

Study touts benefits of universal preschool [US] ^[1]

Author: Rivera, Carla

Source: Los Angeles Times

Format: Article

Publication Date: 30 Mar 2005

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Universal preschool for California's 4-year-olds would bring about \$2.62 in benefits for every dollar spent, greatly reducing special education needs, juvenile arrests and the number of children held back a grade, a Rand Corp. study concludes.

The report released Tuesday also said a high-quality preschool program would create a more qualified, internationally competitive workforce and foster economic growth.

Though other studies have explored the benefits of preschool programs for disadvantaged youngsters, the Rand report is the first to provide a detailed cost analysis for universal preschool in California open to all children without regard to income.

In calculating benefits, the Rand researchers assumed a universal preschool program would be voluntary, include a half-day of activities and highly qualified teachers as well as enroll about 70% of the state's estimated 550,000 4-year-olds.

Such a program would cost about \$1.7 billion annually. But the researchers concluded that investment would result in an estimated \$4.4 billion in new benefits to California over the lives of the children who completed a year's attendance.

For each group of 4-year-olds that completes a year's attendance, researchers foresee 13,800 fewer children held back a grade, 62,500 fewer years spent in special education, 7,300 fewer juvenile arrests, 4,700 fewer reported cases of child abuse and neglect, and 10,000 additional high school graduates.

The California outcomes were based, in part, on reviews of the most rigorous national studies. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation funded her research as part of an initiative to educate the public about the merits of preschool.

The study comes amid growing interest in universal preschool in California. Los Angeles County has just launched an ambitious \$600-million program funded by tobacco taxes, and filmmaker Rob Reiner is expected to propose a statewide universal preschool ballot measure in June 2006.

Earlier this year, state Supt. of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell backed preschool for all.

Business and law enforcement officials are increasingly speaking out on the potential effects of preschool education.

Lewis E. Platt, chairman of the Boeing Co., said he was frustrated that he has had to look out of the state for qualified workers for its California operations.

"We have a college system in this state that is first-rate, a secondary school system that is not among the best and a preschool system that is far from the best," said Platt, who is also a trustee of the Packard Foundation. "I intend to bring to the attention of the governor that if this state is going to remain competitive in its workforce and economy, we're going to have to do a better job of providing education."

That will mean mustering the political will power to commit public dollars, Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca said.

"No one likes taxes, but in surveys education is consistently at the top of priorities," said Baca, adding that "\$1.7 billion sounds like a lot of money, but with 36 million people in this state and a growing and robust economy, we really need to get on with this. We either pay a little more today or a lot later."

- reprinted from Los Angeles Times

Region: United States ^[2]

Tags: economics ^[3]

funding ^[4]

pre-school ^[5]

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/05/04/study-touts-benefits-universal-preschool-us> [2] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/economics> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding> [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/pre-school>