Programs and Policies to Foster Early Development: What Works?

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Educational Benefits of the Perry Preschool Program at age 40

Percentages of Each Group

- IQ 90+ at age 5: 67% Preschool, 28% No Preschool
- Graduated regular high school: 60% Preschool, 40% No Preschool
Crime Reduction Benefits of the Perry Preschool Program at age 40

Percentages of Each Group

- 5+ Arrests
- Arrested for violent crime
- Arrested for drug crime
- Uses heroin

- Preschool: 36% 55% 32% 48% 14% 34% 0% 9%
- No Preschool: 60% 45% 28% 52% 86% 66% 90% 91%
Work / Income Impacts of the Perry Preschool Program at age 40

Percentages of Each Group

- Employed at age 40: 76% Preschool, 62% No Preschool
- Home owner: 37% Preschool, 28% No Preschool
- Has savings account: 76% Preschool, 50% No Preschool
- Females, married at age 27: 40% Preschool, 8% No Preschool
Economists have taken notice.

“You get the 16% rate of return whether you like kids or not.” --Rob Gruenewald, Federal Reserve Bank

“Very few alternative investments can promise that kind of return.” --Ben S. Bernanke, Chairman of the Federal Reserve System
How do we explain such large and long-lasting effects?

1. Early experiences change the brain, make it better for learning.

2. Continuing effects on the child, through changes in the family (parents).
1. Replicate the Chicago Model in our public schools

- Like the Perry Preschool, but tested in practical, scaled up version.

- Used existing funds (largely Title I).

- State incentives could encourage local adoption.
2. State-funded Pre-K

- Several solid tests.
- Impacts on vocabulary and math skills.
- Studies have not followed into later ages yet.
- Good models from other states, and some experience in Wisconsin.
Head Start

- Positive impacts in early adulthood:
  - High School graduation
  - College attendance
  - Employed or not
  - General health

Effect size was 80% that of the Perry Preschool Program.

- Tested by Thompson administration.
- Current investment in 6-year-olds = almost twice that in 3- or 4-year-olds.
- Intervention: $1,500 per child/year public supplement.
- Positive impact on quality of early care & education.
4. Address training & retention of the child care workforce.

- Teacher training $\rightarrow$ child outcomes.
- Early childhood education teacher turnover = 30-35% annually.
- No evaluation of program quality or child gains. But program does lead to better trained teachers and retention in the field.
5. Engage the marketplace to raise quality of child care: YoungStar

- Consumer 5-star rating system.

- % of children in programs rated 3+:
  - 2011: 44%
  - 2013: 65%

- Option: Greater reward for higher quality programs, to help keep them in business (Wisconsin Shares reimbursement system).
6. Home visiting programs

- Model program: Nurse-Family Partnership.
- Results from randomized experiment:
  - Prenatal health
  - Child maltreatment
  - Child emergency room visits
  - Mother’s economic self-sufficiency
  - Child’s later arrest record
  - For girls, teenage childbirth and Medicaid
Home visiting programs

- Wisconsin has some expertise already.

- Demand exceeds supply of programs, and especially of evidence-based programs.

- Relatively costly ($4,000-5,000 / year / family), but also cost effective when targeted. Saves public $.
7. Multidimensional treatment foster care

- Training in behavior management for state supported foster parents.

- Experimental test of the program:
  - 60% fewer days in jail.
  - Twice as many days with their families.

(See Family Impact Seminar briefing report #13)
8. Co-Parenting class for divorcing parents

- 15,000 minor children / year in Wisconsin.

- Class is required in some states, not in Wisconsin.

- In Richland County, cut in half the re-litigation rate and child support delinquency rate:
Child Support Delinquency Rates

- United States
- Wisconsin
- Richland Co. (No Parents in Class)
- Richland Co. (1+ Parents in Class)

Population

Percent Delinquency Rate

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45
In summary

- The potential of *early* interventions to create powerful, lifespan improvements in lives.
- Evidence based programs: cost-effective.
- Why haven’t we done this yet? (Immediate costs, benefits are much later.)
- The most effective programs...
The most effective programs:

- Target the earliest years (brain development).
- Target at-risk families.
- Are family focused.
- Research based design, evidence of impact.
- Quality staff and standards.