The Critical Preschool Years and Preparation for Academic and Career Success

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Outline

• Introduction to key skills for success
• Development of those skills
• Importance of those skills
• Targeted interventions
• Preschool/prekindergarten programming
What skills contribute to success in employment?
What skills contribute to success in employment?

- Motivation and persistence
- Teamwork
- Ability to get along with others
- Focus and adaptability
- Perspective Taking
- Impulse control
- Planning
- Emotion regulation
Motivation and persistence
Planning
Impulse control
Focus and adaptability
Teamwork
Ability to get along with others
Emotion regulation
Perspective taking

Executive function
Social-emotional competence

McClelland et al., 2007
Self-Regulation

Executive function

Social-emotional competence

= “SOFT SKILLS”

Blair & Raver, 2015
Development of Self-Regulation

Jacques & Marcovitch, 2010
Development of Self-Regulation

Shonkoff, 2002
"HARD EVIDENCE for Soft Skills"

Heckman, 2011
Importance of Early Self-Regulation

• Short-term outcomes:
  – Health (Schmitt et al., 2017)
  – Relationships (Denham et al., 2014)
  – School readiness (Blair & Razza, 2007; Schmitt et al., 2015; McClelland et al., 2014)
Importance of Early Self-Regulation

• Long-term outcomes:
  – Academic achievement (McClelland et al., 2013)
  – Health, wealth, employment, and well-being (Heckman et al., 2006; Moffitt et al., 2011)
Importance of Early Self-Regulation

Moffitt, 2011
Importance of Early Self-Regulation

Moffitt, 2011
Self-Regulation and Risk

Poverty, ethnic minority status, and family instability are risk factors for poor self-regulation

Schmitt et al., 2014; Sektnan et al., 2010
Self-Regulation and Risk

BUT....

Strong self-regulation can serve as a compensatory factor for children experiencing risk

Blair & Raver, 2012, 2015; Obradovic, 2010
Self-Regulation and Risk

and....

Self-regulation is malleable!

Bierman et al., 2008; Schmitt et al., 2015
Interventions and Programming

- Targeted Interventions
- Preschool Programs (e.g., PreK)
Interventions and Programming

- Targeted Interventions
- Preschool Programs (e.g., PreK)
Targeted Interventions
Purdue Interventions

- **Red Light, Purple Light**
  - Music and movement games
  - Example: Freeze game
  - **Results**: improvements in self-regulation after 8 weeks of participation
    (Duncan, Schmitt et al., 2017; Schmitt et al., 2015)
Purdue Interventions

• **Block Play**
  
  – Semi-structured block play activities
  
  – Example prompt: “Today your job is to work together to build a boat.”
  
  – **Results**: improvements in self-regulation after 8 weeks of participation (Schmitt et al., 2017)
Interventions and Programming

- Targeted Interventions
- Preschool Programs (e.g., PreK)
Preschool Programming

Abecedarian Project

High Scope/Perry Preschool Project
Abecedarian Project

- Randomized controlled trial
- Year round, full day child care from infancy through preschool
- High quality
Abecedarian Project

- Age when first child born
- Graduated from college
- Received welfare
- Employed

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<th>Category</th>
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<th>Abecedarian</th>
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High Scope/Perry Preschool

• Randomized controlled trial
• 8 months (Oct-May), half day preschool and weekly home visits
• High quality
High Scope/Perry Preschool

Figure 1: Major Findings of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project for Participants Followed Up at Age 27

- Five or More Arrests: Program Group 7%, Control Group 35%
- Arrests for Dealing Drugs: Program Group 7%, Control Group 25%
- Public Assistance as Adult: Program Group 15%, Control Group 32%
- Births Out of Wedlock: Program Group 57%, Control Group 83%
- Earnings of $2,000+ per Month: Program Group 7%, Control Group 29%
- Home Ownership: Program Group 13%, Control Group 36%
- 12th-Grade Education or Higher: Program Group 54%, Control Group 71%

Both of these studies attributed long-term effects on……

soft skills/self-regulation gained during the preschool year!!!!!!!!
Should we be spending tax dollars on public preschool????
Cost/Benefit Analyses

Cost/Benefit Analyses Show Positive Returns
Early Childhood Programs Demonstrating Range of Benefits to Society

- Abecedarian Project (through age 21): $3.23
- Nurse Family Partnership (High Risk Group): $5.70
- Perry Preschool (through age 40): $9.20

Total Return per $1 Invested

Center for the Developing Child, 2009
National Landscape of PreK and Evaluation Studies

Phillips et al., 2017
Consensus Statements Across Evaluation Studies

• Convincing evidence for short-term benefits
• Long-term benefits are either unknown or mixed
• PreK programs are not all equally effective
  – Quality matters
  – Curriculum matters
  – Teacher education, preparation, and support matters

Phillips et al., 2017
Summary

• Preschool as a critical stage for development
• Self-regulation in preschool is key for long-term success
• Targeted interventions can work
• Preschool/prekindergarten may be a sound public investment
Thank you!

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