

Never Too Early

The Importance
of High-Quality
Early Education
and Care





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Introduction: Why It's Never Too Early

There is increasing exposure of Ohio children to poverty and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Each Child, Our Future¹, Ohio's new five-year strategic plan for education notes, "approximately 51 percent of Ohio's total student population is considered economically disadvantaged, an increase of 37 percent in 10 years."²

Surely, conditions cannot be that bad in Stark County?

There are 25,329 children under the age of 6 in Stark County. Under a third (28.9%) are in traditional married households; the rest are with single parents, grandparents or even in foster or non-related households. Of all households with children under age 18 in Stark, 31.1% received public assistance of some type over the last twelve months.³

These are only surface indicators, mere hints of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that many children face. We do know that by the time they get to school, not only are 100% of Alliance, Canton and Massillon children considered economically disadvantaged, but that all districts are supporting substantial and growing populations of at-need children.⁴

While none of this should be taken as a criticism of particular lifestyles or households, what is clear is that conditions, such as those mentioned above, can greatly hamper children through adulthood.

As the Health Policy Institute of Ohio stresses:

Early childhood is a time of extensive development in the brain and many of the body's biological systems that are critical for health. (See Appendix) Learning and development during these early years can have a critical impact on future educational attainment, which is an important determinant

of health. There are also other important aspects of early childhood that can influence health, school readiness and future educational attainment, including experiences, relationships and the environment in which a child grows up. Poverty is often a considerable barrier to healthy development.⁵

Yet, in all of this there is great opportunity. As the Harvard Center for the Developing Child points out:

Recent advances in the science of brain development offer us an unprecedented opportunity to solve some of society's most challenging problems, from widening disparities in school achievement and economic productivity to costly health problems across the lifespan. Understanding how the experiences children have starting at birth, even prenatally, affect lifelong outcomes – combined with new knowledge about the core capabilities adults need to thrive as parents and in the workplace – provides a strong foundation upon which policymakers and civic leaders can design a shared and more effective agenda.⁶

Unfortunately, many civic leaders have soured on early education, primarily due to the huge expense and lackluster results from the federal Head Start Program.⁷ Here in Ohio, for instance, only 6.3% of the state's education spending is from birth to age 5.⁸

Current investments in the education of Ohio's children do not reflect what we know about brain science and the economics of human development.

Yet, despite all of this, the call for quality preschool or early education continues to loom larger all the time. The evidence is more than compelling. Since researchers Barnett and Hustedt first called preschool the “most important grade” in 2003,⁹ that evidence has continued to mount. We now know, for instance, that in the critical age range from 0-3 years, a child’s brain produces more than a million neural connections per second. Language and literacy skills, making connections (thinking skills), a critical precursor to math, and social and emotional learning (SEL) in areas of self-confidence and self-control begin to form. This is why national advocacy organizations such as Zero to Three now say that “Getting Ready for School Begins at Birth”¹⁰ and publications such as the recent Ohio-centered *From the Ground Up* flatly state:

Early childhood education is powerful prevention policy for the state which pays huge dividends for taxpayers. We can either invest now in proven strategies or pay much more later in well-documented public expense. As we prioritize increased investments in early childhood education, we must also analyze outcomes through an equity lens and be relentless when it comes to closing gaps.¹¹

Similarly, the Heckman Equation, named for Nobel Laureate James J. Heckman, projects a 13% return on investment (ROI) for high-quality birth to 5 education. What can happen if we don’t make these investments? Problems continue into adulthood. Consider that in 2016, there were 638 aggravated assaults, 1,072 violent crimes, 8,787 property crimes and nearly 2,000 burglaries reported in Stark County.¹²

Yet, public support and understanding of the need for high-quality early care and education remain elusive as does the definition of “high-quality” itself. Head Start, our nation’s largest early education initiative has been plagued by inconsistent management and implementation. They are not alone. What we have in the United States is a highly fragmented system of both

formal and informal, public and private early care and/or early education experiences, in schools, centers, programs and in-home care. Despite policy enhancements, such as Ohio’s early childhood standards, core knowledge revisions and Step Up to Quality Program, there is little reason to believe that conditions for many Ohio children are substantially different than Kamerman and Gatenio-Gamble (2007) noted nearly a decade ago:

Despite research demonstrating that high-quality early childhood care and education can be beneficial to children, research has also demonstrated that the majority of children in the United States are placed in low-quality care, some of which may be detrimental to the long-term development of children.¹³

Steve Barnett, director of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University, agrees. He says “a majority of low-income 4-year-olds are in poor-quality programs. If there is a silver lining, it’s that even substandard preschool is better than the more common alternative: none at all.”¹⁴

None of this even addresses the issue of capacity. In its profile for Stark County, Ohio’s Early Childhood Advisory Council notes that there is only one early learning and development space for every 2.8 Stark children. Additionally, they state that “of the 9,409 early learning and development spaces, 4,465 or 47.5% are in accredited, quality-rated, ECE, or PSE programs.”¹⁵

Preschool education and care today not only varies in quality, but also in capacity. Unlike a single system, it can be likened to an education “Bosnia” of highly separate services and interests. This is also mimicked at the state level. So much so that Ohio’s new strategic plan calls for a streamlining of regulatory functions:

Six state agencies and the federal government (through Head Start) serve young children and their families. Each embrace a similar goal: to improve outcomes for children from birth

through third grade so they are on track for a life filled with learning. However, the agencies apply a variety of requirements and approaches when serving Ohio's children and families. Parents and caregivers could be better informed if the six state agencies coordinate, align and implement programs consistently.¹⁶

While agencies like their autonomy, guidelines do exist to support alignment. Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards¹⁷ provide coherence and guidance for every program. In the absence of any mandate for public preschool and care, the bottom line is that communities themselves must build the political will to initiate, and more importantly sustain, a system of early care and education. Often this will run contrary to private interests and agency-run programs. Yet, the only system that can ensure consistency and sustainability is public education. Here, enrollment has historically been low, but this is slowly changing.

The Jefferson County Public Schools (Louisville, Kentucky) are a classic example of this situation. Curiously, both state-funded and tuition-based preschool for 3 and 4-year olds are offered¹⁸. Years ago, the Louisville, Kentucky superintendent (it's a Jefferson County-wide school system) explained to a visiting group of Stark County educators how this happened.

“When we first started 3-4 year old preschool, there was a great deal of opposition from private providers”. “OK”, we said, “We’ll partner with you but you must follow our standards.” Those who could meet such standards became district partners; those who couldn’t went out of business.

The Louisville example stresses one other thing. A system, regardless of state support, must meet the needs of its community. However, in localizing a system of early childhood education and care, a district does not have to start from “scratch”. There are philosophies and approaches that can be easily localized and made relevant to any community. Because these are generally not “one-size” fits all, they will often seem vastly different from the state’s usual offerings of model curricula or learning standards. Yet, local educators, schooled in the specific needs of their communities, are best situated to decide on the efficacy of one system or approach.

Next, this paper will look at traditional preschools and discuss three of the emergent philosophical and value-laden approaches to early childhood care and education that allow districts, teachers, parents, and students greater flexibility in meeting the needs of their children. These are: Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf.



The Traditional Preschool

Before considering Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf approaches to early education and care, it might be well to consider the aspects of a traditional preschool. Such preschools can vary widely. Below is a list of characteristics of what may be seen in a traditional preschool.¹⁹

- Emphasis on: social development
- Teacher is center of classroom
- Teacher acts as primary enforcer of discipline
- Group and individual instruction
 - Same age grouping
 - Most teaching done by teacher
- Curriculum structured for child
 - Child-guided to concepts by teacher
- Child generally allotted specific time for work
- Instruction pace usually set by group norm
 - If work is corrected, errors usually pointed out by teacher
 - Learning is reinforced externally by repetition and rewards
 - Fewer materials for sensory development
- Less emphasis on self-care instruction
- Child usually assigned own chair; encouraged to participate, sit still and listen during group sessions
- Voluntary parent involvement

This description does not match all traditional, or conventional, school or center-based preschools. Few are this rigid anymore and the emphasis of most is on learning by doing. Progressively, early child care and education have evolved. What can be said, however, is that there are certain of these elements still present in

many programs, representing different points along the early care and education continuum.

Perhaps the most conventional of all preschool programs is the federal Head Start Program for economically disadvantaged children. It is, and remains, one of the nation's largest systematic efforts to combat poverty. However, it has not been without controversy. Originally conceived in 1965 as a summer "catch-up" program, the Head Start Act of 1981 expanded the scope of the program. Then in 2012 a longitudinal study involving 84 agencies and 5,000 children soured many policy-makers.

Looking across the full study period, from the beginning of Head Start through 3rd grade, the evidence is clear that access to Head Start improved children's preschool outcomes across developmental domains, but had few impacts on children in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Providing access to Head Start was found to have a positive impact on the types and quality of preschool programs that children attended, with the study finding statistically significant differences between the Head Start group and the control group on every measure of children's preschool experience in the first year of the study. In contrast, there was little evidence of systematic differences in children's elementary school experiences through 3rd grade, between children provided access to Head Start and their counterparts in the control group.²⁰

Yet today, a refurbished and better researched²¹ Head Start, in the wake of *Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007*, not only supports preschool programs, which primarily serve 3- and 4-year-old children, but also Early Head Start programs for infants, toddlers, and pregnant women in over 1700 agencies²². Significantly, Head Start also funds home visitations. The program has served 35 million children since its inception and was budgeted to serve one million in 2017. The Stark County Community Action Agency operates a Head Start Program in Stark County²³ while the YWCA Canton Early Head Start enrolls children from 6 weeks through 3 years.²⁴

While the Ohio Head Start State Collaboration Office (OHHSSCO) is located in the Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Head Start remains a limited option to serve Ohio's preschool population. OHHSSCO notes that "sixty-seven Head Start providers in Ohio served a total cumulative enrollment of nearly 32,000 preschool children in Head Start and over 5,300 infants and toddlers in Early Head Start in the 2016 program year."²⁵

There are other widespread approaches. For over 50 years, the High Scope (an active learning) Curriculum²⁶ has been used by many church and community-based preschools. Beginning with an Infant -Toddler Curriculum, High Scope moves into preschool and also supports home providers. High Scope was at the core of what remains to this day one of the landmark early childhood studies, the Perry Preschool Study. Sponsored by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) of the

National Institutes of Health (NIH), the High Scope Perry Preschool Study (HPPS) was designed to learn about the lasting effects of early childhood interventions, such as preschool programs. The study tracks both participants and non-participants of the preschool in the mid-1960s through varying aspects of their lives. The study sample is now approaching their mid-50s. Findings over time have supported that Perry participants had higher earnings; committed fewer crimes; were more likely to hold a job; and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have a preschool education. NORC at the University of Chicago is currently running the Perry study which will actually look at effects into old age. Dr. James Heckman is the principal investigator.²⁷

Though the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) stresses that "no two preschools look or feel exactly the same", the organization says that any high-quality preschool uses developmentally appropriate practices, known as DAP. To NAEYC, this means:

- Teaching based on each child's age and stage of development
- Helping each child meet goals that are just right for that child
- Valuing and including each child's family, language, and culture²⁸

In addition to traditional or conventional preschools, many of which do this, there are three overarching approaches or methods whose philosophies best reflect these quality components.



The Montessori Preschool

*And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child. – Maria Montessori in *The Absorbent Mind*²⁹*

The Montessori Method of Education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori over a century ago, and today there are an estimated 4,000 Montessori schools in the United States, spanning from birth through high school. Simply put, the method recognizes the child, eager for knowledge, as the one who initiates learning in a highly supportive environment. Children learn at their own pace. According to the American Montessori Society, certain components are necessary for a program to be considered authentically Montessori. These include multi-age groupings that foster peer learning, uninterrupted blocks of work time, and guided choice of work activity. In early childhood, this equates to learning through sensory-motor activities, and working with materials that develop cognitive powers through direct experience: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and movement.³⁰

Maria Montessori called her environment for 3- to 6-year-old children Casa dei Bambini or “Children’s House.” The North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA) gives one of the best descriptions of a Montessori preschool as follows:

The Montessori preschool classroom is a "living room" for children. Children choose their work from among the self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves, and they work in specific work areas. Over a period of time, the

children develop into a "normalized community," working with high concentration

and few interruptions. Normalization is the process whereby a child moves from being undisciplined to self-disciplined, from disordered to ordered, from distracted to focused, through work in the environment. The process occurs through repeated work with materials that captivate the child's attention. For some children this inner change may take place quite suddenly, leading to deep concentration. In the Montessori preschool, academic competency is a means to an end, and the manipulatives are viewed as "materials for development."³¹

The Cleveland-based NAMTA (a U.S. Affiliate of the Association Montessori Internationale, AMI)³² remains a resource worth exploring. NAMTA publishes a quarterly journal and is a gateway to information on Montessori conferences and an extensive subscription archive of 20,000 Montessori citations (subsidized by a grant from the Hershey Foundation).

While most Montessori schools (and preschools) remain private, NAMTA now estimates that there are some 200 public Montessori schools in the nation. One of the oldest public (and urban) Montessori preschools in the country is the Cleveland Metropolitan School District’s five-star rated Tremont Montessori.³³ Stark County’s own Portage Collaborative Montessori School is

quite possibly the only public multi-district Montessori school in the nation.³⁴

Regionally and locally, other schools deserve attention for their preschool emphasis. In Brecksville, the South Suburban Montessori

School begins children at 18 months. Their first house groups these children with others up to 3 years in age.³⁵ Canton Montessori uniquely operates both an Infant Environment (6 weeks to 18 Months and a Toddler Environment (18 months to 3 years) prior to pre-primary.³⁶



Reggio Emilia

The pleasure of learning, of knowing, and of understanding is one of the most important and basic feelings that every child expects from the experiences he confronts alone, with other children, or with adults. It is a crucial feeling which must be reinforced so that the pleasure survives even when reality may prove that learning, knowing, and understanding involve difficulty and effort. – Loris Malaguzzi³⁷

Developed in the wake of World War II by psychologist Loris Malaguzzi and parents in the villages around Reggio Emilia, Italy, with a focus on preschool and eventually primary the Reggio approach differs from both Montessori and Waldorf. It is an approach to teaching based on fundamental values about how children learn, rather than a philosophy and set of values that guides curriculum. These values are:

- The child is an active participant in learning. The child is a competent initiator of their own learning. Children also have many ways to express that learning. Hence, a popular phrase used by Reggio is “The Child has 100 Languages”.
- The environment is significant. Classrooms are often studios filled with materials that the child can employ in project-based learning.
- That the teacher, parent and child are

collaborators in the process of learning. In this community, the parent is a resource for the child’s learning.

- Learning is made visible. Student portfolios and teacher observations and recording of learning serve as invaluable tools.

Reggio schools are unique because each draws strongly upon learning opportunities in their own community.

There are only a handful of Reggio schools in Ohio.³⁸ There are probably more Reggio-inspired schools than Reggio schools. Certainly, the project-based approach, widely used in pre-school, and constructivist teaching methods draw inspiration from Reggio. The North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA)³⁹ is probably the best source for materials and information in the United States on the Reggio Approach.



Waldorf Preschools

Waldorf Education is not a pedagogical system but an art - the art of awakening what is actually there within the human being. – Rudolf Steiner

After the end of World War I, Austrian Scientist Rudolph Steiner visited the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory and was asked by owner Emil Molt to establish a school for the children of the factory's workers. The school that was established had its roots in the spiritual-scientific research of Steiner. His philosophy encompassed the notion that the human being is a threefold being of spirit, soul, and body whose capacities unfold in three developmental stages on the path to adulthood. These developmental stages were early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence.

What is perhaps less well known is that Steiner had only agreed to establish the school on the basis of four conditions that were radical for the education of the day and in many places still today: 1) that the school be open to all children; 2) that it be coeducational; 3) that it be a unified twelve-year school; 4) that the teachers, those individuals actually in contact with the children, have primary control of the school, with minimum interference from the state or from economic sources.⁴⁰

Today Waldorf Schools are probably better known for their aversion to traditional grading systems and the use of electronic media. Academics here are classical and experience-based. Students are taught to assimilate information. Steiner said that, "The heart of the Waldorf Method is the conviction that education is an art – it must speak to the child's experience. To educate the whole child, the heart and will must be reached as well as the mind."

As the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America (AWSNA) puts it:

We know that education is more than the acquisition of information, rigid academic curricula, and high stakes testing. In fact, the world is changing so rapidly that no one can really predict what information our children will need to know in the future. However, it is clear that intellectual flexibility, creative thinking, independent judgment, moral discernment, refined written and oral communication skills, and the ability to collaborate effectively will be essential to success in today's ever-changing, global community. The Waldorf curriculum, pedagogy, and teaching methods are designed to nurture these capacities and more.⁴¹

As might be imagined, Waldorf early education focuses on activity, sensory awareness, a good deal of time spent outdoors and a great deal of imaginative play. While AWSNA is the steward of the Waldorf trademarks, there are other groups with distinct differences. The Alliance for Public Waldorf Education is the organization for public district and charter schools in the U.S., and though both follow the core principles developed by the Pedagogical Section Council of North America, the degree of autonomy of Alliance schools varies from district to district and state to state.

Public school districts considering Waldorf education would do well to start with the list of key differentiations published by AWSNA⁴² and additionally Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America (WECAN) for preschool applications.⁴³



A Continuum of Experiences and Care

Not only is quality an issue for early education and care, availability, type, and participation are also issues. Consequently, prior to kindergarten, children can be anywhere along a continuum from no out of home arrangements; to patchwork care with friends and relatives; to early childhood experiences; to enrollment with a public preschool, Head Start program, or quality-rated center. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education, in a national household survey, has found that:

Approximately 60 percent of children age 5 and younger not enrolled in kindergarten were in at least one nonparental care arrangement that was regularly scheduled at least once a week, as

reported by their parents. Among children in a weekly nonparental care arrangement, 41 percent were cared for by a relative (relative care), 22 percent were cared for in a private home by someone not related to them (nonrelative care), and 59 percent were attending a day care center, preschool, or prekindergarten (center-based care).⁴⁴

Not only do arrangements and their corresponding education and SEL value vary, but the survey also found that children could have multiple weekly arrangements across multiple types of care. Not surprisingly, cost and availability were the two largest limiting factors for families.



Early Childhood Experiences

Early childhood experiences are yet another dimension of early care and education. These can be stand-alones or done in conjunction with other care or educational arrangements.

Recently, famed country music star and actress Dolly Parton was recognized by the Library of Congress. The recognition was not for one of her songs or anything that she had written, it was for what she had given away, one hundred million children's books to preschoolers in some of the most impoverished neighborhoods and zip codes in the nation.

Is Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)⁴⁵ quality early childhood education? No, but it is

a quality early childhood experience (one end of the continuum) that represents a learning opportunity based on substantive research and solid concepts. By sending a free book to a preschooler every month, DPIL's first and foremost recognizes that there is a direct link between the amount of reading materials in a home and literacy.

Secondly, much like the SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) program that originated in Stark County, DPIL knows that a family member, generally the mother, is the child's first teacher. Further, the experience persists over time (from 0 to age 5) and is not a singular experience.

The concept is simple, yet complex. Free books encourage parents to read to their child resulting in the child learning new words and wanting more stories. This leads both parents and the child to believe that the child will succeed in kindergarten. Belief that a child will succeed academically encourages that success.

Stark County has originated two outstanding examples of early childhood experiences that have also generated positive outcomes and results that persist over time. They are among the best researched early childhood programs in the state. The first is **SPARK**, which began in 2002 with a W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant awarded to the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton. Now in 11 Ohio counties, SPARK distributes books, but does much more. It is a powerful evidence-based home visitation program with results that persist throughout the primary years. A parent partner visits the child's home monthly to conduct lessons and activities based on Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards. The parent partner and the parent work together to develop and follow an individualized learning plan to help ensure that the child will be ready for kindergarten. SPARK also assesses the child's skill levels and conducts developmental screenings. This helps address issues, such as speech impediments or behavior. Referrals to collaborative service partners in the community help parents address these issues before the child enters school. In a very real sense, SPARK can be considered an early childhood intervention program, yet another point on the continuum, and has been touted as such in the *International Journal of Early Childhood Learning*.⁴⁶

The second outstanding example is the **Artful Living and Learning** Program based at the Stark County Educational Service Center. The program was created in 2008 by two private citizens who were affiliated with the Massillon Museum, Wilbur Arnold and Christopher Craft. Arnold and Craft understood the potential of the arts to enrich the preschool experiences of

children in the Massillon City Schools. A collaborative effort from the start, Artful Living partnered the Canton Symphony, Massillon Museum, Ananda Center for the Arts, and The Massillon Public Library in pairing classroom teachers and artists in creating content lessons based on the Ohio Early Learning Standards and Ohio Fine Arts Standards.

Over the past decade, the program has grown and now serves more than 1,300 students in 14 Stark County public schools and affiliated preschools. These children receive two to four 20-minute lessons each week for a 25-week period. The lessons are in Visual Art, Music, Drama, Dance, and/or Literacy taught by artists and art educators, using lesson plans collaboratively developed by teaching artists and curriculum professionals over the ten years of the program's existence.

Both an Advisory Board, which meets monthly during the school year, and an Administrative Team work to plan, implement, evaluate, fund and promote Artful Living and Learning. Today, Artful Living and Learning serves as one of Ohio's most potent examples of how a broad-based community partnership can work to enrich the preschool experiences. The program has been supported by numerous Stark County foundations and organizations, including ArtsinStark, Stark Education Partnership, Stark Community Foundation, Aultman Foundation Paul & Carol David Foundation, and the Deuble Foundation. Regional and statewide partners have also supported the program, including the PNC Foundation, Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, and Ohio Arts Council. The Massillon Museum, SCESC, and the Massillon City School District, have provided facilities and staff to implement and grow the program.

Similar to SPARK, Artful Living and Learning also tracks student outcomes into the primary years. The Young Children's Achievement Test (YCAT), Thinking Creatively in Action and Movement (TCAM), and the Ohio

Achievement Assessment Results (OAA) and student grades are used as a way to measure effects on academics over time. While Artful Living and Learning students performed at higher levels in all academics, dramatic and

statistically significant differences were seen between Artful Living and non-Artful Living students in fluency, originality and imagination and language arts.⁴⁷



The Importance of Parental Involvement: Is 2Gen the Future?

There is a compelling body of research that shows promising and lasting outcomes when children have access to high-quality early interventions...However, one particular finding is that these early childhood programs are by no means a vaccine for poverty's effects – helping to prevent the ill-effects of growing up poor. Studies show a “fade-out” of many of these high-quality child-focused interventions...⁴⁸

The words above were a prelude to a series of recommendation from the Center for Family Economic Success (CFES) to the Annie E. Casey Foundation. CFES had long held that the integration of services was the most effective way to support low-income families and children. Specifically, CFES recommended integrating:

(a) interventions directed to parents which aim at addressing their economic success (through training, education, job assistance, financial coaching, access to public benefits and work supports, and asset building strategies); (b) interventions for their children through high quality⁴⁹ early educational supports (through home visiting programs and/or quality early childhood programs.)

Hence, the term 2Gen for a two generation, or a family wide approach. 2Gen is not a new concept, but substantive examples remain rare.

Today, one of the greatest advocates for the 2Gen approach is the Aspen Institute through its Ascend Project⁵⁰. Ascend describes a continuum where programs can have a child-adult focus at one end and an adult-child focus at the other or be just adult or child oriented. In the middle are whole family programs. 2Gen is a sometimes disruptive, yet highly positive, human service innovation that seeks to reorder traditional ways families are served and programs are funded. It also addresses some of the common issues faced by early education, adult literacy, and workforce development programs. Rarely is a 2Gen program carried out by just one organization. Often funds and services need to be blended.

CAP in Tulsa is one of the nation's strongest 2Gen approaches blending services for children and adults. Head Start is at the core of its early childhood offerings, as in many places. Yet, career advance for adults and opportunities for parents and children to learn together have

strong impacts. A Georgetown University study has shown that positive academic effects last at least into the eighth grade.⁵¹ School districts are surprisingly well positioned with adult education options to develop and provide 2Gen programs. The Cleveland Metropolitan School District's Parent University⁵² is one such example. Why is a 2Gen approach important?

There is a substantial body of research supporting how the success of a parent supports the success of the child. For instance, the Columbia County New York longitudinal Study begun in 1960 found that a parent's educational level significantly predicted educational and occupational success for the child of 8 as much as 40 years later. This outweighed all other SES factors. Despite other family-stress factors, a child's educational aspirations were strongly supported by parents who modeled achievement through their own pursuit of education.⁵³ As Davis-King (2005) has suggested increasing parental education can have a more permanent impact than supplemental income programs⁵⁴ and as Magnuson and McGroder (2001) found even relatively small increases in a parent's education can benefit a child's achievement.⁵⁵ Inversely, a child's success can also prompt increased achievement on the part of the parent.

Parent education is not the only domain to consider. Research has shown that even small increases in a parent's earnings can have long-term effects on a child's math and reading scores.⁵⁶

There is one other factor that might compel a 2Gen approach.

As the next decade approaches, increased demand and tighter governmental funding will continually redefine the shape of education and human service funding, not only at federal and state levels, but also locally. Schools and community organizations (and funders) will be expected to assume greater responsibility for details and risk. How will this

happen? As the international consulting firm Deloitte⁵⁷ notes, "a worldwide revolution in how we deal with social issues is occurring. The field of social finance and impact investing is changing the landscape." Increasingly, old structures will be challenged as organizations need to collaborate in new and innovative ways. Simply put, governmental policies and funding streams will be altered as local agencies and funders may need to "upfront" programs, in the hope of later governmental reimbursement for demonstrable results. In Ohio, this is already taking place in the higher education sector with the state's new "outcome-based" funding⁵⁸.

It has also started in neighboring Cuyahoga County.

The county of Cuyahoga, Ohio, encompassing the greater Cleveland area, is launching the nation's first county-level Pay for Success (PFS) project in partnership with FrontLine Service, a comprehensive continuum of care service provider for homeless persons in Ohio.

The Partnering for Family Success Program, the first PFS project in the combined areas of homelessness and child welfare, will deliver intensive 12-15-month treatment to 135 families over five years to reduce the length of stay in out-of-home foster care placement for children whose families are homeless.⁵⁹

As foundations and others upfront money, Cuyahoga County will reimburse them, plus an additional return, for successful outcomes as determined by an outside evaluator. Though education is not directly included as an outcome, a working group of 16 educational and human service organizations in Cuyahoga County are already working on a "Call to Action" for educational scenarios. Under this type of option, private funders could upfront a school, or district, 2Gen education effort with a state or federal agency reimbursing the investment. Perhaps it is only a matter of time.



Conclusion: What is High Quality Early Care and Education?

This paper has presented the case for the effectiveness of high-quality early care and education and reviewed several philosophies, approaches and systems. Still, the question remains, what is “high quality”? The National Center for Early Education has one such notion. High Quality is based on both process and structure, they list *The Essential Indicators of Quality Preschool* as follows:⁶⁰

Aspects of Process

- *There are positive relationships between teachers and children.*
- *The room is well-equipped, with sufficient materials and toys.*
- *Communication occurs throughout the day, with mutual listening, talking/responding, and encouragement to use reasoning and problem-solving.*
- *Opportunities for art, music/movement, science, math, block play, sand, water, and dramatic play are provided daily.*
- *There are materials and activities to promote understanding and acceptance of diversity.*
- *Parents are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of the program.*

Aspects of Structure

- *Adult-child ratios do not exceed NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) recommendations.*
- *Group sizes are small.*
- *Teachers and staff are qualified and compensated accordingly*
- *All staff are supervised and evaluated, and have opportunities for professional growth.*

While these are all suitable points for implementation, early child care and education to be successful, needs the following attributes as well: persistence, equity, accessibility, and affordability.

Today there are 6,590 families with children under age 5 in Stark County. Overall, 38.1% fall under the poverty benchmark. 3,059 are married couple families with a far lower poverty rate at 0.9%. However, 2,884 households are headed by females with no husband present. Poverty here is 83.1%⁶¹ What is to be done? Perhaps this is best summarized by The Ground Up Report.

During a child's first five years, Ohio has a critical opportunity to lay a strong foundation for the state's most-at risk children by investing in enriching early experiences. Quality early childhood programs have the ability to close gaps between at-risk kids and their more advantaged peers by the time they enter Kindergarten. Identifying barriers to children's success and providing interventions must happen in the first five years of life to give all children the best shot at reaching their full potential. Children in Ohio are facing unimaginable levels of trauma and adversity before they even enter school. Ohio must do better to reach families and children through quality home visiting, child care and preschool programs. In order to improve kindergarten readiness and lifelong success for Ohio kids, the state needs to ensure early development is happening in high-quality learning environments.⁶²

Throughout the years in Stark County – in collaboration with its school districts,

community organizations, and foundation community – has been a leader in early childhood education and care. Achievements with SPARK and Artful Living and Learning have reinforced this.

Whether through enhancing early childhood experiences or designing a whole new system, we have an opportunity to change the future for the entire Stark community.



Appendix

One of the best summaries of the importance early childhood development has been published by the Health Institute of Ohio. It is quoted here in full. Supporting footnotes and citations can be found in the publication Health Policy Brief 3: *Connections between education and health the importance of early learning*⁶³

Development in early childhood brain development

Ninety percent of a child's brain development occurs in the first five years of life, and it is during the early years that basic brain architecture is formed. The young child's brain grows at a phenomenal rate of approximately one million neural connections every second. However, the brain also actively trims away connections that are not being reinforced during the toddler to early preschool years.

Early brain growth is the foundation for later development. Relationships with nurturing, responsive caregivers in early childhood support healthy brain development. Conversely, if a child experiences traumatic or harmful events during these critical years, the sturdiness of the structure can be compromised, even if a healthy environment is put in place later in life.

Executive function development

Executive function is a part of brain development that involves working memory, mental flexibility and self-control. Executive function skills enable children to focus, remember and apply rules, organize information and control frustration. Foundational to children's success in school, these skills strengthen reading, writing and mathematics capabilities. Children with underdeveloped executive functioning are more likely to display aggressive behavior, be unable to stay on task and behave impulsively, which impact academic achievement and social interactions.

Literacy, numeracy and physical development

In early childhood, children:

- Develop the skills and interests that foster language development and literacy. Children who lack adequate preliteracy foundations may struggle to learn to read.
- Learn counting, number recognition and order and pattern identification. The development of number sense and the application of mathematical reasoning positively impact mathematics achievement in school.
- Grow physically, gaining both the gross and fine motor skills that are important to a child's success. For example, children who struggle with fine motor skills may have difficulty with the physical processes of writing.

Social-emotional development

Social-emotional development, sometimes called child mental health, includes the child's experience, expression and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive relationships with others. These skills are key for success in school and throughout life. Healthy social-emotional development can lead to improved:

- Self-confidence
- Communication skills
- Intellectual curiosity
- Self-control
- Ability to empathize and relate to others



End Notes

¹ The full plan is available at: <http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Media-Releases/Ohio-Launches-Strategic-Plan-for-Education-Each-C#.W4as9uhKjcs>

² Ibid, p. 4.

³ US Census ACS 5-year Data 2012-2016 S0901 Children Characteristics

⁴ Ohio Department of Education FY 2017 District Profile Reports at <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Finance-and-Funding/School-Payment-Reports/District-Profile-Reports/FY2017-District-Profile-Report>

⁵ See: (October 2017) Health Policy Brief 3, Health Policy Brief, Connections between education and health the importance of early learning. Columbus: Health Policy Institute of Ohio available at: <https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/>

⁶ See: Core Principles of Development Can Help Us Redesign Policy and Practice at: <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/three-early-childhood-development-principles-improve-child-family-outcomes/>

⁷ See: Head Start Impact Study and Follow Up 2000-2015 at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/head-start-impact-study-and-follow-up>

⁸ K-12 (93.7%) \$10,484,000,000 Early Childhood (6.3%) \$702,005,000; Source *From the Ground Up: Unearthing fairness for Ohio Kids*

⁹ In Educational Leadership, ASCD, April 2003 | Volume 60 | Number 7 The First Years of School Pages 54-57. Available at: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr03/vol60/num07/Preschool@-The-Most-Important-Grade.aspx>

¹⁰ See Getting Ready for School Begins at Birth at: <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/221-getting-ready-for-school-begins-at-birth>

¹¹ Groundwork Ohio (2018). *From the Ground Up: Unearthing Fairness for Ohio Kids*. Columbus: Author. Available at: <https://www.groundworkohio.org/>

¹² ODPS Office of Criminal Justice Services Crime Statistics and Crime Reports at: https://www.ocjs.ohio.gov/crime_stats_reports.stm

¹³ Sheila B. Kamerman Shirley Gatenio-Gabel (2007). Early Childhood Education and Care in the United States: An Overview of the Current Policy Picture. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy* Vol. 1, No.1, 23-34., p. 30.

¹⁴ See: NPR Education, What Exactly is High Quality Preschool at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2014/04/22/304563233/what-exactly-is-high-quality-preschool>

¹⁵ See: Early Childhood Advisory Council Early Learning and Development County Profile for Stark County at: http://earlychildhoodohio.org/county/pdf/StarkCounty_EarlyLearning_and_DevelopmentProfile.pdf

¹⁶ Each Child Our Future, op. cit. p.21.

¹⁷ See: Early Learning and Development Standards at: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Early-Learning-Content-Standards>

¹⁸ see;JCPS preschool at: <https://www.jefferson.kyschools.us/learning/early-childhood>

¹⁹ See: Differences between Montessori and Traditional Schools at: <http://www.rootsandwingsmontessori.com/home>

²⁰ Mike Puma, Stephen Bell, Ronna Cook, Camilla Heid, Pam Broene, Frank Jenkins, Andrew Mashburn, and Jason Downer (2012). Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study Final Report, Executive Summary. OPRE Report # 2012-45b. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Disclaimer The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Off, p. 4.

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- ²¹ See: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/research-center-to-support-secondary-analyses-of-head-start-impact-study>
- ²² See: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs>
- ²³ See: <http://www.sccaa.org/WBA/Default.aspx>
- ²⁴ See: <https://www.ywcaearlyheadstart.com/>
- ²⁵ See: <https://ohsai.org/>
- ²⁶ See: High Scope at: <https://highscope.org/home>
- ²⁷ See: High Scope Preschool Study at NORC at: <http://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/highscope-perry-preschool-study.aspx>
- ²⁸ See: NAEYC “What Does High-Quality Mean” at: <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/high-quality-program-for-preschooler>
- ²⁹ As related in a series of Maria Montessori quotes by the American Montessori Society in The Role of the Teacher at: <https://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/History-of-Montessori-Education/Biography-of-Maria-Montessori/Quotes-by-Maria-Montessori>
- ³⁰ See: American Montessori Society, Hallmarks of Montessori at: <https://amshq.org/Montessori-Education/Introduction-to-Montessori>
- ³¹ See: The Montessori Preschool Program at: <http://www.montessori-namta.org/the-montessori-preschool-program>
- ³² See: <https://montessori-ami.org/>
- ³³ See: Tremont Montessori at: <http://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/Page/1045>
- ³⁴ See: Portage Collaborative Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten Program at: <http://portagemontessori.com/preschool-kindergarten-program>
- ³⁵ See South Suburban Montessori School Programs at: <http://www.ssmsmontessori.net/programs/>
- ³⁶ See: <http://www.cantonmontessori.org/programs/toddler-environment/>
- ³⁷ As quoted by the North America Reggio Emilia Alliance at: <https://www.reggioalliance.org/>
- ³⁸ See: NAREA Schools at: <https://www.reggioalliance.org/schools/>
- ³⁹ See: About NAREA at: <https://www.reggioalliance.org/narea/>
- ⁴⁰ For an overview of this history, see: https://waldorfeducation.org/waldorf_education/rudolf_steiner_waldorf_history
- ⁴¹ See: Waldorf Education in Our Schools at: https://waldorfeducation.org/waldorf_education/in_our_schools
- ⁴² See: https://waldorfeducation.org/AWSNA_Alliance
- ⁴³ See: <http://www.waldorfearlychildhood.org/>
- ⁴⁴ Corcoran, L., and Steinley, K. (2017). *Early Childhood Program Participation, From the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016* (NCES 2017-101), National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved [date] from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>. p. 3.
- ⁴⁵ The site for Imagination Library is: <https://imaginationlibrary.com/>
- ⁴⁶ See: The International Journal of Early Childhood Learning: SPARK Ohio An Early Childhood Intervention Program Description and Evaluation available at: <http://www.ecresourcecenter.org/uploads/spark-publication.pdf>
- ⁴⁷ The SEP Program Report outlining these differences can be found at: <http://www.starkcountyesc.org/Content/258>
- ⁴⁸ Boots, S.W. (2010). Dual Generation: The Case for Linking CFES Strategies with Early Childhood Programs. The Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ⁴⁹ op.cit., p. 3.
- ⁵⁰ See: Ascend at the Aspen Institute at: <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/>
- ⁵¹ See CAP at: <https://www.captulsa.org/our-impact/>
- ⁵² SEE” CMSD Parent University at: <http://www.clevelandmetroschools.org/Page/2339>

⁵³ See: Long-term Effects of Parents' Education on Children's Educational and Occupational Success: Mediation by Family Interactions, Child Aggression, and Teenage Aspirations at: The National Institutes of Health <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2853053/>

⁵⁴ The influence of parent education and family income on child achievement: the indirect role of parental expectations and the home environment. Davis-Kean PE J Fam Psychol. 2005 Jun; 19(2):294-304.

⁵⁵ Magnuson KA, McGroder SM. Unpublished manuscript. Northwestern University; 2001. Intergenerational benefits: The effect of maternal education on young children's academic problems and school readiness.

⁵⁶ Dahl, G.B. and Lochner, L. The Impact of Family Income on Child Achievement: Evidence from the Earned Income Tax Credit, American Economic Review 2012, 102(5): 1927–1956 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.102.5.1927>. Available at: <http://econweb.ucsd.edu/~gdahl/papers/children-and-EITC.pdf>

⁵⁷ See: Paying for Outcomes at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/ca/en/pages/insights-and-issues/articles/paying-for-outcomes-social-impact-bonds.html>

⁵⁸ See: The Chancellor's May 17, 2018 Presentation to The Joint Committee on College Affordability at: <https://www.ohiohighered.org/sites/ohiohighered.org/files/uploads/Link/College%20Affordability%20-%20Presentation.pdf>

⁵⁹ See: <https://www.thirdsectorcap.org/cuyahoga/>

⁶⁰ National Institute for Early Education Research. *High-Quality Preschool: Why We Need It and What It Looks Like*, Available at: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/high-quality-preschool-why-we-need-it-and-what-it-looks>

⁶¹ S1702 1 Year Estimates 2016. U.S. Census ACS.

⁶² From the Ground Up, p. 37.

⁶³ Op. Cit. p. 2.