

## The Science of Pre-K

The lack of access to high-quality childcare and preschool is an ongoing problem that was highlighted during the pandemic. Increasing funding for access is often in the news, and part of the proposed Build Back Better bill.

Herein we outline the science about access to high-quality preschool and provide proposed policy actions.

### Background

Research shows that effective, high-quality preschool education [provides many benefits](#) for children of all backgrounds. Pure-academic gains from early education are often negligible by later grade levels due to “[fade out](#),”; however, long-term studies on the effects of early education programs show that children who attended preschool programs have [lower incarceration rates](#), [better health outcomes](#), and increased rates high school graduation and [completion of higher education degrees](#). This may be due to the non-academic benefits of acquiring emotional and developmental skills that help children prepare for life both inside and outside the classroom. Children who are [English learners](#), who come from low-income or single-parent families, or who have [an incarcerated parent](#) see greatly improved academic outcomes over the course of their education as a result of preschool attendance.

Public pre-k programs also help further stimulate our economy. Accessible early education is [vital for parents to remain in the workforce](#). But because funding is limited, many parents cannot find affordable preschool programs near them. Though Georgia preschool programs are technically open to all, a limited budget [requires centers to cap attendance numbers steeply](#). As a consequence, [only 15% of Georgia’s low-income children were enrolled in head-start](#). Those who can find programs (most having to resort to private options) can often not afford the steep (and increasing) cost. Despite the US Department of Health and Human Services advising that childcare [programs should cost no more than 10% of a family’s monthly income](#), most programs cost nearly 75% of the average household income. For most, [the annual cost of pre-k is almost 18% higher](#) than the cost of sending your child to a four-year public college.

### Proposed Actions to Take

Research shows that fully funding the Pre-K system, will bolster Georgia’s economy and set up our children for success. Implementing high-quality early education programs that cost, at most, 10% of a family’s income will add a [calculated 4.59 billion dollars of economic activity](#) to our economy. Subsidized early childhood education programs remove the vast - and often debilitating - financial burden from parents, helping us sustain our workforce ([a priority for our state, as labor shortages increase](#)).

The associated decreased rates of poor health outcomes, poverty, and incarceration from pre-k attendance also [dramatically lessen overall costs for the state](#). Reducing these areas of need will allow funds to be reinvested further into our economy and offset the costs of funding Pre-K. Subsidized early childhood education programs remove the huge - and often debilitating - financial burden from parents, allowing them to remain in their jobs and sustaining our workforce.

Additionally, increased collaboration between the K-12 system and early childcare will further the benefits of Pre-K and help combat the fade-out phenomenon to retain academic gains made in early life.

## Moving Forward

Science for Georgia will continue highlighting disparities in early education and childcare access, emphasizing the long-term benefits preschool access provides for everyone. We will continue to work with our partners across the state to advocate for federal and state funding for these essential programs.

## Sources and Additional Readings

Cost/Benefit Analysis and Success Rates for Early Intervention Preschool Programs:

<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/181725.pdf>

In Depth Overview on the Science of Early Childhood Development:

<https://www.nap.edu/read/9824/chapter/1>

Boosts in Early Skill Sets as a Result of Pre-School Attendance:

<https://ced.ncsu.edu/news/2021/05/21/ask-the-expert-why-is-a-preschool-education-important-when-children-attend-high-quality-pre-k-programs-they-get-a-really-great-boost-in-early-skills-that-set-them-up-for-success-in-element/>

How Georgia Rates Pre-K Education Programs: <https://gosa.georgia.gov/introduction-quality-rated-georgias-tiered-quality-rating-and-improvement-system-child-care>

The Cost of Child Care in Georgia:

<https://gears.org/news/cost-child-care-georgia/>

How Fully Funded Pre-K Programs in DC Benefitted Local Families and The Economy:

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/effects-universal-preschool-washington-d-c/>

Basics on Georgia's Pre-K Program:

<http://www.decal.ga.gov/Prek/About.aspx>

How Pre-K Programs are Currently Funded:

<https://gbpi.org/betting-on-our-future-results-from-pre-k-survey-on-lottery-funding-effects-of-covid-19/>

Increased College Graduation and Preschool Attendance:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2668645>

Reduced Rates of Substance Abuse and Preschool Attendance:

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/newsroom/releases/031115-podcast-reynolds>

Why Preschool is Still Valuable, Despite Fade Out:

<https://dreme.stanford.edu/news/value-early-education-why-fade-out-effect-does-not-mean-we-should-give-preschool>