

Quality Pre-Kindergarten: Key to Crime Prevention and School Success

A Research Brief by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is a national anti-crime organization of over 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and victims of violence.

Summary

No one cares more about putting dangerous criminals behind bars than the 2,000 law enforcement leaders and victims of violence who make up FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS. But law enforcement leaders know from experience that intervening early in a child's life is the best way to prevent crime. Research shows that quality pre-kindergarten cuts crime and leads to higher rates of high school graduation. Tragically, inadequate funding denies thousands of eligible children access to these programs.

Quality Pre-Kindergarten Cuts Crime

Research has repeatedly shown that quality pre-kindergarten, especially for at-risk children, cuts later crime. For example:

- Michigan's High/Scope Perry Preschool program served three- and four-year-old children from low-income families. Children who were not in the program were five times more likely to become chronic lawbreakers as adults than those who were in the program.
- Chicago's federally-funded Child-Parent Centers have served 100,000 three- and four-year-olds from low-income neighborhoods since 1967. Research shows that at-risk children who did not attend the program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than similar kids who did attend the program.

Most at-risk kids, even with

poor pre-kindergarten, become contributing adults. Nevertheless, failing to assure access to quality pre-kindergarten programs multiplies the risk that these children will become involved in crime and violence and decreases the likelihood that they will ever achieve their full potential.

Quality Pre-Kindergarten Programs Help Children Succeed

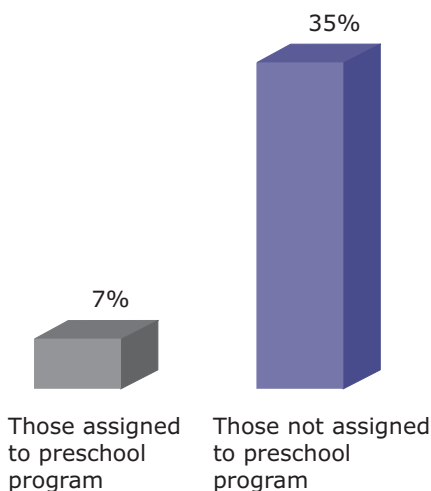
Quality pre-kindergarten also produces extraordinary academic and economic benefits. For example:

- Compared to children who attended the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program, children who were not enrolled were twice as likely to be placed in special education classes and were a third less likely to graduate from high school on time. In contrast, children in the program were four times more likely to have yearly earnings of \$24,000 or more.

Quality Pre-Kindergarten Reduces Future Crime

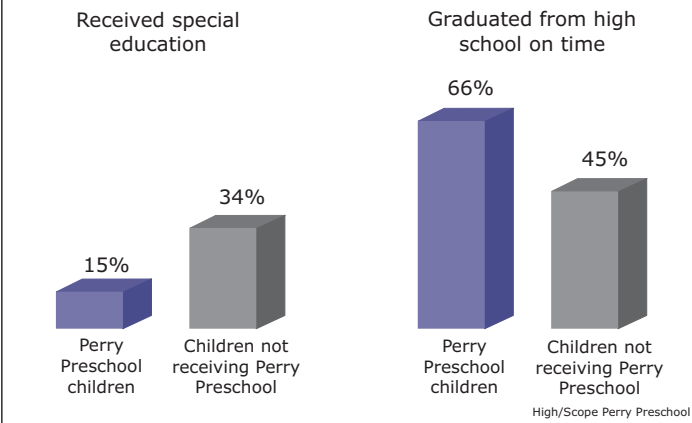
At-risk 3 and 4 year olds randomly excluded from the High/Scope Perry Preschool program were five times more likely to become chronic offenders (more than 4 arrests) by age 27.

Chronic Lawbreakers at Age 27



- Compared to children who attended the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, children not in the program were 67 percent more likely to have been retained a grade in school and 71 percent more likely to be placed in special education classes.
- Compared to children not enrolled in the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention program, children enrolled in the program were half as likely to be assigned to special education classes, 43 percent less likely to be held back a grade in school, and nearly three times as likely to have attended a four-year college.

At-Risk Children Not Attending High/Scope Perry Preschool Were Twice as Likely to Need Special Education and a Third Less Likely to Graduate From High School on Time



Parents Need Help Paying for Pre-Kindergarten

Many parents cannot afford to pay for quality pre-kindergarten any more than they could pay private school tuition if public schools closed. One year of quality pre-kindergarten costs \$5,000-\$7,000—more than the average cost of public college tuition in the United States. Pre-kindergarten for two children costs \$10,000-\$14,000 annually—more than the income of a full-time, minimum-wage worker.

Need for Quality Pre-K is Enormous

The federally-funded Head Start program for children in poverty is so under-funded that it can serve only six out of ten eligible three- and four-year-olds, and can serve most of them for only part of the time parents are working.

The federally-funded Child Care and Development Block Grant, which helps low-income parents pay for early education, can serve only one out of seven eligible children, and provides funds too meager for parents to purchase quality care.

Some state initiatives, like Georgia’s universal pre-kindergarten program and North Carolina’s Smart Start, are making major contributions. But no

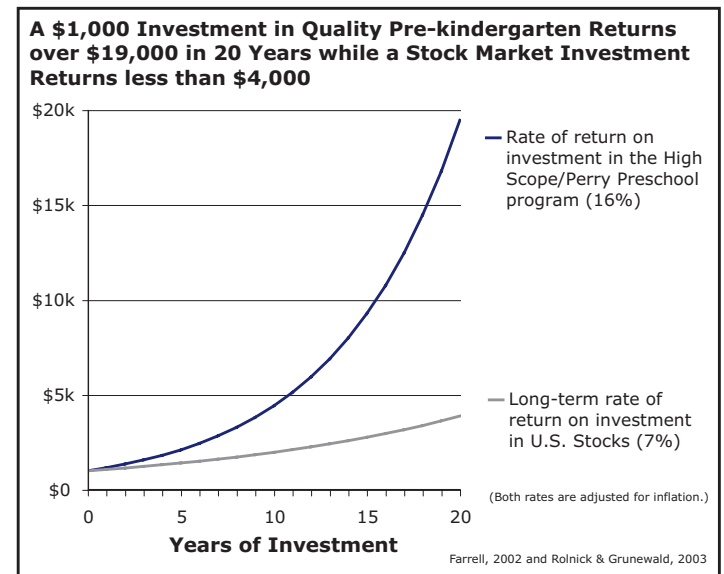
state comes close to meeting the needs of low- and moderate-income working families for quality pre-kindergarten.

Quality Pre-Kindergarten Saves Money

The High/Scope Perry Preschool program cuts crime, welfare, and other costs so much that it saves more than \$7—including more than \$6 in crime savings—for every \$1 invested. An analysis by Arthur Rolnick of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis shows that the program’s annual return on investment is 16 percent after adjusting for inflation. Seventy-five percent of that return goes to taxpayers in the form of decreased special education expenditures, crime costs, and welfare payments. In comparison, the long-term average annual return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent. Thus, an initial investment of \$1,000 in a program like the Perry Preschool will return over \$19,000 in 20 years, while the same initial investment in the stock market will return less than \$4,000. Failing to invest in quality pre-kindergarten programs squanders billions.

Law Enforcement is United

Law enforcement leaders and researchers agree: It is time to invest in what works to help to prevent crime and produce successful schools.



Endnotes

- **Quality Pre-kindergarten Cut Crime**

High/Scope Perry Preschool research results:

Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., & Weikart, D. P. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Chicago Child-Parent Centers research results:

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 285*(18), 2339-2346.

- **Quality Pre-Kindergarten Programs Help Children's Development:**

High/Scope Perry Preschool research results:

Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., & Weikart, D. P. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Chicago Child-Parent Centers research results:

Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 285*(18), 2339-2346.

Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention research results:

Masse, L. N., & Barnett, W. S. (2002). *A benefit cost analysis of the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention*. Retrieved from the NIEER Web site: <http://nieer.org/resources/research/AbecedarianStudy.pdf>. It was found that children who attended the program were 49 percent less likely to be assigned to special education classes.

- **Parents Need Help Paying for Pre-kindergarten:**

Cost of one year of quality pre-kindergarten:

The cost of high quality pre-kindergarten is based on the cost per child for the Chicago Child Parent Centers and Head Start. For the cost of the Chicago Child Parent Centers, see: Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2002). Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Centers. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(4), 267-303. The figure from this article has been recalculated to reflect 2003 dollars. A. J. Reynolds (personal communication, August 7, 2003). For the cost of Head Start, see: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Head Start Bureau. (2003). *Head Start program fact sheet, fiscal year 2002*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/2003.htm>

Public college tuition in the United States:

American Association of State Colleges and Universities, & National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. (2003). *Student charges and financial aid: 2002-2003*. Washington, DC: American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The average cost of tuition and fees for a public four-year institution in the United States was \$4,110 for the 2002-2003 academic year.

Minimum wage in the United States:

U.S. Department of Labor. (2003). *Minimum wage laws in the states*. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm>. Minimum wage in the US is \$5.15 per hour. An annual salary of \$10,712 was computed by multiplying: \$5.15 x 40 hours per week x 52 weeks per year.

- **Need for Quality Pre-K is Enormous**

Head Start serves only six out of ten eligible children nationwide:

The percentage of income eligible children who are enrolled in Head Start was computed by dividing the number of 3- and 4-year-old children served in 2001 (n=805,659) by the number of 3 and 4-year-old children in poverty in 2001 (n=1,369,000). For number of 3 and 4 year-old children served by Head Start see: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Head Start Bureau. (n.d.). *2002 Head Start fact sheet*. Retrieved from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/factsheets/02_hsfhs.htm. For number of 3- and 4-year-old children in poverty see: U. S. Bureau of the Census, & Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2002, September). *Detailed poverty tables: 2001 P60 package*. In *Annual demographic survey: March supplement*. Retrieved from http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032002/pov/new23_001.htm

Only one in seven eligible families received Child Care and Development Block Grant subsidies:

Mezey, J., Greenberg, M., and Schumacher, R. (2002). *The vast majority of federally-eligible children did not receive child care assistance in FY 2000: Increased child care funding needed to help more families*. Retrieved from the Center for Law and Social Policy Web site: http://www.clasp.org/Pubs/DMS/Documents/1024427246.32/view_html

- **Quality Pre-Kindergarten Saves Money**

High/Scope Perry Preschool cost savings:

Barnett, S.W. (1993). Cost benefit analysis. In L.J. Schweinhart, H.V. Barnes, & D. P. Weikart (Eds.), *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27* (pp. 143-173). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

High/Scope investment returns comparison:

For the rate of return on High/Scope Perry, see: Rolnick, A., & Grunewald, R. (2003). *Early childhood development: Economic development with a high public return*. Retrieved from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Web site: <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/pubs/fedgaz/03-03/earlychild.cfm>. For the rate of return on the stock market, see: Farrell, C. (2002, November 22). *The best investment: America's kids*. Retrieved from the Business Week Web site: http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/nov2002/nf20021122_0334.htm

- **Law Enforcement is United**

Law enforcement survey:

Mason-Dixon Polling and Research. (2002, August). *National law enforcement leadership survey*. Retrieved from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Web site: <http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/nationalkidspoll2002.pdf>. In response to a Mason-Dixon Polling and Research survey, 71 percent of the nation's law enforcement leaders chose providing "more after-school programs and educational child care programs" as the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime. Note: Many respondents favored adopting more than one strategy, and a majority ranked hiring more police officers as the second strategy with the greatest impact.