

NV ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG CHILDREN (NEVAEYC)

Early Childhood Education

Policy Statement

Nevada must develop a system of early childhood care and education with appropriate regulatory, governance, finance, and accountability mechanisms so that:

- All children have access to high quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education;
- All early childhood professionals are supported as professionals with a career ladder, ongoing professional development opportunities, and compensation that will attract and retain high quality educators;
- All families have access to affordable, high quality early care and education programs; and
- All communities are accountable for the quality of early childhood programs provided to all children, backed by the local, state and federal funding needed to deliver quality programs and services.

Background

Quality early childhood education is critical to both the intellectual and social well-being of young children. Two of the most widely studied programs, the High Scope/Perry Preschool¹ and the Carolina Abecedarian², followed their participants to the ages of 27 and 21, respectively. These longitudinal studies reveal that children participating in quality programs are less likely to be held back a grade or be placed in special education programs. The studies also indicate that reduced dropout rates and improved test scores are benefits of early childhood education programs. More benefits have become apparent as the participants matured into early adulthood – lower juvenile crime rates, greater labor force participation, and higher incomes. Major findings of the studies include:

- Participants had higher cognitive test scores from toddler years to adulthood;
- Participants had higher academic achievement in both reading and math;
- Participants completed more years of education and were more likely to attend a four-year college than children who did not attend the early intervention program;
- By age 27, only one fifth as many of the participants were arrested 5 or more times as compared to non-participants;
- At age 27, four times as many of the participants as compared to non-participant children earned \$2,000 or more per month. Almost three times as many owned their own homes.

¹ Schweinhart, Lawrence J., Benefits, Costs, and Explanation of the High Scope/Perry Preschool Program. Presented at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Tampa, FL (April 26, 2003).

² Campbell, Ph.D, Frances and Craig Ramey, Ph.D, Principal Investigators. Carolina Abecedarian Study. Website: <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/%7Eabc/index.htm>.

Currently in Nevada:

- In 2003 there were an estimated 162,201 children between the ages of 0 and 4 in Nevada.³
- During 2003-2004 school year 2,690 children ages 3 and 4 were enrolled in public school pre-kindergarten programs to receive special education.⁴
- During the 2003-2004 school year, 3,155 children were enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs.⁵
- In 2003 the Nevada Legislature with the support of Gov. Guinn approved \$2,896,583 each year for fiscal years 2004 and 2005 for comprehensive pre-kindergarten programs. From those funds, \$301,000 must be granted to the Classroom on Wheels program. (Down from 3.5 million per year in FY 02,03 – which did not include COW).⁶
- The average wage of a child care worker in Nevada is \$16,920 per year or \$8.14 an hour.⁷
- “Only 18 occupations out of 770 surveyed by the [Bureau of Labor Statistics] reported having lower mean wages than child care workers. Those who earned higher wages included service station attendants, bicycle repairers and locker room attendants.”⁸

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEVADA

- Restore the allocation for comprehensive pre-kindergarten programs to \$3.5 million each year for fiscal years 2006 and 2007.
- Implement state-funded full day kindergarten programs in all Nevada public schools, while reducing group size to a maximum of 24.
- Allocate funding to the T.E.A.C.H.® initiative for teacher education and compensation.
- Conduct a feasibility study regarding developing universal pre-kindergarten for children age three to five.
- Implement regulations to reduce group sizes for early childhood education pursuant to NAEYC recommendations.

For more information, please contact NevAEYC by visiting our website at www.nevaeyc.org.

³ Nevada Demographer Estimate 2003, Nevada Age, Sex, Race, Hispanic Origin.

⁴ Nevada Department of Education Research Bulletin 2004.

⁵ Nevada Headstart Collaboration Office.

⁶ 2003 Statutes of Nevada, 20th Special Session, § 189.50 (250).

⁷ Center for the Childcare Workforce, “Current Data on the Salaries and Benefits of the U.S. Early Childhood Education Workforce” 2004.

⁸ *Id.*