



Home Visiting Beginning at Birth Enhances Pre-K Results for Children

Children who participate in high quality early childhood programs develop better language skills, score higher on school-readiness tests and have better social skills and fewer behavioral problems once they enter school. However, while preschool certainly goes a long way in preparing youngsters for school, it usually begins after age 3 when a child's brain has already reached 90 percent of its adult size and the developmental windows of opportunity are closing. Because it's the earliest parent interactions that lay the foundation for a child's social and emotional health and intellectual growth (building attachment, trust and emotional self-regulation), pre-kindergarten programs can be enhanced by the addition of parent education and child development services beginning during the critically important first three years of life.

Further, parents who become involved in their children's development and learning from birth continue that involvement and engagement as their children progress through school. **Early childhood education must begin at birth.**

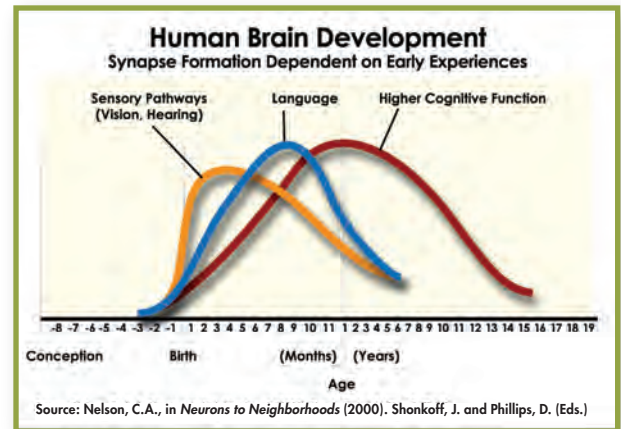
Parents as Teachers National Center's Position

Research shows us that children experience the best outcomes when quality pre-kindergarten experiences are preceded by and combined with quality programs that start at birth, such as Parents as Teachers. This combination of services gives children the best possible opportunity to succeed once they enter kindergarten. Therefore Parents as Teachers National Center recommends linking pre-kindergarten programs in the states to quality home visiting and other programs for younger children to help children start school ready to succeed.

Parents as Teachers National Center supports state and federal efforts to improve the quality of and access for children to pre-k programs, and understanding the importance of also enriching earlier childhood opportunities for children, through services such as evidence-based home visitation.

Supporting Points

1. The movement to expand the reach of Parents as Teachers and quality pre-kindergarten programs are based on these shared principles:
 - Parents are their children's best first teachers;
 - The importance of a child's brain development in the early years—see following chart titled *Human Brain Development*; and
 - The value of universal programs that assure children with greater needs receive the special help they require.



A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy, 2007. Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University.

2. Parents as Teachers combined with preschool promotes school readiness and predicts later school success.
 - Early childhood—the period from birth to age 5—is a time of life during which significant transformations take place. The early years are important because they are the time when children acquire the basic skills that lay the foundation for school readiness and later school success. (Source: Weiss, Caspe and Lopez, Harvard Family Research Project, 2006.)
 - The highly acclaimed High/Scope Perry Preschool Project and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers preschool both include a home visitation component alongside center-based preschool. Both of these programs have rigorous longitudinal research demonstrating strong child outcomes. (Source: www.highscope.org and www.waisman.wisc.edu/clc)

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— 2007 research showed that when preschool programs are coupled with Parents as Teachers participation, children are more prepared for kindergarten. In fact, the added value of Parents as Teachers carried over to third-grade achievement.
(Source: Zigler and Pfannenstiel, 2007.)

— This same research also showed that disadvantaged children who participated in the Parents as Teachers program in combination with preschool were just as ready for kindergarten as their more affluent peers who had no preschool or program participation. The combination of Parents as Teachers and quality preschool experience effectively eliminated the achievement gap between the two groups.
(Source: Zigler and Pfannenstiel, 2007.)

3. Encouraging parental involvement and fostering strong parent-child interactions before a child starts school create positive outcomes that are long-lasting.

— Among families who participate in Parents as Teachers, the participating parents are more involved in their children's schools, request more conferences, and volunteer more in the classroom. They take an active role in their child's schooling. (Source: Pfannenstiel, 1998; Pfannenstiel, Lambson, and Yarnell, 1996.)

— One study of kindergarteners found that a positive mother-child interaction—one that is sensitive and elicits prosocial behavior—is associated with children's social and academic performance in middle school. (Source: Morrison, Rimm-Kauffman, and Pianta, 2003.)



— Warm, reciprocal parent-child interactions and fewer life stresses in the home improve children's behavior and ability to concentrate. (Source: Lamb-Parker, Boak, Griffin, Ripple and Peay, 1999).

4. Early childhood and pre-K programs help to ease the transition to kindergarten.

— More than 200,000 children repeat kindergarten every year.
(Source: PreK Now, 2007.)

— Families are often the most consistent context in children's lives and provide a natural link between the early childhood and elementary school learning environments.
(Source: Weiss, Caspe and Lopez, 2006.)

Additional Resources

www.parentsasteachers.org

www.preknow.org

www.nieer.org

www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/



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