

Evidence of Academic or Emotional Harm of Preschool Education or All-Day Kindergarten

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2007 Study

A 2007 study funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development-funded tracked 1,364 children who had participated in early childhood education. Preschool participants were more likely to score higher on factors of aggression and disobedience as reported by their teachers. This finding was true even for children who attended high quality center-based care. The more time a child spent in center-based care the more likely he or she was to be described by sixth grade teachers as one who “gets in many fights,” is “disobedient at school,” and “argues a lot.”

Quebec’s Universal Childcare Program

“Several measures we looked at suggest that children were worse off in the years following the introduction of the universal childcare program. We studied a wide range of measures of child well-being from anxiety and hyperactivity to social and motor skills. For almost every measure, we find that the increased use of childcare was associated with a decrease in their well-being relative to other children. For example, reported fighting and aggressive behavior increased substantially.” (Michael Baker, Jonathan Gruber, and Kevin Milligan, What Can We Learn from Quebec’s Universal Childcare Program?, (C.D. Howe Institute, February 2006).

http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/ebrief_25_english.pdf)

2002 NICHD STUDY

A 2002 study NICHD followed a group of more than 1,300 children in 10 different states through their first seven years of life and found that children who spend more hours per week in non-parental childcare have more behavior problems, including aggressive, defiant and disobedient behavior in kindergarten.

“Attendance in preschool centers, even for short periods of time each week, hinders the rate at which young children develop social skills and display the motivation to engage classroom tasks, as reported by their kindergarten teachers...Our findings are consistent with the negative effect of non-parental care on the single dimension of social development first detected by the NICHD research team [in 2002].”- Fuller, et. al. 11/05 (This references the study immediately above.)]

Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey (ELCS)

Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey (ELCS), researchers concluded that preschool has a positive impact on reading and mathematics scores in the short term and a negative effect on behavior. While the positive academic impacts mostly fade away by the spring of the first grade, the negative effects persist into the later grades. (Katherine A. Magnuson, Christopher J. Ruhm, Jane Waldfogel, “Does Prekindergarten Improve School Preparation and Performance?” National Bureau of Economic Research, April 2004)

Also using the ECLS data, Lisa Hickman at Ohio University, compared children in center care with children who were taught at home. She found that center care children had higher math and reading skills and poorer social skills prior to kindergarten entry. In first grade, however, preschool participants’ cognitive advantage disappeared and their social skills deteriorated. (Lisa N. Hickman, “Who Should Care for Our Children? The Effects of Home Versus Center Care on Child Cognition and Social Adjustment,” Journal of Family Issues 27 (May 2006): 652-684)

2001-2004 Georgia Early Childhood Study

“Students enrolled in the [Georgia] Head Start program consistently tested below the national norm and significantly behind their peers. Students enrolled in the Pre-K program exceeded the national norm by the end of kindergarten but fell slightly below it by the end of first grade. Students who either enrolled in a private preschool program or did not attend an all day four year old program consistently performed at or above the national norm.” (Gary T. Henry, Dana K. Rickman, Bentley D. Ponder, Laura W. Henderson, Andrew Mashburn, Craig S. Gordon, “The Georgia Early Childhood Study 2001-2004 Final Report,” Georgia State University, 2005, at <http://aysps.gsu.edu/publications/2005/EarlyChildhoodReport.pdf>, p. 59)

Oklahoma preschool program

In the 2005-2006 school year, the Oklahoma state preschool program that began in 1980 and became universal in 1988, had 33,296 participants and boasted the highest percentage of children in a government preschool program of any state, according to national surveys. Seventy percent of Oklahoma's four-year-olds are enrolled in the state preschool program, also according to a national survey. In 1992, Oklahoma's fourth graders scored ahead of the national average in National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading and math. Today average scale scores for Oklahoma fourth graders are behind the national average. Of all the states that took the fourth grade reading test in 1992, Oklahoma is the only one that has seen its scores fall over a 15-year period. (See U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard>)

New Jersey

In 1996, the state began to provide preschool for four-year-olds in low income school districts. Following the New Jersey Supreme Court decision 1998 *Abbott v. Burke*, the state has funded full-time, year round pre-kindergarten programs for all three- and four-year-olds in the state's 31 lowest income school districts. The state funds other public education programs in the Abbott districts as well. Through public schools, private preschools and Head Start centers, the pre-kindergarten program served more than 40,500 children in the 2005-2006 school year. Yet, according to researcher Lisa Snell, "more New Jersey children score below basic (which means they cannot read) on the NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] fourth-grade reading test in 2005 than in 2003 or 1992...In the case of disadvantaged students who qualify for the free lunch program, 52 percent scored below basic in 1992, 54 percent scored below basic in 2003, and 55 percent scored below basic in 2005 in fourth-grade reading." (Lisa Snell "Preschool reality check in New Jersey," *The Record*, Monday, July 30, 2007 at www.reason.org/commentaries/snell_20070809.shtml.)

Rand Institute Study

"In other words, after controlling for nonacademic readiness at kindergarten, children who had attended a full-day program at kindergarten showed poorer mathematics performance in fifth grade than did children who had attended a part-day kindergarten program." (Le, Vi-Nhuan, et. al. (2006) *School Readiness, Full-Day Kindergarten, and Student Achievement: An Empirical Investigation* Rand Institute available at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG558>)

"Attendance in a full-day kindergarten program was negatively associated with attitudes toward learning, self-control, and interpersonal skills, and was positively related toward internalizing (measured by a scale indicating presence of anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, and sadness) and externalizing behaviors." (Ibid.)

Abecedarian Project

A 1985 study found negative behavior impacts among participants of the Abecedarian Project, a program held up as a model intervention. Haskins investigated this aspect of the Abecedarian Project. He found treatment children were "more aggressive than children in the control group" in elementary school. (Ron Haskins, "Public School Aggression among Children with Varying Day-Care Experiences," *Child Development*, Vol., 56, No. 3, June 1985, p. 695.)

Head Start

Other researchers have found negative impacts on social-emotional development among Head Start participants. In this case, participants had lower mean scores in communication, daily living skills, and social skills domains, and the total adaptive behavior score. (Yvonne B. Reedy, "A Comparison of Long Range Effects of Participation in Project Head Start and Impact of Three Differing Delivery Models," Pennsylvania State University (State College, Penn.: 1991).

White House Conference on Early Childhood

"Most out of home child care cannot provide a number of [these] essential building blocks... We need to gradually bring about social arrangements that maximize at home care of young infants by their parents." – Stanley Greenspan, MD, professor of pediatrics and psychiatry and speaker for Clinton White House Conference on Early Childhood, George Washington University School of Medicine

The Harvard Guide to Psychiatry

“Since the 1960’s a vast body of research has stressed the importance to the developing child of the physical presence and emotional accessibility of both parents. ...the loss of a parent through death, divorce, illness, or a time demanding job contributes to many forms of emotional disorder, especially the anger, the low self esteem, and the depression that accompany adolescent suicide.” – Armand Nicholi, MD, *The Harvard Guide to Psychiatry*, 3rd edition, Belknap/Harvard Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999, p. 623

David Elkind

“There is no evidence that such early instruction has lasting benefits, and considerable evidence that it can do lasting harm...If we do not wake up to the potential danger of these harmful practices, we may do serious damage to a large segment of the next generation...” (David Elkind, *Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk* (New York: Knopf, 1997): 4, as quoted in Olsen, 2005).

Edward Ziglar, co-founder of Head Start

“There is a large body of evidence indicating that there is little if anything to be gained by exposing middleclass children to early education... Those who argue in favor of universal preschool education ignore evidence that indicates early schooling is inappropriate for many four-year olds and that it may even be harmful to their development.” (Edward Ziglar, co-founder of Head Start and director of the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University, “Formal Schooling for Four-Year-Olds? No” in *Early Schooling: the National Debate*, ed. Sharon L. Kagan and Edward F. Zigler (New Haven, Conn.:Yale University Press, 1987, as quoted in Olsen, 2005)