

**Written Testimony of Dr. Debra J. Ackerman
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Submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Hearing on
Partnering to Prepare: Expanding Access to High Quality Early Childhood Education
Tuesday, April 6, 2010

Good afternoon. My name is Debra Ackerman and I am the Associate Director for Research at the National Institute for Early Education Research, which is part of Rutgers University. Thank you for inviting me to testify today.

What I would like to share with you today is a brief overview of the compelling research base on the benefits of high-quality PreK programs, particularly for disadvantaged children. I will do this by highlighting the significant outcomes from research on four PreK programs. In addition, to help inform future federal efforts in expanding access to PreK to additional low-income children, I will focus on the critical program elements that contributed to the quality of these programs.



Expanding Access to PreK: Why Federal Assistance for Improving Quality Matters



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The evidence we have on the short- and long-term outcomes of high quality PreK comes from a variety of rigorous research studies. However, the three most famous studies are those of the Abecedarian, Chicago Child-Parent Center, and High/Scope Perry Preschool programs.

Each of these programs served children who were considered to be at-risk for school failure. The Abecedarian and Perry Programs were very small in comparison the Child-Parent Center Program, which was offered by the Chicago Public Schools. The programs also differed in terms of the ages served and whether they had a half- or full-day program.

However, all three programs were similar in that they used highly qualified teachers. In addition, because classrooms were staffed by a teacher and assistant, their staff-child ratios were 1 to 8.5 or better.



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Three Benefit-Cost Analyses with Disadvantaged Children

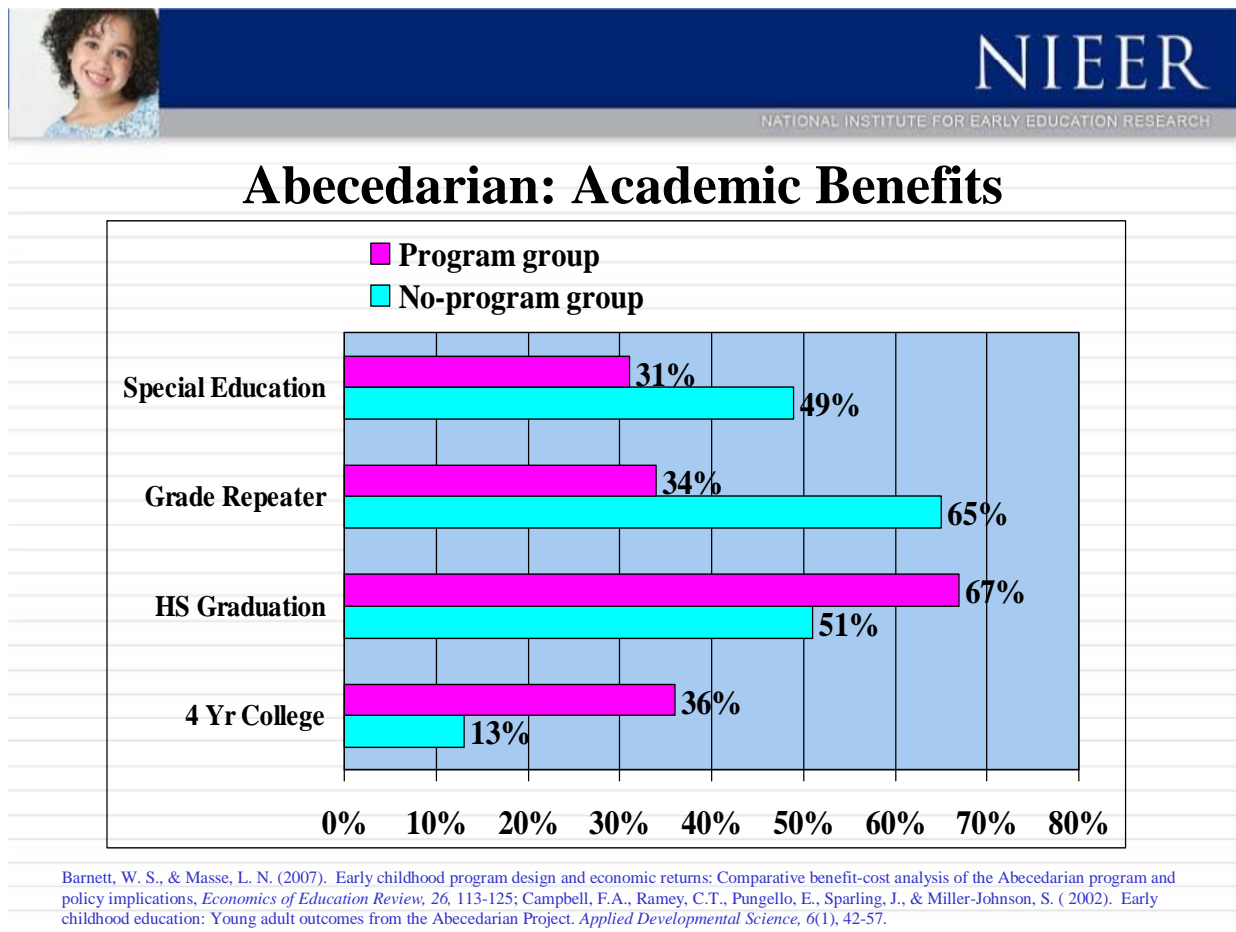
	Abecedarian	Chicago CPC	High/Scope Perry
Location	Chapel Hill, NC	Chicago, IL	Ypsilanti, MI
Number Served	111	1,539	123
Ages Served	6 weeks-Age 5	Ages 3-4	Ages 3-4
Program schedule	Full-day Full year	Half-day School year	Half-day School year
Teacher Qualifications	BA, MA, or demonstrated skills	Min. BA & EC certification	Min. BA & Elem/Spec Ed certif.
Max. Preschool Class Size	12	17	13
<p>Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007). Early childhood program design and economic returns: Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and policy implications. <i>Economics of Education Review</i>, 26, 113-125; Temple, J. A., & Reynolds, A. J. (2007). Benefits and costs of investments in preschool education: Evidence from the Child-Parent Centers and related programs. <i>Economics of Education Review</i>, 26(1), 126-144; Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). <i>Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40</i> (Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.</p>			

Despite the differences in schedule, each program has demonstrated remarkable academic benefits for enrollees in comparison to the outcomes for children who did not participate in the program.

We begin with the small Abecedarian program. As can be seen from the slide, just one third of enrollees were subsequently placed in special education, versus about half of the no-program group.

In terms of grade repetition, again, about one third of enrollees repeated a grade in comparison to 65 percent of those who did not participate in the program.

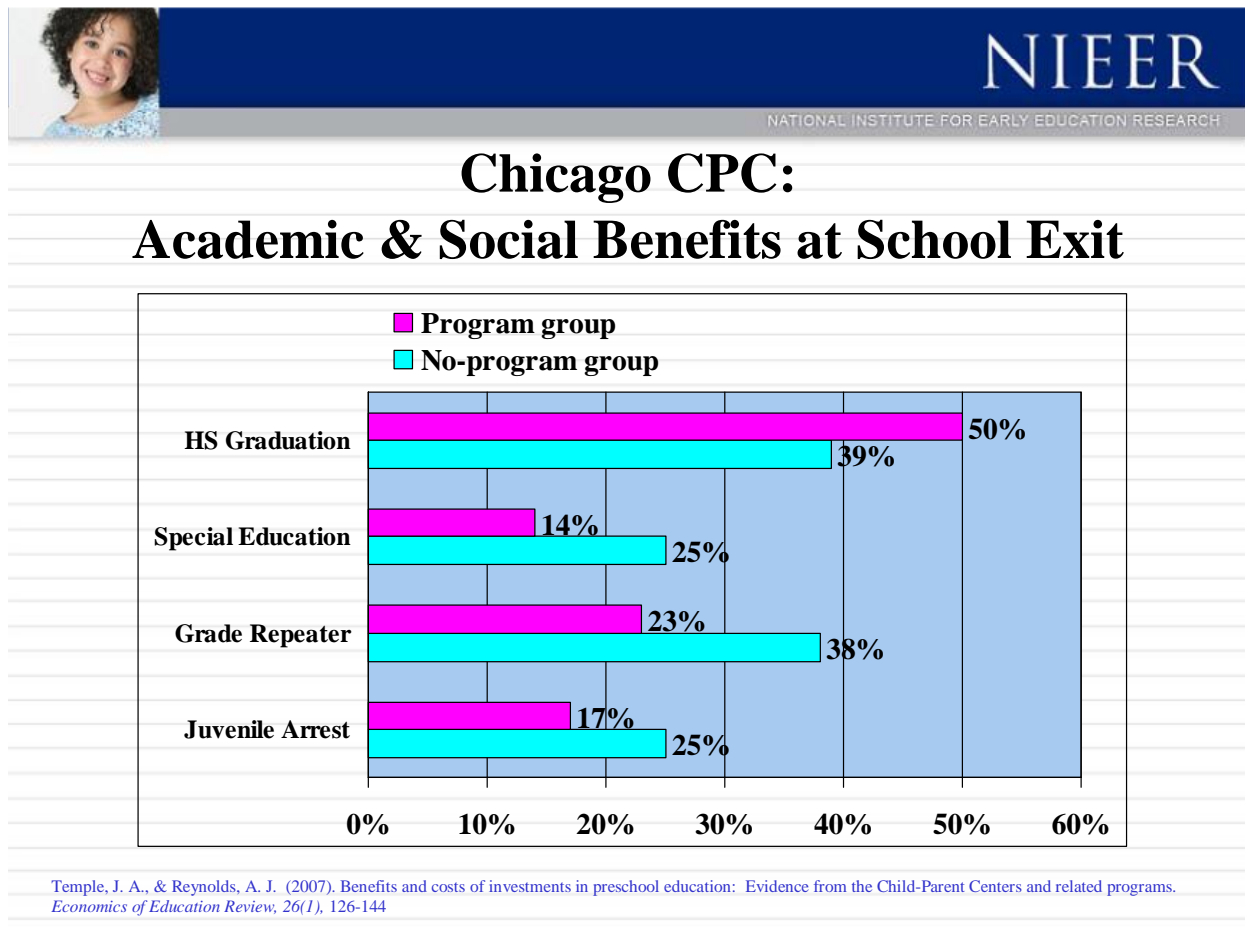
The difference in high school graduation rates was 67 versus 51 percent. Finally, while a full third of participants went on to a 4-year college, only 13 percent of the no-program group had a similar outcome.



We see similar results when comparing academic outcomes for those enrolled in the Chicago Child-Parent Center program. Half of the program enrollees graduated from high school, versus 39 percent of the no-program group.

Special education placement and the rate of in-grade repetition also were lower for those who participated.

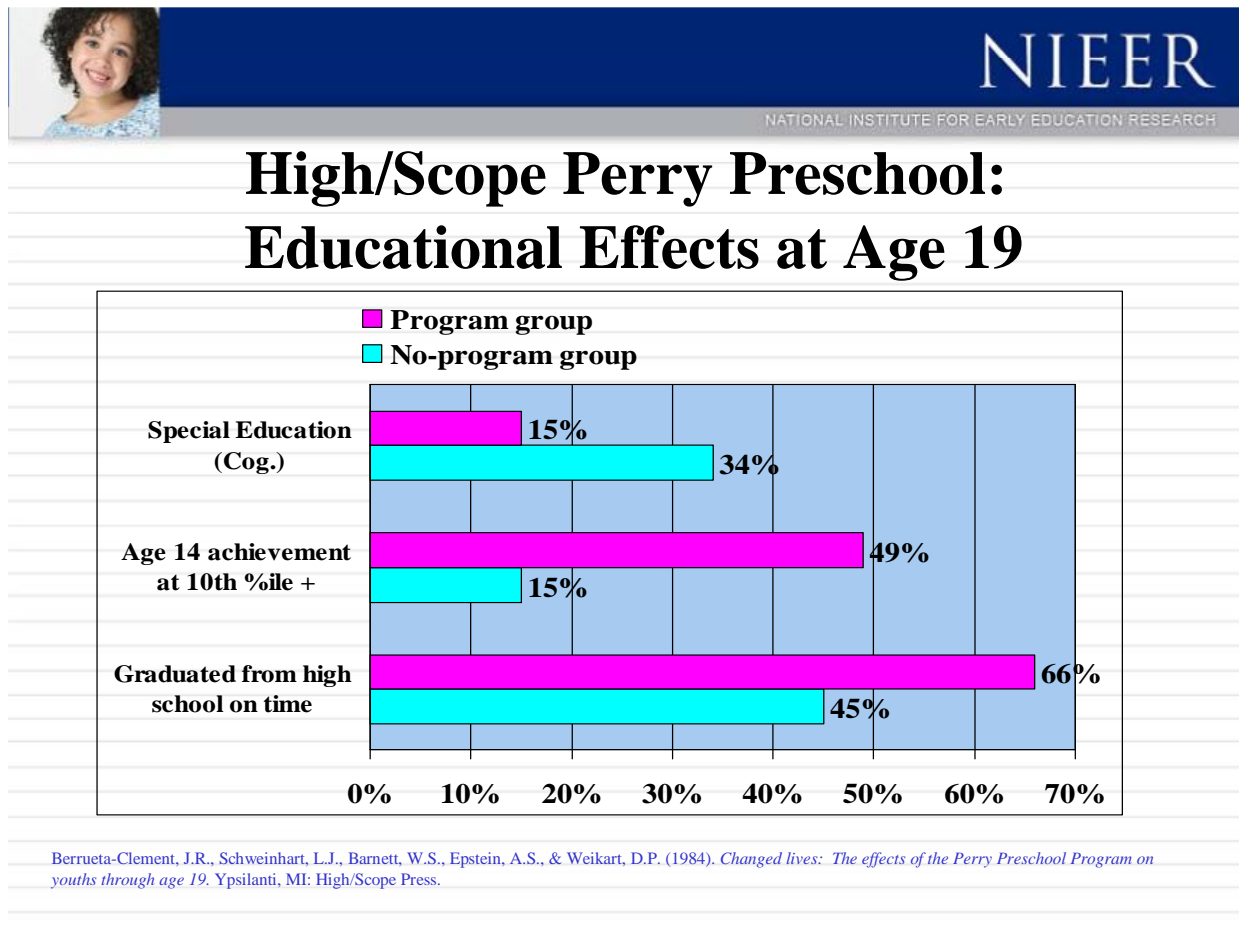
Enrollment in the CPC program also had an effect on non-academic social outcomes. For example, we see that just 17% of enrollees experienced a juvenile arrest, versus one-quarter of the no-program group.



For the Perry Preschool Project, we see rates of special education placement that are half as high for the program group in comparison to the no-program group.

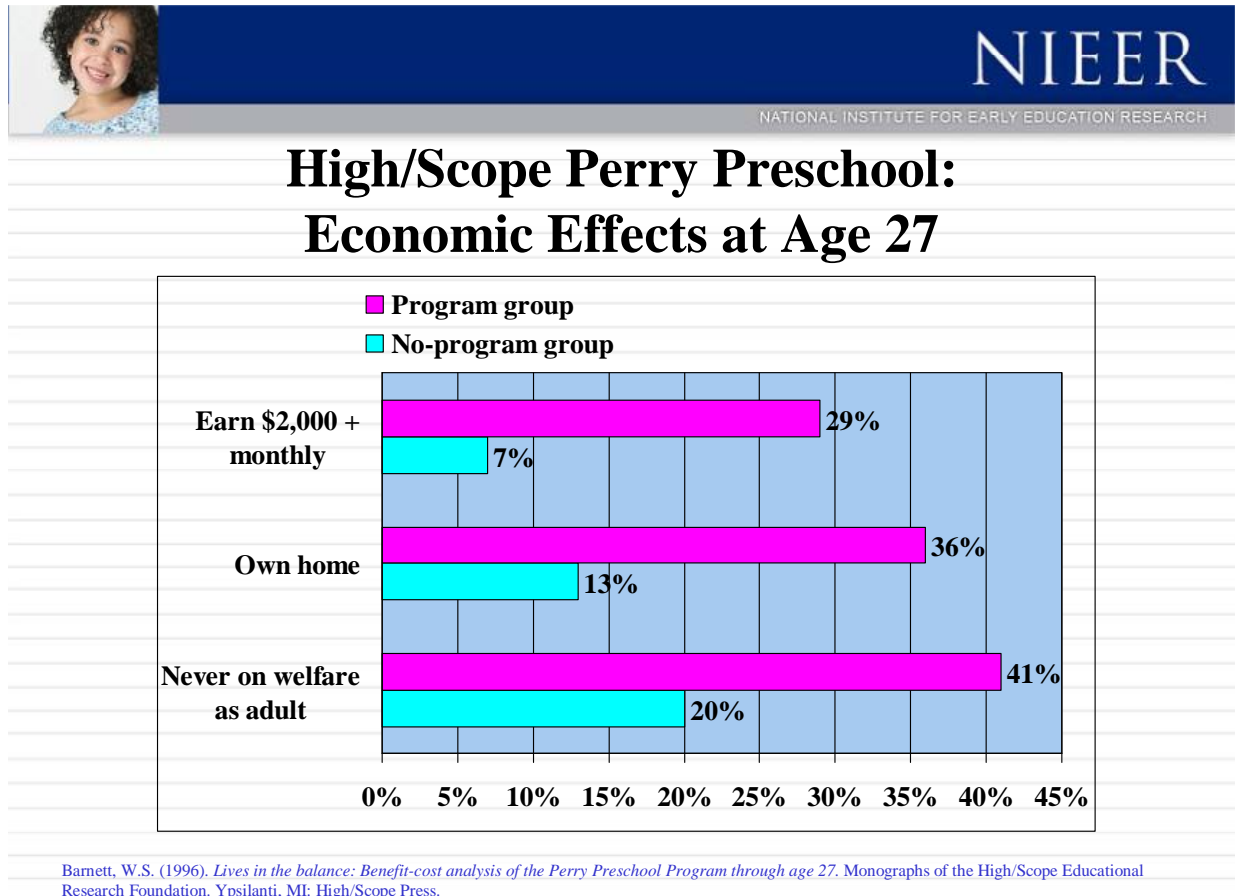
In addition, close to half of Perry enrollees had standardized test achievement levels that were at the 10th percentile or higher, versus only 15 percent of the non-enrollees.

Finally, a larger percentage of the program group graduated from high school on time, as well.

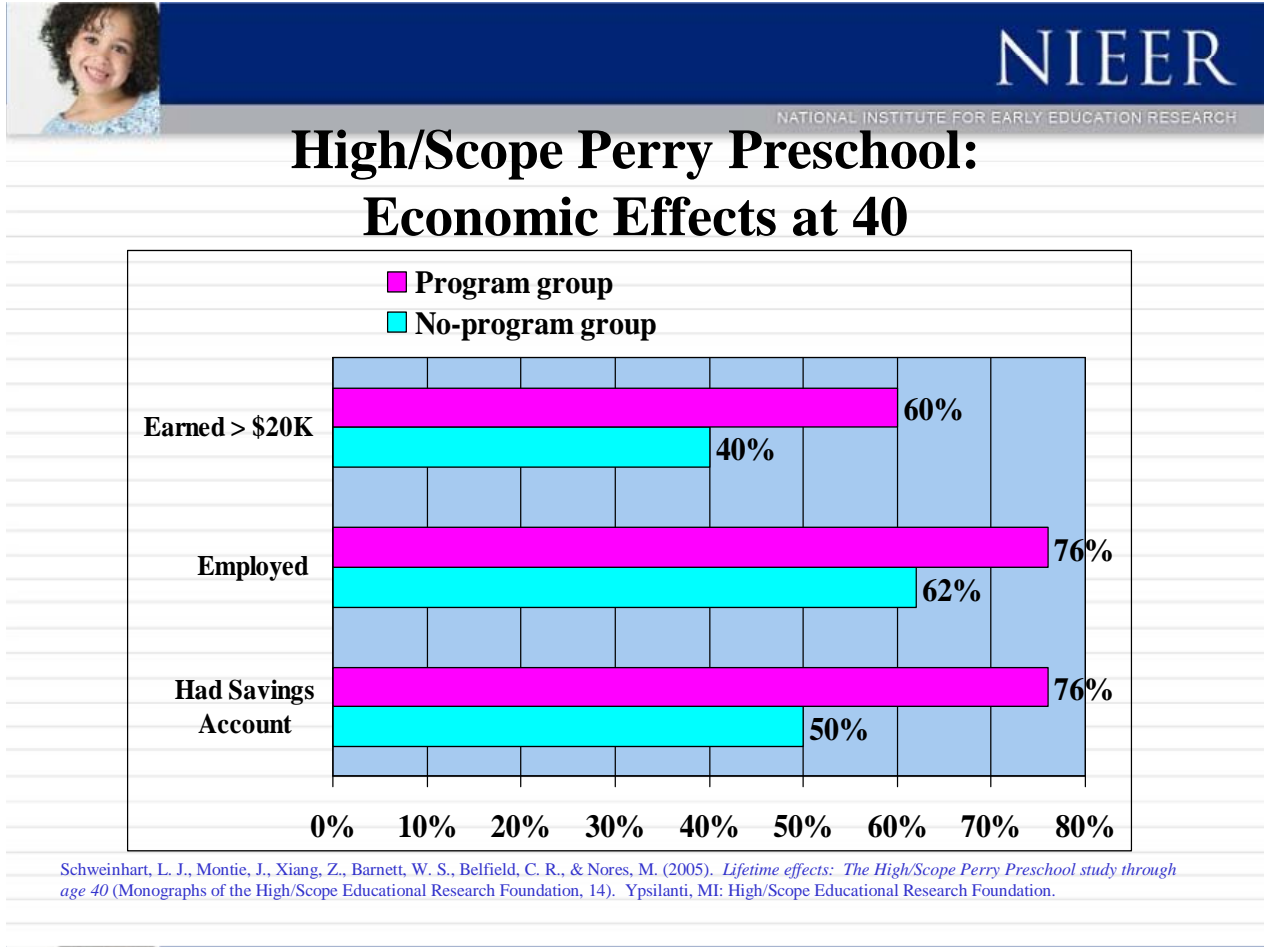


The three slides you just viewed are brief examples of the individual school-age outcomes one might expect from access to high quality PreK programs. However, it's also important to talk about the outcomes children experience as adults.

For example, when examining several economic variables for 27-year olds who had previously participated in the Perry Preschool program, we see that their rates of earning at least \$2,000 per month, owning their own home, or never having been on welfare as an adult are significantly higher in comparison to the no-program group.



By age 40, we still see differences in terms of income, employment rates, and such characteristics as having a savings account.



When talking about the potential outcomes from enrollment in PreK programs, it also is important to understand the economic returns the larger community when schools have lower rates of special education placement and grade repetition, as well as higher high school graduation rates. Higher post-secondary employment and income rates also contribute to the larger community.

Each of these three programs had different per-child costs. The programs were admittedly not cheap. But, perhaps the most compelling evidence for why high quality PreK is a wise investment is the benefit/cost ratio for each program.

In short, the Abecedarian Program realized a 2.5 to 1 rate of return. The rate of return for the Chicago Child-Parent Center and High/Scope Perry programs are even higher. For every dollar invested in these programs, there was a \$10 and \$16 return, respectively.



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Economic Returns to EC Education for Disadvantaged Children

(In 2006 dollars, 3% discount rate)

	Per-child Cost	Benefits	B/C Ratio
▪ Abecedarian	\$70,697	\$176,284	2.5
▪ Chicago CPC	\$ 8,224	\$ 83,511	10
▪ High/Scope Perry	\$17,599	\$284,086	16

Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007). Early childhood program design and economic returns: Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and policy implications. *Economics of Education Review*, 26, 113-125; Belfield, C., Nores, M., Barnett, W.S., & Schweinhart, L.J. (2006). The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Human Resources*, 41(1), 162-190; Temple, J. A., & Reynolds, A. J. (2007). Benefits and costs of investments in preschool education: Evidence from the Child-Parent Centers and related programs. *Economics of Education Review*, 26(1), 126-144.

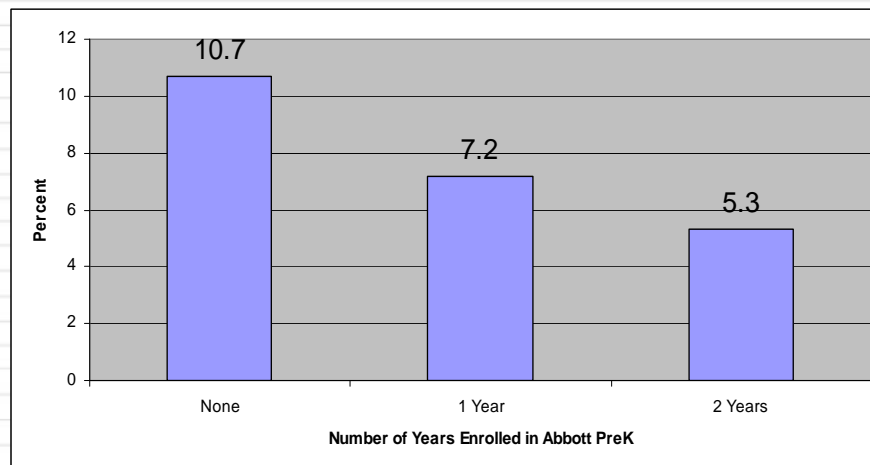
I now would like to share with you recent research on the effects of New Jersey's Abbott PreK Program for children living in its most disadvantaged urban districts.

In comparison to children who did not attend, Second Graders who are previous Abbott preschoolers experienced higher language, literacy, and math gains. As is shown in the slide, by Grade 2 grade repetition was cut in half for children who attended at age 3 and 4 versus no enrollment at all.

We do not yet have the same extent of longitudinal data for New Jersey's program to demonstrate the returns on the state's investment. However, we do anticipate that the state will realize academic outcomes that are similar to those found in the Abecedarian, Chicago Child-Parent Center, and High/Scope Perry preschool programs.



NJ PreK: Retention at 2nd Grade



- Source: Frede, E., Jung, K., Barnett, W. S., & Figueras, A. (2009). *The APPLES blossom: Abbott preschool program longitudinal effects study (APPLES) preliminary results through 2nd grade (Interim report)*. New Brunswick, NJ: NIEER.

What is important to note is that New Jersey's Abbott PreK shares many of the same high-quality program elements found in the Abecedarian, Chicago Child-Parent Center, and High/Scope Perry programs.

The teachers in the program all have a minimum of a BA and a specialized early child education certification. The program uses a full-day schedule and also provides before- and after-school care, which results in higher participation rates. Class size is capped at 15 students.

Teachers use a research-based, intentional curriculum, and their practice is guided by formal expectations for what children should learn. In addition, both children and teachers have access to a variety of key supports. Teachers, in particular, have access to ongoing training and supervision.

It should also be noted that New Jersey's per child spending amount in 2007-2008 was almost \$11,000, which also was the highest in the nation.



PreK Program Standards & Learning Expectations

	Abecedarian Chicago CPC High/Scope Perry NJ Abbott PreK	Head Start	Licensed Child Care Some PreK Programs
Teachers required to have BA & specialized certification	X	34% AA 41% ≥BA	
Public school equivalent teacher salaries	X		
Maximum class size of 20	X	X	
Use of intentional, research-based curriculum	X	X	
Formal learning expectations	X	X	

It therefore is important to point out that while providing additional federal dollars to expand access to PreK program is commendable, this investment will not necessarily produce similar outcomes unless there is a concurrent focus on the quality of the programs children will be attending.

Many state-funded PreK programs, including New Jersey's, rely on a mixed auspice approach, meaning classrooms are situated in public schools, private child care centers, and to a lesser extent, Head Start programs. In New Jersey this works well because all providers are held to the same standards, but child care and Head Start sites also receive financial support to raise their quality levels.

In contrast, the Head Start Act requires that all teachers have at least an AA by 2011 and just 50 percent of teachers attain a BA by 2013. As a result, much of the Head Start workforce could not meet the teacher qualification standard found in the four high quality models. In addition, the salaries of Head Start teachers are still half that of teachers in the public schools.

No state requires child care teachers to have a BA or use a curriculum or formal learning expectations. Their wages also are extremely low.

In some state-funded PreK programs, teachers are not required to have a BA and the use of formal learning expectations is voluntary. While their salaries may be higher than those found in child care settings, they may not be sufficiently high enough to recruit and retain the best teachers.

In summary, rigorous research demonstrates the potential outcomes of access to high-quality early childhood education programs. These outcomes include higher learning gains for children and lower rates of grade repetition and special education placement. Children have a better shot at graduating from high school and going on to become productive members of society, as well.

All of these outcomes benefit the larger community and present the potential to realize an economic return that beats what I'm currently getting at my local bank.

However, it is not enough to merely identify classroom space and staff and begin to offer a program that serves young children. Instead, early education stakeholders must ensure that programs offer children the experiences and support they need to realize the short- and long-term outcomes highlighted today.

The costs of a high-quality PreK program are admittedly not cheap, but it can be more expensive in the long run to fund programs that have little chance of improving children's outcomes.

Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions.



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Conclusions

- Early Education *can* be a strong public investment
- High *quality* is important for gains
- Success is not cheap—but failure is far more expensive