

## **Statement on Duncan, et al. paper**

February 24, 2017

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*An excerpt of this letter appeared in The Washington Post on February 24, 2017.*

A new study, *Persistence and Fadeout in the Impacts of Child and Adolescent Interventions*, [was featured in a Washington Post analysis on January 17, 2017](#), making the claim that the cognitive gains of early childhood education programs fadeout over time. It ignores an overwhelming body of recent evidence that shows to the contrary: so-called fadeout doesn't exist. In our recent work, we carefully [study](#) the effectiveness of a wide range of early childhood programs that received government funding, including Head Start. We find that all provide benefits and lasting effects to children who would have experienced lower quality care or have otherwise not received quality early childhood education.

The recent study of cognitive skill fadeout also ignores the important fact that socio-emotional skills have greater effects on outcomes across the lifecycle. For example, a study of the Perry Preschool Program, which has a documented lifetime return that increased academic motivation creates 30 percent of the effects on achievement and 40 percent on employment for females. Reduced negative externalizing behavior decreases lifetime violent crime by 65 percent, lifetime arrests by 40 percent, and unemployment by 20 percent.

Similarly, our recent analysis of the short- and long-term effects of [North Carolina's ABC/CARE programs](#) show lasting boosts in both IQ and socio-emotional skills that result in greater educational achievement, higher adult wages, and significantly better health outcomes that reduce health care costs. In fact, comprehensive birth-to-age-five early childhood education programs like ABC/CARE deliver a 13% per annum return on investment due to greater productivity and the reduced need for expensive social and health spending.



These positive later-life effects are consistent across other programs with long-term follow-up and speak to the need to invest in programs that develop the whole child with a full range of skills.

The sloppy evaluation ignores a body of serious scholarship and obscures the promise of early childhood programs. High-quality programs enable upward mobility through the effective building of early skills. Much more can be done to understand how these programs work and how to make them work better, but the evidence overwhelmingly points to the value of investing in quality early childhood development from birth to age five.