

Civic Minds in The Seattle Times

Date: Friday, October 2, 2015

E-Edition Date: Wednesday, September 30, 2015

Article Title: Study finds preschool gains can quickly fade

Section: NW Wednesday, B1

Vocabulary:

Look up the definition of **convergence**. Please write the definition and create a new sentence, using your own words.

“Others call it “**convergence**,” suggesting that elementary-school teachers may be good at catching up kids who didn’t attend preschool — or they might be boring the kids who did, stifling their potential.”

Comprehension Questions

1. For decades, researchers studying preschool have struggled to explain a common finding. What is it?
2. Some call the phenomenon “fade-out.” What do they mean by that?
3. Others call it “convergence.” What are they implicating?
4. It’s not a universal finding, a 2014 study of Washington State’s preschool program for low-income children found that gains persisted through what grade?
5. The 5-year study from Vanderbilt University, which is following a random sample of low-income students in Tennessee who attended that state’s preschool program, has found the same flattening out of test scores, with a troubling twist. What did the researchers find that showed up on all the measures?
6. Researchers can’t say what caused the downturn, but Farran said that surveys of teachers involved in the study suggested one possible answer. What was it?
7. Seattle is emphasizing quality over quantity, ramping up slowly to serve 2,000 children in 100 classrooms by _____.

Class Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts:

- Did you attend pre-school? Do you think it helped you during the early elementary years? Why or why not?
- When you have children, do you think you’ll send them to pre-school? Why or why not?
- What are the factors that have helped your personal achievement in school?

But the latest results from a major study, released earlier this week, underscored the notion that preschool gains can fade out fast — and offers some cautions about moving ahead too quickly without nailing down quality first.

But no other study has found a decline in test scores for kids who attend preschool, said Steven Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research.

He argued that the findings reflect a flaw in the study, comparing groups of kids who have important differences. The authors strongly disagree.

- What do you think the flaw in the study is?
- Why would the authors disagree?
- Do you think it's important to focus on quality and not quantity early on in new pre-school programs? Why or why not?
- Why do you think this particular group had a decline in test scores across the board, in all areas?

Essay

Is pre-school necessary for early elementary success? Why or why not? What other factors contribute to the success of young children?

Newspaper-related CBA activity: U.S. Policy

How the United States government interacts with the world affects people across the globe. Analyze and evaluate the causes and effects of US foreign policy on people in the United States and across the world.

- Using The Seattle Times e-edition, find an article from this week that deals with world politics or foreign policy.
- What are the main points of view from someone living in that particular country? How is that "view" similar and different than your own opinion, regarding the specific issue the article is discussing?
- Why is it important to study and learn about foreign policy? How does it help you understand the world we live in, using current issues and events?

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