



Does Early Childhood Education Have Effects 15 Years Later?

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One of the nation's largest studies of public early childhood education shows that early education produces benefits that persist into early adulthood.

Children who participated in the Chicago School District's Child-Parent Center Program performed better on several educational and social milestones than a similar group who attended another preschool program. For example, 3 year-olds who participated in the program for 1 or 2 years benefitted in ways that could be observed 15 years later:

- Lower dropout rates,
- Higher graduation rates,
- More years of education completed, and
- Lower rates of juvenile crime and violent arrests.

Both preschool and school-age participants in the Child-Parent Center Program were also less apt to be held back in school or assigned to special education services.

This federal program is similar to Head Start. It has served 100,000 families in some of Chicago's highest poverty neighborhoods since 1967.

According to Arthur Reynolds, the UW-Madison researcher who published the study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, "We haven't had this level of long-term scientific evidence for public programs until now."

In other studies of the Chicago Child-Parent Center Program, parent involvement was associated with school success above and beyond the child's program participation and family background. For example, more parent involvement in the child's early education had long-term benefits—higher reading achievement, lower grade retention, and fewer years in special education at age 14. ■

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