

Early Childhood Education: Making Sense of All the Research.

Tulsa, Tennessee, Quebec—we've seen a number of new studies on the effectiveness of early childhood education. Some say it works, others say it doesn't. Professor Heckman and his co-authors Sneha Elango, Jorge Luis Garcia and Andres Hojman provide clarity in *Early Childhood Education*, a new working paper that makes sense of a number of seemingly conflicting research studies on the effectiveness of public investment in early childhood education. It assimilates data from randomized controlled trials and less rigorous evaluations to compare treatments, treated populations and findings across programs.

The bottom line: a wide range of studies show that disadvantaged children benefit from access to quality early childhood programs—and society benefits from targeted investments in disadvantaged children. Other findings provide clarity on a number of contentious issues:

Head Start Works. The Head Start Impact Study has created the misperception that Head Start has no effect. Opponents use the study to argue that government can't replicate effective early learning programs. Heckman and his research team debunk this myth by analyzing two new studies that clean up the pollution in this randomized controlled trial, as well as analyze other studies that offer data on long-term outcomes. They find that Head Start has significant beneficial short-term effects, strong long-term effects and deserves government investment.

Quality Matters. Higher quality programs like Perry Preschool and Abecedarian produce the highest quality outcomes, but less intensive programs still have significant beneficial effects for disadvantaged children and society.

Fadeup, not fadeout. Quality early childhood education provides persistent boosts in socio-emotional skills even if cognitive skills taper in the short-run. Gains in socio-emotional skills ultimately create better education, health and economic

achievement. It's time to focus on developing the whole child and stop declaring failure based on third grade standardized test scores.

Universal Access before Universal Subsidies. It makes dollars and sense to facilitate universal access to quality early childhood programs rather than subsidize low quality universal programs.

You can download Early Childhood Education [here](#), as well as our easy-to-understand one-page summary [here](#).