

Early Childhood Investments: Early Learning System Development



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The Heckman Equation



Invest

in educational and developmental resources for disadvantaged families to provide equal access to successful early human development.

+ Develop

cognitive and social skills in children – from birth to age five when it matters most.

+ Sustain

early development with effective education through adulthood.

= Gain

more capable, productive and valuable citizens that pay dividends to America for generations to come.

Early Intervention Promotes Educational Success



- **By 3rd grade, about 1/3 of the achievement gap can be closed by early education**
(Camilli, Vargus, Ryan & Barnett 2010)
- **High quality early childhood programs increase graduation rates by as much as 44%**
(Schwienhart, Monti, Xiang, Barnett, Belfield, & Nores 2005)

Grade Level Reading



- Reading proficiency by 3rd grade is the most important predictor of high school graduation and career success.
- Proficiency in reading by the end of 3rd grade enables students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn, and to master the more complex subject matter they encounter in the 4th grade curriculum.
- Although schools must be accountable for helping all children achieve and provide effective teaching for all children in every classroom every day, the National Grade Level Reading Campaign is based on the belief that schools cannot succeed alone.
- Engaged communities mobilized to remove barriers, expand opportunities, and assist parents in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to serve as full partners in the success of their children are needed to assure student success.



Parents play an enormous role in closing the school readiness gap, as do early learning providers, pediatricians, preschools programs, and the broader community.



School Readiness



The percentage of students missing 10 percent of the school year can reach remarkably high levels, and these early absences can rob students of the time they need to develop literacy skills.



Attendance Matters

Summer Learning Loss



What Happens to Children DURING THE SUMMER?



During the summer months, disadvantaged children tread water at best or even fall behind. It's what we call

“SUMMER SLIDE”

while better off children build their skills steadily over the summer months.



SUMMER LEARNING LOSS

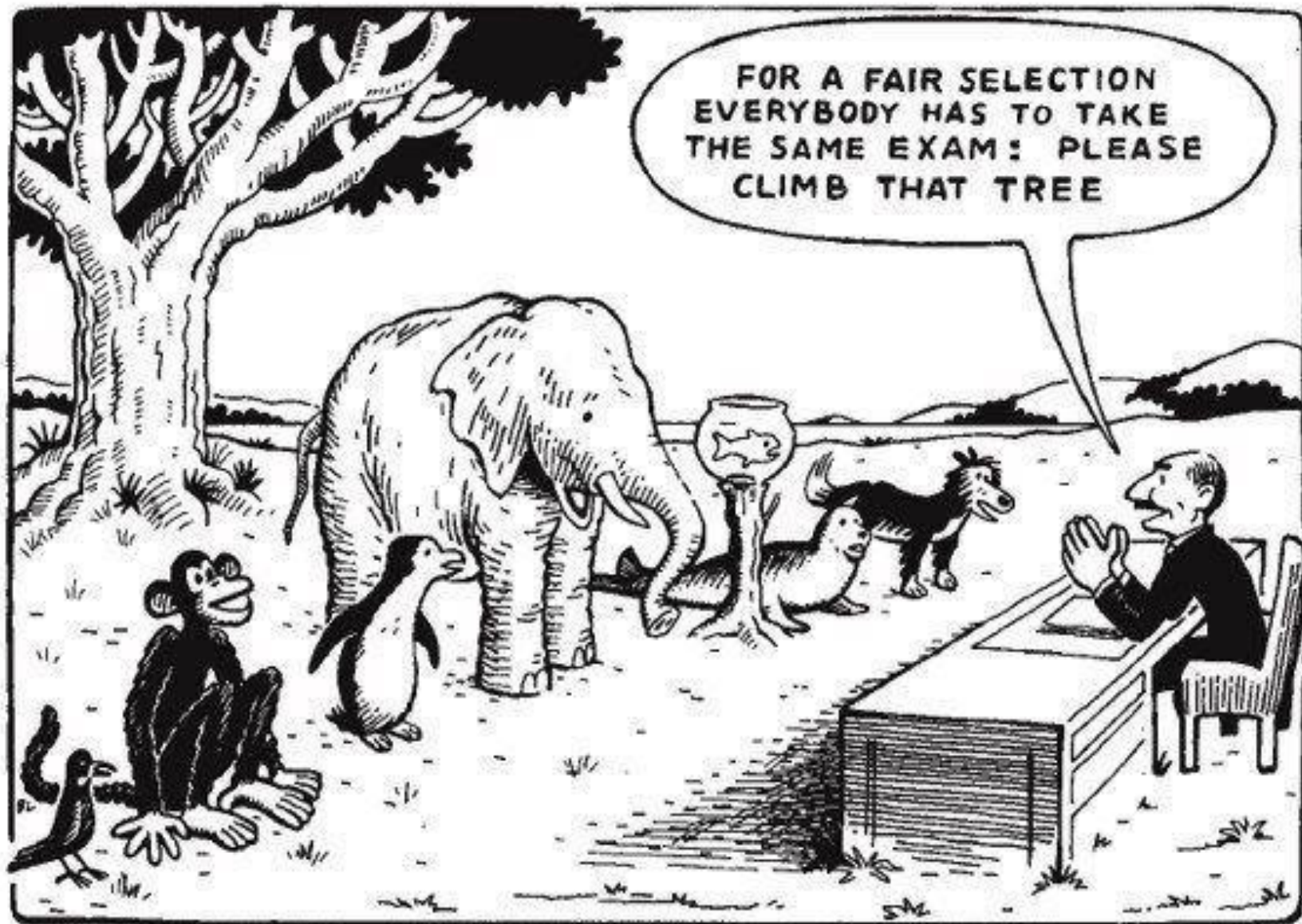
accounts for about two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap in reading.⁷

Why Early Childhood Experiences Matter



The most rapid rate of brain development happens in the first five years of life.

Genes provide a blueprint for the brain, but a child's environment and experiences carry out the construction.



30 Million Word Gap



Children in professional families hear approximately **11 million** words per year.

Children's vocabulary: **1,116** words

Children in working class families hear approximately **6 million** words per year.

Children's vocabulary: **749** words

Children in low-income families hear approximately **3 million** words per year.

Children's vocabulary: **525** words

The Relationship Between Language and Reading



Early language abilities are *directly* related to later reading abilities
(NICHD ECCRN, 2002; Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Lee 2011; Grissmer 2011)

Early language abilities are *indirectly* related to reading through code skills like phonemic awareness to finding the “b-sound” in “boy.”
(Munson et al, 2004, 2005; Starkel 2001, 2003; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998, 2001; Silven et al., 2007; Starch & Whitehurst, 2002)

Language skills are relatively more important than code skills for reading over time. The shift from learning to read to reading to learn.
(Starch & Whitehurst, 2002; Catts et al. 2006; Vellutino et al., 2007)

Executive Function

Executive function are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. These skills are crucial for learning and development.

- Motivation
- Ability to work with others
- Attention
- Self regulation
- Perseverance



Executive Function



- **There is a considerable “readiness skills” gap at the start of school related to socioeconomic background.**
- **Children’s executive functions provide the foundation for school readiness.**
(Heckman, 2006; Raver, 2012).
- **Executive Function is consistently linked with school-age outcomes, including academic achievement, disruptive behavior problems, teacher-child conflict, and attention problems.**
(Blair & Razza, 2007; Gilliom, Shaw, Beck, Schonberg, & Lukon, 2002; Nigg, Quamma, Greenberg, & Kusche, 2007; Schultz, Izard, & Ackerman, 2001).

CHALLENGE



How can Florida define quality for early learning and provide resources needed for implementation that result in positive child outcomes for children in our programs?



Quality Matters

David Elkind,
Ph.D., professor
of child
development at
Tufts University

“When we instruct children in academic subjects... at too early an age, we miseducate them; we put them at risk for short-term stress and long-term personality damage.... There is no evidence that such early instruction has lasting benefits, and considerable evidence that it can do lasting harm.”

Early Childhood System Approaches



- **Targeted: the policy of investing state funds in programs for children and families in the greatest need.**
 - Florida: School Readiness Program funds primarily support income-eligible families with children ages birth to 5-years-old
- **Universal: funding free preschool education for all children.**
 - Florida: Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program available to all 4-year-olds

Early Learning System Framework



Three core components of system development:

- 1. Affordability**
- 2. Accessibility**
- 3. Quality**

Investments are needed in the infrastructure of quality improvement and access to quality services for children.

Core Component 1: Affordability



- Florida has among the lowest School Readiness payment rates in the nation. Average payment rate is approximately \$5,000 versus the average private pay rate that is approximately \$10,000.
- Increasing the payment rate will positively impact the ability of early learning providers to provide high quality early learning environments for children, to provide a more livable wage for their employees, and to stay in business to support working families' child care needs.

Core Component 2: Accessibility



- Currently, Florida does not have an accessibility issue, there is however an access to *quality* issue.
 - UF found an average 40% vacancy rate statewide
 - Oversaturation of market further drives quality down
- There are approximately 20,000 early learning facilities in the state of Florida; with about 10,000 offering the School Readiness program.
- Without clear definitions and standards of quality in place, there is not consistent access to quality.

Core Component 3: Quality



The level of quality of a program is defined by a number of indicators. There are three basic elements that are necessary for high quality early learning programs:

- **Structure:** Small classes, enough adults, consistent adults
- **Environment:** A supportive, well-provisioned learning environment guided by well-designed curriculum
- **Process:** Effective teachers, who interact positively with each child, supported with professional development, reflective supervision, and good compensation

Quality: System Strategies



To operationalize quality, there are strategies demonstrated by research that meaningfully support child development:

- 1. Accreditation**
- 2. Adult-Child Interactions**
- 3. Curriculum and Developmental Progress**
- 4. Professional Development**

Quality Element 1: Accreditation



Continue existing opportunities for providers to achieve and sustain structural quality through accreditation.

- Physical environment
- Health and safety standards
- Ratio/Group Size
 - Florida: Up to 20% increase in school readiness reimbursement + property tax waiver

Quality Element 2: Adult-Child Interactions



A research-based instrument completed by a reliable and trained observer.

- Results are used by each program to make data-driven quality improvement decisions.
- Single best predictor of positive child outcomes.

Quality Element 3: Curriculum and Developmental Progress



Programs utilize curriculum-based assessment to meet individual learning needs of children.

- A curriculum-based observation completed at least 3 times a year provides critical information on children's developmental milestones.
- Results are used to inform individualized care and instruction and provide information to families.

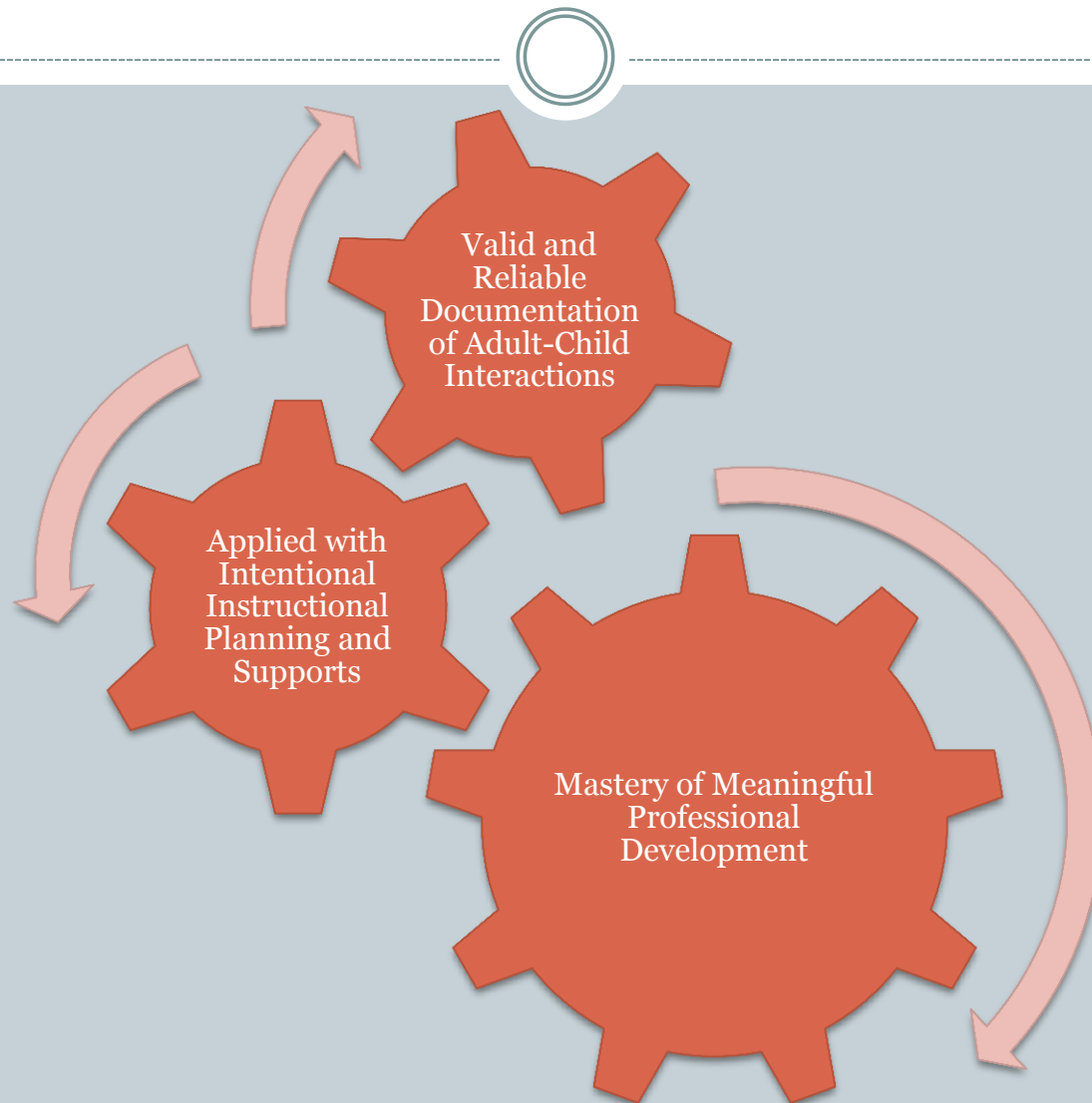
Quality Element 4: Professional Development



Comprehensive professional development plans align specialized training with core competencies needed to facilitate children's development and learning experiences.

- Instruction and coaching models support transfer and implementation of knowledge.

Performance Benchmarks



Core Early Learning System Components

Adult/Child Interactions

- Single Best Predictor of Child Outcomes
- Application of Practitioner Core Competencies in the Classroom

Professional Development

- Foundation of Practitioner Knowledge and Skills
- Strengthens Core Competencies of Practitioner

Foundational Skills

Progress Monitoring

- Intentional Individualized Instruction/Planning
- Supports Implementation of Professional Development/Knowledge Gains

Key Considerations



- Early learning as the foundation for school success (applied science of brain development)
- Early learning standards (developmental focus)
- Skills children need for school success (executive function)
- What matters in early learning for positive child outcomes? (benchmarks)
- Which children benefit from early learning as an intervention?
- Parent engagement strategies
- Supports and resources for improving early learning systems

Reauthorization: Child Care Development Block Grant



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For More Information



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