

EARLY LEARNING IN WASHINGTON STATE:

WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE NEED TO BE

Children are born learning. Brain research indicates that the first 5 years are some of the most productive learning years in a child’s life. It is a time when they learn more quickly and efficiently than adults. Yet this rich opportunity to develop tomorrow’s scientists, engineers, firemen and artists is often ignored or missed.

High-quality early learning results in lasting positive outcomes. By investing in early learning, we give students the foundation to be successful in school and in life.

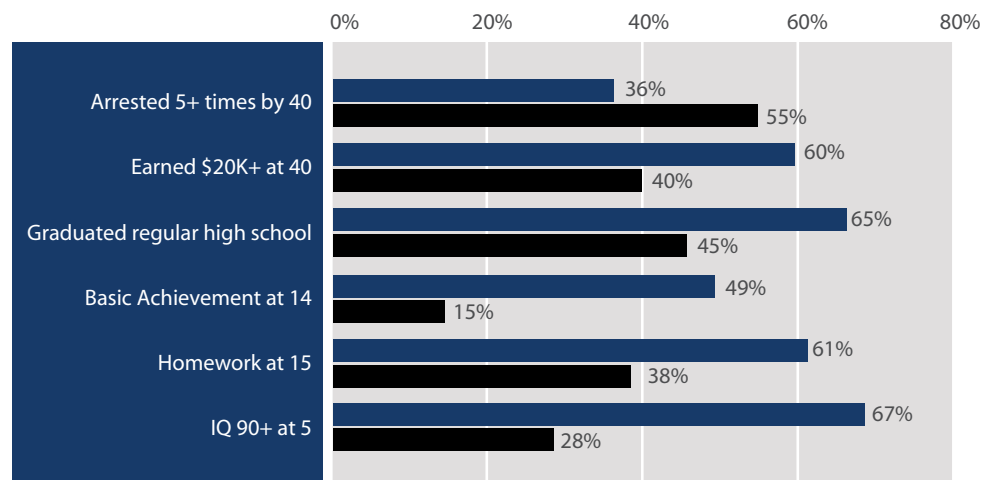
Washington has recently fallen behind many states in early learning. In our state, less than 50% of all children, and 25% of the lowest-income children, begin kindergarten ready for school.

The cost-benefit analysis of investing in quality child care programs shows long-term returns. For every \$1 spent, \$4–\$12 are returned in the form of increased earnings by a child once he or she reaches adulthood, and dollars not spent on welfare, remediation or on the criminal justice system.

Washington is on the cusp of changing this. Initiatives like Thrive by Five, Foundation for Early Learning and the Business Partnership for Early Learning are working to significantly improve early learning in Washington state.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF PRESCHOOL PARTICIPATION: THE HIGH/SCOPE PERRY PRESCHOOL STUDY**

■ High-quality preschool program participants ■ Non-participants



**The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study followed 123 low-income children who attended the preschool in the 1960s through 40 years of development and life experiences.

THE FACTS

- Around age 2, children begin learning to read. They become increasingly curious about print and symbols, so it is important to provide them access to books early in life.
- Close to 70% of children under age 5 in the United States receive some form of early childhood care outside the home on a regular basis.
- Washington has no statewide quality standards for early learning programs. Nationally, the most comprehensive measurement of program quality is accreditation—and only 6% of total child care centers in Washington are accredited.
- Many experts agree that what matters most in early learning is not the toy a child plays with, but the interaction he or she has with adults, which is critical to building a child’s early language skills.
- The earlier a baby follows the gaze of an adult—generally between 9 months and 11 months—the more advanced his or her language skills are at age 2.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV viewing of any kind before age 2.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

- Make voluntary parenting information and support available to parents, grandparents and other caregivers.
- Create common school readiness indicators for children entering kindergarten.
- Strengthen regulatory oversight and implement a uniform rating system to evaluate the quality of early learning programs.
- Increase access to training opportunities for child care providers through college-based programs.
- Implement full-day kindergarten for Washington’s neediest children.
- Support private partnerships focused on early learning.

THE REPORTS

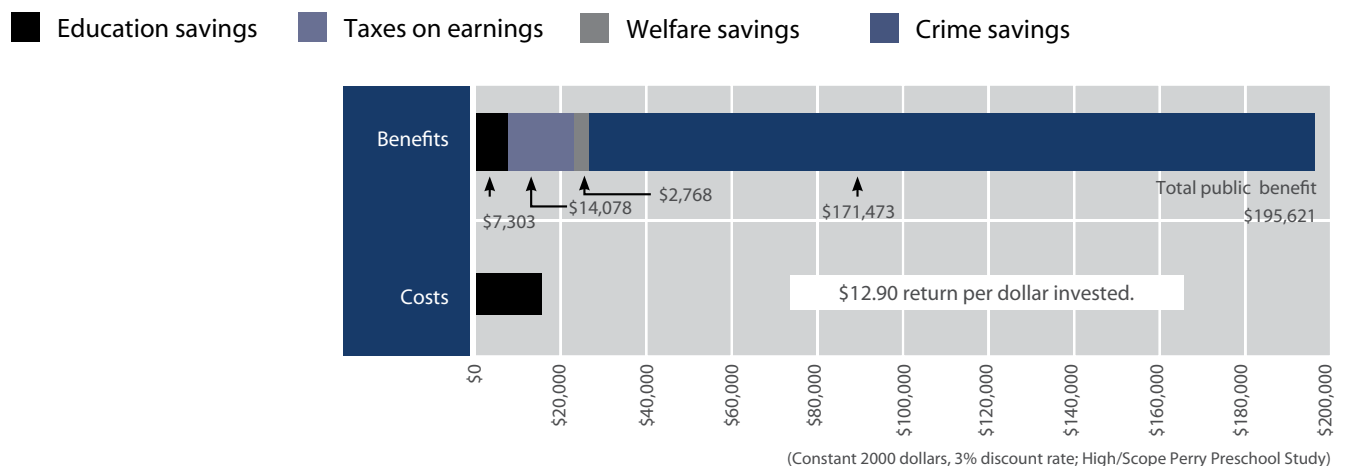
How Quality Early Learning Shows up on the First Day of School

http://www.parent-child.org/research/pdfs/scstudy_abstract.pdf

How Early Learning Programs Affect High School Graduation Rates

http://www.parent-child.org/research/pdfs/gradstudy_abstract.pdf

PUBLIC COSTS AND BENEFITS OF HIGH-QUALITY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM



THE WEBSITES

Thrive by Five www.thrivebyfivewa.org; Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences ilabs.washington.edu; Talaris Research Institute www.talaris.org; Foundation for Early Learning www.earlylearning.org

Sources: Foundation for Early Learning, Thrive by Five, Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, Washington Learns Report, TIME Magazine, “The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40.”