



The Missouri Quality Rating System (QRS) School Readiness Study Results

New findings from the Missouri Quality Rating System School Readiness Study indicate that some aspects of children's school readiness are hurt by low quality early childhood programs. Children in poverty are particularly at-risk for falling behind.

The QRS Study

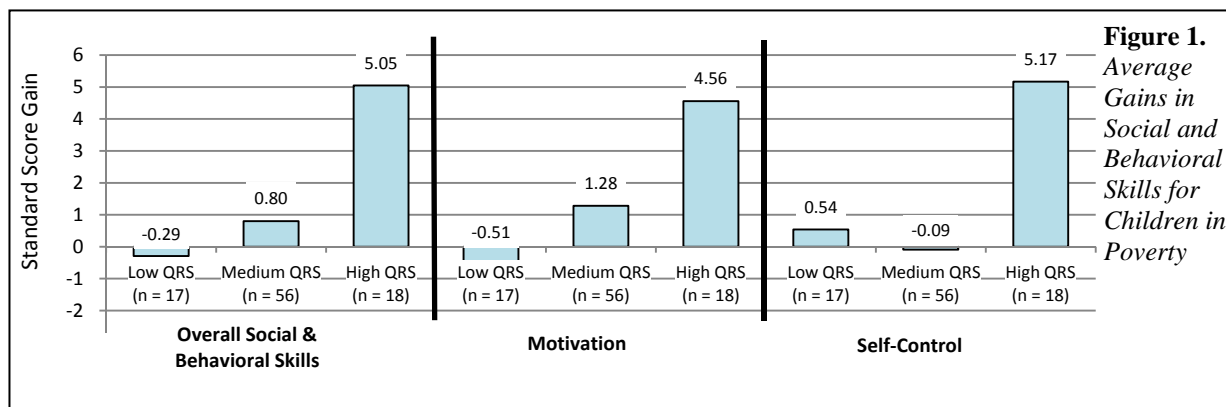
- This study asked if preschool children who attend higher quality early childhood programs show greater gains in school readiness than their peers who attend lower quality programs.
- The study consisted of 38 early childhood programs which included 350 children ages 3 to 5 from 66 classrooms. All children attended an early childhood program full-time.
- Each early childhood program was assessed with the Missouri Quality Rating System (MO QRS). The MO QRS assesses the quality of early childhood programs by rating program personnel, program content, and program management on a scale ranging from 1 to 5 stars.
- There were 3 categories of quality based on star range: Low (1-2 stars), Medium (3 stars), and High (4-5 stars).
- Since school readiness covers several aspects of development, each child's school readiness, knowledge, and skills were measured using a wide range of assessments.
- Individual child assessments were conducted by experienced assessors in the fall of 2008 and spring of 2009.
- 30% of children were considered *children in poverty* (eligible to receive free or reduced lunch).

Overall Results

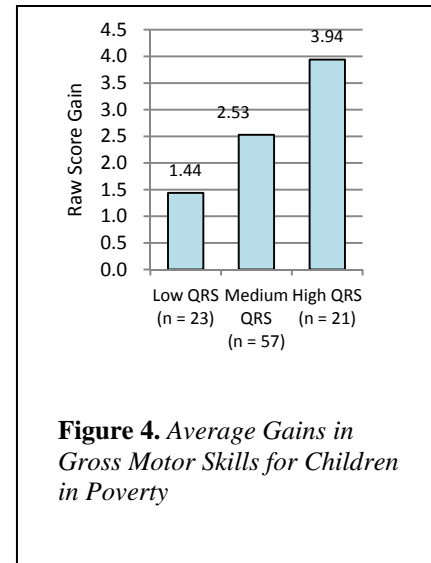
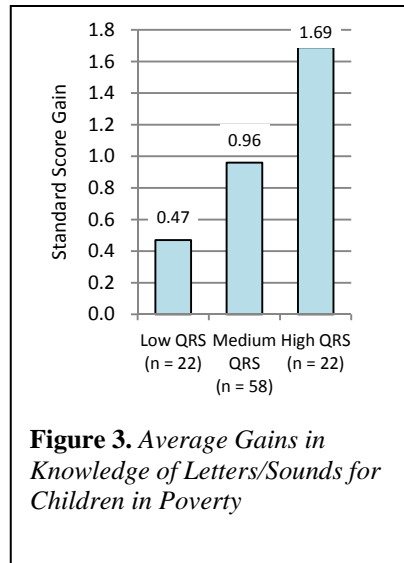
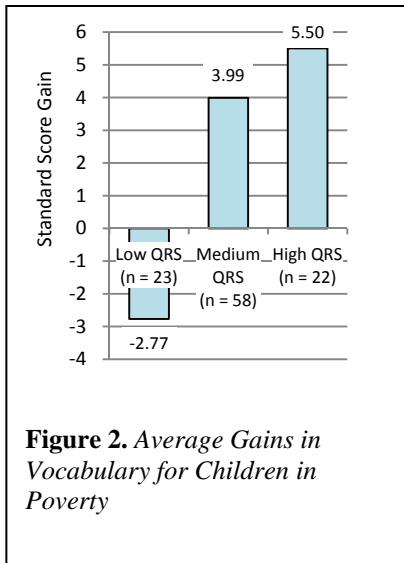
- Based on the MO QRS, 73 children attended low quality programs, 209 were in medium quality programs, and 68 were in high quality programs.
- All children in low quality programs lost ground when it came to overall social and behavioral development, motivation, self-control, and positive adult relationships, when compared to children in medium and high quality programs.
- Children attending low quality early childhood programs actually scored lower over time.

Results for Children In Poverty

- Compared to children in low quality programs, children in high quality programs showed significant gains from pretest to posttest on overall social and behavioral skills, motivation, and vocabulary. In addition, they showed marginally significant gains in knowledge of letters/sounds, gross motor skills, and self-control.
- The large gains typically occurred among children who attended high quality programs.



policy brief



- Compared to their peers in low quality programs, children in poverty attending medium quality programs showed significant gains on vocabulary.
- Compared to their peers in medium quality programs, children in high quality programs showed significant gains on self-control and marginally significant gains in overall social and emotional development.

Conclusions

- In general, all children’s social and emotional development was hurt by attending low quality programs.
- Children in poverty attending low quality programs gained significantly less vocabulary when compared to children who attended high quality programs.
- Children in poverty attending high quality programs made significant gains in early literacy skills and social-emotional development.

Policy Recommendations

- It is imperative that all children have the opportunity to attend medium or high quality programs.
- Children in poverty are particularly at-risk for falling behind in school readiness and thus need access to higher quality early childhood programs.

(Compiled by Tricia Harris, October 2009)

Reference

Thornburg, K. R., Mayfield, W. A., Hawks, J. S., & Fuger, K. L. (2009). *The Missouri quality rating system school readiness study*. Columbia, MO: Center for Family Policy & Research.

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For more information about this topic, please contact the Center for Family Policy & Research

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