

High/Scope Perry Preschool

A Summary of:

“Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through Age 27. Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation” No. 10, 1993, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. By Lawrence J. Schweinhart, H.V. Barnes & D. P. Weikart.

Focus

- ✓ Early Childhood
- Primary School
- Middle School
- Secondary School
- Postsecondary
- Extended Learning

Overview

In the early 1960s, two pioneering projects helped introduce early childhood education in America to young children living in poverty: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program and Head Start. Both aimed to improve the academic success of low-income children by offering them settings and activities that their home environments did not provide. Head Start, initiated in 1965, was part of the federal government’s “War on Poverty.” The project was designed by a committee of experts in the fields of preschool education, health, child development and mental health and offered a comprehensive array of services to the child and the family. The High/Scope Perry Preschool project was developed by the Division of Special Services of the Ypsilanti School District, Michigan between 1962 and 1967. The project placed a higher emphasis on education than did

POPULATION

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program served 58 African American children, 3-4 years of age, from low-income homes and deemed at risk of school failure because of environmental factors and low IQ scores. The children participated in the program for approximately two years. In addition to defined classroom activities, teachers visited the children’s homes weekly and had monthly group meetings with parents. The longitudinal study tracked participants and control group members until age 27. The study maintained contact with approximately 95% of the initial group.

Head Start. Follow-ups of project participants and a control group were conducted by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation at ages 14-15, 19 and 27. This summary reports on the last follow-up, done in 1993.

Key Findings

High/Scope Perry Preschool participants at age 27, compared with members of the control group, had the following statistically significant findings (at the 0.05 level):

- ◆ Higher monthly earnings (29% vs. 7% earned \$2,000 or more per month).
- ◆ Higher percentages of home ownership (36% vs. 13%) and second-car ownership (30% vs. 13%).
- ◆ Higher level of schooling completed (71% vs. 54% completed 12th grade or higher).
- ◆ Lower percentage receiving social services at some time between ages 18 and 27 (59% vs. 80%).
- ◆ Fewer arrests (7% vs. 35% having five or more arrests), including crimes of drug making or dealing (7% vs. 25%).

In addition, as measured on earlier follow-ups, participants, when compared to members of the control group, showed higher:

- ◆ Scores on the Adult Performance Level Survey at age 19.
- ◆ School achievement at age 14 as measured by the California Achievement Tests.
- ◆ Performance on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale from age 4 through 7.

When compared to women in the control group, women who attended the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program had significantly:

- ◆ Higher monthly earnings at age 27 (48% vs. 18% earned over \$1,000) because they had higher employment rates (80% vs. 55%).
- ◆ Fewer children out-of-the wedlock (57% vs. 83% of births) and more program women were married at age 27 (40% vs. 8%).
- ◆ Lower participation in special education programs (8% vs. 37%).

When compared to men in the control group, men who attended High/Scope Perry Preschool Program had significantly:

- ◆ Higher monthly earnings at age 27 (42% vs. 6% earned over \$2,000).
- ◆ Higher percentage of home ownership at age 27 (52% vs. 21%).
- ◆ Lower receipt of social services at some time between ages 18 and 27 (52% vs. 77%).

“It is essential that we invest fully in high-quality, active learning preschool programs for all children living in poverty. Since the national Head Start program and state-funded pre-school programs now serve fewer than half of these most vulnerable of our children, the nation is ignoring tremendous human and financial potential.”

—Schweinhart, Barnes & Weikart, 1993.

An analysis of criminal behavior between program participants and non-participants showed that:

- ◆ The mean number of arrests for participant males was 3.8 vs. 6.1 for non-participants.
- ◆ The mean number of arrests for participant females was 0.4 vs. 2.3 for non-participants.
- ◆ Twelve percent of participant males had been arrested five or more times vs. 49% of non-participant males.
- ◆ No participant females had been arrested five or more times vs. 16% of non-participant females.

The average cost of the program per participant was \$12,356 (in 1992 dollars) and the average amount of economic benefits was estimated at \$88,433 per participant. Benefits included: savings on unneeded special education services, welfare assistance, the criminal justice system process, and higher taxes paid by participants due to higher earnings. Savings by potential crime victims were calculated based on in-court and out-of-court settlements. The benefit-cost ratio of the program was \$7.16 returned to the public for every dollar invested in the program.

Program Components

The educational approach used in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program is based on the work of Jean Piaget and views the child as an active learner. The main characteristics of the program are:

- ◆ A well-defined classroom program operating at least 12 ½ hours each week and relying on a plan-do-review routine.
- ◆ Developmentally appropriate practices that encourage child-initiated learning activities (the High/Scope Curriculum is used nationwide in many early childhood initiatives, including some Head Start programs).
- ◆ Emphasis on language and literacy, social relations and initiative, movement, music, classification, numbers, space and time.

- ◆ Small groups to develop closer relationships between the teacher and the child (the teacher plans the materials but allows children to choose how to use them).
- ◆ Circle time (the whole class meets together with an adult for about 15 minutes to play games, sing or exercise).
- ◆ Staff highly trained in early childhood education.
- ◆ Supportive adults, both in and outside the school (school staff maintained intensive outreach to parents, including weekly home visits).
- ◆ A child-staff ratio of no more than 10 children per adult.
- ◆ Consistent staff supervision and training (use of a train-the-trainers system).

Contributing Factors

Empowering Children

In the High/Scope Perry Preschool model, the children were seen as active learners, continuously involved in a “plan-do-review” process. They were encouraged by supportive adults to plan their own learning activities, were offered a materials-rich environment to implement these activities, and had to report on results afterwards. The role of the adult was basically that of guidance and support.

Empowering Parents

Teachers visited parents at least once a week for approximately an hour and a half. The visits involved the child and the parents in discussion and modeling of the child’s activities in the classroom. Monthly group meetings helped parents to

understand their children’s development and abilities. The focus was on helping parents to provide the necessary supports for their child to develop intellectually, socially and physically.

Empowering Teachers

Training and supervision were integral to the program and aimed both to improve the effectiveness of the program and support the teachers. A trained curriculum specialist provided teachers with hands-on workshops, observation and feedback. Currently, the High/Scope Foundation has a nationwide certified trainers program with systematic evaluation. Each High/Scope trainer works with an average of 25 teachers and assistant teachers.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Of an initial group of 123 children who were eligible for the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program, 58 were randomly assigned to the program and the remaining 65 were assigned to a control group. Data were collected on both groups annually from ages 3 through 11, and follow-ups were conducted at ages 14, 15, 19 and 27. *Significant Benefits* reports on the follow-ups through age 27.

EVALUATION FUNDING

High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Program was located in Ypsilanti, MI.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Note: A comparative analysis of Head Start and High/Scope programs can be found in “Is the High/Scope Perry Preschool Better Than Head Start? Yes and No,” *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* (1994), 9, pp. 269-287, by Edward Zigler and Sally J. Styfco.