



NFDW President Cindy Jenks

Action Alert      May 11, 2021

One pillar of President Bidens' American Family Plan is to expand universal Pre-K. A new study has presented evidence that early childhood education does help the boys and girls to mature with social and emotional intelligence. The New York Times is reporting:

**“But test scores are mostly a means, not an end. More important than the scores are concrete measures of a student’s well-being. And by those measures, the students who won the lottery fared substantially better than those who lost it.**

**The winners were less likely to be suspended in high school and less likely to be sentenced to juvenile incarceration. Nearly 70 percent of lottery winners graduated from high school, compared with 64 percent of lottery losers, which is a substantial difference for two otherwise similar groups. The winners were also more likely to take the S.A.T., to enroll in college and – though the evidence is incomplete, because of the students’ age – to graduate from college.**

**These positive effects were similar across racial groups and income groups. They also spanned both sexes, with larger effects for both sexes, with larger effects for boys than girls. The authors note that their findings are consistent with several other studies, which also found that early education had a bigger effect on long-term outcomes than short-term metrics.”**

While the jury is still out on whether Pre-K helps a student have better grades, NFDW can embrace the data that shows those students that participated in Early education stayed in school, graduated high school and continued with some form of higher education, including technology or a skilled trade and this is a primary importance.

NFDW members are urged to help publicize the value of universal Pre-K. Actively support President Biden's plan because our children will benefit from this opportunity.

Below is the entire article:

The New York Times  
**The Morning**

May 10, 2021

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by [David Leonhardt](#)

**Good morning. Biden wants universal pre-K. A large new examines its likely effects.**



A pre-K classroom in Boston's Brighton neighborhood in 2017. Craig F. Walker/The Boston Globe, via Getty Images

**Life outcomes, not test scores**

In the late 1990s, Boston expanded its public pre-K program, but it did not have nearly enough spots for every 4-year-old in the city. So, it used a lottery to help determine which children could enroll.

That lottery created an opportunity for academic researchers. It meant that thousands of otherwise similar children would have different life experiences based on random chance. And [random chance](#) is a powerful way for social scientists to study cause and effect. It may be the closest thing to a laboratory experiment in the real world.

Pre-K was a particularly good subject to study, because there has been a long-running debate about how much it matters. In the 1960s and '70s, studies of two small preschool programs — known as the [Perry](#) and [Abecedarian](#) programs — showed major benefits for the children who attended them. But some experts pointed out the two programs were of a higher quality than most pre-K programs. For that reason, a community that enacted universal pre-K could not expect to replicate the benefits of Perry and Abecedarian.

The evidence about larger pre-K programs — like the federal Head Start program — was [more mixed](#). Graduates of Head Start seemed to do better on math and reading tests during the early years of elementary school. As they got older, though, the positive effects often [faded](#), leaving the value of universal pre-K unclear.

This debate now has a new urgency. President Biden is [calling for](#) the federal government to subsidize state pre-K programs. About two-thirds of 4-year-olds and half of 3-year-olds now attend such programs. Biden wants to make them universally available, at an additional cost of about \$20 billion a year (or less than 1/30th of what the federal government spends on Medicare). He would pay for it by raising taxes on the wealthy.

In today's newsletter, I want to tell you about the results from the Boston pre-K study. They are [being released this morning](#) by three economists, from the University of Chicago, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California, Berkeley.

A Head Start classroom in 1969. Ted Streshinsky/Corbis, via Getty Images

## **Social and emotional skills**

Let's start with the negative results: The Boston students who won the lottery did not do noticeably better on standardized tests in elementary school, middle school or high school, according to the

three researchers, Guthrie Gray-Lobe, Parag Pathak and Christopher Walters. These findings are consistent with the [mixed evidence](#) on Head Start.

But test scores are mostly a means, not an end. More important than the scores are concrete measures of a student's well-being. And by those measures, the students who won the lottery fared substantially better than those who lost it.

The winners were less likely to be suspended in high school and less likely to be sentenced to juvenile incarceration. Nearly 70 percent of lottery winners graduated from high school, compared with 64 percent of lottery losers, which is a substantial difference for two otherwise similar groups. The winners were also more likely to take the S.A.T., to enroll in college and — though the evidence is incomplete, because of the students' age — to graduate from college.

These positive effects were similar across racial groups and income groups. They also spanned both sexes, with larger effects for boys than girls. The authors note that their findings are consistent with several other studies, which [also found](#) that early education had a bigger effect on long-term outcomes than short-term metrics.

How could pre-K have these positive effects without lifting test scores? It seems to improve children's social and emotional skills and help them mature more than it helps in a narrow academic sense, the researchers told me.

The findings are a reminder of how complex a process schooling is. We can't simply give up on test scores. Measurement and accountability are vital parts of education, just as they are with most human endeavors. Without them, society ends up tolerating a lot of mediocrity and failure. But measurement often needs to be nuanced to be accurate.

"An important implication of our study," Walters, a Berkeley economist, said, "is that modern large-scale public preschool programs can improve educational attainment."

**For more:** [How child care became a top issue in Biden's Washington](#), by The Times's Emily Peck; and [why Republicans are abandoning their past support for universal child care](#), by Elliot Haspel, in The Washington Post.

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