Why is Pre-K Important?

Introduction

According to research, early intervention programs have the potential to help at-risk children from impoverished families achieve at the same level as the children from more advantaged homes (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). Pre-school is the foundation for success in reading, writing, communication, listening, and preparation for a more structured classroom environment (McKinney, 2013). Activities that combine teacher instruction with child interaction engage children in more elaborate oral communication, improve social skills with their peers, develop their reading proficiency (Howes, et al., 2008).

Key Elements of an Effective Pre-K Program:
- Instructional, engaging activities
- Clear & concise teacher instruction
- Constructive feedback
- Encouraging, respectful, inviting classroom environment
- Reading and being read to
- Oral conversations with teacher and with other children

Benefits of Pre-K Programs

Gains in academic achievement and social skills are not limited to children from less advantaged backgrounds (Howes, et al., 2008). Pre-k programs are most successful when the child-teacher relationship is strong and the classroom atmosphere is conducive to productive stimulation and learning (McKinney, 2013). Research has shown that pre-k programs improve children’s language proficiency, literary skills, enthusiasm for learning, and social skills (Howes, et al., 2008; Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005, Jacobson, 2005). Furthermore, as pre-k programs become more accessible, the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children continues to shrink, although there is still lots of room for improvement.

Long Term Benefits:
- Early social development
- Group learning experience
- Effective verbal communication
- Higher academic achievement
- Enhanced reading and literacy skills
- Ability to pay attention
- Independence

Statistics & Data (Barnet, et al., 2017)
- 32% of 4 year olds enrolled in state-funded pre-k programs
- Maximum class size: 20 students
- Staff-to-child ratio: 1:10 or better
- Total spending: $7.4 billion