

Institutionalized Early Childhood Education and Development

Background and Issues

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“Education is not a race.”

(Dr. David Elkind)¹

1. David Elkind, Ph.D., professor of child development at Tufts University, writes, “When we instruct children in academic subjects... at too early an age, we miseducate them; we put them at risk for short-term stress and long-term personality damage.... There is no evidence that such early instruction has lasting benefits, and considerable evidence that it can do lasting harm.”²
2. Arthur Jensen, Ph.D., a learning psychologist, wrote that Benjamin Bloom’s³ conclusions that people develop 50% of their mature intelligence by the age of 4, is a statistically unwarranted conclusion.⁴
3. The University of California child psychologist, Nancy Bayley, Ph.D., whose data Bloom used, later pointed out that Bloom’s theory was inherently wrong because it was based on an inadequate definition of intelligence.⁵
4. In 2003, Sarah Friedman⁶ made a presentation to the National Institute of Health Child Care Board about findings from the government study in which she is a principal investigator. She reported “...the more time children had spent in nonmaternal child care across the first 4.5 years of life, the more adults reported conflict with the child and such problem behaviors as aggression, disobedience, and assertiveness.”⁷
5. A 2005 Stanford University/University of California research study reported, “We find that attendance in preschool centers, even for short periods of time each week, hinders the rate at which young children develop social skills and display the motivation to engage classroom tasks, as reported by their kindergarten teachers.” This lack of development of social skills involved three specific areas: “children’s externalizing behaviors (such as, aggression, bullying, acting up), interpersonal skills (such as, sharing and cooperation), and self control in engaging classroom tasks.”⁸
6. In 2006, Michael Baker, et. al.⁹ of the C.D. Howe Institute reported the results of their study of the affect that child-care has on children and families in Quebec, Canada: “We studied a wide range of measures of child well-being, from anxiety and hyperactivity to social and motor skills. For almost every measure, we find that the increased use of childcare was associated with a decrease in their well-being relative to other children.”¹⁰
7. A 2007 report from an ongoing research study by *The NICHD Early Child Care Research Network* “...breaks new ground by tracking American children to ages 11-12....” This report concludes in part, “...children with more experience in [child care] center settings continued to manifest somewhat more problem behaviors through sixth grade.”¹¹
8. Dr. David A. Scott, a clinical psychologist who participated in an international psychiatric conference in Eastern Europe in 1989, reported what had been learned in Czechoslovakia after a period of some 20 years of placing almost 90% of all children in state run institutions following the end of WWII: “Institutionalized children... suffered developmental retardation and deprivation. In comparison with children raised in families, the institutionalized children suffered heightened emotional disorders, fear, tension, behavioral disorders, and even such physical symptoms as weight loss and more frequent respiratory infections.” “The Czechs learned from bitter experience that the wholesale institutionalization of children after the war took a terrible toll on Eastern European children.”¹²
9. According to a report by the Southwest Policy Institute: “Contrary to common belief, early institutional schooling can harm children emotionally, intellectually and socially, and may later lead to greater peer dependency.” “Moreover, research indicates that most academic gains shown by normal children schooled early do not last past the second grade.” “The need for early schooling for disadvantaged and at-risk children does not justify mandating kindergarten for all children.”¹³

10. The 2004 Perry Preschool Study by Lawrence J. Schweinhart, Ph.D., noted that reported results of narrowly focused and highly controlled experimental preschool programs, such as Perry Preschool are “seldom if ever achieved in state preschool programs” such as open-enrollment universal preschool.¹⁴
11. The Hewitt Foundation reported, “The Stanford ECE [Early Childhood Education] public policy research team, which worked in this field for a number of years, could not find a single state that had early school mandates based on replicable research.”¹⁵
12. Dr. Elkind¹⁶ points out additional significant problems stemming from early education. “Hurried children... constitute many of the young people experiencing school failure, those involved in delinquency and drugs, and those who are committing suicide.”¹⁷
13. Dr. Elkind writes that the capacity to manipulate symbols mentally, which is developed around the age of 5 or 6, is what makes it possible for older children to attain a level of achievement (in math and reading for instance) that was not possible for preschool children.¹⁸

“Children at this stage... have the capacity to learn and operate according to rules, the basis for all lasting social change.” “The ability to learn rules makes formal education possible, because most of what children learn as they acquire the basic skills of reading and arithmetic are rules.” “Mastering the basics means acquiring an enormous number of rules and learning to apply them appropriately. Hurrying children academically, therefore, ignores the enormity of the task that children face in acquiring basic math and reading skills. We need to have a better appreciation of how awesome an intellectual task learning the basics really is for children and give them the time they need to accomplish it well.”¹⁹

14. Multiple studies over a period of 100 years, beginning in the late 1800’s, demonstrate that close eye work can result in astigmatism and myopia, especially close eye work by young children. For example, E.W. Adams, OD, summarized a report to the Optometric Research Institute: “... that in the first and second grades very little astigmatism is found, but after these two beginning grades each successive grade up to about the sixth increases the percentage of astigmatism; after the sixth the percentage remains about the same.”²⁰
15. Educator Dr. John Dewey, Ph.D., was aware that children’s eyes develop first to look at larger objects and at a distance. In 1898 he reported that when children have to focus on close work or small objects over extended periods of time, unnecessary stress and strain would develop. According to Dewey, children should not be required to engage in this type of work until about 8 years of age.²¹
16. Consistent with Dewey’s statement, information in a pamphlet distributed by a Southern California optometry clinic explains that “Myopia may simply develop as a result of excessive near work and excessive near work may simply mean going to school.” “Consider the following statistics: only 4% of our 8 year-olds are nearsighted, whereas over 60% of our college students are nearsighted.”²²
17. Henry Hilgartner, MD, in a 1963 paper to the Texas Medical Society, noted that children’s eyes, up to about the age of 8 or 9, are more plastic than older eyes, and the outer covering of the eye (sclera) can be distorted by undue strain. Until a youngster’s eyes have developed more, they should not read much. This also means that brighter children could have a greater risk if they are in a regular reading program before they are 8 years old.²³
18. Studies in Japan and Alaska strongly indicate that the introduction of compulsory education, with the attendant close work required of young children, has resulted in significant increases of cases of myopia in those societies.²⁴
19. Dr. Chen Tzay-jinn,²⁵ as Director-General of the Health Promotion Bureau under the Department of Health in Taiwan,²⁶ observed, “The growth of nearsightedness among young children is thought to result from learning to read very young and using computers very young....” Lin Lung-kuang, ophthalmology professor at National Taiwan University, said, “Myopia cannot be cured. We have to prevent children from becoming nearsighted. Don’t let them use their vision too early....”²⁷
20. According to the American Optometric Association, “There is... growing evidence that nearsightedness may be caused by the stress of too much close vision work. It normally first occurs in school age children. Since the eye continues to grow during childhood, nearsightedness generally develops before age 20.”²⁸
21. Replicated research has consistently demonstrated that on the average girls develop formal academic skills at an earlier age than boys.²⁹ Many studies suggest that the decreased self esteem experienced by boys has resulted in much of their antisocial and delinquent behavior. This can be traced to the failures in their early school experiences due to their comparatively slower development.³⁰

22. Dr. Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D., wrote in his book *Boys Adrift*, that physiologically boys' brains and girls' brains develop differently. For instance, the parts of the brain most involved in integrating information (i.e. sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing) develop in girls at a rate roughly two years ahead of boys.³¹ A 2006 *Educational Horizons* article explains that this more rapid development of the left hemisphere of the brain in girls enables them to learn to read and write earlier than boys. "Its primary responsibility is auditory processing and verbal expression, such as listening, speaking, and writing." However, the right hemisphere, which develops sooner in boys, "... has the primary responsibility for visual-spatial and visual-motor activities, such as [are used in] sports, architecture, sculpture, painting, and carpentry."³²
23. In another study of first through sixth graders it was noted that 70% of readers with visual, perceptual, or refractive problems were boys.³³ It is significant that boys lag behind girls in their development from 6 to 12 months. Stanley Krippner noted from his research that boys made up 90% of disabled readers.³⁴ This is supported by Bickel & Maynard in their 2004 paper on "No Child Left Behind."³⁵
24. Dr. Raymond Moore³⁶ points out, "What the child needs most to grow well is a warm one-to-one relationship with a parent (or parent figure) who is always there to comfort and guide him. During the first crucial eight years, home should be the child's only nest and parents the teachers of their children."³⁷

Notes

- ¹ David Elkind, *Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk* (New York, Kopf, 1987), 83.
- ² David Elkind, *Miseducation: Preschoolers at Risk*, 69.
- ³ Benjamin S. Bloom, *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1964).
- ⁴ Arthur R. Jensen, "How Much Can We Boost IQ and Scholastic Achievement?" *Harvard Educational Review* 39, Winter (1969): 1-123.
- ⁵ Nancy Bayley, "Development of Mental Abilities." *Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology* I. Ed. John Mussen (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1970), 1163-1209.
- ⁶ Sarah Friedman is a principal investigator on the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. This study has been ongoing since 1989.
- ⁷ Sarah Friedman, summary presentation to NIH Child Care Board, *Does Amount of Time Spent in Child Care Predict Socioemotional Adjustment During the Transition to Kindergarten?*, NIH Child Care Board Meeting Minutes, 5 June 2003.
- ⁸ Susanna Loeb, et al, *How Much is Too Much? – The Influence of Preschool Centers on Children's Development Nationwide*, (Stanford University and the University of California). Summary pages 2-3. Presented at Association for Policy Analysis and Management, Washington, D.C., 4 November 2005.
See also: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Early Child Care Research, "Duration and Developmental Timing of Poverty and Children's Cognitive and Social Development From Birth Through Third Grade," *Child Development* 76, (Aug. 2005): 795-810.
- ⁹ Michael Baker is the RBC Chair in Public and Economic Policy in the Department of Economics at the University of Toronto. Jonathan Gruber is a Professor in the Department of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Kevin Milligan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics at the University of British Columbia.
- ¹⁰ Michael Baker, Jonathan Gruber and Kevin Milligen, *What Can We Learn from Quebec's Universal Childcare Program?*, C.D. Howe Institute (e-brief), February 1, 2006.
- ¹¹ Jay Belskey, et al, "Are There Long-Term Effects of Early Child Care?"; *Child Development* 78, (March/April 2007): 681-701.
- ¹² Dr. David A. Scott, "Day Care and Democracy in Eastern Europe" (A talk on Democracy in Eastern Europe, c. 1989).
- ¹³ Cheri Fuller, Early Schooling: *An Idea Whose Time Has Gone?* (Southwest Policy Institute, Policy Study, No. 2, 4 December 1989).
- ¹⁴ Lawrence J. Schweinhart, *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40* (<http://www.highscope.org/Research/PerryProject/perrymain.htm>, 2004), 12-13.
- ¹⁵ P.D. Forgione, and R.S. Moore, *The Rationales For Early Childhood Education Policy Making*, (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Hewitt Research Foundation, prepared for the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity, Research Grant No. 50079-G/73/01, 1975).

- ¹⁶ David Elkind, at the time of the writing of his book, The Hurried Child, was a child psychologist and chairman of the Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study at Tufts University in Medford Massachusetts.
- ¹⁷ David Elkind, The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon (Addison-Wesley, 1981 & 2001), 103.
- ¹⁸ David Elkind, "Much Too Early" (Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 2001).
- ¹⁹ David Elkind, The Hurried Child, 104-105.
- ²⁰ Alexander Eulenberg, The Case for the Preventability of Myopia, (Paper presented at the University of Indiana, 3 March 1996) (http://www.i-see.org/prevent_myopia.html).
- ²¹ John Dewey, "The Primary Education Fetish" Forum 15 (1898).
- ²² San Bernardino Optometric Vision Care Center, Orthokeratology and Myopia - Children's Vision Visual Requirements (San Bernardino, CA: Public Service Pamphlet No. 18106 W-B) 1982.
- ²³ Henry L. Hilgartner, "The Frequency of Myopia in Individuals Under 21 Years of Age" (Paper presented to the Texas Medical Society, Austin, Texas, 1963).
- ²⁴ D. S. Rehm, The Prevention of Acquired Myopia, International Myopia Prevention Association, 1974 (<http://members.aol.com/myopiaprev/page2.htm>).
- ²⁵ Dr. Chen Tzay-jinn, received his Masters Degree in Public Health from Harvard University and graduated from the National Taiwan University's School of Medicine. He lives and works in Taiwan. Since his position as Director-General of the Health Promotion Bureau, he has served as head of the central region Department of Health; the Director-General of the Center for Disease Control; and head of the Commission on Hospital Affairs.
- ²⁶ Kazuichi Konyama, a representative of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IABP) and Director of the Asia Blindness Prevention Training Center, said on May 20, 2002, "...from the perspective of the field of ophthalmology, Taiwan is genuinely an advanced country. And he praised Taiwan for its efforts in public eyesight health..." (http://th.gio.gov.tw/show.cfm?news_id=14181).
- ²⁷ Liu Shao-hua, "Myopia Increases Among Children," Myopia Prevalence in Asia, Taipei Times, December 6, 2000 (<http://www.myopia.org/myopiaprevalence.htm>).
- ²⁸ American Optometric Association, in an article on *nearsightedness, or myopia* (<http://www.aoa.org/conditions/myopia.asp>, 2001).
- ²⁹ R. Vance Hall, "Does Entrance Age Affect Achievement?" Elementary School Journal April (1963): 396-399.
 Ronald Davie, Neville Butler, and Harvey Goldstein. From Birth to Seven (New York: Longmans, Green, 1972).
 F. Bentzen, "Sex Ratios In Learning and Behavior." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry 33 (1963): 92-98.
- ³⁰ D. P. Flammer, "Self-Esteem, Parent Identification and Sex Role Development In Preschool Age Boys And Girls" Child Study Journal 2, (1971): 39-45.
 D. L. Mumpower, "Sex Ratios Found In Various Types Of Referred Exceptional Children." Exceptional Children 36 (1970): 621-22.
 N. Cutts, and N. Moseley Teaching the Disorderly Pupil In Elementary and Secondary School (New York: Longmans, 1957).
- ³¹ Leonard Sax, M.D., Ph.D., Boys Adrift (New York, Basic Books, 2007), 17.
- ³² Betsy Gunzelmann, and Dianne Connell, "The New Gender Gap: Social, Psychological, Neuro-biological, and Educational Perspectives", Educational Horizons 84-2 (Winter 2006), p. 98.
- ³³ H. M. Coleman, "Visual Perception and Reading Dysfunction." Journal of Learning Disabilities, February (1968): 116-113.
- ³⁴ Stanley Krippner, (Address to 21st Annual School Vision Forum and Reading Conference, 1968).
- ³⁵ Robert Bickel, and A. Stan Maynard, Group and Interaction Effects with 'No Child Left Behind': Gender and Reading in a Poor, Appalachian District, Education Policy Analysis Archives vol. 12, no. 4, (<http://epaa.asu.edu>, 27 January 2004).
- ³⁶ Dr. Raymond Moore was a classroom teacher and administrator, worked in public schools and universities, was superintendent of a school system, and held responsible positions at the federal level in relation to policy formation and implementation.
- ³⁷ Raymond S. Moore, and Dorothy N. Moore, Better Late Than Early (New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1977), 3.