

Investing in Alaska's Future:

The Critical Role of Universal Preschool

A Bipartisan Approach to
Strengthening Our Children
and Communities

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Why Early Learning Matters

A study out of Harvard shows that early childhood is the most important time in life and for brain development. 90% of a child's brain development happens before age of 5.

(Harvard Center for the Developing Child)

Preschool supports Kindergarten readiness which is a child's ability to adapt to the classroom environment. It includes a variety of skills, including social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.



Anchorage School District Preschool

37 General education Preschool Classrooms.

24/25 Application Lottery

1418 Applicants

598 Students placed

Based on Risks

Most classrooms are funded through grants. **10** classrooms are funded through the .5 ADM



Preschool provides:

- A space to build social-emotional skills
 - Regulation of emotions and body
- Promotes cognitive development
- Opportunities to learn through play
- Develop skills of Kindergarten readiness
 - Phonemic Awareness and numeracy
- Allows for early identification and intervention
 - Early Intervention if needed
- Help break the cycle of adversity and trauma
 - Support with Mental Health



Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences ACEs in Alaska

ACEs

ABUSE

1. Physical
2. Sexual
3. Verbal/Emotional

Household Dysfunction

4. Mental illness in the household
5. Substance Abuse in the household
6. Witnessing domestic violence
7. Separation/ divorce
8. Household member in Prison

16% of Alaska's Children aged birth to 5 experience at least two ACEs



Evidence-Based Success

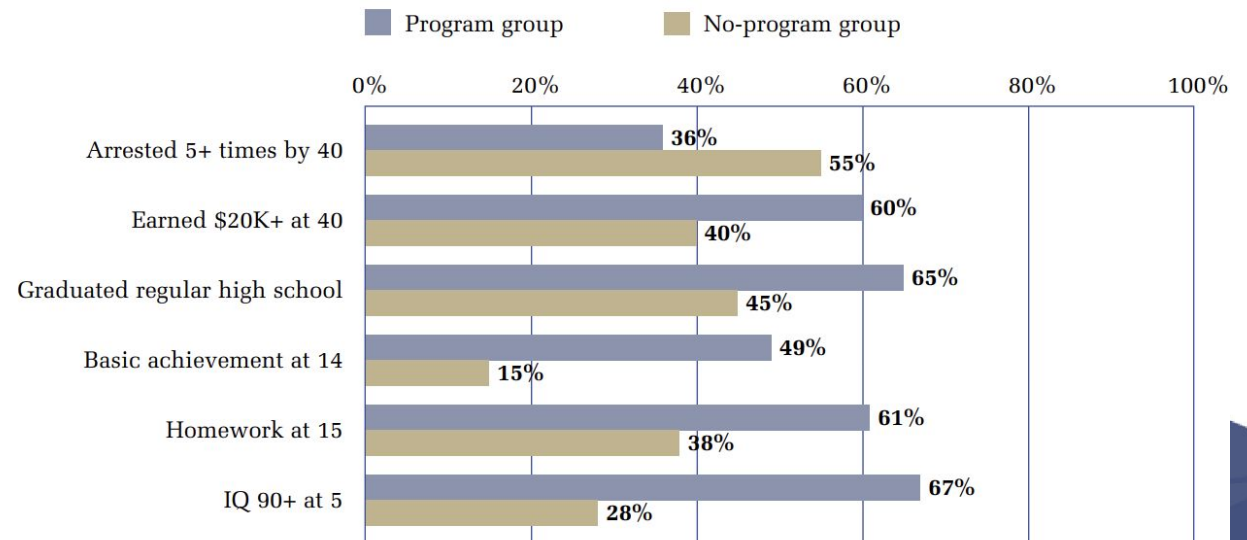
The Perry Project -

Randomized Study out of Michigan in the 1960s tracked into their 40s

Proved that high-quality early childhood education can strengthen families and has the potential to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

Figure 1

Major Findings: High/Scope Perry Preschool Study at 40



ASD DATA

mClass Fall Risk Level for Grade K Students 24/25					
Overall	ASD PreK		No ASD PreK		Difference
Above Benchmark	116	15.2%	268	12.9%	2.3%
At Benchmark	94	12.3%	234	11.3%	1.0%
Below Benchmark	157	20.6%	361	17.4%	3.2%
Well Below Benchmark	396	51.9%	1210	58.4%	-6.5%
Grand Total	763	100.0%	2073	100.0%	
Title 1	ASD PreK		No ASD PreK		Difference
Above Benchmark	45	10.9%	33	5.1%	5.9%
At Benchmark	46	11.2%	50	7.7%	3.5%
Below Benchmark	80	19.4%	84	12.9%	6.5%
Well Below Benchmark	241	58.5%	484	74.3%	-15.9%
Grand Total	412	100.0%	651	100.0%	
EDS	ASD PreK		No ASD PreK		Difference
Above Benchmark	63	11.8%	73	6.9%	4.9%
At Benchmark	64	12.0%	87	8.2%	3.8%
Below Benchmark	104	19.5%	143	13.5%	6.0%
Well Below Benchmark	302	56.7%	753	71.3%	-14.6%
Grand Total	533	100.0%	1056	100.0%	
ELL	ASD PreK		No ASD PreK		Difference
Above Benchmark	7	7.7%	15	6.3%	1.4%
At Benchmark	7	7.7%	16	6.8%	0.9%
Below Benchmark	15	16.5%	36	15.2%	1.3%
Well Below Benchmark	62	68.1%	170	71.7%	-3.6%
Grand Total	91	100.0%	237	100.0%	
SWD	ASD PreK		No ASD PreK		Difference
Above Benchmark	26	9.6%	6	5.6%	4.0%
At Benchmark	35	12.9%	9	8.3%	4.6%
Below Benchmark	46	17.0%	16	14.8%	2.2%
Well Below Benchmark	164	60.5%	77	71.3%	-10.8%
Grand Total	271	100.0%	108	100.0%	



Summary of ASD Preschool to Kinder Data

Overall those who attended ASD Preschool out performed those who did not.

- **Title 1:**
 - A much larger percentage of No ASD PreK students are "Well Below Benchmark" (74.3%) compared to ASD PreK students (58.5%).
 - There is a large difference in the above benchmark category. ASD Prek students have 10.9% while No ASD PreK students have 5.1%.
- **EDS (Economically Disadvantaged Students):**
 - Similar to the overall trend, a higher percentage of No ASD PreK students are "Well Below Benchmark" (71.3%) compared to ASD PreK students (56.7%).
 - The ASD PreK students have a higher percentage in all other categories.
- **ELL (English Language Learners):**
 - The majority of both groups are "Well Below Benchmark," with No ASD PreK students slightly higher (71.7% vs. 68.1%).
- **SWD (Students with Disabilities):**
 - Again, a higher percentage of No ASD PreK students are "Well Below Benchmark" (71.3%) compared to ASD PreK students (60.5%).
 - The ASD PreK students have a higher percentage in all other categories.



Early Learning: An Economic Investment

When children have access to High Quality Preschool we see a direct correlation to

- Higher maternal labor workforce
- Students are starting on or above the same playing field as peers in Kindergarten
- Increased education and income
- Lower crime rates
- Increases employment opportunities for Teachers and paraprofessionals in the field



The True Cost of High-Quality Child Care and Preschool in Alaska

According to U.S. Chamber of Commerce report from 2024:

- Childcare issues result in an estimated \$165 million loss annually for Alaska's economy.
- Absences and employee turnover cost Alaska employers an estimated \$152 million per year.
- Alaska loses an estimated \$13 million annually in tax revenue due to childcare ¹ issues.



The Need for 1.0 ADM in Alaska and SB93

- ASD was the only district to initially receive the .5 ADM
- State-Wide supported Curriculum, Assessment Tools, High Quality Standards
- 1.0 will allow ASD to open an additional 10 classrooms to serve the Anchorage Community.
- Very challenging for other districts in rural Alaska to meet the requirements
- DEED facilitates monthly calls to support curriculum, Purchases the assessment tools and guides through the the standards
- Opportunities for other districts to offer high quality preschool to students and families





Educating All Students for Success in Life



Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (n.d.). *Connecting the brain to the rest of the body: Early childhood development and lifelong health are deeply intertwined*. Retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/working-paper/connecting-the-brain-to-the-rest-of-the-body-early-childhood-development-and-lifelong-health-are-deeply-intertwined/>

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