaching structure) - What is your approach to nap time? (Is this empirically-based; must sleep for 2 hours or can children read a book)
- 2. What do you like to do with the children during the day?
- 3. How do you recognize good behavior?
- 4. What's your approach for handling difficult behavior?
- 5. How do you encourage children to work and play together (to get along)?

Observation of Classroom Environment

Five things to observe when observing a early childhood/preschool classroom:

- 1. Are there activities in the class that your child would be interested and which support his or her overall development?
- 2. What does the teacher do when a child does something wrong? [observe how negative behavior is handled]
- 3. How do children treat one another?
- 4. Are the children enjoying what they were doing?
- 5. How do you see the teacher talking to the children?

What Parents Need to Know

- Parents need to be comfortable in the choice they make when deciding on early childhood program for their child.
- The decision should be based on the best scientific evidence available.
- Parents should understand what is and is not developmentally appropriate for young children.
- Providing parents with knowledge about what constitutes high quality early childhood education will empower them to support the growth and development of their children.



References

- 1. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007). The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap Between What We Know and What We Do. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu.
- 2. Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W. T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K. A., ... & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education (Vol. 9). Society for Research in Child Development and Foundation for Child Development.
- 3. Preschool Development Grants .
<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/index.html?src=rotato>