

**PK-3 EDUCATION:
Programs and Practices that Work in Children's First Decade
Arthur Reynolds, Katherine Magnuson, & Suh-Ruu Ou, 2006**

Overview

There is increasing evidence that programs to successfully address children's learning needs must be comprehensive, span multiple years, and target transition points. The PK-3 perspective has helped the early childhood field move away from reliance on brief, one shot programs toward more comprehensive models. This report reviews the knowledge base on the effectiveness of PK-3 intervention programs and practices for young children making the transition to school.

Rationale for PK-3 Initiatives

The transition from preschool to kindergarten and the primary grades necessitates changes in the roles, settings, and expectations of an individual child. Participation in PK-3 programs may lead to greater and longer-lasting effects than less extensive interventions for several reasons.

1. Longer periods of implementation may be necessary to promote greater and longer-lasting changes in scholastic and psychosocial outcomes. Early interventions often provide many services to children and parents that require significant coordination. They can be more effective if they have more time to work.
2. PK-3 Programs and elements are designed to encourage more stable predictable learning environments, both of which are key elements in optimal scholastic and social functioning. One assumption of early interventions that continue into the primary grades is that the post program learning environment at home and in school can reinforce, limit, or neutralize earlier gains in learning, and thus should not be left to chance.
3. PK-3 programs occur at a time increasingly viewed as a sensitive if not 'critical' period in children's scholastic development. It is expected that the provision of additional services to children and families during this key transition would promote greater success and would prevent major learning problems by third grade. As a result of this, PK-3 programs promote children's learning now and in the future.

Conclusion

Evidence from national samples of children who received several of the key PK-3 elements suggests that these children had significantly higher levels of school adjustment and achievement in third grade than children who did not receive these program elements. Expansion of PK-3 programs will require significant investments by governments and school systems. There are several steps that parents, administrators, teachers and the community can do to encourage the implementation of PK-3 programs across the country.

Reynolds, A., Magnuson, K. & Ou, S. (2006). *PK-3 education: Programs and practices that work in children's first decade*. Foundation for Child Development: Washington, D.C.