Early Childhood Native American Language Immersion Programs

A Promising Approach to School Preparation, Economic Opportunity and Language Preservation

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Research shows that high-quality early childhood education has a positive impact on children’s school performance and provides the foundation for future workforce skills. Consistent with this research, early childhood Native American language immersion programs have the potential to help children prepare for school and life as well as support efforts to increase the number of Native language speakers. When implemented with sufficient resources and high quality, early language immersion programs seem to support the goals of school preparation and future workforce skills as well as Native language preservation without downside risk to any of these outcomes.
On June 30, a paper with prepared remarks will be posted on the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Early Childhood Development page. (Click Here)
The Federal Reserve Districts

Alaska and Hawaii are part of the San Francisco District
Center for Indian Country Development

MISSION: To help self-governing communities of American Indians in the United States attain their economic development goals
The first few months and years of life are a sensitive period for brain development and language acquisition.
Human Brain Development
Synapse Formation Dependent on Early Experiences

Sensory Pathways (Vision, Hearing)

Language

Higher Cognitive Function

FIRST YEAR

Birth (Months) (Years)

Source: C. Nelson (2000), graphic by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University
Barriers to Social Mobility Emerge at a Very Young Age

Source: Hart & Risley (1995), graphic by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University
Risk Factors for Adult Heart Disease Are Embedded in Adverse Childhood Experiences

Source: Dong et al., (2004), graphic by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University
High-quality early learning programs produce high public returns.
High/Scope Study of Perry Preschool

• In early 1960s, 123 children from low-income families in Ypsilanti, Mich.

• Children randomly selected to attend Perry or control group.

• High-quality program with well-trained teachers, daily classroom sessions and weekly home visits.

• Tracked participants and control group through age 40.
Perry: Educational Effects

- Age 14 achievement at 10th percentile+: Program group vs. No-program group.
- Graduated from high school on time:
  - Program group: 75% vs. No-program group: 50%
- Didn't require special education:
  - Program group: 100% vs. No-program group: 75%

Source: Schweinhart et al. (2005)
Perry: Economic Effects at Age 40

- **Own home**: Program group 30%, No-program group 25%
- **Earn $25,000+**: Program group 50%, No-program group 35%
- **Have a savings account**: Program group 75%, No-program group 50%

Source: Schweinhart et al. (2005)
Perry: Arrested 5 or More Times Before Age 40

Source: Schweinhart et al. (2005)
Perry Preschool
Costs and Benefits Over 62 Years

Program Cost
K-12 Ed
Higher Participants' Earnings
Justice System
Crime Victims
Welfare Payments

Source: Schweinhart et al. (2005)
Perry Preschool — Estimated Return on Investment

- Benefit-Cost Ratio = $16 to $1
- Annual Rate of Return = 18%
- Public Rate of Return = 16%
- Heckman Reanalysis = 10%

Sources: Schweinhart et al. (2005); author’s calculations; Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyez, & Yavitz (2010)
Benefit-Cost Ratios for Other Longitudinal Studies

- Abecedarian Educational Child Care
  - $4 to $1

- Chicago-Child Parent
  - $10 to $1

- Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project
  - $5 to $1

Sources: Masse & Barnett (2002); Reynolds, Temple, White, Ou & Robertson (2011); Karoly et al. (1998)
Lessons Learned from Research

• Invest in quality
• Involve parents
• Start early
• Reach vulnerable children and families
• Bring to scale
Early Childhood Native American Language Immersion Programs

• Preschool or kindergarten classes connected with an elementary school or full K-12 program.

• “Language nest” programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers where Native language is spoken by adults and children.
Promise of Early Childhood Native American Language Immersion Programs

• School preparation and success

• Economic opportunity through stronger workforce skills

• Native language preservation
Sources


Sources


