



Early Childhood Educators: Our Partners in Crime Prevention in Tennessee

Highly-qualified teaching staff set preschoolers on the path to productive adulthood

Acknowledgements

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and violence survivors protecting public safety by promoting solutions that steer kids away from crime.

Supported by tax-deductible contributions from foundations, individuals, and corporations.

Author:

Sandra Bishop-Josef, Ph.D., Director, Research

Contributors:

Joshua Spaulding, National Director, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Eoin Dillon, Director, State Policy

Diane Halstead, Project Director, Tennessee

Mariana Galloway, Graphic Designer

December 2019

©2019 Council For A Strong America. All Rights Reserved.



The law enforcement leaders of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids in Tennessee recognize that high-quality early childhood education programs are a powerful way to give kids the right start in life and help them avoid becoming involved in later crime. Research backs that up: studies show that at-risk kids who attend high-quality preschool programs are more likely to succeed in school and less likely to commit crimes as adults than similar children who do not attend such programs. To have an impact, programs must be high-quality in order to help children develop critical skills needed for success in school and life. High-quality preschool programs share certain key features, including highly-qualified teachers, developmentally-appropriate standards and curricula, appropriate teacher-child ratios, small class sizes, monitoring and quality-improvement systems, and screening and referral to needed services.

**\$18 billion
per year**
the estimated national
savings in crime
related costs caused
by a 5% increase in
male graduation rate.

Among the most fundamental of these quality features are highly-qualified teachers: well-trained (both before and during their service) and well-compensated. Tennessee policymakers must address workforce quality to ensure that early childhood education's crime prevention potential is achieved.

High-Quality Early Education: A Path to Less Crime

The path we set children upon, in their earliest years, can make a huge difference. Research shows that high-quality early childhood education (ECE) can result in more successful outcomes, particularly for at-risk children from low-income families.

- **Better school performance:**

A recent study found that children who participated in the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K program (VPK) who later had “sustaining environments” (defined as attending high-performing K-3 schools and being taught by highly-effective teachers) significantly outperformed their peers who also attended high-performing schools and had highly-effective teachers but who had not attended VPK, in both language arts and math.¹ Research on Head Start and preschool programs in other states find similar positive impacts on school performance.²

- **Fewer dropouts:**

Michigan’s pre-K program reported a 35 percent increase in high school graduation rates among its participants.³ An analysis of Head Start found that siblings who attended the program had an increased probability of graduating from high school, compared to their siblings who did not attend.⁴ The link between high school dropout and crime is strong enough that a study projected that our nation would save more than \$18 billion per year in crime costs if the male graduation rate increased by five percentage points.⁵ In recent decades, high school graduation rates have increased significantly and crime has

simultaneously sharply decreased.⁶ Moreover, six out of 10 prisoners nationwide do not have a high school diploma.⁷

- **Less crime and fewer prisoners:**

Children not served by the Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC) program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.⁸ By age 24, the people served by the Chicago CPC were 20 percent less likely to have served time in jail or prison.⁹ A recent study of Oklahoma’s universal Pre-K program found the program decreased the likelihood that black children were later charged with a misdemeanor or felony crime at age 18 or 19.¹⁰

“ I know from my years in law enforcement that we can’t arrest our way out of crime. High-quality Pre-K fights crime by readying kids for success.”



Floyd Bonner, Jr.
Shelby County Sheriff

In sum, early childhood education programs can set children on a path to productive adulthood. However, to achieve lasting results, programs must be high quality.

Teachers Are the Foundation of High-Quality Early Childhood Education

The heart of any early childhood education program is the relationship between the teacher and the child.¹¹ Research indicates that a well-qualified workforce is an essential, fundamental component of high-quality early childhood education. Highly-qualified preschool teachers engage in warm, nurturing interactions with the children, to support their development in all areas, including social-emotional. Excellent teachers also provide developmentally-appropriate instruction in key pre-literacy, pre-math and other academic skills.¹² To offer this high-quality experience, early childhood educators must be well-trained, both before they start teaching and once they are on the job through ongoing professional development.¹³ Adequate compensation is also key to attract and retain top talent.¹⁴

Key Elements of a Highly-Qualified Early Childhood Education Workforce Education

The level of education required for ECE teachers has been a matter of long-standing debate. Much research, including a comprehensive review of 48 studies by the Campbell Collaboration, has found that higher teacher education levels have a strong relationship to higher quality in early childhood education.¹⁵ Thirty states currently require lead teachers in state-funded preschool programs to have bachelor's



degrees.¹⁶ In Tennessee, VPK teachers must hold a BA.¹⁷ Even in states that do not require it, many lead teachers have BAs. The federal Head Start program requires that half of all lead teachers have a BA; 75 percent meet that requirement.¹⁸

Professional development

The research around ongoing, in-service training for early education teachers offers more clarity than that on pre-service education. Studies show that effective professional development is:

- **Classroom-focused:** related to what teachers are actually teaching;
- **Active:** allows for hands-on practice of skills;



- **Collaborative:** with modelling and/or coaching of skills and feedback provided.

Unfortunately, despite the fairly consistent research, out in the field professional development for early childhood educators lacks consistency. For example, with regard to state-funded preschool, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) reports that only nine states meet its benchmark for quality professional development that consists of 15 hours of annual training, with some of it involving coaching or other hands-on support, as well as annual written individualized professional development plans.²⁰ Tennessee exceeds the NIEER requirement with regard to number of hours of professional development, but does not require coaching for all teachers as included in the NIEER quality benchmark.

Compensation

Adequate compensation is required to attract and retain a high-quality early childhood workforce.²¹ This is particularly true when some states (including Tennessee) and Head Start are requiring teachers to obtain bachelor's degrees. But early childhood teachers typically earn substantially less than kindergarten teachers. Despite Tennessee's having a policy of pay parity for pre-K and kindergarten teachers, pre-K teachers' annual mean wage is \$32,630, compared to \$50,160 for kindergarten teachers.²² Given the low wages in the field, between 2009 and 2013, more than one-third (34 percent) of preschool teachers had to rely on public assistance to meet the needs of their own families.²³ Teacher compensation tends to be highest in state-funded preschool or

Head Start, compared to private, community-based settings, which serve a majority of children. However, even in state-funded preschool and Head Start, requirements for BAs have not been accompanied by proportionate increases in teacher compensation.²⁴

The Path Forward for the Early Childhood Education Workforce in Tennessee

Policymakers in Tennessee recognize the vital importance of a strong early childhood education workforce. The Pre-K Quality Act of 2016 included a focus on the ECE workforce, mandating that Local Education Agencies who applied to provide VPK programs must include: “A plan for delivering relevant and meaningful professional development to voluntary pre-kindergarten teachers, specific to ensuring a high-quality prekindergarten experience.”²⁵ Policymakers should ensure that state professional development standards reflect the research on what components define effective in-service training—including coaching—and provide sufficient resources to attain those standards. In light of the new study which points to the importance of a strong pre-K to 3rd grade continuum in sustaining gains children make in pre-K, policymakers should also support teachers in implementing high-quality early grades curriculum using developmentally-appropriate practices.

Teacher pre-service education is another critical issue. However, currently in Tennessee there are multiple pathways to obtain pre-K to third grade endorsement, each with different standards. Instead of this patchwork approach, state policymakers should develop a new, streamlined pre-K to

third grade endorsement that focuses on academic content in multiple areas, particularly early literacy, along with developmentally-appropriate teaching practices.

Finally, with regard to compensation, achieving a highly-qualified, stable early education workforce will not happen without a focus on increasing teacher wages.

To have maximum impact, each of the key elements must be addressed in a comprehensive strategy. This is essential, as the elements are interrelated; for example, if compensation remains low,

“ Despite Tennessee’s having a policy of pay parity for pre-K and kindergarten teachers, pre-K teachers’ annual mean wage is \$32,630, compared to \$50,160 for kindergarten teachers. Given the low wages in the field, between 2009 and 2013, more than one-third (34 percent) of preschool teachers had to rely on public assistance to meet the needs of their own families.”



teachers will have neither the means nor the incentive to pursue intensive professional development. Similarly, the type and amount of professional development required will vary depending on the quality of teacher pre-service education.

North Carolina provides one example of a comprehensive approach.²⁶ The state implemented the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) Early Childhood Scholarship Program that provides scholarships to two- and four-year degree programs in early childhood education. Upon completion, T.E.A.C.H. participants receive a raise or bonus from their employers. The state also has a program, the Child Care WAGE\$ Project, that rewards increases in education with additional salary. Although North Carolina requires all preschool teachers to have a BA, it offers flexibility in how teachers meet the requirement, through two pathways. Finally, the state provides parity on both salary and benefits for preschool and K-12 teachers with equal levels of education and experience. Multi-faceted strategies like those in North Carolina represent promising ways of building a well-qualified workforce, increasing ECE quality, and ultimately benefiting children.

Conclusion

High-quality early childhood education is a powerful means of crime prevention. However, this potential will only be realized with a highly-qualified early childhood workforce, with adequate education, ongoing professional development, and sufficient compensation. Tennessee policymakers must ensure that policies and resources support each of these components of workforce quality.

Endnotes

- 1** Pearman, F., Springer, M., Lipsey, M., Lachowicz, M., Farran, D., & Swain, W. (2019). Teachers, schools, and pre-K effect persistence: An examination of the sustaining environment hypothesis. (EdWorkingPaper: 19-85). <http://www.edworkingpapers.com/ai19-85>
- 2** E.g., Phillips, D., Gormley, W., & Anderson, S. (2016). The effects of Tulsa's CAP Head Start program on middle-school academic outcomes and progress. *Developmental Psychology*, 52, 1247-1261 <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/q43pgptmzmm6h3zjcosk93ucnh1k4o9e>; Barnett, W. S., Jung, K., Youn, M., & Frede, E. (2013, March 20). Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study: Fifth grade follow-up. <http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/APPLES205th20Grade.pdf>
- 3** State of Michigan, Department of Education (2012, May 21). Presentation on Great Start Readiness Program evaluation. <https://www.bridgemi.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/GSRP-evaluation-may-21-12.pdf>
- 4** Bauer, L., & Schanzenbach, D. W., (2016, August 19). The long-term impact of the Head Start Program. http://www.hamiltonproject.org/papers/the_long_term_impacts_of_head_start
- 5** Alliance for Excellent Education. (2013, September). Saving futures, saving dollars: The impact of education on crime reduction and earnings. <https://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/SavingFutures.pdf>
- 6** Child Trends Databank (2018). High school dropout rates. <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/high-school-dropout-rates>; Gramlich, J. (2019, October 17). 5 facts about crime in the U. S. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/10/17/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/>
- 7** Ewert, S., & Wildhagen, T. (2011). Educational characteristics of prisoners: Data from the ACS. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2011/demo/ewert-wildhagen-prisoner-education-4-6-11.pdf>
- 8** Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001, May 9). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11343481>
- 9** Reynolds, A. J., & Ou, S., (2011). Paths of effects from preschool to adult well-being: A confirmatory analysis of the Child-Parent Center Program. *Child Development*, 82, 555-582. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3793348/>
- 10** Smith, A. (2015, September 1). The long-run effects of universal pre-K on criminal activity. <http://www.sole-jole.org/16422.pdf>
- 11** Sabol, T. J., Soliday Hong, S. L., Pianta, R. C., & Burchinal, M. R. (2013, 23 August). Can rating pre-K programs predict children's learning? *SCIENCE*. <https://earlylearningtexas.org/media/24062/science-2013-sabol-845-6.pdf>; Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., et al. Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education. http://www.srcd.org/sites/default/files/documents/washington/mb_2013_10_16_investing_in_children.pdf
- 12** Burchinal, M. (2017). Measuring early care and education quality. *Child Development Perspectives*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cdep.12260>
- 13** Connors-Tadros, L. & Daily, S. (2018, April). Strategies to improve Instructional practice in early childhood settings http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2ceelo_fast_fact_LA-Instruction-LCT_041218_final.pdf
- 14** Child Trends (2018, April). High-quality preschool can support healthy development and learning. https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PreschoolFadeOutFactSheet_ChildTrends_April2018.pdf
- 15** Manning, M., Garvis, S., Fleming, C., & Wong, G. T. W. (2017, January). The relationship between teacher qualification and the quality of the early childhood education and care environment. https://www.campbellcollaboration.org/media/k2/attachments/0224_ECG-Manning-Teacher_qualifications.pdf
- 16** Friedman-Krauss, A., & Kasmin, R. (2018, May). Lead teacher workforce: Qualifications, pay and parity http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Yearbook-Data-Snapshot_Workforce_5.29.18.pdf
- 17** Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Barnett, W.S., Garver, K.A., Hodges, K.S. Weisenfeld, G. G. DiCrecchio, N. (2019). The state of preschool 2018. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Tennessee_YB2018R.pdf
- 18** Workman, E., Guernsey, L., & Mead, S. (2018, February). Pre-K teachers and bachelor's degrees Envisioning equitable access to high-quality preparation programs. <http://na-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/PreK-Teachers-Bachelors-Degrees.pdf>
- 19** Lieberman, A., Cook, S., & Jackson, S. (2018, April 30). Extracting success in pre-K teaching: Approaches to effective professional learning across five states. <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/extracting-success-pre-k-teaching/introduction>; Connors-Tadros, L. & Daily, S. (2018, April). Strategies to improve Instructional practice in early childhood settings. http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2ceelo_fast_fact_LA-Instruction-LCT_041218_final.pdf; Department of Health and Human Services (n. d.). Head Start Program Performance Standards 45 CFR Chapter XIII RIN 0970-AC63. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/hspss-final.pdf>
- 20** Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Barnett, W. S., Garver, K. A., Hodges, K. S., Weisenfeld, G. G. DiCrecchio, N. (2019). The state of preschool 2018. <http://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/2018-2>
- 21** U. S. Department of Health and Human Services; U. S. Department of Education. (2016, June). High-quality early learning settings depend on a high-quality workforce Low compensation undermines quality. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/ece-low-compensation-undermines-quality-report-2016.pdf>

- 22** Barnett, S. & Kasmin, R. (2017). Teacher compensation parity policies and state-funded pre-K programs. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pre-K-Parity-Report_Final.pdf ; Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017, May). State occupational employment and wage estimates Tennessee. https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_tn.htm#25-0000
- 23** U. S. Department of Health and Human Services; U. S. Department of Education. (2016, June). High-quality early learning settings depend on a high-quality workforce Low compensation undermines quality. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/ece-low-compensation-undermines-quality-report-2016.pdf>
- 24** Whitebook, M., McLean, C., & Austin, L.J.E. (2016). Early childhood workforce index - 2016. <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2016/Early-Childhood-Workforce-Index-2016.pdf>
- 25** <https://team-tn.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Pre-K-Quality-Act-SB1899.pdf>
- 26** Meloy, B. (2017, September 20). For high-quality early childhood education, invest in a skilled and supported workforce. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/blog/high-quality-early-childhood-education-invest-skilled-and-supported-workforce> ; Whitebook, M., & McLean, C. (2017, April). In pursuit of pre-K parity: A proposed framework for understanding and advancing policy and practice. http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Pre-K-Parity-Brief_Final-1.pdf

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Thousands of police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and violence survivors protecting public safety by promoting solutions that steer kids away from crime.

Council for a Strong America is a national, bipartisan nonprofit that unites five organizations comprised of law enforcement leaders, retired admirals and generals, business executives, pastors, and prominent coaches and athletes who promote solutions that ensure our next generation of Americans will be successful, productive members of society.

1212 New York Avenue NW / Suite 300 / Washington, DC 20005 / 202.464.7005

