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Thank you for your request for **help in determining what best practices have been shown to differentiate between effective and non-effective Pre-K programs.** Ask A REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the 10 regional educational laboratories (REL) that, by design, functions much in the same way as a technical reference library. It provides references, referrals, and brief responses in the form of citations on research-based education questions.

Please note that REL Southwest has not done an evaluation of the resources themselves but offers this list to you for your information only.

BACKGROUND

The Louisiana Charters Research Alliance held a Bridge Event in December 2015. REL Southwest is providing these resources based on research questions asked by attendees of that event.

Following an established REL Southwest protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive briefs on differentiating factors between effective and non-effective Pre-K programs. The sources included federally funded organizations, additional research institutions, educational databases, and general Internet searches using Google and Bing. See the methods section at the end of this Ask a REL for additional information on how we identified the following sources.

QUESTION

What best practices have been shown to differentiate between effective and non-effective Pre-K programs?

Best, J. & Cohen, C. (2013). Early care and education: Policy considerations for ensuring high-quality pre-K programs. *Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)* <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED544246>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Interest in early care and education (ECE), also referred to as an early childhood education, has escalated in recent years. The interest is bipartisan, as evidenced by the multiple ECE-related bills already introduced by the 113th Congress. Further, 39 states have implemented prekindergarten (pre-K) programs. In 2013, 27 governors mentioned ECE in their State of the State Addresses, and 15 of those proposed pre-K program expansion (Mead, 2013). Nationwide attention to ECE and pre-K programs increased significantly after President Obama's 2013 State of the Union Address when he announced plans to expand pre-K programs and take a step towards universal pre-K in all states. This announcement has caused skeptics and

supporters alike to take a closer look at the necessity of pre-K programs and what role they play in a child's future success. Best practices for pre-K programs can be derived by analyzing ECE data and evaluating pre-existing pre-K programs. This brief will address those best practices and provide five necessary program areas for fostering a successful, high-quality ECE system. These include: (1) coordinated ECE governance; (2) standards alignment between ECE and K-12; (3) professional development needs; (4) ECE program assessments; and (5) coordinated longitudinal data systems.”

Daniels, D. H. (2014). Children's affective orientations in preschool and their initial adjustment to kindergarten. *Psychology in the Schools*, v51 n3 p256-272.
<http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1028373>.

From the ERIC abstract: “Children's prior attitudes toward school may be an important entry factor to consider in their initial adjustment to kindergarten. This short-term longitudinal study examined children's affective orientations and other school-related perceptions and approaches to learning in late preschool and then 1 to 2 months after entry into kindergarten. Child, parent, and teacher reports were obtained, and classroom practices were observed. Findings showed that children who anticipated liking school demonstrated more positive approaches and adjustment in kindergarten than did less enthusiastic children. Children's approaches to learning in the classroom, reported by teachers and parents, were similar across the transition from preschool to kindergarten, despite notable differences in practices. Recommendations for practice include attending to children's affective orientations, involving multiple informants in school readiness assessments, and fostering communication among teachers in school transition activities.”

Diamond, K.E., Justice, L.M., Siegler, R.S., & Snyder, P.A. (2013). Synthesis of IES research on early intervention and early childhood education. (NCSE 2013-3001). Washington, DC: National Center for Special Education Research, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.
<http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=NCSE20133001>.

From the report description: “The report describes what has been learned from research grants on early intervention and early childhood education funded by the Institute's National Center for Education Research and National Center for Special Education Research, and published in peer-reviewed outlets through June 2010. This synthesis describes contributions to the knowledge base produced by IES-funded research across four focal areas:

- Early childhood classroom environments and general instructional practices;
- Educational practices designed to impact children's academic and social outcomes;
- Measuring young children's skills and learning; and
- Professional development for early educators.

Research supported by IES has made significant contributions to the evidence base in these areas. The authors also raise important questions for education research in the future, including:

- What are the crucial features of high-quality early childhood education?
- Which instruction is most effective for which children and under what circumstances?
- How do we effectively and efficiently support teachers in improving their instruction?"

ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES TO CONSULT

We also searched for appropriate organizations and resources that may be useful on this issue. We have not done an evaluation of these organizations or the resources themselves but offer this list for reference only.

- National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org)

From the website: “The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) conducts and communicates research to support high-quality, effective early childhood education for all young children. Such education enhances their physical, cognitive, and social development, and subsequent success in school and later life.

The Institute offers independent, research-based advice and technical assistance to policymakers, journalists, researchers, and educators.”

- WWC Evidence Review Protocol for Early Childhood Education Interventions Version 3.0 (2014). *Institute of Education Sciences*. (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/documentsum.aspx?sid=24>)

From the IES website’s WWC abstract: “What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews in this topic area focus on early childhood education (ECE) interventions designed for use in school- or center-based settings with 3- to 6-year-old children who are not yet in kindergarten and are attending a center-based program. The primary focus for early childhood education interventions is on cognitive, language, and behavioral competencies associated with school readiness (specifically, language, cognitive, and social-emotional development, print knowledge, phonological processing, early reading and writing, and math).

Systematic reviews of evidence in this topic area address the following questions:

- Which ECE interventions improve preschool children’s school readiness (specifically, their language, cognitive, and social-emotional development, print knowledge, phonological processing, early reading and writing, and math)?
- Does the effectiveness of ECE interventions differ by type of outcome?
- Which ECE interventions are particularly effective for which children?"

NOTE: A link to the full protocol can be retrieved from IES web address listed above.

- WWC Evidence Review Protocol for Early Childhood Education Interventions for Children with Disabilities, Version 2.0, *Institute of Education Sciences*. (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/document.aspx?sid=30>)

From the IES website's WWC abstract: The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) review in this topic area focuses on interventions that have a primary focus on outcomes associated with the school readiness of children with disabilities, including outcomes in the areas of cognition, communication competencies, literacy, mathematics achievement, social-emotional development and behavior, functional abilities,¹ and motor development. The review focuses on early childhood education (ECE) interventions (curricula, practices, and therapies) designed for use with 3- to 5-year-old children who are not yet in kindergarten and older children who are attending a preschool program. These interventions must take place in a school or center-based preschool setting, or if they take place in other locations (such as clinical settings or family homes), they must be implemented under the direction of or in collaboration with a school, preschool, or program funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Education and Improvement Act (IDEA).

The review of evidence in this topic area addresses the following questions:

- Which early childhood education interventions improve outcomes associated with school readiness among children with disabilities?
- Does the effectiveness of early childhood education interventions for children with disabilities differ by type of outcome?
- What types of early education interventions are particularly effective for which children with disabilities under which circumstances?

Individual intervention-level reports will be released on a periodic basis.

- WWC Database of Study Findings (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/StudyFindings.aspx>)

From the IES website's WWC abstract: "The review of individual studies underlies all What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) products, from reports on a single study to a systematic review of all studies on an intervention. The WWC's Database of Study Findings provides data resulting from WWC reviews for every study that meets standards and is included in a quick review, single study review, or intervention report, as well as studies that have been reviewed for Department grant competitions.

The Database of Study Findings provides comprehensive data at the outcome level, a finer level of observation than any other WWC database. It includes 50 variables on more than 3,000 records, each representing an individual finding in a study. Finding-level variables include means, standard deviations, and sample sizes, for use in meta-analysis. Other new variables provide information on study populations (e.g., grade, race, ethnicity, English Learners, students with Individualized Education Plans, and students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch) and setting (state, region, and urbanicity).

The WWC is releasing this free dataset as part of our open data approach to increase transparency and encourage data driven assessments. This dataset will provide:

- **Greater transparency** for WWC reviews, allowing users to replicate WWC findings and reports
 - **Comprehensive information** to encourage research questions beyond those asked by the WWC
 - **Detailed study findings** to allow for meta-analysis
 - **Contextual information** for the examination of what works for whom and under what conditions”
- WCC Reviewed Studies (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/ReviewedStudies.aspx>)

From the IES website’s WWC abstract: “The studies database includes all studies cited in WWC reports and studies reviewed for grants or initiatives of the Department of Education. The database may be filtered by topic, reason for review, study rating or type of publication. Search results list the citation, WWC study rating, the protocol that guided the review and the WWC publication the study was cited in or a notation of why the study was reviewed. Documents that are not studies, such as newspaper columns or intervention materials, are not included in WWC reports or the studies database.”

- Bredekamp, S. (2017). Effective practices in early childhood education: Building a foundation, 2/E. *Pearson’s REVEL*.
<https://www.pearsonhighered.com/program/Bredekamp-REVEL-for-Effective-Practices-in-Early-Childhood-Education-Building-a-Foundation-with-Bound-Book-3rd-Edition/PGM260369.html>.

From the publisher’s description: This edition is a Pearson REVEL™ book.¹ “An entire chapter introduces readers to developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) for early childhood education. Subsequent chapters are organized according to the [National Association for the Education of Young Children] (NAEYC) guidelines, which Bredekamp has co-authored for over 30 years. Building on the DAP framework, Bredekamp focuses on three themes that are essential to quality teaching: intentional teaching, challenging and interesting curriculum, and evidence-based, effective practices. The Third Edition is updated with the latest research impacting policy and practice to help teachers thrive in the dynamic field of early education.

Effective Strategies Tables provide central place in many chapters to find strategies that are effective in scaffolding development and learning across a variety of domains and content areas. *What Works* features present research-based practices in action, including descriptions of demonstrated effective practices such as dialogic reading and engaging children in planning.”

¹ REVEL™ is Pearson’s fully digital, interactive “learning environment” that is less than the cost of a traditional textbook. Package includes the REVEL™ access card and bound book. Other editions are available.

From the Book's Relevant Features:

“Current research on evidence-based, effective practices:

- UPDATED: Reflects the rapidly-changing landscape and expanding knowledge base of early childhood education. Students will obtain an understanding of the latest research impacting practice and policy through new discussions of policy initiatives, changing demographics, research on the effectiveness of early education, and trends in the field. Chapter 1 is updated, and approximately 350 new references are cited throughout the book.
- Demonstrates effective practices in action.
 - *What Works* features present research-based practices in action, including descriptions of effective practices such as teaching mathematics to dual-language learners and using evidence-based curriculum to narrow the achievement gap.
 - *Effective Practices* summary tables help students quickly find strategies that are effective in scaffolding development and learning across a variety of domains and content areas.”

METHODS

Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Searches:

(Pre-K effectiveness, effective pre-K programs, effective practices in pre-K, best practices in pre-K, early childhood education (ECE) best practices, pre-K quality, preschool outcomes, ECE outcomes).

Search of Databases and Websites

- Institute of Education Sciences (IES) website (<http://www.ies.ed.gov>) and IES sources: Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Program, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Center for Education Research (NCER), What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)
- ERIC database (www.eric.ed.gov)
- Google Scholar (scholar.google.com)
- Google (www.google.com)
- Bing (www.bing.com)

Criteria for Inclusion

REL Southwest selected resources that provide research on differentiating factors between effective and non-effective Pre-K programs. When REL Southwest staff reviewed resources, we considered – among other things – three factors:

1. **Date of Publication:** The most current information (primarily published from 2011 to the present) is included.

- 2. Source and Funder of the Report/Brief/Article:** Priority was given to publications written in relevant, peer-reviewed journals or reports or produced by well-known research organizations.
- 3. Methodology:** Sources include reported studies, literature reviews and policy reports.

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