

The science of early childhood development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do ^[1]

Author: Shonkoff, Jack

Source: Harvard Graduate School of Education

Format: Speech

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AVAILABILITY

- Slides from PowerPoint presentation ^[2]
- Webcast of lecture (Real Player) ^[3]

Text of press release:

In November 30, 2005, Brandeis Professor Jack Shonkoff, the Gingold Professor of Human Development and Social Policy and chair of the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, spoke at HGSE. His talk, "The Science of Early Childhood Development: Closing the Gap between What We Know and What We Do," argued that healthy child development is both a moral and a social responsibility, essential for sustainable productivity and democracy.

The neural development that occurs during the first few years of a child's life serves as the foundation for all subsequent learning and behavior. Higher neural circuits build upon more basic circuits and stabilize over time, becoming more difficult to change as a child gets older. Nurturing, protective relationships are the key to developing healthy neural circuits and protecting against negative stress. To counter the harmful effects of stress, Shonkoff recommends high quality preschool and targeted intervention, as well as the integration of developmental science into policy discussions about welfare reform, housing, family and medical leave, adult mental health, and environmental protection.

Within academia, Shonkoff maintains that scholars must work to integrate molecular biology, neuroscience, behavioral science, and social science to determine just how genes and the environment influence development. Academic leadership and technical expertise must adjust to suit these needs. Furthermore, the public must be kept abreast of these findings. After all, the family, the community, the workplace, and the government must all have a vested interest in the healthy development of children.

Region: United States ^[4]

Tags: child development ^[5]

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Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/06/01/science-early-childhood-development-closing-gap-between> ^[2]

http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/2005/11-30-05_Harvard_rev.ppt ^[3] http://gsevserv.harvard.edu/ramgen/gse/js_11-30-05.rm ^[4]

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