



The Advocate

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A newsletter on children's issues

April 2003

Early Childhood Education: An Investment That Pays Off

By Jennifer MacMasters
TCCY Intern

Success is a journey. Education is its foundation. Funding is the building block for quality education. Channeling lottery revenue into early childhood education provides the tools to build a better future for Tennessee's children.

Early Childhood Education Proposal

The proposal presented to the Legislature includes the following:

- ✓ Phase-in \$100 million in lottery proceeds for early childhood education, \$25 million per year.
- ✓ Develop pre-kindergarten programs, phased in over four years, with 4-year-old children whose family incomes meet eligibility requirements for free and reduced-price lunch having the highest priority for participating in the program.

Benefits All. Not only the children who enter school unready to learn but also their peers are affected by a need for early childhood education. **When at-risk children are provided with skills and opportunities necessary to be ready-to-learn before kindergarten, teaching staff spend less time "catching-up" unready students** and, therefore, have more time and resources available to work with all students.

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Governor Announces Initiatives at CAD

Gov. Phil Bredesen signed an executive order creating a Children's Cabinet before more than 500 advocates assembled for Children's Advocacy Days March 18. The group, the largest in the 15-year history of TCCY's annual gathering of advocates, also heard from the new commissioners of the state departments caring for children and from Jack Levine, the president of Florida Voices for Children.

The governor also announced a coordinated effort to recruit foster homes for 10,000 children in state custody who need the security and support of a back-up family.

Advocates visited with their legislators and packed the House Education Committee room to observe a presentation by Dr. Douglas Wood of the State Board of Education. The committee was considering allocation of funds to be collected by the lottery authorized by voters' approval of last year's referendum.

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Early Childhood

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Tennessee Data. In Tennessee it is estimated that **38,000 4-year-old children are at risk of school failure because of low family income.**

- ✓ Approximately 3,000 of these children are currently enrolled in the pilot, state-funded early childhood education programs.
- ✓ Approximately 15,000 additional children are currently enrolled in Head Start programs.
- ✓ 20,000 children are without access to language, writing, physical, and social development activities provided by quality early childhood education.

Why Early Childhood Education is Effective

Research shows that when a child enters school behind, no matter the intervention, that child is still behind at the 12th grade level.

James Heckman, the 2000 Nobel Laureate in Economic Sciences, said: “Learning starts in infancy, long before formal education begins.... Recent research in psychology and cognition demonstrates how vitally important the early preschool years are for skill formation.... Early learning begets later learning and early success, just as early failure breeds later failure.”

Brain development is non-linear; there are prime times for acquiring different kinds of knowledge and skills. Early experiences and interactions have a direct effect on the way the brain is “wired.”

Tennessee needs to invest funds where it can make the most difference, when children are young and brains are more receptive.

Economically. Long-range evaluation of quality early childhood education indicates that **every dollar spent on quality early childhood education for high risk children saves \$5 to \$7** in avoidable expenditures, as children who experience quality early childhood education have lower rates of special education placements, grade retention, school dropout, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, adult criminality, long-term unemployment, and long-term welfare dependency.



*Poverty’s impact is reflected in the achievement test scores of Tennessee’s elementary students.

*Children identified with low socioeconomic status, whether attending a school with high or low concentrations of poverty simply start out behind and stay behind.

*Low Socioeconomic Status (SES) has more impact on cognition scores than any of the other factors, such as race, ethnicity, home reading, family educational expectations, etc.

Source: Tennessee State Board of Education

“It won’t matter if the economy grows 2 percent or 6 percent a year, this part of our society won’t reach its potential if we don’t give them the opportunity,” said Arthur Rolnick, head of research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

Economic studies suggest that **the return on investment in early childhood development is a huge 14 percent to 15 percent** after adjusting for inflation. To put that figure in perspective, the long-term real return on U.S. stocks is 7 percent.

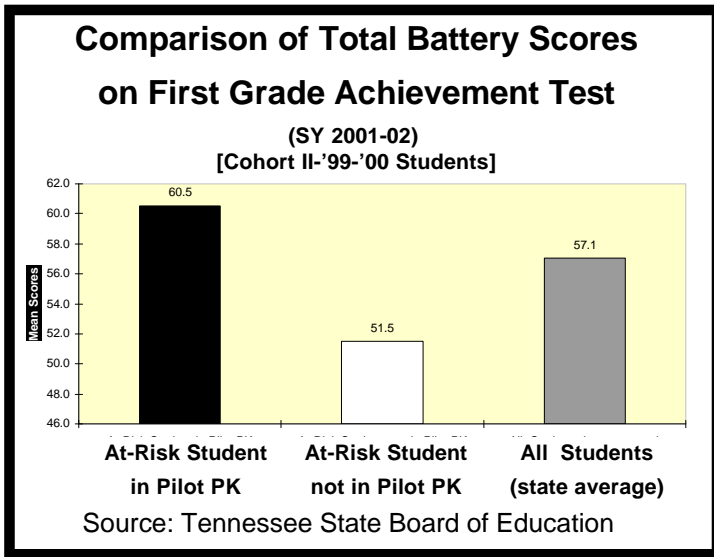
History and Evidence

The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project was designed to document the impact that participation in high quality, active learning preschool programs had on participants through adulthood. This study has identified many positive and significant relationships between preschool participation and task related, social, and educational outcomes.

The impact of cuts on a single classroom, based upon this study, are that for every 20 high-risk children who do not have the opportunity to experience quality early childhood education classes, we can expect:

- ✓ 11 children held back for the equivalent of at least one grade;
- ✓ 9 children identified with borderline intelligence and in need of special education;
- ✓ 16 children without the skills necessary to go on to higher education;
- ✓ 11 children who will not graduate from high school and will not have the skills needed to compete for adequate living wages;

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- ✓ 7 children destined to committing five or more crimes and requiring taxpayers to build and support the prisons to house them.

In *An Uneven Start: Indicators of Inequality in School Readiness*, Richard Coley analyzed data from The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 and made the following conclusions:

- ✓ Socioeconomic status (SES) was related to proficiency across all mathematics tasks.
- ✓ SES was related to proficiency across all reading tasks.

Since 1962, careful evaluations of state programs in Florida, Georgia, Maryland, South Carolina, and Texas have shown that high-quality pre-kindergarten programs can:

- ✓ Help children be ready for school;
- ✓ Improve students' scores on standardized tests;
- ✓ Reduce students' chances of repeating a grade;
- ✓ Reduce referrals of students to special education; and improve students' chances of completing high school

According to the vocabulary data displayed on this page, children of professionals hear more than three times the number of words per hour than children of those on welfare. Furthermore, at 36 months, children from professional families have a vocabulary more than double that of children from welfare families.

Effective Early Childhood Education

High quality preschool programs are identified by five essential characteristics:

- ✓ Strong health and safety standards;
- ✓ Low student-to-teacher ratios and small classes;
- ✓ Qualified, well-compensated teachers;
- ✓ Proven curricula and learning processes;
- ✓ Meaningful involvement by parents.

Statewide Need

An analysis of demographic information regarding Tennessee's children demonstrates a need for funding early childhood education.

- ✓ More than 50 percent of the students in 130 of Tennessee's 132 schools identified for improvement qualified for free and reduced meals (185 percent of poverty); in 77 of these schools, the concentration of at-risk students exceeds 90 percent.
- ✓ Nearly 50 percent of Tennessee's 3- and 4-year-old children fall in an "at-risk" category due to low socio-economic status, which has been correlated to a reduced ability to enter school ready to learn.

Cumulative Vocabulary at 36 months of age	
Children from professional families:	1100 words
Children from working class families:	700 words
Children from welfare families:	500 words

Source: Hart and Risley, 1995

Actual Differences in Quantity of Words Heard	
In a typical hour, the average child would hear:	
Welfare:	616 words
Working Class:	1,251 words
Professional:	2,153 words
Actual Differences in Quality of Words Heard	
Professional:	32 affirmations, 5 prohibitions
Working Class:	12 affirmations, 7 prohibitions
Welfare:	5 affirmations, 11 prohibitions

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Early Childhood

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- ✓ Tennessee public schools, K-12, rank 44th in the nation and next to last in the Southeast in expenditures per pupil.

School Readiness, Defined

Specifically, “ready to learn,” involves readiness on the part of the child as well as by the existence of nurturing families, supportive communities, etc.

Additionally, academic achievement and social-emotional development are not separate priorities; rather, they represent the integrated continuum of development needed for a child to grow up healthy and succeed in school.

Categories of skills children should master before entering school include:

- ✓ Personal and social skills: understanding of self concept;
- ✓ Language and literacy: literature and reading;
- ✓ Mathematical thinking: patterns and relationships;
- ✓ Scientific thinking: questioning and predicting;
- ✓ Social studies: human similarities and differences;
- ✓ Physical development: large motor;
- ✓ The arts: artistic appreciation.

Tennessee faces the potential loss of 90 of the 150 state-funded early childhood education classes

because they have been funded with federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) surplus dollars that have now been exhausted. Approximately 1,800 fewer 4-year-old children will receive early childhood education. The current proposals to award Tennessee graduates merit-based college scholarships will encourage higher education and diligence. Research in other states has indicated, however, that the majority of these merit-based awards are granted to those who already can afford to attend college. More specifically, those who need financial assistance to attend college have lost the opportunity to achieve before kindergarten because of a lack of “school readiness.”

Thus, funding early childhood education, which is effective in terms of creating school readiness, reducing dropout rates, reducing aggression in school, reducing teen pregnancy, etc., is imperative. It not only

prepares economically disadvantaged children to enter school ready to learn but also enables them to engage in life-long, pro-social behavior and achievement. Both early childhood education and higher education are points on the same spectrum at present. Coupling the initiatives of funding early childhood education with funding merit-based college scholarship rewards youth presently eligible to attend college while preparing future classes for college who would be more representative of the population.

As set out in the Tennessee Board of Education and Department of Education Tennessee Early Childhood Education Plan, these pre-kindergarten programs must include:

1. A licensed teacher, endorsed in early childhood education;
2. A teacher assistant with a Child Development Associate (CDA) certificate;
3. Adult-child ratios of 1:10 for 4-year-olds;
4. A minimum of 180 days (5.5 hours per day, excluding naps) of instruction through (see item 5);
5. Developmentally appropriate educational activities:
 - An educational program designed to enhance growth in cognition, social-emotional development, motor development, and language development;
 - A parental/family involvement component, including parent training, designed to empower the parent(s) to be supportive of the child’s educational experience.

Resources

Tennessee Dept. of Education, (www.state.tn.us/education/).

Building Strong Foundation for Early Learning, U.S. Department of Education Guide to High Quality Early Childhood Education Programs.

Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children by Betty Hart, Ph.D., and Todd R. Risley, Ph.D., 1995. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

The Best Investment: America’s Kids by Christopher Ferrell, *Business Week*, November 2002. (www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/nov2002/nf20021122_0334.htm)

TCCY Honors Advocate, Media

The Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth honored an advocate's advocate and four journalists Tuesday, March 18, at the 15th annual Children's Advocacy Days.

Philip A. Acord, executive director of the Chattanooga Children's Home-Chambliss Shelter, received the Jim Pryor Child Advocacy Award. Through his participation with local, state and national organizations, including serving on the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth, Acord has helped guide policy related to early childhood education, children in state custody and other issues. In her nomination of Acord, social worker Elizabeth Pelton said: "He sees the impact of policy decisions and is able to distill the issue and show how it can affect those working in the field. He is always the strong voice from the ranks."

Judith C. Byrd, director of the Chattanooga Social Services Department, said, "One of the most significant contributions Phil has made to Tennessee is his leadership that stimulated countless numbers of professionals and volunteers to become lifetime advocates."

The Jim Pryor Award, begun in 1995, is awarded to a Tennessean who has demonstrated a commitment to improving, expanding and advocating for children and youth. The award was established in memory of James F. Pryor, a long-term member of the Commission. A Greeneville attorney, Pryor was a leading advocate for children.



Commission Member Jerry Maness congratulates Jim Pryor Advocacy Award winner Phil Acord.

Broadcast media awards were given to May Dean Eberling, executive producer on Nashville's WTVF NewsChannel 5, and to WLJT television, a public station in Jackson. Eberling has been called the dean of public affairs programming in Middle Tennessee and has contributed to the community both professionally and as a volunteer. WLJT has a dedicated community focus, including sustaining attention on early childhood education at a time when this issue received little media attention.

Two journalists received the print Making KIDS COUNT Media Awards. Bradley A. Martin, editor of the weekly *Hickman County Times*, received an award for consistent and ongoing coverage of children and their issues. Jill Thomas, a reporter with the *Cookeville Herald-Citizen*, was honored for her efforts to inform the community about the health status of children and the needs of abused and neglected children.

The Making KIDS COUNT Media Awards honor outstanding reporting that enlightens citizens on issues and problems concerning children in Tennessee. TCCY began the media award in 2000.

For more information on each honoree, please contact TCCY or check the agency website at www.state.tn.us/tccy/releases.html



Notice

After July 1, 2003, TCCY will no longer print and mail *The Advocate*. Upcoming issues of the newsletter will be available at www.state.tn.us/tccy/advocate.html and by e-mail.



Governor

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“We’re just emerging from a difficult and frustrating time in our state, the governor said. “We’ve been consumed by political wrangling over budgets and taxes. Everyone is frustrated and tired of the arguing.

“We need to get everyone in state government who is responsible for children working on the same page together, not separately,” Bredesen added.

The governor and the panel of commissioners, Ginna Betts, commissioner of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities; Gina Lodge, commissioner of the Department of Human Services; Michael Miller, commissioner of the Department of Children’s Services; Kenneth Robinson, commissioner of the Department of Health; and Lana Seivers,



CAD participants joined other advocates to pack the House Education Committee studying early childhood education.



No one stands so high as when he stoops to help a child. Governor Bredesen signs an autograph for Matthew Ridgway as a member of the governor’s staff and TCCY President Betty Cannon watch.

commissioner of the Department of Education, listed plans, priorities, and visions for their departments.

The Children’s Cabinet, which, initially, met weekly, is one mechanism to make this happen. It is comprised of the commissioners who appeared at CAD; TCCY’s executive director; Andrea Conte, the state’s first lady; Bonnie Beneke, executive director of Children’s Advocacy Centers, Tennessee chapter; Ana Escobar, attorney; Betty Hastings, Tennessee Foster and Adoptive Care Association president; Steve Hornsby, Hardeman County General Sessions judge; and Tam Gordon of the governor’s office.

Calling for more collaboration and cooperation, the governor said, “We need help from all the stakeholders across this state, including community groups, churches, families and child advocates. It’s going to take everyone working as one big family to help improve the prospects for our children—particularly those who have nowhere else to turn.”

Levine, whose appearance was sponsored by Success by 6, encouraged advocates to be strong supporters of children. According to Levine, the Advocate’s Credo is “Thou art my child, I love thee best, But could not love thee half as much, Loved I not all the rest.”

Mailing of The Advocate to Cease June 30

TCCY Publications Will Be Available Electronically at www.tennessee.gov/tccy

TCCY, as a state agency, has been affected by the budget cuts called for in the governor's 2003-04 budget. The primary effect will be that as of July 1, 2003, we will no longer be printing and mailing *The Advocate* to advocates across the state. TCCY plans, however, to continue to provide information about a range of concerns. We will place the newsletter with all other TCCY publications on our website at www.state.tn.us/tccy.

Because of continuing revenue problems, brought on in part by the slowing economy and in part because of the continued reliance on a diminishing form of revenue, the tax increase passed by the Legislature in 2002 has not been enough to cover the state's expenses. Therefore, an across-the-board 9.5 percent cut was necessary to keep the state's budget balanced, as required by the State Constitution.

TCCY will continue to provide a variety of information, focusing on the more cost effective Internet.

In addition to *The Advocate*, KIDS COUNT, and CPORT reports, other resources on the TCCY website include:



Juvenile Justice Grant Information (<http://www.tennessee.gov/tccy/funding.html>)
Information on and applications for federal juvenile justice grants is available.

Events Calendar (www.state.tn.us/webcalen.pdf or www.tennessee.gov/webcalen.pdf).

TCCY maintains a calendar of regional, statewide, and national conferences and training sessions, including all TCCY events. To offer an event for consideration, contact Fay Delk at fay.delk@state.tn.us or (615) 741-2933.

Resource Directory Listing (www.state.tn.us/services.html or www.tennessee.gov/services.html).

TCCY lists sources from which you can get information about local services. Please let us know of new or updated resources for this listing.

Legislative Information (www.tennessee.gov/legislat.html or www.state.tn.us/legislat.html).

During the legislative session, TCCY weekly updates information about bills related to children.

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Meetings and Events

Council Activities

Memphis-Shelby

Aug. tba, Prevention Committee workshop on Conscience Discipline and Bullying (date/location tba).

May 28, Quarterly Meeting, Early Dependency and Neglect and Subsequent Juvenile Behavior, Shelby County Board of Education.

Mid-Cumberland

Monthly meetings are held in counties in the region.

Northeast

June 12, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., No Child Left Behind, Toy F. Reid Employee Center, Kingsport.

May 30, Rural West Region Suicide Prevention Conference, University of Tennessee Martin.

Commission Meeting

July 31-Aug. 1, Legislative Plaza. For more information call (615) 741-2633.

CPORT Schedule

May 19 – 23, Upper Cumberland Region. Exit

Conference: June 11, 10 a.m..

June 16-20, Northeast Region. Exit

Conference: July 7, 2:30 p.m.

July 14-18, Northwest Region. Exit

Conference: tba.

Aug. 11-15, Shelby County. Exit

Conference: tba.

September 8-12, Southeast. Exit

Conference: tba.

DMC Task Force Meeting

July 9, Andrew Johnson Tower, (615)

532-1581.

Special Events

June 2 – 3, TACC “Skills for Successful

Family Engagement,” Holston United

Methodist Home Knoxville, (615)

385-4433. Other sessions across the

state.

June 9 – 13, Tennessee Coalition Against

Domestic & Sexual Violence

Conference, dbenson@tcadsv.org or cbevis@tcadsv.org.

June 19-22, Tennessee Disability Mega Conference, Cool Springs Convention Center, Franklin, (800) 835-7077, 615-248-5878 or pcooper@theartn.org.

June 30-July 2, 4th Annual Southeast Regional Character Education Conference, Chattanooga, (800) 477-8277 or www.ncyi.org.

July 7-9 TACC Supervision and Leadership Institute, Scarritt-Bennett Center, Nashville, (615) 385-4433 or jmccaskill@tnchildren.org.

August 27 - 29, 8th Annual Minority Health Summit, “Our Health Is In Our Hands,” Sheraton Music City, (615) 741-9443.

For more updated information on TCCY and child advocacy events, see the TCCY Web Events Calendar at www.state.tn.us/tccy/events.html.



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