

# Leading ECE: What I learned on the way to the Roundtable

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# Movement to Replace ECE with Cheap Care

## **Major studies with disappointing results**

- Head Start Impact Study and others with little or no long term effects
- Tennessee VPK evaluation with negative long-term effects

## **What is the message from some prominent think tanks?**

- Preschool is a waste of money
- What is needed is cheap child care birth to 5
- We can afford this if we don't spend on quality pre-K

## **What is the message from some prominent researchers**

- We don't know what to do and need more research
- You need to use our “special sauce” or “magic formula”



# **“Paradox” of Early Care and Education Policy**

**Science finds early experience has broad, persistent effects**

- Learning, development, and health
- Educational, social, and economic success

**ECE has produced high rates of return**

- Primarily from long-term impacts on children
- Also labor force benefits for parents

**Large scale public programs often fail to reproduce results**

- Weak initial effects
- No persistent benefits or even negative results
- Costs can exceed measured benefits

# What explains this paradox?

## **Best small scale study results are not reproducible**

- Luck (extreme outcomes receive undue attention)
- Populations and contexts differ at scale

## **We underinvest for the intended goals**

- Costs are immediate, obvious, and concentrated
- Benefits are long-term, hard to discern, and dispersed

## **Two major problems result**

- Design failure
- Implementation failure

# How do we get out of this mess?

## **Design for success**

- Begin with high but realistic goals
  - What do we want for our children now?
  - What do we want for the long-term?
- Design and assess integrated P-3 process

## **Focus much more on supporting implementation**

- Sustained attention—avoid constantly shifting priorities & approaches
- Wright way—start small to go big, go slow to succeed fast
- Use data to inform policy and practice—everyone needs a GPS—good measures of child well being and progress P-2

# Research Offers *Some* Guidance

- Strong intentional teaching
- Focus more on unconstrained domains
  - Language
  - Mathematics
  - Character, creativity, dispositions to learn?
- Individualize 1-on-1 & small groups
- Coaching, feedback, reflection
- Deliver a “big” dose—cross thresholds
- Alignment from preschool to/thru school

# Can we avoid another curriculum war?

- Research produces apparent contradictions
- Little research on persistent impacts of curriculum
- What works best depends on what we want for children
- Real life curriculum implementation varies much more within each model than in small studies
- Curriculum models do not stay the same over time
- Need to inform policy makers: the “best” approach, including “virtual pre-K” will be directly marketed to elected officials

# Implementation Depends on State Leaders and a Strong Workforce

- Research provides only general guidance on design and implementation
- States need to guide and support, provide tools and resources based on evidence
- A GPS at every level--continuous evaluation & analysis –classroom to capitol—no one “right” approach for everyone, everywhere, always
- Teachers must have the capacity to design and continuously improve their own practice



# Progress 2002 vs. 2017!

2002	2017
Only 3 states & DC served more than 1/3 of 4-year-olds	This is now the national average
2 states enrolled >50% of 4-year-olds	10 states enroll 50% or more of 4-year-olds
13 “No Program” states	7 “No Program” states
3% of 3-year-olds served	5% of 3-year-olds
\$2.4 billion in state pre-K spending	\$7.6 billion in state pre-K spending
\$3,458/child or \$5,395 inflation-adjusted	\$5,008/child slight decrease in real \$
No programs met all 10 quality standards benchmarks; 3 programs met 9	5 programs met all 10 original quality standards benchmarks; 15 others met 9
10 programs met fewer than half of the benchmarks	9 programs meet fewer than half of the benchmarks

# “New” Quality Standards Benchmarks

Standard	Change
<b>Comprehensive Early Learning Standards</b>	<b>Enhanced</b>
<b>Curriculum Implementation Support</b>	<b>New</b>
Lead Teacher Degree (BA)	None
Lead Teacher Specialized Training	None
Assistant Teacher Degree (CDA)	None
<b>Staff Professional Development</b>	<b>Enhanced</b>
Maximum Class Size (20)	None
Staff:Child Ratio (1:10)	None
Screenings and Referrals & 1 support service	Slight change
At least one meal	<b>DELETED</b>
<b>Monitoring → Continuous Improvement</b>	<b>Enhanced</b>

# Top challenges to meet the PD Benchmark

- Lack of policy requirements for PD for assistant teachers, modest cost
- Lack of policy regarding PD plans for all teachers
- PD for all classrooms needs to include coaching or other classroom embedded support
- Can changes in the profession and its work allow us to make these changes without raising cost?

# Top challenges for CQIS (GPS)

- Conducting valid observations in all classrooms
  - Expertise
  - Cost of training, materials, and time
- Valid and reliable measures of children's learning and development
- Capacity to use this information (expertise and time)



# Conclusions: Leading for change in ECE

- Designing effective ECE to meet needs of our children can drive equity
- Set high goals for all children and teachers
- Structural “quality” is necessary not sufficient
- ECE agencies need capacity to support strong implementation not just set policy
- ECE needs major reform—preschool 2.0—transform the work and the workforce, we can work smarter at a feasible cost