

PRIMER: THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC)

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INTRODUCTION

What is early childhood education and care?

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) promotes the learning, development, and wellbeing of children birth through age eight to establish a foundation for lifelong learning and development. It includes formal classroom-based child care and preschool, as well as home visiting and home-based child care. For the purposes of this Commission, ECEC will include children prenatal through age five (as funding to support children in elementary school has been the purview of previous commissions and groups).

Why is high quality ECEC important?

The foundation for lifelong learning and development is built through reciprocal relationships between children and adults. These relationships can exist anywhere in a child's life: a child is learning and developing constantly, regardless of where they are receiving care.

Basic principles of neuroscience indicate that early preventive intervention through services such as high-quality ECEC will produce more favorable outcomes than remediation later in life. Babies' and young children's brains require stable, caring, interactive relationships with adults, and any way or any place they can be provided will benefit healthy brain development. With the majority of children under five engaged in some kind of regular non-parental care each week, it is critical that we ensure families have access to high-quality options for this care.

One such option is in a high-quality ECEC environment, where adults have been trained in child development and possess the skills necessary to cultivate positive, reciprocal relationships with small groups of young children and guide their development. This type of environment can mitigate stress or trauma elsewhere in a young child's life and can help to prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Research has shown that high-quality formal ECEC, with a well-developed and

well-implemented curriculum, can be especially effective in boosting young children's cognitive, language, and social emotional skills. The impact of high-quality programs have been shown to last through adulthood, while lower-quality programs have not been shown to have such lasting benefits.

SOURCES

Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool

Authors: Foundation for Child Development researchers: Hirokazu Yoshikawa, Christina Weiland, Jeanne-Brooks-Gunn, Margaret R. Burchinal, Linda M. Espinoza, William T. Gormley, Jens Ludwig, Katherine A. Magnuson, Deborah Phillips, and Martha J. Zaslow.

Links:

- Executive Summary: <https://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/Executive-Summary-Evidence-Base-on-Preschool.pdf>.
- More info: <https://www.fcd-us.org/the-evidence-base-on-preschool/>.

Description: This brief reviews rigorous evidence on why early skills matter, which children benefit from preschool, the short- and long-term effects of preschool programs on children's school readiness and life outcomes, the importance of program quality, and the costs versus benefits of preschool education.

Investing in Infant and Toddler Child Care to Strengthen Working Families

Authors: Center for American Progress: Rasheed Malik

Link: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2019/10/21/475867/investing-infant-toddler-child-care-strengthen-working-families/>.

Description: This report describes the high cost and scarcity of child care for children under age three, when the benefits from quality child care are highest.

From Unlivable Wages to Just Pay for Early Educators

Authors: Berkeley Center for the Study of Child Care Employment researchers: Caitlin McLean, Marcy Whitebook, and Eunice Roh.

Links:

- Executive Summary: <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2019/05/Executive-Summary-From-Unlivable-Wages-to-Just-Pay-for-Early-Educators.pdf>.
- More info: <https://cscce.berkeley.edu/from-unlivable-wages-to-just-pay-for-early-educators/>

Description: This report summarizes recent research on wage standards, assesses existing initiatives intended to address the problem of low wages in ECEC, describes why compensation reform is important, what it can look like, and how to achieve it.

What is Early Childhood Development? A Guide to the Science

Authors: Harvard Center on the Developing Child

Links:

- *The Science of Early Childhood Development*
 - (Print): <https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/InBrief-The-Science-of-Early-Childhood-Development2.pdf>
 - (Video): <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-science-of-early-childhood-development/>
- *Three Core Concepts in Early Development*
 - (Video and print): <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/three-core-concepts-in-early-development/>
- *The Science of Resilience*
 - (Print): <https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/InBrief-The-Science-of-Resilience.pdf>
 - (Video): <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-science-of-resilience/>
- More info (optional): <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/guide/what-is-early-childhood-development-a-guide-to-the-science/>

Description: This guide provides short briefs and 2-3 minute videos on the importance of high-quality ECEC in supporting positive outcomes for young children. They answer questions such as “Why is early childhood important?” “How does early childhood development happen?” and “What can we do to support child development?”