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High-Quality Pre-K Yields Lasting Gains for Children

As its Commission on Early Childhood prepares final recommendations, SREB brings together the research on what children gain from high-quality prekindergarten programs. The brief, [Confronting the Fade-Out Debate: Children Flourish and Gains Do Last in High-Quality Pre-K Programs](#), focuses on what the research findings suggest about state priorities for early learning.

[A one-page companion piece](#) highlights main points.

Pre-K yields short-term academic gains. After one year, children who participated in pre-K showed substantial gains compared with children who did not.

Pre-K yields long-term academic benefits, too. Some studies showed that the academic gaps – between children who attended pre-K and those who did not – narrow somewhat as students grow older. But the overall gains do not fade away.

Pre-K also yields substantial nonacademic benefits. Pre-K provides positive social, emotional, physical and behavioral benefits over a lifetime, especially for children from low-income families.

Lessons learned

The body of research on early childhood offers several conclusions that can inform policy.

Quality – especially teacher quality – is the most important element in whether children reap long-term academic gains from pre-K.

Early investments in education yield larger returns than those made later in life.

High-risk children – those from low-income or dual-language families, for example – stand to gain the most from high-quality pre-K programs.

State-by-state data

SREB states have led the nation in access to state-funded early childhood programs. The

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- pre-K enrollment
- poverty levels
- percentages of students retained or placed in special education
- NAEP fourth-grade reading results
- states that meet NIEER teaching-quality standards

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