

9 in 10 kindergarten teachers believe more students succeed with preschool programs [US] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A statewide crime-fighting group has released a national poll of kindergarten teachers to illustrate the need for more preschool education funding.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania has called for increased federal and state funding to expand access to pre-kindergarten. The National Kindergarten Teacher Survey reinforces its position, the group's state director, said at a news conference.

The telephone survey of 800 kindergarten teachers conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling and Research last month found 86 percent of the educators believed children in their classes last year who attended pre-kindergarten will do better in school than the children who did not attend pre-kindergarten.

Most of the teachers who participated in the survey said students who attended quality preschool programs were more likely to get along with others and were less likely to be disruptive in class.

Nine in ten teachers surveyed believed more children would succeed in school if all families had access to pre-kindergarten programs, because educators would spend less time focusing on troubled students.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Pennsylvania is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization of more than 150 victims of violence, police chiefs, sheriffs and other law enforcement officials. It advocates that an investment in early childhood education, after-school programs, child abuse prevention and intervention projects will help reduce crime.

The survey unveiled Wednesday did not draw any conclusions between crime or delinquency and preschool education.

But the national organization last fall released a report based on a 22-year study of the High/Scope Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, Mich. At-risk 3- and 4-year-olds left out of the program were five times more likely to become chronic lawbreakers by the time they turned 27 compared to the children in the program.

There's a large amount of research that supports the idea that early quality interaction between children and adults prevents delinquency later, said David Myers, associate professor of criminology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Research also has shown that the more a community spends on early education and programs, the more the community saves in the future on things like prisons and law enforcement.

"The idea is to set kids up for success, instead of waiting until more serious problems come about and reacting to them," Myers said.

According to preliminary figures from Gov. Ed Rendell's office, 40 of the state's 501 school districts plan to fund preschool programs with the state's new block grants. The state has separately set aside \$15 million to expand the federally funded Head Start program that provides preschool services for children from low-income families.

- reprinted from the Associated Press

Region: United States ^[2]

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