



KEY FACTS: PRESCHOOL IN CALIFORNIA

PUBLIC POLICY
BRIEFING KEYS

Prepared by *Preschool California*
www.preschoolcalifornia.org
for the
California Working Families Policy Project
January 2009

School readiness gaps mirror achievement gaps in later grades.

- When children walk into kindergarten classrooms without the early social and academic skills that high-quality preschool gives them, it's difficult for them to ever catch up.
- Early gaps in children's school readiness mirror standardized test results for third graders, indicating that the same groups of students who fall short of state standards by third grade were behind when they entered kindergarten.¹
- Almost two thirds of California third graders did not meet state standards in English-language arts, and more than 40 percent did not meet state standards in math.²

High-quality early education is a proven investment in school and adult success.

- Early education provides eager young learners with early reading, math and social skills that prepare them to be successful learners in kindergarten.
- Children who attended Oklahoma's high-quality, state-funded preschool program showed gains in early reading and math skills of 52 percent in letter and word identification, 27 percent in spelling and 21 percent in applied problems.³
- Children who attended high-quality preschool did significantly better in K-12 and were less likely to be held back or placed in special education than children who did attend preschool, according to a longitudinal study of nearly 1,000 low-income children in the Chicago Child-Parent Centers' preschool program.⁴
- The benefits of high-quality preschool continue into adulthood. According to the Perry Preschool Study, preschool participants are more likely to graduate high school, more likely to be employed, more likely to own a home and less likely to be arrested more than five times.⁵
- For every dollar, high-quality preschool provides a \$7 to \$17 return on investment by saving government spending on education, the criminal justice system and public assistance, and increasing tax revenues.⁶

¹ Karoly, L., et al. (2007). *Who is Ahead and Who is Behind? Gaps in School Readiness and Student Achievement in the Early Grades for California's Children*. RAND Corporation.

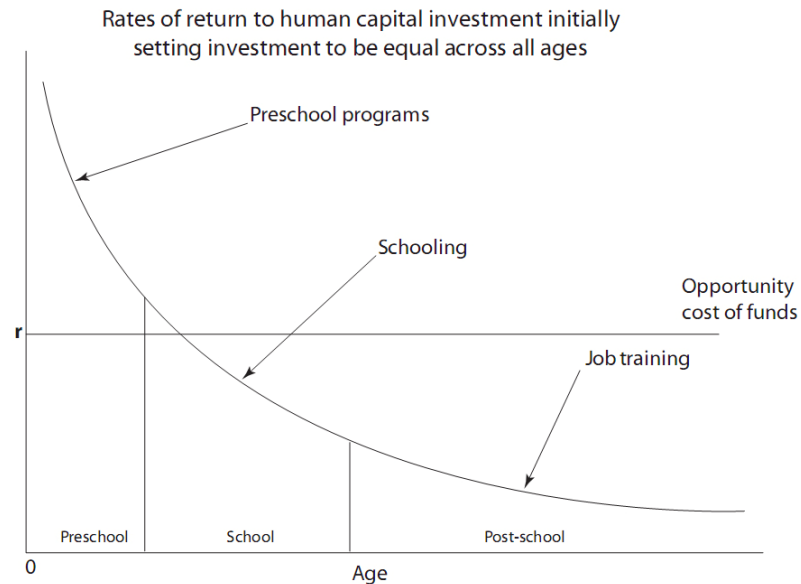
² Ibid.

³ Gormley, W., Gayer, T., Phillips, D. & Dawson, B. (2004). *The Effects of Oklahoma's Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program on School Readiness*. Retrieved October 2, 2008 from Georgetown University's Center for Research on Children in the U.S.

⁴ Reynolds, A. et. al. (2001). Long-term Effects of an Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Achievement and Juvenile Arrest. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 285.

⁵ Schweinhart, L. et. al. (2005). *Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

⁶ Ibid and Reynolds (2001).



Source: Heckman, J. *Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children in an Economically Efficient Policy* (2006)

The children who could benefit most from high-quality preschool are least likely to be in it.

- The children who could benefit most from high-quality preschool – Latinos, African Americans, English learners and those from low-income families – are the least likely to be in it.
- Only 53 percent of low-income children attend preschool, while 80 percent of children whose families make more than \$100,000 attend.⁷
- Even fewer are in high-quality preschools – 13 percent of low-income children are in programs that prepare them for success in school.⁸
- Three quarters of publicly funded preschools in California that responded to a survey have waiting lists.⁹

⁷ Karoly, L., et al. (2008). *Prepared to Learn: The Nature and Quality of Early Care and Education for Preschool-Age Children in California*. RAND Corporation.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Fight Crime Invest in Kids: California. (2005). *Public Safety Can't Wait: California's Preschool Shortage, A Missed Opportunity for Crime Prevention*. Oakland, CA: Fight Crime Invest in Kids California.. <http://www.fightcrime.org/ca/waitlist/capreschool.pdf>