

# Preventing Crime with Pre-kindergarten: A Critical Investment in Tennessee's Safety

A Research Brief by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is an anti-crime organization of over 2,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and victims of violence nationwide, including more than 40 in Tennessee.

## Summary

Kindergarten teachers report that 35 percent of children are not ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. Quality pre-kindergarten programs help children learn to get along with others and begin school ready to succeed. Research also shows these programs later result in lower crime and drug use, higher graduation rates, and fewer families receiving welfare. Tennessee has taken some steps in the right direction by funding a state pre-kindergarten program. Nevertheless, thousands of Tennessee's children are denied access to early learning programs due to inadequate state and federal funding. This compromises the future of young children and threatens the public safety for all. The federal and state governments should increase funding so all families have access to quality pre-kindergarten programs.

## Quality Pre-kindergarten Cuts Crime

Research shows that quality pre-kindergarten programs help children learn to get along with others and start school ready to succeed. For at-risk children who attend quality programs, these short-term gains are followed by long-term benefits such as lower crime rates. For example:

- 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 similar children were 70 percent more likely to have been arrested for a violent crime by age 18 than those who attended the program. This program will have prevented an estimated 33,000 crimes by the time the children already served reach the age of 18.

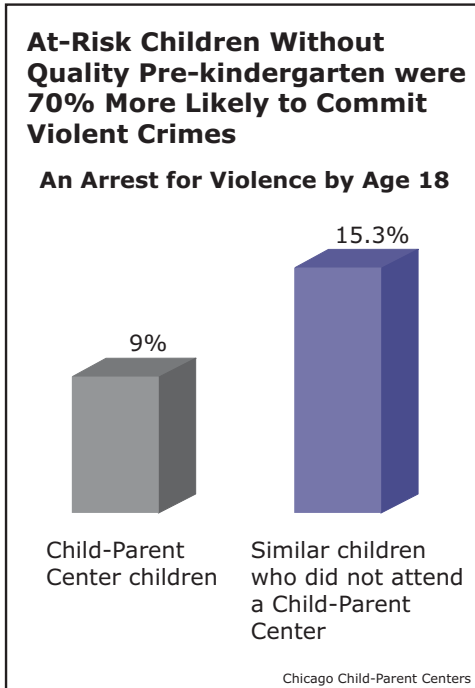
- Michigan's High/Scope Perry Preschool program served three- and four-year-old children from low-income families. Children randomly assigned to a control group were five times more likely to have become chronic lawbreakers as adults than those assigned to attend the program.

## Parents Need Help Paying for Pre-k

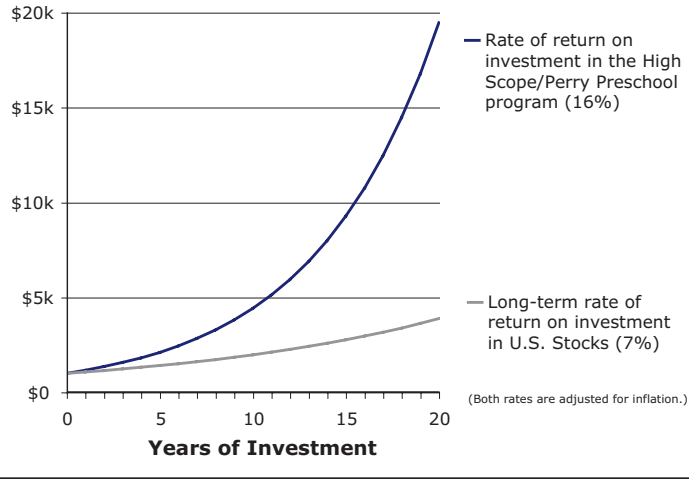
Many parents cannot afford to pay for quality pre-kindergarten services any more than they could pay private school tuition if public schools closed. One year of quality pre-kindergarten for a three- or four-year-old, such as the Chicago Child-Parent Center or Head Start, costs \$5,000-\$7,000—more than the average cost of public college tuition in Tennessee. Services for two children cost \$10,000-\$14,000 annually—more than the income of a full-time, minimum-wage worker in Tennessee. The burden doesn't end there since many working parents must also enroll their children in child care for the afternoon hours.

Quality programs prepare children for kindergarten, while they also provide a stimulating and safe environment for children during the parents' workday. Sixty percent (or 255,731) of children under the age of six in Tennessee have both parents or their only parent in the workforce, and are, therefore, in the care of someone other than their parent(s) during the work day. The question is whether they are in "child storage" (for instance, parked in front of a TV set), or in quality programs.

Quality programs have well-trained teachers, preferably with a bachelor's degree in early



**A \$1,000 Investment in Quality Pre-kindergarten Returns over \$19,000 in 20 Years while a Stock Market Investment Returns less than \$4,000**

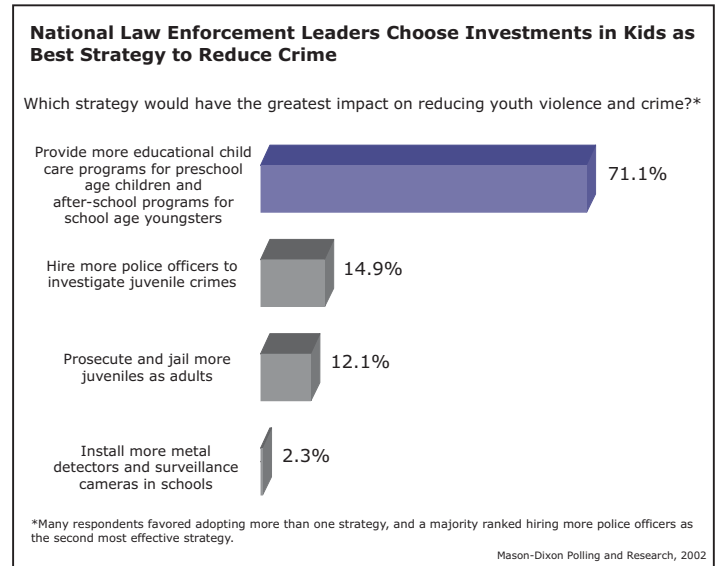


more than \$7 (including more than \$6 in crime savings) for every \$1 invested. An analysis by Arthur Rolnick of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, shows that the annual return on investment in this program is 16 percent after adjusting for inflation. Seventy-five percent of that return goes to taxpayers in the form of decreased special education expenditures, crime costs and welfare payments. In comparison, the long-term return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent annually after adjusting for inflation. 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.

A study of the Chicago Child-Parent Centers also showed a savings of \$7 for every \$1 invested. Failing to invest in quality pre-kindergarten programs squanders billions.

**Law Enforcement Leaders are United**

In response to a Mason-Dixon Polling and Research survey, an overwhelming 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. If Tennessee is really serious about cutting crime, additional state and federal funds must be allocated so that all at-risk children can receive quality pre-kindergarten services.



childhood education, low staff turnover rates, and competitive teacher salaries. Model programs have 5-10 children per staff member, class sizes of 12-20 children, and a strong parent-involvement component. Funding must be adequate to meet these quality standards.

**Services Denied to Needy Kids**

Inadequate funding denies thousands of Tennessee’s children, especially those most at-risk, access to quality pre-kindergarten. The federally-funded Head Start program for children in poverty serves only six out of ten eligible children nationwide due to inadequate funding. In Tennessee, Head Start and the state-funded pre-kindergarten program together served approximately 18,300 children in 2002. This means that only 12 percent of all three- and four-year olds were served by these programs.

Another federally-funded program, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG), helps low-income parents pay for child care. This program is also so inadequately funded that only one in six eligible Tennessee children received federal CCDBG support in 1999.

**Investments that Save Money**

The High/Scope Perry Preschool program cut crime, welfare and other costs so much that it saved

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# Endnotes

## • Summary

### 35 percent of children are not properly prepared for kindergarten:

Boyer, E. L. (1991). National survey of kindergarten teachers. In E. L. Boyer (Ed.), *Ready to learn: A mandate for the nation*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Princeton University Press. As cited in Urahn, S.K. (2001). *Promoting universal access to high quality early education for three and four year olds: The Pew Charitable trusts and the Starting Early, Starting Strong Initiative*. Washington, DC: Pew Charitable Trusts.

## • Quality Pre-kindergarten Programs Cut Crime

### 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.

### 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.

## • Parents Need Help Paying for Pre-k:

### Cost of one year of quality pre-kindergarten:

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 Tennessee:

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 Tennessee was \$3,583 for the 2002-2003 academic year.

### Minimum wage in Tennessee:

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 TN 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.

### 255,731 children under the age of 6 in Tennessee are in nonparental care:

The percentage of children under age 6 in Tennessee who have both or their only parent in the labor force was determined by dividing the number of children under age 6 with both or their only parent in the labor force [n=255,731—which was computed by adding the following subtotals: 162,249 (children living with both parents/both parents in labor force); 21,139 (children living with father only/father in labor force); and 72,343 (children living with mother only/mother in labor force)] by the total number of children under age 6 (n=425,940). For these figures, see: U.S. Census Bureau. (2002). *Census 2000 summary file 3 (SF 3)—P46. Age of own children under 18 years in families and subfamilies by living arrangements by employment status of parents*. Washington, DC: Author.

### Quality programs have well-trained staff, low staff turnover rates, and competitive teacher salaries:

Howes, C., & Brown, J. (2000). *Improving child care quality: A guide for Proposition 10 commissions*. Retrieved from UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities Web site: <http://healthychild.ucla.edu/reports/materials/child.pdf>; Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (1993). *National child care staffing study revisited: Four years in the life of center-based child care*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce; Whitebook, M. et al. (2001). *Then and now: Changes in child care staffing, 1994-2000 (Technical Report)*. Washington, DC: Center for the Child Care Workforce. All three cited in Barnett, W.S. (2003). *Better teachers, better preschools: Student achievement linked to teacher qualifications*. Retrieved from National Institute for Early Education Research Web site: <http://nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=62>

### Model programs have 5-10 children per staff member, class sizes of 12-20 children, and a strong parent-involvement component.

Child: staff ratios for the following model programs are: Chicago's Child Parent Centers (1:8); High/Scope Perry Preschool a maximum teacher:child ratio of 1:10 for 4-year-olds and 1:8.5 for 3-year-olds, however, in reality Head Start programs exceed their own standards). Class sizes for the following model programs are: Chicago's Child Parent Centers (17); High/Scope Perry Preschool (15-16 for the preschool curriculum study); Abecedarian (12); Head Start (13); The mandated class size maximum is 20 for 4-year-olds and 17 for 3-year-olds, however, in reality Head Start programs exceed their own standards). Model programs are characterized by a strong parent-involvement component, such as the intensive parent coaching in the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, the home-visits in the High/Scope Perry Preschool, and the parent volunteers in Head Start.

For Chicago Child-Parent Centers, see: Reynolds, A. J. (2000). *Success in early intervention: The Chicago Child-Parent Centers*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. For Perry Preschool, see: 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. For Abecedarian, see: Campbell, F. A., Pungello, E. P., Miller-Johnson, S., Burchinal, M., & Ramey, C. T. (2001). The development of cognitive and academic abilities: Growth curves from an early childhood education experiment. *Developmental Psychology*, 37(2), 231-242. For Head Start, see: Zill, N. et al. (2003). *Head Start FACES 2000: A whole-child perspective on program performance*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Outcomes Research and Evaluation & Head Start Bureau.

- **Services Denied to Needy Children**

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\\_hsf.htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/research/factsheets/02_hsf.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](http://ferret.bls.census.gov/macro/032002/pov/new23_001.htm)

Head Start and the state-funded pre-kindergarten program together served approximately 18,300 children in Tennessee in 2002:

Barnett, W. S., Robin, K. B., Hustedt, J. T., & Schulman, K. L. (2004). *The state of preschool: 2003 state preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Only 12 percent of all three- and four-year-olds were served by these programs.

Barnett, W. S., Robin, K. B., Hustedt, J. T., & Schulman, K. L. (2004). *The state of preschool: 2003 state preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Only one in six (18%) eligible Tennessee families received Child Care and Development Block Grant subsidies in 1999:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2002). *Child Care and Development Block Grant/Child Care and Development Fund: Children served in fiscal year 1999 (average monthly)*. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2000/cctable.htm>

- **Investments that Save 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.

Arthur Rolnick and Rob Grunewald's analysis on investment returns:

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>

Chicago Child-Parent Centers cost savings:

Reynolds, A. J. et al. (February, 2002). *Age 21 cost-benefit analysis of the Title I Chicago Child-Parent Centers*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Society for Prevention Research, Washington, DC.

- **Law Enforcement Leaders are 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>. 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..