

*THE IMPORTANCE
OF
PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION*

How Pre-School Education Benefits Children

in Their Academic Life



Studies have established that pre-school education is a very essential phase in a child's life. This early education helps to nurture and advance the learning process in young children before they join the formal schooling system.

Early childhood has constantly been referred to as a crucial, yet thrilling phase in a child's life. This is because it is the stage when the child's brain is very active, quick, and open towards learning new things, both about themselves as well as others. It is also during this stage that children get to learn more about the world and its surroundings. Parents and other care-givers play a vital role in the lives of children during this stage since they are the people who are charged with the responsibility of helping their children have an easier time and also understand this journey of new encounters.

Despite all this however, ensuring that a child attends pre-school during their early years is a very important step to take, especially with regards to advancing the child's growth and development in all spheres of his or her life. In the first place, pre-school offers a very good environment since it enables children to become part of a larger group in a strategic educative setting. Since playing is an essential need for a child's growth and development, pre-schools often ensure that they provide the children with enough time to engage themselves in playful activities while, at the same time, enabling them to interact with one another. This helps to build a child's social skills as well as their confidence and communication skills by providing them with an opportunity to express themselves.¹

¹ Harvard Center on the Developing Child, (2007). The science of early childhood development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do. Cambridge, MA: Author.

There are many benefits gained from taking a child to pre-school before introducing them to the formal education system. The Harvard Center on the Developing Child conducted a study that looked into the impact that pre-school education has on a child's development in all areas of his or her life. Identified benefits tended to affect all spheres of the child's growth and development. Basically, this means that all areas of the child's life are positively impacted. The spheres are inclusive of the child's social and emotional development, as well as their physical development.²

In a related study, Heckman defined the first topic of discussion as the impact of pre-school education on a child's social development. Through attending pre-school, children are removed from their comfort zone and put into an environment where they have no choice but to learn how to interact with other people, other than their family members. Through this interaction, children get to learn how to carry themselves when they are with other children and also when with adults. They also learn how to behave in respectful ways with other people. The school environment enables children to have fun and make new friends as well as learning how to show concern for others and how to solve problems such as disagreements. These are very important aspects of life that a child needs to acquire early enough in order for them to have an easier experience when the time comes for them to join the formal education system.³

The second subject of discussion is the impact that pre-school education has on a child's intellectual development. Through attending pre-school children are given a chance to learn

² Ibid

³ Heckman, J. et al., (2012). Understanding the mechanisms through which an influential early childhood program boosted adult outcomes (NBER Working Paper No. 18581). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

how to autonomously use their mind by allowing them to try and think critically as well as solve problems under the keen observation and guidance from their teachers. They also learn how to express their ideas and emotions by being provided with opportunities to speak and act.⁴

Pre-school allows for children to explore their imagination as well as their creativity. Additionally, through pre-school, children are introduced into the world of languages and numbers through the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills.⁵

In addition, pre-school education has a number of benefits on a child's emotional development. By being placed in an environment where they interact with other people, other than their primary care-givers, they end up learning about feelings. A good example lies in a case where one child offends another child by making a statement that hurts the other child's feelings. The teacher will call on both students and explain to each why it is wrong to hurl insults at other people and the impact it has on the other person. This will help both children understand that some statements, even though innocently made, end up hurting other peoples' feelings; so, it is important to always learn what to and what not to say.

By being uprooted from the familiar environment which they were used to and being introduced to the new environment at the pre-school, children begin to get used to the idea of spending time away from their families, thus enabling them to become a bit more independent.

Additionally, through the acquisition of reading and writing skills, as well as language skills in

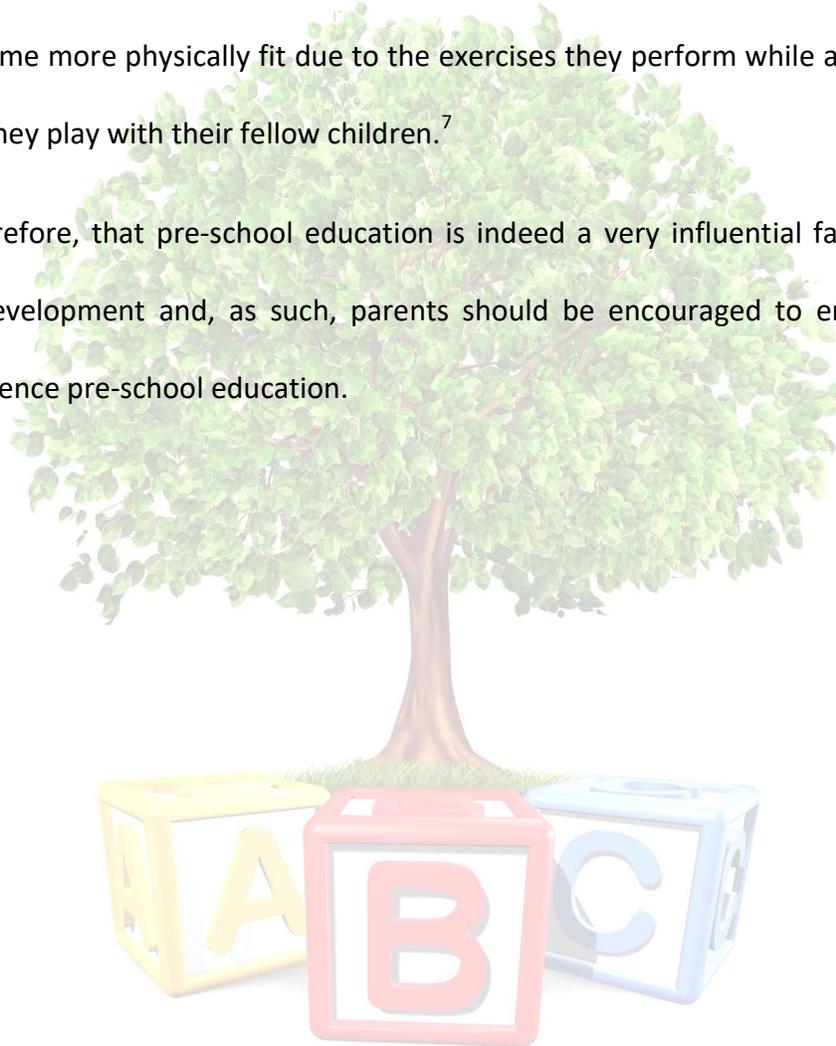
⁴ Gormley, W., Gayer, T., Phillips, D.A., & Dawson, B. (2005). The effects of universal Pre-K on cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology*, 41, 872-884; Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2013). Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills. *Child Development*.

⁵ Camilli, G. et al., (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. *The Teachers College Record*, 112, 579-620; Wong, V.C. et al., (2008). An effectiveness-based evaluation of five state prekindergarten programs. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27, 122-154.

general, children learn to communicate better, not only verbally, but also through the use of expressions and other non-verbal cues.⁶

Lastly, through pre-school education, children get an opportunity to make use of their bodies in new ways as they grow. In so doing, they gain more stability as well as improve their mobility. They also become more physically fit due to the exercises they perform while at school, as well as the games they play with their fellow children.⁷

It is clear, therefore, that pre-school education is indeed a very influential factor in a child's growth and development and, as such, parents should be encouraged to ensure that their children experience pre-school education.



⁶ Ibid

⁷ Currie, J., & Thomas, D. (1995). Does Head Start make a difference? *The American Economic Review*, 85, 341-364; Ludwig, J., & Miller, D. L. (2007). Does Head Start improve children's life chances? Evidence from a regression discontinuity design. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122, 159-208.

Bibliography

Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. *The Teachers College Record*, 112, 579-620; Wong, V. C., Cook, T. D., Barnett, W. S., & Jung, K. (2008). An effectiveness-based evaluation of five state prekindergarten programs. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 27, 122-154.

Currie, J., & Thomas, D. (1995). Does Head Start make a difference? *The American Economic Review*, 85, 341-364; Ludwig, J., & Miller, D. L. (2007). Does Head Start improve children's life chances? Evidence from a regression discontinuity design. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 122, 159-208.

Gormley, W., Gayer, T., Phillips, D.A., & Dawson, B. (2005). The effects of universal Pre-K on cognitive development. *Developmental Psychology*, 41, 872-884; Weiland, C., & Yoshikawa, H. (2013). Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills. *Child Development*.

Harvard Center on the Developing Child (2007). *The science of early childhood development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do*. Cambridge, MA: Author.

Heckman, J., Pinto, R., & Savelyev, P. A. (2012). Understanding the mechanisms through which an influential early childhood program boosted adult outcomes (NBER Working Paper No. 18581). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.