

EFFECTS OF A SCHOOL-BASED, EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION ON ADULT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:

A 19-year Follow-up of Low-Income Families

Arthur Reynolds, Judy Temple, Suh-Ruu Ou, Dylan Robertson, Joshua Mersky, James Topitzes, & Michael Niles, 2007

Overview

The Chicago Longitudinal Study followed the life course of a cohort of 1,539 low-income minority children (93% black, 7% Hispanic) born in 1979 or 1980 who attended early childhood programs in 25 sites in 1985-1986. Since 1985, data have been collected continuously on health and well-being from school records, frequent participant and family surveys, and many types of administrative records. The objective was to determine long-term effects for early childhood participants.

Method

Two groups of children were studied and compared in this study. The first group included 989 children who completed preschool and kindergarten in 20 randomly selected Chicago Public Schools with combined programs. The second group consisted of 550 children who participated in alternative full-day kindergarten programs that were available to low-income families. The two groups were matched on age, eligibility for and enrollment in government-funded early intervention, and neighborhood and family poverty.

Study Findings

- a. Educational Attainment-The preschool group had significantly higher rates of high school completion and 4-year college attendance as well as more total years of education completed.
- b. Crime-By age 24, the preschool group had significantly lower rates of incarceration and lower rates of multiple incarcerations.
- c. Economic Well-Being-The preschool group was more likely to have a stable employment history or to have attended college by age 24.
- d. Family and Parent Outcomes-Preschool was consistently associated with less maltreatment, and by age 17, participants had lower rates of out-of-home placement. Preschool participation was also associated with higher parental educational attainment.

Conclusion

This study provides evidence that quality early childcare education can positively influence the adult life of its participants in several ways. The scope and magnitude of these effects not only demonstrate the benefits of preschool to participant's general health and well-being, but these results also show the benefit of preschool to society for investments made in early educational programs.

Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Ou, S., Robertson, D.L., Mersky, J.P., Topitzes, J.W. & Niles, M.D. (2007). Effects of a school-based, early childhood intervention on adult health and well-being: A 19-year follow-up of low-income families. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, 161(8), 730-739.