

Equal from the start: Promoting educational opportunity for all preschool-children ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Available in print for order (see SOURCE) and online for download.

- Full report available in pdf ^[3]

Excerpt from full report:

France and the United States share a belief in equal educational opportunity for all children, recognizing it as a critical to an individual's success in life and to society's continued vitality. Yet, despite efforts by both nations, equal educational opportunity has remained an elusive ideal. Student's from lower socioeconomic backgrounds continue to lag behind their more privileged peers in achievement, although the gap is wider today in the United States than in France. The disparity is evident even before compulsory schooling begins, especially in the United States, where recent studies have shown that poor children typically enter kindergarten a full year-and-a-half behind their better-off classmates in language ability.

Over the past twenty years, France has developed some impressive strategies to support young children in poor and immigrant neighborhoods. This report explores what we might learn from the French approach.

It is important to recognize that the French strategy cannot and should not be imported wholesale to the U.S., since it stems from a different history, philosophy, and tradition. The U.S. must build on its own distinctive system and capitalize on its strengths, but elements of the French strategy could be modified to help the U.S. achieve the goal of giving all children a more equal start.

The most important lesson from the French experience is that it is possible to provide additional resources and support to disadvantaged children within a high-quality system of universal services. A universal, comprehensive approach is the best way to ensure that children from low-income and immigrant backgrounds receive the quality early learning experiences they need.

Region: Europe ^[4]

United States ^[5]

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pre-school ^[7]

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