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**ACHIEVEMENT OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS AND ATTENDANCE IN PRESCHOOL  
PROGRAMS**

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# Achievement of Elementary School Students and Attendance in Preschool Programs

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**Abstract –** The purpose of this paper was to determine if a difference in achievement scores exist between students who attended the School System preschool program and those who did not as measured by standardized achievement test Reading/Language Arts and Math scores of students in the third and fourth grades. The variables of grade level and preschool attendance were considered. The population consisted of students who were in the third or fourth grades in the School System during the 2010-2011 school years through the 2012-2013 school years. Data gathered were from the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program achievement test scores obtained from the 2010-2011 school year through 2012-2013 school years and from the preschool attendance student management system. Independent and paired t-tests were used to evaluate differences in the variables. The investigation of the relationship between attendance in preschool and achievement test scores might assist educators in planning and implementation of future preschool programs within the public school setting. Findings in this study did not show significance of preschool attendance within the School System preschool program in relation to achievement test scores. Scale scores were tested in this model for both third and fourth grade achievement scores. These scores consisted of Reading/Language Arts and Math. Areas tested were found to have no significant differences for third and fourth grade based on preschool attendance but did have significant differences when third grade was compared to fourth grade of the same students.

**Keywords:** Achievement, Elementary, School, Students, Attendance, Preschool, Programs, etc.

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## INTRODUCTION

The contribution of early childhood education to the healthy development and future well-being of children who are economically and socially disadvantaged has become a vital public issue with important implications for families, business, private philanthropy, and government. As more attention is focused on increased academic rigor and standardized tests, children's readiness to begin kindergarten becomes increasingly important. Preschool education is seen as a factor in helping families balance childrearing and work responsibilities [4-6]. Many women are in the labor force with 60% of women working in 2000. This included 73% of all women with children under age 17 and 72% of women with children aged 3 to 5 years (Blau, 2007. Gorey, 2001. Nelson, 2003). According to the U. S. Census Bureau 77% of women were working in 2010; of this number 64% were women with children under the age of 6. For these reasons it is important to understand the effect of preschool on children's school readiness. (Magnuson, et. al., 2007). School readiness refers to aspects of children's social and academic development that are associated with children's preparedness for formal schooling. The largest increase in United States enrollment rates in public and private schools between 1970 and 2007 came

from children ages 3 to 4 years old, rising from 20% to 55% (Belfield, 2008- Barnett, et. al., 2007, Karoly, et. al., 2008). Nationally, state prekindergarten (Pre-K) enrollment of 3 and 4 year olds reached an estimated 1.4 million children in 2007-2008 and state funding for Pre-K programs was approximately \$4.6 billion. In 2012 more than 1.3 million children attended state funded Pre-K programs, yet the total state funding for Pre-K programs decreased by more than \$548 million across the 40 states that offer Pre-K programs. Only 28% of 4 year olds were served in state funded Pre-K programs (Gorey, 2001). Educating the young mind is an important step in readying the child for future learning experiences. The first 5 years of a child's life is a time of enormous growth in linguistic, conceptual, and social competence. Early education offers toddlers learning experiences that benefit them throughout their educational careers (Magnuson, et. al., 2007).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Educating the young mind is an important step in readying the child for future learning experiences. The first 5 years of a child's life is a time of enormous growth in linguistic, conceptual, and social competence. Early education offers toddlers learning

experiences that benefit them throughout their educational careers (Magnuson, *et. al.* 2004). Federal and state initiatives have emphasized the importance of helping all children develop school readiness skills including early reading skills. In 1990 the National Education Goals Panel created by then President George H. W. Bush and 50 governors set a goal that by the year 2000 all children would start school ready to learn. Evidence has shown that the early years are significant to children's later academic success (Stephen, 2012). Because kindergarten can be such an important beginning educational experience, the United States has been evaluating where it stands with respect to one of eight national educational goals: By the year 2000 all children in America will start to school ready to teach. The call for education improvements intensified with the passage of the No Child Left behind Act of 2001 by which government raised expectations for the achievement of all children including those children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act was launched in 2005 and by the end of the 2011-2012 school years 18,609 children were served in 934 classrooms throughout the state with every district offering at least one classroom. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided \$787 billion in tax cuts, funding for entitlement programs, and federal grants and loans. The three goals of the Recovery Act were

- (a) Create new jobs and save existing jobs,
- (b) Spur economic activity and invest in long-term growth, and (c) foster unprecedented levels of accountability and transparency in government spending (Gormley, *et. al.*, 2008).

Race to the Top (RTTT), a \$4.35 billion competitive grant, was announced in 2009 by President Barak Obama. This grant was created to spur innovation and reforms in state and local districts' K-12 education and was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Race to the Top emphasized:

- designing and implementing rigorous standards and high quality assessments,
- attracting and keeping great teachers and leaders in America's classrooms,
- supporting data systems that inform decisions and improve instruction, and
- using innovation and effective approaches to turn around struggling schools
- demonstrating and sustaining education reform (Tennessee Department of Education, 2009).

## 1- Early Childhood Studies and Effects:

The major government intrusions into the early years of education because such intervention would be considered a signal of failure on the part of the family (Frede, *et. al.*, 2007). This type of resistance has produced a vicious circle: parents resist government intervention in the education of young children on ideological grounds; the government, for its part, does not produce high quality daycare facilities; parents' resistance to government daycare solidifies because of the low quality of the care. This view of daycare is unfortunate as evidence strongly supports the idea that high quality daycare produces long-term positive outcomes. Studies of specific programs have provided the evidence.

## 2- High/Scope Preschool Project:

Schweinhart, Barnes, and Weikart (1993) described the effectiveness of one such program:

"The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project has been the focus of an ongoing longitudinal study conducted by the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation of 123 high-risk African American children. Participants were of low socioeconomic status, had low IQ scores, and were at high risk of failing school. Fifty-eight of these 3-and-4-year-old children were assigned to the program group, and these children were assigned to a control group that did not go through the program. Children attended the preschool program Monday through Friday for 2.5 hours per day over a 2-year period. During that same period, a staff to child ratio of one adult for every five or six children enabled teachers to visit each child's family in their home for 1.5 hours each week. In addition parents participated in monthly small group meetings with other parents facilitated by program staff." (Hilado, *et. al.*, 2011). Also indicated that only 15% of those who attended the preschool program had been placed in special education programs for mental impairment compared with 34% of the control group. Each year the mean achievement test scores of the program group of children from ages 7 to 14 were noticeably higher than were those of the control group. The difference in the final achievement test scores of the two groups at age 14 was particularly significant: the program group students' scores were 29% higher than the control group's scores. The mean school grade point average of those students who were in the High/Scope Perry Preschool project was higher than that of the control group and 71% of the program group graduated from high school compared with 54% in the control group. Also recorded positive results for those in the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project: "A study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project took place regarding these preschool students at the ages of 19 and 27. At age 19, the preschoolers had higher graduation rates and were less likely to have been in special education. The preschoolers also had higher scores on the Adult Performance Level Survey, a test from the American College Testing Program that

simulates real life problem situations. By the time the two groups turned 27, 71% of the preschool group had earned high school diplomas or GEDs compared to 54% of the control group."

## CONCLUSION:

A substantial body of research is available regarding the effects of preschool education on young children's learning and development, including long-term outcomes. Much of the evidence is from rigorous studies, and findings have been replicated with considerable variations in program design, populations served, and social context. These studies provide a sound basis for conclusions about the benefits of publicly funded preschool education, and they can help inform key decisions about who to serve and how programs should be designed. Based on a detailed and comprehensive review of the evidence the following conclusions and recommendations are offered:

- ❖ Many different preschool programs have been shown to produce positive effects on children's learning and development, but those effects vary in size and persistence by type of program.
- ❖ Well-designed preschool education programs produce long-term improvements in school success, including higher achievement test scores, lower rates of grade repetition and special education, and higher educational attainment. Some preschool programs are also associated with reduced delinquency and crime in childhood and adulthood.
- ❖ The strongest evidence suggests that economically disadvantaged children reap long-term benefits from preschool. However, children from all other socioeconomic backgrounds have been found to benefit as well.
- ❖ Current public policies for child care, Head Start, and state pre-K, do not ensure that most children will attend highly effective preschool programs. Some attend no program at all, and others attend educationally weak programs. Children from middle-income families have least access, but many children in poverty also lack preschool experiences.

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