

Smart Start and preschool child care quality in North Carolina: Change over time and relations to children's readiness ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Available for order (see SOURCE) or for download.

- Full report and summary available for download in pdf ^[3]

- Complete press release ^[4]

Excerpts from press release:

North Carolina preschoolers participating in high quality child care programs are ahead of their peers who attend low quality programs, finds a new study of Smart Start by researchers at the FPG Child Development Institute (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The study has three main findings, said Dr. Donna Bryant, head of the Smart Start Evaluation Team at FPG. "Child care quality has increased in the study sample during the Smart Start years; Smart Start-funded activities were positively related to classroom quality; and quality was positively related to children's outcomes" said Bryant.

Children in the study were assessed on their language, early literacy, math and social-emotional skills -- abilities deemed important for success in kindergarten. Children participating in high quality child care programs scored significantly better on language, book awareness and knowledge, math and counting skills, than did children from low quality centres.

Researchers expected children's abilities to be related to poverty, as many studies have shown, but this study showed that the quality of the children's child care experience made a difference over and above the effects of income, gender, and ethnicity.

In addition, the study replicated an earlier finding that a centre's level of current participation in Smart Start-funded activities was related to classroom quality, but previous participation was not, Bryant said.

"This means that continuous quality enhancement efforts seem necessary to sustain levels of classroom quality that will improve children's development," she said.

The study -- actually a series of studies conducted between 1994 and 2002 -- showed that child care quality in the sample steadily and significantly increased, according to Bryant. Still, she said, a large proportion of preschool child care is of "low to average quality and continuous efforts are still needed."

Region: United States ^[5]

Tags: quality ^[6]

child development ^[7]

kindergarten ^[8]

pre-school ^[9]

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