

Home, preschool and school coordination boosts achievement

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Children whose minds are stimulated in several early childhood settings—home, preschool, and school—have higher achievement in elementary school. What matters is not whether children's learning is supported at home, or stimulated in preschool or in elementary school, but that all three of these occur.

That's the conclusion of a new study published in the May/June 2010 issue of *Child Development*.

"The study has implications for policy as Congress reauthorizes the No Child Left Behind Act," notes Robert Crosnoe, associate professor of sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, the study's lead author.

"Our findings point to the importance of improving coordination among parents, preschool classrooms, and elementary schools to boost children's achievement."

The research is based on a longitudinal analysis of more than 1,300 children living in 10 locations in the United States who were followed from birth in the Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. It was carried out under the auspices of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) by researchers at the University of Texas at Austin, Tufts University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of California, Irvine, the University of Virginia, and the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network.

The researchers evaluated children's homes and child care/preschool settings when the children were 4-1/2 years old, studied their first grade classrooms, and evaluated reading and math test scores through fifth grade. In doing so, they gauged whether the links between various combinations of cognitive stimulation and children's achievement were simply due to the socioeconomic circumstances of the children's families, or whether children from different [socioeconomic backgrounds](#) got more or less, academically, from each combination.

"The ultimate payoff of attempts to improve one context of early childhood depends in part on whether related contexts are improved, too," according to Crosnoe.

Moreover, even though children from advantaged families are more likely to experience this convergence of support for learning across the contexts of their lives, the study found that low-income children may benefit more from it.

"Helping [children](#), especially those from poor families, get off to a good start in [elementary school](#) has become a major focus of education policy," Crosnoe adds. "These policy interventions typically target one setting—the home, preschool, or elementary school—but rarely the intersection of all three."

This study suggests that increasing coordination among the three main contexts involved in the transition to formal school is critical. "To do so, policymakers must put renewed focus on the home-preschool partnerships often advocated by early intervention programs and the family-school partnerships advocated by No Child Left Behind, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act," according to Crosnoe.

Provided by Society for Research in Child Development

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