

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood is one of the most critical periods of adolescence, with those years consisting of nearly 90 percent of total brain growth. Exposure to positive interactions, stimulation, and curriculum fosters key brain architecture development. When done correctly, early childhood education can help children develop a foundation in cognitive, social, and functional skills, which points them toward success in elementary school and beyond. But high quality early childhood education can be incredibly expensive, and it's challenging for families to find a program that suits their needs. Students of color or from low income backgrounds frequently lack access to high quality early childhood education programs or age appropriate learning materials at home.

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THE ISSUE

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The lack of access to high quality early childhood education can have lifetime ramifications. Low-income students, and in particular students of color, are over 20% less likely to be enrolled in an early childhood education program. Research shows that toddlers from low-income families who did not attend preschool were several months behind in both math and reading development compared to their peers who did attend preschool by kindergarten. This is largely because early childhood education helps children develop a foundation in social and emotional skills, and academics, which points them towards success in elementary school. Over the course of a child's lifetime, a high quality

early childhood education is associated with better health, better cognitive and social-emotional skills, and higher employment rates. Without access to high quality early childhood education, it is harder for low income families and families of color to overcome a head start that privileges the white and wealthy. Students must not be barred access to vital developmental opportunities because of household income.

WHY IT MATTERS

The Federal Government should provide additional resources to states through expanding funding to Head Start and Child Care and Development Block Grant programs. States should reprioritize their funding structures to expand funding for low-income students to attend cost free early childhood education centers. We can address the inequality in pre-school access and quality by:

WHAT WE CAN DO

- Encouraging states to set transparent standards for Pre-K achievement, specifically focusing on early English Language Arts (ELA) and Math;
- Creating incentives and structures for families to increase participation of low-income students;
- Encouraging states to identify and remove any aversive discipline structures for Pre-K students;
- Ensuring equitable and prioritized access to Pre-K programs for students with disabilities; and
- Encourage states to create standards and assessments for high quality early childcare facilities.

Ready to demand better for and with students?
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