

# Outcomes associated with participation in high-quality early care and education

December 4 2023

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For decades, researchers have debated the long-term impact of early childhood education, sharing evidence that while some children experience positive long-term outcomes, others see initial benefits fade

out—or even experience detrimental outcomes.

Now, [a study](#) published in *Education Sciences* is adding to a growing body of research indicating that high-quality early care and learning programs can positively impact children for years into the future. But there is one caveat: children need to be enrolled early, in infancy or early toddlerhood, to reap these benefits.

Beginning in 2010, researchers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, followed a cohort of 37 children who were 19 months or younger when they enrolled in Tulsa Educare, a high-quality, early-learning [program](#). A team from the Early Childhood Education Institute at the University of Oklahoma- Tulsa, regularly evaluated the children's academic outcomes and executive function through the end of third grade.

These outcomes were then compared to a cohort of 38 [children](#), serving as a control group, who were unable to get a spot at Tulsa Educare. (Children in the [control group](#) were cared for by relatives or family friends, enrolled in family childcare homes or attended a public-school preschool program or local Head Start program.)

"To me, the results show the importance of starting early if you want to have large and sustained effects from high-quality early childhood programs," said Diane Horm, the founding director of the Early Childhood Education Institute at OU-Tulsa and a George Kaiser Family Foundation Endowed Chair of Early Childhood Education.

A "sustained and large dose" of a high-quality early [childhood](#) program prior to kindergarten, Horm said, seems to be key to the lasting, positive results. "If we start early, we can prevent the achievement gap from forming."

**More information:** Diane M. Horm et al, Kindergarten through Grade

3 Outcomes Associated with Participation in High-Quality Early Care and Education: A RCT Follow-Up Study, *Education Sciences* (2022).  
[DOI: 10.3390/educsci12120908](https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12120908)

Provided by University of Oklahoma

Citation: Outcomes associated with participation in high-quality early care and education (2023, December 4) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-12-outcomes-high-quality-early.html>

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