The Research is Compelling
What Makes An Effective Early Learning Program?

- Staff-child ratios and group size
- Staff qualification level and specialized training
- Staff gender and diversity
- Staff compensation
- Program duration
- Curriculum
- Physical environment

Essential Elements of High Quality

Enabling Environment

• Political leadership and/or judicial mandate and ongoing support
• Compelling vision coupled with strong leadership

Essential Elements of High Quality

Rigorous Program Policies

• BA and specialized training compensated on par with K-3
• Class composition
• Learning time/dosage
• Two adults in a classroom
• Early learning standards (bidirectional)
• Proven curriculum with fidelity and results
• Special Education
• DLL support
Essential Elements of High Quality

Strong Program Practices

- Teachers delivering high-quality instruction
- Assessment and independent program evaluation
- Data driven system and practices
- Professional development
- Integrated system (standards, curriculum, assessment, instruction, PD, data)
Does Early Education Last:
Fade Out, Sleeper Effect, or Convergence?
Preschool Programs in the US Produce Long-term Gains

(123 studies since 1960)

“Consistent evidence obtained by different researchers surveying slightly different but overlapping outcome literatures confirms that preschool programs have statistically significant and practical long-term preventive impact.”

- Direct instruction in preschool programs had an immediate effect on children’s cognitive development. With developmentally appropriate practice becoming the conventional wisdom, there are fewer examples of curricula that used direct instruction as the main pedagogical method in the 1990s and beyond.

- “Individualized” instruction had a positive impact on cognitive and school outcomes.

- Smaller groups and lower staff ratios provide more opportunity for teachers to match content to children’s particular developmental levels so that they are able to learn various academic concepts.
Measuring Quality

Snapshot Data (FirstSchool/FPG)

Activity Setting - Pre K
- Basics: 15%
- Meals/Snacks: 9%
- Whole Group: 24%
- Choice: 37%
- Station: 5%
- Small Group: 2%

Activity Setting - K
- Basics: 19%
- Meals/Snacks: 5%
- Whole Group: 45%
- Choice: 6%
- Station: 2%
- Small Group: 0%

Activity Setting - 1st Grade
- Basics: 23%
- Meals/Snacks: 4%
- Whole Group: 45%
- Choice: 5%
- Station: 4%
- Small Group: 1%

Activity Setting – 2nd Grade
- Basics: 26%
- Meals/Snacks: 4%
- Whole Group: 33%
- Choice: 8%
- Station: 0%
- Small Group: 0%
Do Credentials Matter?

Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation
Teacher Qualifications

• “Available studies alone are insufficient to enable conclusions as to whether a bachelor’s degree alone improves the quality and effectiveness of educators, whether for early childhood settings or for K-12 schools.”

• “Studies conclude that college education or a specialization in early childhood education alone is not a guarantee of better instruction and improved child outcomes.”

• “The quality of teachers’ prior learning experiences in higher education and the quality of their ongoing professional learning and working environments all play important roles in enabling effective teaching and learning.”
“Lower educational expectations for early childhood educators than for elementary school teachers perpetuates the perception—and policies that reflect the perception—that educating children before kindergarten requires less expertise than educating K-3 students.”

“Lead educators who support the development and early learning of children from birth through age 8 should have at a minimum a bachelor’s degree and specialization in the knowledge and competencies needed to serve as a care and education professional.”
Administrator Qualifications

- “The importance of leadership is unequivocal, yet the expectations for leaders in settings for children aged 0-8 do not (align) with the responsibilities of these leaders for fostering early learning and development.”

- “Current expectations and policies for education and certification of elementary school principals are not well aligned with the interests of early elementary teachers and students and the need to understand childhood development research and best practices in instruction in preschool and the primary grades.”

- “Current education and certification requirements and expectations for directors in early childhood settings outside of school systems are inconsistent across states, credentialing is largely voluntary, and do not adequately reflect the knowledge and competencies needed.”
Reliable, trustworthy sources for information on early education
Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) as Change Agents. Edited by W. Steven Barnett, Stacie G. Goffin and Kimberly Boller

*Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

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QRIS
National Learning Network

About QRIS NLN ▼ Resource Libraries ▼ Tools ▼ State Contacts & Map ▼ National Meeting ▼

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The National Resource Library contains resources on a variety of QRIS focus areas. You can search resources by topic, author, date and/or type.

Select a Topic ▶ Advanced Search

- Advocacy & Early Childhood Systems Building
- Culture, Language & Race in QRIS
- Data Collection & Data Systems
- Engagement & Outreach
- Evaluation & Research
- Financing & Financial Incentives
- Leadership & Professional Development
- Monitoring & Accountability
ECE Consensus Letter for Researchers

As policymakers debate investing in quality early childhood education programs, they should note the widespread agreement among researchers about the value of such programs. An extensive body of research in education, developmental psychology, neuroscience, medicine and economics shows that quality early childhood education programs produce better education, health, economic and social outcomes for children, families, and the nation. As researchers, we urge policymakers to make decisions based on the full body of scientific knowledge about early education and child development.

If you are a scholar or researcher, please click on this link to add your signature.

Quality early childhood education can reduce the achievement gap. Too many American children start school inadequately prepared to succeed. Gaps in cognitive, linguistic, social, and emotional skills due to unequal opportunities become evident well before children enter kindergarten. The resulting achievement gap widens as children progress through school, despite strong efforts at remediation. The long-term consequences include high rates of school failure, grade repetition, inappropriate special education placements, and dropout involvement in risky behaviors and crime; and, even higher risk for adult chronic disease including hypertension, heart disease, obesity and diabetes. These problems are not limited to the poor: many children who fail a grade and drop out are from middle-income families. The costs of remediation, social dependency,
ECE Consensus Letter for Researchers

- Quality early childhood education can reduce the achievement gap.
- Access to quality early childhood education is essential.
- Develop the whole child with quality programs.
- Quality programs include health and home.
- Quality programs can be brought to scale.
- Quality programs produce quality life outcomes.
- Quality early childhood education benefits children from diverse family backgrounds and circumstances.
- Investing in quality early childhood education pays off.
- Critics of greater investment ignore the full body of evidence.
• How do you apply this conversation about research in your discussions with policymakers about QRIS? Families? Administrators?
• Does your state have a research foundation behind its QRIS quality?
Parting Comments

• Research results should shape beliefs, not vice versa.

• Be evaluative of ALL research claims. Be prepared. Someone will always find a reason to disagree.

• Research evolves. It should spawn on-going, inter-related changes in “The System” with its programs, policies, practices, & resources.

• We don’t know everything, but we know more than we did before. By addressing new research questions today, we’ll know even more tomorrow to the benefit of children, families, professionals, and communities.
For More Information

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