



Missouri Early Childhood Programs: Subsidy and Workforce Issues

If our society is to prosper in the future, we will need to make sure that all children have the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially, and emotionally.... These early investments reap dividends as child development translates into economic development later on.¹

policy brief

Economic Development: The Lasting Impact of Early Childhood Education

Economic data indicate investments in early childhood education provide substantial, long term dividends among adults who attended high quality programs during their preschool years.² Research suggests a significant contributor to these positive outcomes is the workforce: a highly qualified workforce in the field of early childhood (EC) education has a positive, lasting impact on children.^{3,4} When examining longitudinal research focused on the economic outcomes of high quality EC programs, the findings are compelling:

- Children scored significantly *higher* on a range of standardized measures throughout their school years, were *less likely* to be referred for remedial or special education, and were *less likely* to be involved in any form of criminal activity when compared to peers who did not attend high quality programs.⁵
- EC workforce characteristics, such as higher levels of formal education, more hours of training, and academic degrees (e.g., child development, early childhood education) are significantly associated with high quality programs and positive child outcomes.⁶
- Cost-benefit analyses show a significant return on investment (\$3.78-\$8.74 return/\$1 investment)⁷ in short- and long-term outcomes (see table below).⁸

Short-term and Long-term Outcomes of High Quality EC Programs	
Child Outcomes	Adult Outcomes
<i>Higher rate of:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completing high school 2. Above average test scores 3. Positive attitudes toward school among children and parents 	<i>Higher rate of:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stable employment 2. Home & car ownership 3. Family involvement 4. Education attainment
<i>Lower rate of:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remedial education 2. Special education 	<i>Lower rate of:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social service use 2. Criminal involvement 3. Substance abuse

The research literature points out that children, who are *most* at-risk for poor academic outcomes, benefit the most from high quality EC programs. This includes children who reside in low-income families or rural communities.

These findings inform discussions about Missouri's economic development. In order to maximize long-term economic viability, we must ensure that the quality of our current EC programs and workforce of the highest quality.⁹

Research Findings: Missouri's Early Childhood Program Quality and Workforce

Research data from 763 Missouri EC programs were examined to identify characteristics of the programs and workforce. Using program accreditation as an indicator for high quality and educational attainment as an indicator for a highly qualified workforce, the data provide statistically significant findings. These findings inform the policy recommendations.

High Quality Programs: Accreditation

When an EC program becomes accredited, it means that many aspects of the program, including teacher qualifications and use of a curriculum, meet the highest standards of the early childhood field. Across Missouri, EC programs located in urban communities, when compared to EC programs located in rural communities, are more likely to be:

- Accredited program (14% versus 8%)
- Accredited and serve infants (15% versus 5%)
- Accredited and accept child care subsidy funds (14% versus 4%)

Highly Qualified Workforce: Teacher Education and Training

Across Missouri's urban and rural communities, a pattern of teacher education and training was identified based on whether or not the program enrolled children whose family participated in the child care subsidy program. Among EC programs that *currently do not* enroll children whose families receive child care subsidy funds, when compared to EC programs that do, teachers reported:

- More years of formal education
- More years of child-focused formal education (e.g., child development, EC education, CDA)
- Fewer hours of training

Implications of Research Findings

The data indicate that certain groups of children have an increased likelihood of attending lower quality programs and are less likely to have a highly qualified teacher. These groups of children are: children receiving subsidized care and children residing in rural areas.

Policy Recommendations

Based on these research findings from Missouri data, it appears specific policy work can occur in four areas.

1. Tie higher levels of child care subsidy reimbursement to higher levels of EC program quality, to provide an incentive for program improvements.
2. Support EC professionals who provide subsidized child care to pursue formal education in child development/EC education (e.g., T.E.A.C.H.) to improve the education of the EC workforce.
3. Increase training and technical assistance provided to rural EC programs to improve the quality of programs, especially those who provide infant care.
4. Encourage accredited rural centers and family child care homes to participate in the child care subsidy program, to support rural families with low-incomes.

(Mayfield, W., Thornburg, K., & Scott, J., 2006)

For a complete list of references or more information about this topic, contact the Center for Family Policy and Research

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¹ Frameworks Institute (2006). *Talking early child development and exploring the consequences of frame choices*. Retrieved July 11, 2006 (www.frameworksinstitute.org).

² Galinsky, E. (2006, February). The economic benefits of high-quality early childhood programs: What makes the difference? The Committee for Economic Development: Author.

³ Evans, J. (2006). Economic perspectives on early care and education. In M. Zaslow, & I. Martinez-Beck (Eds.), *Critical issues in early childhood professional development*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

⁴ Whitebook, M. (2003). *Early education quality: Higher teacher qualifications for better learning environments – A review of literature*. Berkeley, CA: Institute of Industrial Relations, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

⁵ Galinsky, E. (2006, February). The economic benefits of high-quality early childhood programs: What makes the difference? The Committee for Economic Development: Author.

⁶ See literature review in Tout, K., Zaslow, M., & Berry, D. (2006). Quality and qualifications: Links between professional development and quality in early care and education settings and Barnett, W. S. & Kelley, P. J. (2006). A framework for cost-benefit analysis of professional development in early care and education. In M. Zaslow, & I. Martinez-Beck (Eds.), *Critical issues in early childhood professional development*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

⁷ Lynch, R. G. (2004). *Exceptional returns: Economic, fiscal, and social benefits of investments in early childhood development*. Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute.

⁸ Schweinhart, L.J. (2005). *High/Scope Perry preschool study through age 40*. High/Scope Educational Research Foundation: Author.

⁹ Heckman, J. J. (n.d.). *Policies to foster human capital*. Retrieved July 14, 2006 from <http://www.jcpr.org/wpfiles/Wildavsky.pdf?CFID=3133113&CFTOKEN=51494260>