

EPISODE 3: ARE WE CRAZY ABOUT OUR KIDS?

Discussion Guide

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Discussion Guide 1.0

The Raising of America: Early Childhood and the Future of Our Nation

The Raising of America is an ambitious documentary series and public engagement campaign that seeks to reframe the way we look at early child health and development. It illustrates how a strong start for all our kids leads not only to better individual life course outcomes (learning, earning and physical and mental health) but also to a healthier, safer, better educated, more prosperous and equitable nation.

Learn more about each episode in the series at raisingofamerica.org:

- Ep 1: *The Raising of America*
- Ep 2: *Once Upon a Time*
- Ep 3: *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?*
- Ep 4: *Wounded Places*
- Ep 5: *DNA is Not Destiny*

View our 400+ partner organizations at raisingofamerica.org/partners and join the campaign (raisingofamerica.org/join-campaign) to change the conversation about what we can—and should—do to give all our kids a strong start.

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Are We Crazy About Our Kids?

SYNOPSIS

Episode 3: *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?* (32 minutes) is part of the documentary series *The Raising of America: Early Childhood and the Future of Our Nation*.

This episode asks:

What are the economic benefits reaped by investing in affordable, high-quality early care and preschool?

Science demonstrates that a child's experiences during the earliest years are vital to building the foundation for life-long success—in school and in life. Now economists are studying the costs and benefits of high-quality child development programs. And they're worried. Not because we're spending too much but because we're spending too little where it matters most.

With guidance from acclaimed economists—including Nobel prize winner James Heckman, former Minneapolis Federal Reserve senior vice president Arthur Rolnick, and the economist and investment banker Robert Dugger—*Are We Crazy About Our Kids?* looks at the research around high-quality early programs. The field's classic investigations—HighScope's Perry Preschool, Carolina's Abecedarian Project and Chicago's Parent-Child Center Study—are combined with more recent examples from Québec and Salt Lake City, Utah. Here is what they found: investments in high-quality child care and preschool pays for itself in many ways and many times over, yielding huge individual—and societal—benefits.

Children who received high-quality early care and education were more likely to graduate high school and college, get better jobs and contribute more in taxes. They were less likely to abuse substances, go to jail, be unemployed, or be tracked into special education classes. Studies show that high-quality programs return to society \$6 or more for every dollar invested over time.

And parents with affordable, high-quality child care options did better, too. In Québec, child poverty rates went from the highest in Canada to the lowest after the province started subsidizing infant and toddler care and preschool for any family who wanted it. The tuition: \$7 a day. Access to affordable care made it possible for more mothers to work, which increased family income.

Despite the proven benefits, high-quality child care is hard to find and unaffordable for most families here in the U.S. Less than 10% of child care facilities are even accredited, and center-based care can cost \$12,000 a year or more. Subsidies and local and federally-funded programs like Head Start and Early Head Start meet only a fraction of the need.

Why aren't we doing more? The film points out that states and cities do have money. They spent more than \$80 billion handing out tax breaks and other incentives to corporations in 2011 alone, competing to lure each other's companies and jobs. But, as former Fed economist Arthur Rolnick points out, that's a zero sum game: for the nation as a whole, not one new job is created.

But some places are investing in preschool programs, including a Salt Lake City School District. Their preschool program reduced the number of students assigned to special education by more than 90%. Those savings alone paid for the program. Tracked now through fifth grade, low-income students who attended preschool had almost closed the achievement gap between their affluent peers.

The evidence is so compelling it leaves us to wonder what is preventing the U.S. from investing more in its youngest children—and what are we willing to do about it.

How crazy are we about our kids?

THEMES

Are We Crazy About Our Kids? is appropriate for audiences interested in:

Achievement gap	Granite City School District
Anti-poverty initiatives	Human capital development
Carolina Abecedarian Project	Labor issues
Chicago Parent-Child Center Study	Parental leave policies
Child care programs	Perry Preschool Study (HighScope)
Child care subsidies	Preschool and pre-K
Child development	Public health
Crime prevention	Québec
Early childhood education	Racial equity
Economic development	Social welfare
Economic equity	Socioeconomic class
Economic justice	Special education
Education	Stratification
Feminism	Women in the workforce

FILM CHAPTERS

1. **00:00 – Prologue, Economists Ponder Child Development: Why Start Early?**
2. **03:49 – First Happy Returns: The Perry Preschool Studies - Better Outcomes, Lower Social Costs**
3. **07:24 – Québec Learns from the U.S.: Abecedarian and Chicago Parent-Child Center Studies**
4. **10:26 – “Québec Is Crazy About Its Kids!”: Reducing Poverty by Enacting Affordable Universal Early Care**
5. **18:02 – Subverting Our Own Future? The U.S. Lags Behind**
6. **23:17 – Closing the Achievement Gap in Utah: Are We Crazy About Our Kids?**

STATISTICS FROM THE FILM

Outcomes for Children

Compared to their peers, children in the high-quality child care programs studied were:

- Less likely to need special education services
- More likely to be literate by the sixth grade
- More likely to graduate high school
- Four times as likely to graduate college
- More likely to be employed
- More likely to have high-skill jobs and contribute more in taxes
- 50% less likely to commit a crime

Economic Return

According to studies of Perry Preschool and other programs by Nobel economist James Heckman, there is a 7-10% per year return over the lifetime of each child for each dollar invested in early interventions.

Other studies conclude a return of \$6 to \$17 for every dollar invested in high-quality programs as a result of better education, increased productivity and decreased social costs. In dollar terms, the Chicago Parent-Child Center and Abecedarian studies calculated a return to society of \$84,000 and \$100,000 respectively after the costs of the programs were subtracted.

In Quebec, the government gets back \$1.04 from increased tax revenues alone for every \$1 it invests in its child care system because so many more mothers (and some fathers) are now able to work.

In 2011, states and municipalities gave corporations \$80 billion in tax breaks and other incentives (e.g. infrastructure, buildings, waivers of zoning and regulations) in a competition to lure each other's companies. That's enough money to fund a \$20,000/year childcare experience for 4 million children.

Results from the Granite School District

After two years in Granite School District’s (Salt Lake City) high-quality preschool program, only 11 of the 238 mostly low-income children whose original entry tests suggested they would be directed to “special education” were placed in special ed. The rest were mainstreamed.

The Granite preschool program saved Utah \$1.4 million and saved the federal government \$2.5 million in special education costs alone.

The mainstreamed children were tracked through fifth grade at the time of filming. Their performance indicated that Granite School District’s early childhood initiative reduced the gap between low-income schools and high-income schools from 22 points to 5 points—and closed the math gap completely.

THE FILM’S TITLE

The title *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?* was inspired by Québec’s initial report recommending universal early care and education, *Un Québec Fou des Ses Enfants* (Québec is Crazy for Its Kids!). The report’s title sent the message that Québec should take an impassioned stand for children—and it captured the imaginations of early childhood advocates, galvanizing them to push for solutions that prioritized children.

We have to ask ourselves why we in the U.S. appear to be sabotaging our own future by not making these investments a national priority. Will we be “crazy about our kids,” as in enthusiastic about making children a priority? Or will we stick with the status quo?

The choice is ours as a nation to make.



FILM PARTICIPANTS

In order of appearance

Cheryl Polk

President,
HighScope Educational Research
Foundation

Robert Dugger

Economist and former Investment Banker
Co-Founder, ReadyNation

James Heckman

Nobel Laureate, Economics
University of Chicago

Arthur Rolnick

Former Senior Vice President
Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Lyse Brunet

Former Executive Director
Avenir d'enfants

Camil Bouchard

Community Psychologist
Québec, Canada

Yolande James

Québec Minister of Families
2010-2012

Alexi Chartrand

Father of Vladimir
Freelance media producer

Christa Japel

Professor, Department of Specialized
Education and Training
Université du Québec à Montréal

Senator Aaron Osmond

Utah State Senator
District 10 (Rep.)

Brenda Van Gorder

Director of Preschool Services
Granite City School District (UT)

Granite City School students

Jason, Rey, Diego and Maria

Janis Dubno

Senior Policy Analyst
Voices for Utah Children

1. Facilitating the Discussion

A successful film screening allows participants to:

- Watch purposefully and critically
- Reflect upon what they've seen
- Consider new information and how it affirms/conflicts with preconceived ideas
- Bring viewers' attention back to their own situation and how they might tackle inequities

Your job as facilitator is not to lecture but to encourage participation and keep the discussion focused and flowing. Be prepared to accept reactions to the film without judgment. If people feel that you are fishing for particular opinions, they are less likely to engage.

At the same time, participants will look to you to keep the discussion from wandering. If necessary, gently guide discussants to consider how their personal experiences or concerns reflect larger systems, structures and policies.

Prior to the discussion, be sure to preview the film yourself so you won't be processing your own reactions to the issues while trying to guide the group. You can also preview the transcript of the episode, available at raisingofamerica.org/are-we-crazy-about-our-kids.

Finally, plan in advance how you will deal with logistical issues, including strategies to ensure that everyone who wishes to speak has an opportunity to be heard.

2. Pre-Viewing Activities

Before you show the film to your audience, it helps to get them thinking about the issues involved. You can use the following two activities to start a pre-viewing conversation and get your audience engaged.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUIZ

Take the quiz below, individually or in small groups. Review the answers after the screening and compare them with what the film says.

1. Over the lifetime of a child, government spending on high-quality early care and education will result in a net financial gain or loss of how much?
 - a) loss of \$5 for every dollar invested
 - b) loss of \$1.50 for every dollar invested
 - c) breaks even
 - d) gain of \$3 for every dollar invested
 - e) gain of \$7 for every dollar invested

2. What percentage of U.S. child care facilities are accredited?
 - a) none
 - b) 10%
 - c) 45%
 - d) 70%
 - e) all

(cont. →)

3. Québec, our Canadian neighbor to the north, reduced their child poverty rate by offering:
 - a) child care and preschool at \$7 a day, birth to age 5
 - b) paid maternity leave for 11 months (some sharable with fathers)
 - c) decreased taxes for families with children
 - d) incentives to businesses to offer a family wage, so a single earner could support a family while their spouse remained at home to care for the couple's children
 - e) all of the above
 - f) a & b
 - g) c & d

4. On average, a parent of a four-year-old in the U.S. who was not eligible for subsidies could expect to pay _____ for center-based care:
 - a) less than \$5,000 per year
 - b) \$5,000-\$10,000 per year
 - c) \$10,000-\$15,000 per year
 - d) more than \$15,000 per year

5. Research shows that children who receive high-quality early care and education:
 - a) are more likely to be identified as in need of special education services and tracked into special education in elementary school.
 - b) are less likely to need special education services in elementary school.
 - c) are neither more nor less likely to need special education. Quality of early care does not have a measurable impact on whether or not a child is identified as having special needs.

(Answers: 1e; 2b; 3f; 4c; 5b)

RANKING EXERCISE

Ask people to consider their own experience with child care and/or preschool:

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being really easy, how easy was it for you to find child care?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 very hard ←————→ very easy

2. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being excellent, how would you rate the quality of care available?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 poor ←————→ excellent

3. Approximately what percentage of your income did you pay/are you paying for child care?

4. Has lack of child care ever prevented you from going to work? If so, describe.

5. Was maternity or paternity leave available to you, and if so, did you take it? For how many weeks? On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being the very easy, how feasible was it/is it for you to take three months of parental leave under current policies?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 very hard ←————→ very easy

3. *Post-Viewing Discussions*

The questions and prompts in this section are designed to help a wide range of audiences understand, analyze, explore and reflect on what they've seen, as well as on what they hear from others in the room. There is no need to use all the questions or use them in any particular order. Choose those that best meet the needs of your group.

A) OPENING PROMPTS

1. If a friend asked you what this film was about, what would you say?
2. Name three things from the film: one that surprised you, one that frustrated you, and one that inspired you. How did the things you named compare to the things named by other people in the room? How would you account for the similarities and differences?
3. Jot down a “tweet” describing the film’s most important messages.
 - After people have had a minute or two to compose their tweet, invite volunteers to share what they wrote (and, if they wish, to send the tweet). Discuss whether there is a consensus about what the main message is or why people may have had different ideas about the main message.
4. Review the Pre-Viewing Multiple Choice Quiz and ask if people’s original answers were correct. If not, discuss the possible reasons for not having accurate information. Invite people to think about the sources of their ideas and where their misperceptions originated.
5. Compare your own experience with the experiences of people in the film. Which parts of their experience “spoke truth” to you and which were very different from your life?

B) COMPREHENSION CHECK-INS

1. According to the film, why do a growing number of economists care about early childhood experiences for our nation's children?
2. What did the film mean when the narrator said, "Our system is paying for failure rather than investing in success."? What is the evidence of failure? How are we paying the price for that failure?
3. What were the key results of the Perry Preschool, Abecedarian Project, and Chicago Child-Parent Centers research studies?
4. What were the major lessons from Salt Lake City's Granite School District and Québec's investment in early childhood?
5. What is the typical "return on investment" for dollars put into providing affordable high-quality child care/preschool? Specifically, how does the investment increase government revenue and decrease spending on social programs?
6. How are corporations able to pit cities and states against each other in a competition for business and jobs? What are the consequences?



C) FRAMING THE ISSUES

1. Economist James Heckman declares that, “The worst fallacy in this business is to assume that the abilities, the motivations, the skills of people are fixed at birth—they are not.” Why are ideas about “nature” versus “nurture” important to policy debates about early childhood?



- How do your own ideas about children’s abilities influence the way you think about the issues?

- 2. Arthur Rolnick looks at early childhood expenditures and asks a common business question: “What was the return on the investment?” How would you answer the question?
 - What do you hope the return on investment would be?
 - Does your answer include any non-monetary benefits?

- 3. Québec’s parental leave laws give all mothers the option to take 50 weeks of paid maternity leave at 75% of their salary, and most of the leave can be shared with the father. Why would parental leave policies be an economic benefit rather than simply an added expense for employers?
 - How might attitudes towards parental leave policies be affected by framing them as a benefit that a nation grants to each of its children rather than as an extra benefit that employers grant to parents?

- 4. How might the saying “it takes money to make money” apply to early childhood policy? Why do people typically apply the phrase to business investments, but not social investments?

(cont. →)

C) FRAMING THE ISSUES (CONT.)

5. The film's title derives from Camil Bouchard's 1992 report *Un Québec Fou de Ses Enfants* (Québec Is Crazy for Its Kids). Why do you think the filmmaker chose that title?

- What does the Québec report's title say about Québec's social priorities?
- What does this film's title suggest about ours?



6. In Québec, early care and preschool and other services birth to age five are universal, i.e. they are offered to all families who want them. There is a debate in the U.S. whether initiatives like high-quality early care, pre-K and home visiting nurses should be made available for free or low cost only for children of low-income families, or for all children. What are the arguments for both sides? Where do you stand?



D) EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE

1. In terms of early childhood education, what evidence from the film would support or contradict the adage, “Either invest for success now, or pay more for failure later?”
2. The positive results described in the film are not attributable to all child care, but rather, to the very specific high-quality models from the Perry, Abecedarian and Chicago case studies. What did you notice about the specific features of those projects that contributed to children’s and families’ success?
3. The film notes that only one in ten U.S. childcare centers is accredited. What do you think explains the scarcity?
 - How difficult is it to find high-quality (certified) care where you live? How much does it cost?
 - How does that cost compare to the average wage in your region?
4. The film asks, “When is it true that what we lack is really a lack of early opportunity?” What did you learn from the Utah example about stereotyping, labeling and tracking our youngest students?
5. One of the Utah legislators challenges the long term gains of Granite’s investment, saying that the narrowing of the achievement gap fades after only a few years. Why might he think this? What evidence do Sen. Osmond and the Granite Hill study team employ to counter his assertion?



(cont. →)

D) EXAMINING THE EVIDENCE (CONT.)

6. The Granite City preschool program helped close the achievement gap between children attending low and high income schools through the fifth grade (which, at that time, was the highest grade reached by children involved in the program). What other social conditions and forces can improve developmental trajectories after preschool?
7. Of all the possible strategies to deal with skyrocketing social welfare or special education costs, where would you rank investments in early care and education? What evidence supports your ranking?



E) UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

1. In your view, what was the most compelling evidence for investing in child care and preschool? What are the likely counterarguments and how would you answer them?
2. Economist and investment banker Robert Dugger says, “In years traveling in East Asia and elsewhere in the world, top people managing large amounts of resources asked me again and again, ‘Rob, why are Americans not investing in their own children?’” He expresses frustration at not having a good answer. What would your answer be?
3. In the film, we see Canada and China working to provide affordable, high-quality early care and preschool. The narrator asks, “If research from our own country’s experiments is inspiring governments around the world, why haven’t we applied these lessons ourselves?”
 - Why do you suppose that China and Canada were able to enact policy based on American research when the U.S. hasn’t acted on its own studies?
4. In Québec, access to affordable care made it possible for mothers to work and advance their education. As social policy, why is enabling women’s labor force participation beneficial? Are there circumstances when it wouldn’t be beneficial?
5. Québec guarantees by law 40 weeks of paid maternity leave at 75% of pay (some of that time is shareable with fathers). Why might paid leave be important? Why do you think the U.S. does not guarantee paid maternity leave, even though all other wealthy nations do?

(cont. →)

E) UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE (CONT.)

6. Québec's Lyse Brunet links the women's movement to advocacy for universal, affordable, quality child care. What's the relationship between feminism and support for early care and education?

- In your view, how do the values of the women's movement and the values inherent in calls for universal early care and education intersect?



7. If society, as a whole, benefits from investing in affordable and high-quality child care and preschool, why do we continue to leave it to individual parents to cover the lion's share of costs for child care and preschool?

- What are the costs to society when high-quality care is unaffordable for most parents?

8. Resistance to government investment in early child development is often couched in the terms of "We can't afford it," or "It's not government's job." How would you respond to these claims?

F) UNDERSTANDING GOVERNMENT (IN)ACTION

1. Economist Arthur Rolnick observes that it is easy to make moral arguments for investing in early childhood, but “policy makers need more than moral arguments.” Why wouldn’t a moral argument be enough? Is an economic argument enough?
2. Camil Bouchard explains that creating Quebec’s report about the benefits of a strong childcare system wasn’t enough to make change: “You have to have a constituency around the report.” How would you build a constituency around the research presented in the film?
3. Pointing to funds wasted by providing businesses with tax incentives to simply shift jobs from one city or state to another, Arthur Rolnick says that, “Economic development, the way it is conventionally practiced in this country, is seriously flawed. I’m talking billions of dollars and the return is virtually zero.” Later on, Rob Dugger says, “So when we say that we have a budget crisis, it’s not a shortage of money that we’re talking about. There’s plenty of money.” How is business able to attract these public dollars from cities and states?
 - In addition to interstate competition, what other forces are at work to keep current spending patterns unchanged?
4. The majority of financial and social benefits produced by investment in early childhood show up years after the initial expenditures (e.g., reductions in crime or higher tax revenue from adults who end up with better jobs). How does this time lag influence the likelihood of government action?



(cont. →)

F) UNDERSTANDING GOVERNMENT (IN)ACTION (CONT.)

5. The film reports that, “public investment in affordable, high-quality programs like Perry is so low, only a fraction of our children can attend them.” Even in Québec, only 60% of children have access to subsidized childcare spaces. Why, even when governments understand the benefits, do we persistently maintain a shortage of spaces? Why don’t we have a system where programs serve all children?

6. What does government currently do to help parents who need, but cannot afford, child care or preschool?
 - Why are the current strategies falling short?
 - Is it just a shortage of money, or are we using the wrong strategies?
 - How would you change things if you could rebuild the child care system from scratch?

7. Imagine that you are the Treasurer or Comptroller of Michigan or another state and you were looking to invest state funds where they will yield the top long-term financial returns. Of the options listed below, where would you invest your money? Why?
 - a) In high-quality early care and education
 - b) In the stock market
 - c) In Treasury bonds
 - d) In tax breaks to businesses
 - e) In real estate
 - f) Other

8. A lot of people depend on or prefer more informal friend and family care providers rather than center-based care, especially for culturally appropriate care. Some provide excellent care while others don’t. How might a universal childcare system be structured to include and provide these caregivers with the skills and tools to ensure high-quality care?

G) SUMMING UP

1. Describe one thing you learned from the film. How does your new insight affect the way you think about early care and education?
2. What major questions was the filmmaker trying to answer (and how do you know)?
 - › How did the filmmaker answer those questions?
 - › Did you agree with the answers? Why or why not?
 - › Were there other questions you wanted to ask, and if so, what were they?
3. How is this film similar to or different from other media you have seen, read or heard on this issue? In what ways did it confirm or challenge ideas you held?
4. How does what you saw in the film compare to your own experience?
5. If you could guarantee that policy makers and politicians would watch this film, what would you want their “takeaway” to be?

4. *Moving to Action*

Ending discussions by planning action steps creates energy and optimism, even when the conversation has been difficult. Powerful action ideas are most likely to come from participants themselves, so we recommend leaving time at the end of your event, meeting or class to brainstorm.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GETTING STARTED

1. Identify people in your community who are willing to speak publicly about the issues raised in the film. Help them develop a press packet using statistics from the film and information that you gather from your school district, neighborhood, city, county or state.
 - Distribute the packets to local media outlets, offering opportunities for interviews and visits to model child care sites in your area.

2. Host a special screening of *Are We Crazy About Our Kids?* for the many organizations in your area who would have an interest in this issue: childcare center staff and parents, of course, but also neighborhood associations and other community-based groups, affordable housing and racial justice advocates, service clubs, PTAs, school volunteers, social service providers, your local chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and even stakeholders such as law enforcement and juvenile justice.
 - Don't forget to include government officials and your local Chamber of Commerce or other business groups. Invite them to suggest ideas about how the business community could help address the need for affordable, universal, high-quality child care in your city or town.

(cont. →)

3. Monitor the status of state and federal legislation related to early childhood education (e.g., the Obama administration's Preschool for All Initiative).
 - Arrange to meet with your elected representatives and their designated education staffers and explain what you think is important and why.
 - Share with them a copy of the film, along with key talking points.

4. Investigate existing advocacy initiatives both locally and nationally. Get in touch with those that interest you and find out how you can help.
 - See the list of more than 400 partner organizations who are changing the conversation about what we can—and should—do to give all our kids a strong start. (raisingofamerica.org/partners)

Background & Resources

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

In the United States, there is no federal law guaranteeing paid parental leave. In fact, many parents are not entitled to any leave at all (paid or unpaid).

The only federal law pertaining to parental leave is the Family and Medical Leave Act. The FMLA, instituted in 1993, entitles eligible employees to unpaid, job-protected leave for twelve weeks.

There are three caveats to this act:

1. Not everyone in America is eligible for this unpaid leave. Employees have to work for a company that has at least 50 employees, they have to have worked for that company for at least 12 months, and they have to have worked at least 1,250 hours over those 12 months (~25 hrs/week). In total, about 40% of all workers are not eligible for unpaid family leave under the FMLA.
2. The FMLA only provides unpaid leave—parents taking leave must figure out on their own how to financially manage the loss of income during their leave. For parents, this means cobbling together paid vacation days, paid sick days, and stretching this income to cover the unpaid time. Yet for many employees who cannot afford the loss of income, this means not taking the FMLA leave at all. A recent survey found that nearly 50% of workers eligible for FMLA leave did not take it because they couldn't afford the loss of pay.
3. The FMLA encompasses any type of family leave whether to care for a newborn (or newly adopted child) or to care for a sick parent or relative. If an employee takes time off to care for a family member, that time is deducted from the original twelve weeks of unpaid leave.

At this time, there is no federal law that provides paid parental leave. Yet, three states have stepped forward to provide some paid leave to employees in their states. California, New Jersey and Rhode Island each provide a percentage of one's salary for 4-6 weeks. Legislation has been introduced in several other states, as well as the U.S. Congress.

It is important to note that the United States is the only economically-developed nation in the world that does not provide any paid parental leave—every other rich nation provides a minimum of six weeks of paid leave; some countries provide more than a year of paid time to care for a child.

Source: “A Look at the U.S. Department of Labor’s 2012 Family and Medical Leave Act”, February 2013

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “QUALITY”?

In current policy debates, “high quality” early care and education is sometimes misinterpreted to mean that preschool or child care should focus on a very narrow set of academic and cognitive skills.

When *The Raising of America* talks about “high quality,” it means the set of practices that proved to be beneficial in the HighScope Perry Preschool and other classic studies, as well as the initial Head Start programs and research-based “best practice” findings in the decades since the 1960s.

These include care that:

- Is safe and provides an environment that includes developmentally appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments
- Is affordable and accessible for all children and families
- Uses a developmentally appropriate curriculum that includes these learning areas: social, emotional, physical, language and cognitive
- Uses developmentally appropriate instruction that is flexible while also ensuring that teachers intentionally plan a daily schedule that maximizes children’s learning through effective use of time and play materials, includes time for self-initiated

learning, free play, and creative expression, offers opportunities for children to learn individually and in groups according to their developmental needs and interests, balances sedentary and physical activities, and includes both indoor and outdoor time

- Is run by knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators, including educators with advanced degrees in child development
- Respects the whole child, including providing comprehensive services that support the health, nutrition, and social well-being of each child
- Creates an environment that respects and supports diversity and the cultural backgrounds of children and their families
- Establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child's family in ways that are sensitive to family composition, language and culture, and in ways that help family members increase their level of education
- Treats staff as professionals, including offering regular opportunities for professional development and career advancement
- Promotes positive relationships among all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth, security, and belonging as part of a community and to foster each child's ability to contribute as a responsible community member
- Establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children's communities to support the achievement of program goals
- Adjusts programs according to feedback from ongoing systematic, formal and informal assessment

Sources: www.naeyc.org/policy/excellence
www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/Position%20Statement%20EC%20Standards.pdf (2005)

ECONOMISTS & THEIR RESEARCH

Robert Dugger, ReadyNation

readynation.org

James Heckman, The Heckman Equation

heckmanequation.org/

Arthur Rolnick, Human Capital Research Collaborative

www.cehd.umn.edu/ceed/projects/hcrc/default.html

Perry Preschool Study (HighScope Education Research Foundation)

highscope.org/file/Research/PerryProject/specialsummary_rev2011_02_2.pdf

Abecedarian Project (North Carolina)

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Chicago Child-Parent Center Study

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Quebec's Early Years Study

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Granite School District (Salt Lake City, Utah)

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