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Race to the Bottom: The United State's Early Childhood Education Issue

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**RACE TO THE BOTTOM: THE UNITED STATES' EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION ISSUE**

**By
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**Submitted in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of American Studies**

**Union College
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Abstract

Since the 1990's there has been a large push for universal early childhood education in the United States, as other countries have started to create their own programs. Administrators and policymakers in power have realized the impact of early childhood education on the future lives of children. In my paper, I do a historical comparative analysis on Head Start and the push for universal preschool in the states and abroad. I do this by looking at why Head Start was needed, the process to make it a staple in American society, and the impacts. I move on to look at the emergence of Universal Preschool abroad and in certain states. I argue that while Head Start was an important part of early childhood education history, the United States should move away from it and move towards Universal preschool. Head Start has not made the impact that it was supposed to, and it doesn't reach every child that needs it. Universal preschool reaches all children, regardless of background, and has made positive impacts in the states and countries that have it.

Through researching the history of Head Start, universal preschool in Florida, Oklahoma, Georgia, France, England, and Finland, I discovered the positive impacts of each program. Each program dealt with hardships to get started, but ultimately, became recognized and established as a great program. There are positives and negatives to each program and I ultimately came up with a set of recommendations that the United States should implement in the future.

Introduction:

In the late 20th century the United States missed out on an opportunity to become a world leader in early childhood education because our system of federalism gives each state the responsibility of educating our children. Today, so many politicians and policymakers have made a push for the implementation for universal preschool in the states. If the United States could implement an early childhood education system that prepares children to be lifelong learners, the states could have a chance to be at the top instead of the bottom. As I show from a series of six case studies below, such a system would require: truly universal preschool, a new curriculum change that includes play, new requirements for teachers so the students are getting the very best education possible, family involvement, a new definition of early childhood education, and adding preschool to the K-12 system that would increase the quality of the program and the transition to kindergarten nicely.

Throughout my research, I found that there have been countless studies that reveal the importance of early childhood education program on the development of young children, but we have still failed to implement a quality program. Children are the future, but why is not the United States more concerned with the well-being and education of all children below the age of six? The United States has been faced with possibilities of quality early childhood education programs, but all have fell through. This includes the possible continuance of the Lanham Act during WWII and the passing of the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971. The WWII act could have continued federally funded childcare for all. The 1971 act would have funded \$2 billion for childcare programs.¹ Many policymakers thought that President Nixon would pass the act after he was quoted saying, “My one conviction [is] that the Federal

¹ David L. Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment: The Preschool Movement and Kids-first politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 145.

Government's role wherever possible should be one of assisting parents to purchase needed day care services in the private, open market, with federal involvement in direct provision of such services kept to an absolute minimum."² He seemed to have a genuine interest in the wellbeing of young children and the need for the government to step in. The goal of the act was to have a child care system that would give mothers a chance to work and get quality free childcare. However, when it was time to vote on it, Nixon vetoed it. He claimed that child-rearing was the job of the parents and it was not the governments place to step in.³ John Lombardi commented on Nixon's veto as it, "set the childcare agenda back for decades: while other countries moved ahead, the United States stood still."⁴ This is important because it showed the United States stance on the importance of child care at home versus public child care. Even though this was a sad loss to children around the states, it created a dialogue about the clear importance of education for the young.

The focus on preschool aged children came up again in the 1960's with the introduction of Head Start. The goal of the program was to introduce a high-quality preschool program that would give preschoolers who were under the poverty line a "head start." The United States continues to fund this program to this day, but it does not necessarily have the results the government was originally hoping for. However, the program is still growing to this day.

The fight for early childhood education continued during the 1990's when the Carnegie Corporation Task Force report came out, which focused on the importance of early childhood education. The report pointed out, "Not a single state or city has developed a coherent system of

² Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 145.

³ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 145.

⁴ Andrew Karch, *Early Start: Preschool Politics in the United States* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2013), 85.

birth-to-3 services or has provided adequate funding for the services that are available.”⁵ This report was important because, unlike the focus of Head Start, it was focused on all children, not just low-income. This report had an impact on governors, which is clear as some states started to create universal preschool programs. The push for a focus on children also came in 2000 with the Educate America Act. The act called on teachers, administrators, families, and policymakers to help children.⁶ The act demonstrated an understanding of education and the need for a curriculum change, clear guidelines, and assessments.⁷

Since then, small steps have been made, including President Obama’s Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge, which is a grant program that promotes high-quality programs so children can be ready for kindergarten.⁸ It gives states incentives to revamp their early childhood education programs. This goes hand in hand with many universal preschool programs throughout the states because it is one way they can fund their programs. The most recent call to the public for recognition of early childhood education was Obama’s speech at the White House Summit on early education in December 2014.⁹ Obama called on the whole country, as he said:

Study after study shows that children who get a high-quality early education earn more over their lifetimes than peers who don’t. They’re more likely to finish school. They’re

⁵ Jack P. Shonkoff and Samuel J. Meisels, *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 362.

⁶ “H.R. 1804 Goals 2000: Educate America,” Government Archived Information, accessed February 21, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/legislation/GOALS2000/TheAct/index.html>.

⁷ “Sec 207. Early Childhood Assessment,” Government Archived Information, accessed February 21, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/legislation/GOALS2000/TheAct/sec207.html>.

⁸ “Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge,” Department of Health and Human Services & Department of Education, accessed February 21, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/2013-early-learning-challenge-flyer.pdf>.

⁹ Denise Rednour, “President Obama’s Speech at Early Education Summit South Court Auditorium, White House – 10 December 2014 – Transcript Text (TCP) Chicago,” *The Critical Post- Chicago*, December 10, 2014, <http://thecritical-post.com/blog/2014/12/president-obamas-speech-at-early-education-summit-south-court-auditorium-white-house-10-december-2014-transcript-text-tcpchicago/>.

less likely to go to prison. They're more likely to hold a job... Early education is one of the best investments we can make not just in a child's future, but in our country.¹⁰

Everyone wants to send their children to a quality program, but it is not always accessible. His speech is important because he pointed out the important impacts of preschool. Quality preschool is an investment in the country's future. He also pointed out the low-rate of high-quality programs when he said, "today fewer than 3 in 10 four-year-olds are enrolled in high-quality preschool. It is not that working parents do not want their kids to be in safe, high-quality learning environments every day. It is that they cannot afford the costs of private preschool."¹¹ A big problem with trying to get children in preschool is the cost. Obama announced that he would be investing millions of dollars in the country's investment through his program, "Invest in Us."¹² As part of the plan, he described how, "Our GDP in early education would become .44... The investment in these children would save the United States \$8 in the future."¹³ He points out that the money the public puts into early childhood education would be returned. Through his program, Obama hoped to offer universal preschool for all four-year-olds with his program. Obama was able to gather over \$330 million through other companies who are willing to invest in the future.¹⁴ This has been a step in the right direction, but needs to be implemented

¹⁰ Rednour, "President Obama's Speech at Early Education Summit."

¹¹ Rednour, "President Obama's Speech at Early Education Summit."

¹² Louis Freedberg, "Obama says preschool an economic investment," *Ed Source*, December 15, 2014, <https://edsources.org/2014/obama-says-preschool-an-economic-investment/71633>.

¹³ David Hudson, "Invest in US: President Obama Convenes the White House Summit on Early Education," *The White House*, December 10, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/12/10/invest-us-president-obama-convenes-white-house-summit-early-education>.

¹⁴ Jennifer C. Kerr, "Obama announces \$1 billion investment for early childhood education," *PBS Newshour: The Rundown*, December 10, 2014, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/obama-announcing-1-billion-investment-early-childhood-education/>.

through a new universal preschool program for all fifty states. Even though the United States has a clear interest it has struggled to even get close to the programs abroad.

I have decided to write my thesis on early childhood education because it is an important topic that has had some progress in recent years, but need dan extra push to get to the real work. After volunteering at a local Head Start program my freshman year, I became very interested in the inner workings of the program, and early childhood education in general. I also encountered the achievement gap during my time at an afterschool program. My time at C.O.C.O.A. House added to this interest in inequality and the importance of a quality education, as many of the students who attended the after school tutoring program struggled to keep up with their work. Four years later, I decided to write my thesis about early childhood education. I researched the origins of early childhood education, and how it made its way to the United States. I then read about the emergence of Head Start, universal preschool abroad, and universal preschool here in the States. I chose to focus on both Head Start and Universal Preschool in the states because of the shift from only focusing on low-income students to everyone. I chose to focus on universal preschool abroad and in the states to compare and evaluate the programs.

I picked Georgia, Oklahoma, and Florida because they are the only three states who offer true, universal preschool. There are other states that offer some sort of state funded preschool programs, but they frequently are focused on only low-income students. I picked France, England, and Finland because they are the only true countries with universal preschool. Other countries have tried to make their way towards a universal program, but their programs either cost families a daily fee or are only centered around low-income families. The concept of universal preschool in the United States is very important because every child deserves a quality

education regardless of their background. Throughout my historical analysis of each program, I focused on certain aspects. These include:

1. why did the country or state need universal preschool?
2. When did the process start?
3. Who started it?
4. What policies were included in the process?
5. What does the program offer? How is funded? Cost?
6. What have people said about the program? Is it working?
7. Benchmark number?

By using these questions, I was able to evaluate each program and give a recommendation for the future of early childhood education in the United States. Through my critical analysis and historical overview, I will answer the question: Should the United States be moving away from Head Start and towards Universal Preschool?

Chapter 1: What is preschool? What was the first national program?

Origins of Preschool

In order to understand the importance of Head Start and Universal Preschool, the origins of preschool must be found. The origins show how the focus of preschool came out of different programs including programs for the poor, religious, and just basic child care. When the idea of preschool first began in the 1600's, the program did not focus on education. Instead, this child care program focused on religion. In England, there was a perceived great decay of religion during the 1600's.¹⁵ This was an important detail because it meant the focus was not on academics, like it is now. It was believed that the poor needed to be educated on religion. Another important part of this original preschool program was the fact that it wasn't geared toward preschool-aged children.¹⁶ Is this a hint that early childhood education shouldn't start till later? This program was important because it was geared towards the poor, which would happen later on as well. Current preschool programs like the ones we see today began during the Industrial Revolution.

Preschool started out as infant schools, which were created because the working poor could not care for their children due to their hectic work schedules. The focus of these schools was to provide childcare, not necessarily focused on IQ and test scores like it is today. However, these schools were important because they were the building blocks to today's preschool program. They were a way for working-class parents to be able to continue working, but also know their children were safe, which is usually the case today. This revealed the importance of early childhood education and overcoming poverty through this extra education. These programs were also offered to the working class because at the time, factory life was dangerous

¹⁵ Emily D. Cahan, *Past Caring: A History of U.S. Preschool Care and Education for the Poor, 1820-1965* (New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, 1989), 3.

¹⁶ Cahan, *Past Caring*, 3.

for children with all the equipment and potentially dangerous work conditions.¹⁷ There wasn't a religious focus in these programs compared to the ones that were popular in England in the 1600's, but instead they focused on, "visions of the betterment of human society."¹⁸ They would turn out children who were ideal citizens. This was the start of believing that schools for young children would change the character and development. These schools also focused on the value of teaching kids at a young age with the hope that morals and lessons would rub off on these children. Of course, there were objections to this school because at the time, it was the mother's job to take care of the children, which is still a concern today. Some people also feared, "that if poor children were educated they would become discontented with their lot in life."¹⁹ Class issues are still a problem with early childhood education today as it can effect the quality of the program. The contrast between the religious preschools that eventually became schools for the working class showed the evolving preschool program outside of the United States. Therefore, when the preschool program came to the United States would be made up of parts from the two different schools.

During the 1820's infant schools made their way to the United States.²⁰ These preschools were open to both poor and affluent families, which differed from the programs in Europe. One type of school included socializing poor children as many people thought that the families could not do it themselves.²¹ This brings up the question of who's job is it to parent? Should the government be stepping over that line? Infant schools were important because like the religious schools in England, they were focused on the poor families that might not have time to take care

¹⁷ Cahan, *Past Caring*, 4.

¹⁸ Cahan, *Past Caring*, 4.

¹⁹ Cahan, *Past Caring*, 7.

²⁰ Cahan, *Past Caring*, 8.

²¹ Cahan, *Past Caring*, 8.

of their children. On the other hand, during this time schools were also offered to affluent families. These rich families were sending their children to these schools for enrichment.²² Although, they didn't last long, these infant schools were important to the start of early childhood education in the States. Amariah Bringham's, *Remarks on the Influence of Mental Excitement upon Health* (1833), ultimately brought down the infant schools in the United States because she wrote about how early schooling would cause physical illness or insanity.²³ Of course, this created a problem for the infant schools that quickly emptied out. Even though they closed down for a while, preschool eventually became prevalent again.

The beginning of infant schools in the United States are important for the history of preschool because it shows that from the early 1800's there were two types of schools that kids were sent to, one for the disadvantaged kids and one for the rich. This can be seen today as well, affluent families send their children to expensive high-quality programs that give them a leg up, while poorer families are forced to send their children to whatever program they can afford. Of course, there was a huge difference between regular childcare and preschools that actually taught the children life skills. These distinctions between the class separation in early childhood education would continue. However, a need for a quality program for all children regardless of background did develop during WWII. The need for preschool increased as women started to join the workforce instead of staying at home.

Women joining the workforce during WWII – the need for preschool

The idea of women being anywhere else, but the home was unheard of or very rarely seen before WWII. A woman's job before the war was to take care of the home, which meant

²² Cahan, *Past Caring*, 8.

²³ Cahan, *Past Caring*, 12.

cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. However, this all changed during World War II as women were asked to help in the war effort because all the men were going abroad to fight. There was a void to fill, which gave women a window to join the workforce. Over five million women joined the workforce during the war years.²⁴ This was a huge change because previously women were only in the home. Many women were pressured to go into the workforce because the men were off at war. That meant there was a huge lack of workers able to produce supplies for the war effort. In order to get women into the factories, a fictional character was created. Her name was Rosie the Riveter.²⁵ Rosie the Riveter was an important figure because she got the women who were hesitant to leave the home to feel like it was their moral obligation to help with the war effort. Rosie embodied the idea that it was okay to be more than a mother. She also symbolized patriotism and how women were vital to the success of the war. This could be seen as many posters had slogans like, “‘Do the job he left behind,’ ‘Women in the War –We can’t win without them,’ and ‘I’m proud...my husband wants me to do my part.’”²⁶ Women were now accepted into the workforce, for the time being. Patriotism was another factor that led to women joining the assembly lines in factories. They began to feel like it was their civic duty to work. Of course, there were also benefits for them. Women were making more money than they were able to before the war.²⁷ They could now, “bring home the bacon.” They were able to do this because of the federally funded child care centers.

First and Only federally funded child care for all

²⁴ Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 39.

²⁵ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 43.

²⁶ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 46.

²⁷ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 47.

World War II an important time in American History as all mothers were called on to join the workforce and child care was being accepted. This is important because women regardless of their class were in need of child care. It was also important because there was a, “temporary redefinition of child care, formerly private problem, as a legitimate public concern.”²⁸ There was a public need for a childcare, which is why it was more accepted. In order to fix this concern, the government stepped in and created the only federally funded child care program in American history. They did this when they passed the Lanham Act from 1942-1945.²⁹

This act was important because it didn’t originally include child care, but as the need for more workers increased, the Federal Works Agency decided to amend the act to include child care centers. It is interesting that the Federal Works Agency was in charge of administering child care centers around the U.S. as they were a construction agency.³⁰ The act created day care centers in almost every state.³¹ In the end, the program cost over \$1 billion dollars, but served over 500,000 children.³²

The first nationally funded child care program came to an end in 1946 as the War was coming to an end. Women were no longer needed in the factories, which led to the shift to women back in the home and the rejection of public child care. This can be seen as members of congress declared,

This great grant allocated to child care, instead of discouraging it, it will encourage these women to remain in these plants, knowing that their children will be looked after. The

²⁸ Susan E. Riley, “Caring for Rosie’s Children: Federal Child Care Policies in the World War II Era,” *Polity* (1994), 658.

²⁹ Riley, “Caring for Rosie’s Children,” 658.

³⁰ Riley, “Caring for Rosie’s Children,” 660.

³¹ Rhaina Cohen, “Who Took Care of Rosie the Riveter’s Kids?,” *The Atlantic*, November 18, 2015.

³² Cohen, “Who Took Care of Rosie the Riveter’s Kids.”

policy should be, it seems to me, that they should be discouraged and driven, if necessary, back to their homes, where they belong to look after these children.³³

The public who urged women to get into the factories and leave their children in child care were now taking back this notion. Congress made it clear that the Lanham Act was only acceptable during the wartime.³⁴ The Lanham Act was an imperative time in American history as child care become a public concern and necessity. It reveals the possibility of universal preschool in the States as it catered to all classes. It also created a discourse in women's lives as they wanted to continue working and were unhappy as they were pushed back into the home.

Post WWII

During the 1950's, women became unhappy with their lives at home. As Chafe notes, "Given the number of four-children families, the average mother could easily have devoted her day in equal parts to diapering the baby, supervising a toddler on a swing, serving as a den mother for an 8-year-old cub scout, and transporting a 10-year-old daughter to gymnastics."³⁵ This new post-war society enforced this idea that women were supposed to be at home taking care of the children. This was a problem because many women started feeling bored with their lives. Betty Freidan's *Feminine Mystique* came out and made women feel like they were not alone. Freidan described the problem as such, "Sometimes a woman would say 'I feel empty somehow...incomplete.' Or she would say, 'I feel as if I don't exist.'"³⁶ Women were being conditioned to believe that they were meant to be in the home. Obviously, this caused mixed

³³ Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children," 663.

³⁴ Riley, "Caring for Rosie's Children," 664.

³⁵ William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 118.

³⁶ Betty Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: Norton, 1974), 20.

feelings as women had encountered the out of home life during the war, but were forced back into this housewife role. This is because the men were coming back home and they expected to get their jobs back, which pushed women into the home again. While many women happily went back to their home life, some women thought, “war jobs have uncovered unexpected abilities in American women...why lose all these abilities because of a belief that a ‘woman’s place is in the home.’ For some it is, for others it is not.”³⁷ This became an issue for many women because they no longer fit into the post war image of the woman at home anymore. Therefore, many women argued to stay in their positions. It was clear that the women were a huge force during WWII as working women with children went from 3.5 million to 5 million.³⁸ The increase in women in the job market was key to the increase in preschool participation as women needed childcare. The next time childcare would be brought up was during the 1960’s.

Chapter 2: Head Start

War on Poverty and the road to Head Start

Head Start would not have been possible without President Johnson’s 1960’s controversial War on Poverty. During Lyndon B. Johnson’s 1964 State of the Union Address, he declared, “Many Americans live on the outskirts of hope -- some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their

³⁷ Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, 26.

³⁸ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 156.

despair with opportunity.”³⁹ Johnson’s speech touches on the fact that many immigrants come to America to start a new life. They believed that they could come to America and have a better life by getting a job and starting a family. However, this was a problem for many people because there weren’t opportunities to thrive in America. The War on Poverty initiatives were created to decrease the number of people living in poverty. The War on Poverty was important because it, “was based on the ideas that a culture of poverty existed among the poor, that this culture created a vicious cycle that maintained people in a state of poverty, and that government programs could eliminate poverty by changing the poor.”⁴⁰ Johnson’s statement was important because he was taking an interest in the poor population in America. He showed his investment as he made government jobs available to this particular population of people. Johnson’s war on poverty focused on offering programs and support to poverty stricken people. The program showed a deep vested interest on making opportunities accessible to all.

In order to create these equal opportunities, Johnson said,

Our chief weapons in a more pinpointed attack will be better schools, and better health, and better homes, and better training, and better job opportunities to help more Americans, especially young Americans, escape from squalor and misery and unemployment rolls where other citizens help to carry them.⁴¹

³⁹ Lyndon B. Johnson, “State of the Union” (speech, Washington, DC, January 8, 1964), PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/lbj-union64>.

⁴⁰ Carl L. Bankston II and Stephen J. Caldas, *Public Education, America’s Civil Religion: A Social History* (New York: Teachers College Press., 2009), 115.

⁴¹ Johnson, “State of the Union.”

It was a well thought out plan that would tackle all aspects of poverty. Through Johnson's War on Poverty the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 was passed in August.⁴² This act was important because the Office of Economic Opportunity was created to focus on ways to alleviate poverty. Through this office, the Community Action Program staffers worked on how to attack the poverty within communities.⁴³ This coalition group was vital because the, "intention was to give previously disenfranchised poor citizens a voice in their communities and in the programs designed to serve them."⁴⁴ The Community Action Program focused on bringing together the poor to fight poverty themselves through employment.⁴⁵ This was an important part to Head Start because a unique aspect of the program is the employment of parents as well as other people living in poverty. The government allocated funds for the Community Action Program to employ people, but the group itself was unsure of how to wisely spend the money. This is when the group researched and found, "that nearly half of the nation's 30 million poor people were children, and most were under the age of 12. 'it was clear that it was foolish to talk about a total war against poverty...if you were doing nothing about children.'"⁴⁶ People within a community were finally able to voice their problems and concerns. The group decided that they could not ignore that the biggest population of poor in America were children. Sargent Shriver, the Father of Head Start, knew at that moment that the focus should be on America's youth. He got some of his inspiration from the Early Training Project, which discovered a relationship between low income students and intervention. The study had found that intervention could offset progressive

⁴² Michael L. Gillette, introduction to *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xix.

⁴³ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 27.

⁴⁴ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 26.

⁴⁵ Edward Zigler and Susan Muenchow, *Head Start: The Inside Story of America's Most Successful Educational Experiment* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 3.

⁴⁶ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 3.

retardation in elementary school aged children.⁴⁷ These children were mentally handicapped, but the program helped raise their IQs. The study found that,

The most effective intervention programs for pre- school children that could possibly be conceived cannot be considered a form of inoculation whereby the child forever after is immune to the effects of a low-income home and of a school inappropriate to his needs. Certainly, the evidence on human performance is overwhelming in indicating that such performance results from the continual interaction of the organism with its environment. Intervention programs, well-conceived and executed, may be expected to make some relatively lasting changes.⁴⁸

The study was important to Shriver because he thought that if this program showed some progress then he could manipulate the study to create his own for typical children.⁴⁹ Shriver realized, “Look, if we can intervene with mentally retarded children and raise their IQ, we surely ought to be able to intervene with children who are not mentally retarded and have a beneficial effect on their IQ and on their abilities in school.”⁵⁰ That is how the idea of Head Start was founded. The question was, how was the war on poverty going to tackle creating a preschool program for the poor.

The Beginnings of Head Start

Shriver believed, “Everybody has been in some kind of foot race, where one group, by reason of a handicap, is given a head start.. It was a facile phrase, and it actually did represent what we were trying to give these kids – a running head start.”⁵¹ Head Start was an important program because while there were quality preschools at the time, they were only available to

⁴⁷ Susan W. Gray and Rupert A. Klaus, "The Early Training Project: A Seventh-Year Report," *Child Development* 41, no. 4 (December 1970), 1.

⁴⁸ Gray and Klaus, “The Early Training Project,” 923.

⁴⁹ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 5.

⁵⁰ Gillette, *Launching The War on Poverty*, 260.

⁵¹ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 6.

people who could afford it. The quality preschools depended on status, geography, and availability of openings, which frequently left out the families that were under the poverty line. In order to introduce a new preschool program, they needed to come up with a super preschool program. That's when it was decided that Head Start would add to the preschool world by focusing on more than just mental success. Head Start would include medical help, life skills, and programs to promote development. A set of goals came out that pointed to what Head Start would be about. In 1965, a list of seven objectives outlined what the program would focus on. These seven objectives are:

- A. Improving the children's physical health and physical abilities.
- B. Helping the emotional and social development of the child by encouraging self-confidence, spontaneity, curiosity, and self-discipline.
- C. Improving the child's mental processes and skills with particular attention to concept and verbal skills.
- D. Establishing patterns and expectations of success for the child which will create a climate of confidence for his future learning efforts.
- E. Increasing the child's capacity to relate positively to family members and others while at the same time strengthening the family's ability to relate positively to the child and his problems.
- F. Developing in the child and his family a responsible attitude toward society, and fostering constructive opportunities for society to work together with the poor in solving their problems.

G. Increasing the sense of dignity and self-worth within the child and his family.⁵²

Since these children would be from low-income areas, they would need medical benefits that would encourage them to have healthy habits. This meant they would receive basic medical checkups, eye checkups, and dental help.⁵³ Another health aspect that was enforced during the program was regular teeth brushing. This was to give, “Children a ‘head start’ on reaching adulthood with a full set of teeth.”⁵⁴ Of course, the amount of medical care varied between the different programs. There was the issue of how much medical care professionals were willing to give to Head Start.⁵⁵ However, Medicaid picked up a lot of the cost for the Head Start students to receive the medical care needed.⁵⁶ The health component of the Head Start program is controlled by the Health Coordinator.⁵⁷ He or she would then coordinate the accessibility to medical, dental, mental health, and nutritional resources.⁵⁸ The purpose of the health component is to get parents to develop a healthy habit cycle with their children.⁵⁹ The component’s goal is to establish a positive and healthy lifestyle for the children. The health care aspect of Head Start is important because many people that attend Head Start struggle to get sufficient healthcare. This is due to personal reasons as well as racial issues.⁶⁰ Head Start helps pave the way to a healthy lifestyle for these families by connecting them with medical help that they would not necessarily be able to access otherwise. The nutrition aspect is important to a healthy lifestyle as

⁵² Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 37.

⁵³ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 35.

⁵⁴ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 35.

⁵⁵ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 36.

⁵⁶ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 36

⁵⁷ James A. Griffen, Michael J. Keane, Robert W. O’Brien, David C. Connell, and Nicole C. Close, “A Descriptive Study of the Head Start Health Component” (1996,) 17.

⁵⁸ Griffen, “A Descriptive Study of the Head Start Health Component,” 17.

⁵⁹ Griffen, “A Descriptive Study of the Head Start Health Component,” 18.

⁶⁰ Griffen, “A Descriptive Study of the Head Start Health Component,” 18.

each child receives at least one hot meal and one snack.⁶¹ These meals and snacks are important as they are healthy and help the children receive their daily nutritional needs. It also gives parents and children a sense of healthy diet habits. Head Start also offers nutrition guidelines and meal planning help to parents so they can continue the trend at home.⁶² The Head Start Bureau created performance standards for each major program component, in this case the health requirements are as follows:

- Provide a comprehensive program of health services
- Promote preventive health services and early intervention
- Provide families with skills, insights, and linkages needed to obtain ongoing healthcare.⁶³

These requirements for the health component help the Head Start parents understand what is available to them and what they will come out of Head Start knowing. The health component is vital to the program and it is one of the ways parents are educated on how to keep their child mentally and physically healthy. The Head Start program is also important as it incorporates parents, unlike most average preschool programs. The program is a full circle program as the learning doesn't end after the children go home. It would not be possible to succeed without the help of parents.

The program is unique by having parent involvement. This parent involvement aspect came from Urie Bronfenbrenner, a planning committee member. He had done studies on cross cultural families and found that, "both fathers and mothers abroad seemed to spend more time

⁶¹ Griffen, "A Descriptive Study of the Head Start Health Component," 47.

⁶² Griffen, "A Descriptive Study of the Head Start Health Component," 47.

⁶³ Griffen, "A Descriptive Study of the Head Start Health Component," 46.

with their children than did American parents.”⁶⁴ Therefore, Head Start would have mandatory parent involvement time on a weekly basis through volunteering and conferences. Families are also an integral part of the program as they work with the staff to set goals and expectations for their child.⁶⁵ This serves as a two-way street where information is sent to the staff and updates in school are sent to the parents. That way the goals can be worked on both at home and at school. Even though Head Start is a multi-component program, there are and were bumps in the road to success.

Problems erupt in Head Start planning process

The problems began at the beginning of the planning process. Head Start’s success at the beginning is largely due to Lady Bird Johnson’s support.⁶⁶ She was an honorary chairperson, which meant she helped sell the program to the public. The whole family was an integral part of the program as they promoted it. President Johnson’s two daughters also volunteered at a local Head Start center.⁶⁷ Of course there were a lot of kinks to work out that ultimately became the question of quality in the programs. However, when lady Bird Johnson first started selling the program, the program focused on giving the kids a ‘head start’, but did not focus on the IQ scores because there weren’t necessarily IQ gains.⁶⁸ The program was supposed to be more about readiness skills than academic goals. However, when Lady Bird Johnson began selling the

⁶⁴ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 16

⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework: Promoting Family Engagement and School Readiness, From Prenatal to Age 8” (Washington, D.C.: The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, 2011), 7.

⁶⁶ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 25

⁶⁷ Edward Zigler and Sally J. Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 56.

⁶⁸ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 68.

program, she fell into the IQ trap.⁶⁹ The IQ trap is the struggle of Head Start administrators and staff to avoid talking about the lack of IQ gains because of people's inability to judge the program. This was a problem for Head Start due to reports after the summer program that said there was an increase in IQ.⁷⁰

After the summer program of 1965, an intelligence test was given, which showed an increase in IQ of 8 to 10 points.⁷¹ This was an encouraging result, but ultimately put pressure on the program as it went on to be a full year program. This became a problem as it became the main instrument in assessing Head Start, but the whole goal of head start was about school readiness, not improving IQ. However, IQ was the easiest measurement of change from before and after the program. This becomes a problem as the Head Start goals are clearly set out in broad categories that do not include IQ scores. However, critiques tend to focus on the fact IQ scores are not necessarily rising. Although the fact that the program focused on school readiness didn't give it a fine line as how to assess the program.⁷² Such problems have plagued those attempting to assess the programs efficiency. The problem increased as reports came out with negative results, which gave Head Start a negative reputation.

The Coleman Report

One famous test of quality that gave and still gives Head Start a bad reputation is the Coleman Report. The report had a special part that focused on Head Start that first summer. The

⁶⁹ Zigler and Muenchow, *Head Start*, 25.

⁷⁰ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 68.

⁷¹ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 68.

⁷² Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 68.

effects of Head Start would be analyzed as the children attended first grade.⁷³ The report focused on kids who did not have Head Start available, the kids who did have Head Start available, but didn't attend, and the kids that did participate in Head Start.⁷⁴ The children were then scored based on verbal and nonverbal tests.⁷⁵ An important side note to the scores is the fact that the quality of Kindergarten education of these children were never studied.⁷⁶ So it makes part of this report inconclusive. This also shows that the quality in the programs after Head Start could have a deep effect on the retention rate of what the children learned in Head Start. For example, if they had a quality Head Start experience, but their Kindergarten teacher was sub par, their test could've been heavily impacted. In the end, the reports showed that the black children who participated fared better than the black children who did not. On the other hand, the white children who did or didn't participate had the same scores.⁷⁷ Did this prove a need? The Coleman report is important to the Head Start case because it showed basically no change for the children who did attend Head Start. This made people question whether or not Head Start was effective. The study found that the major factor of, "socioeconomic status of the home, and there was little that schools could do to reverse poverty-induced educational handicaps."⁷⁸ This was the beginning of the Head Start doubters. Many people use this report as a reason Head Start should not continue and the government should stop funding it. This isn't the only negative report about Head Start.

⁷³ James S. Coleman, Ernest Q. Campbell, Carol J. Hobson, James McPartland, Alexander M. Mood, Frederic D. Weinfeld, Robert L. York, "Equality of Education Opportunity" (Washington D.C: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1966), 491.

⁷⁴ Coleman, Equality of Educational Opportunity Study, 493.

⁷⁵ Coleman, Equality of Educational Opportunity Study 495.

⁷⁶ Coleman, Equality of Educational Opportunity Study 495.

⁷⁷ Coleman, Equality of Educational Opportunity Study, 497.

⁷⁸ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 59.

The Westinghouse Report

Another famous report that gave Head Start a problem was the Westinghouse Report of 1969. The study was done by the Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University. One important point made at the beginning of the study is that it, “did not address the question of Head Start’s medical or nutritional impact. It did not measure the effect of Head Start on the stability of family life.”⁷⁹ This is an important comment that is commonly overlooked.

However, it is important when talking about the worth of Head Start because from the beginning the planning committee did not want people to focus on IQ scores. Instead it was about school readiness, which is more than just boosting children’s IQ scores. The fact that the Westinghouse report didn’t focus on the health and family life aspect of the program is a major flaw. The study focused on the question, “To what extent are the children now in the first, second, and third grades who attended Head Start programs different in their intellectual and social-personal development from comparable children who did not attend?”⁸⁰ The children who attended Head Start and the children who did not attend a program were given the Metropolitan Readiness Tests (MRT), the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic abilities (ITPA).⁸¹ The tests focused on learning readiness, academic achievement, and language development.⁸² In the end, the children who attended full year programs fared a little better than the children who did not attend Head Start. The children who attended the summer programs did

⁷⁹ Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University, *The Impact of Head Start: An Evaluation of the Effects of Head Start on Children’s Cognitive and Affective Development, Volume 1: Report to the Office of Economic Opportunity* (Athens, Ohio: Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University, 1969), 1.

⁸⁰ Westinghouse and Ohio University, *The Impact of Head Start*, 2.

⁸¹ Westinghouse and Ohio University, *The Impact of Head Start*, 2.

⁸² Westinghouse and Ohio University, *The Impact of Head Start*, 4.

not score significantly higher.⁸³ The report also had some flaws due to the fact the first summer program was not well organized and shouldn't have been evaluated due to the confusing start.⁸⁴ Also a summer program should not have been evaluated because it wouldn't get the results that a full year program would get. This report was the first full study of Head Start, which meant it was taken seriously and got people to highly doubt Head Start's ability to help the poor. While there have been negative reports about Head Start, it is important to also see the positive impacts it has had on families.

Positive impacts of Head Start and plans for the future

In order to understand the positive impacts that Head Start has on families in low income areas is by reading in between the lines. The Head Start Impact Study reveals that Head Start did in fact impact the kids, but it did not last as long as they had hoped. However, it must be noted that there were positive impacts. This can be seen as Zigler points out, "the size of the effects found for 9 months of Head Start is 'comparable to or larger than' that of other large programs."⁸⁵ This means that Head Start did have an impact on the children who attended it when compared to kids who did not attend, which means that quality programs do make a difference⁸⁶ As mentioned before, the available programs to low-income families are slim to none. If they are even available, it is likely that the program is a glorified child care center. However, Head Start gave the children a chance to be in an academic setting where they were given life skills and support. Zigler points out that, "scholars concluded that small positive effects like those found in the Impact study would be 'large enough to generate long-term dollar-

⁸³ Westinghouse and Ohio University, *The Impact of Head Start*, 4.

⁸⁴ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 62.

⁸⁵ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 329.

⁸⁶ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 329.

value benefits that outweigh program costs.”⁸⁷ This is important as small effects can have a lasting effect and are worth mentioning. They might even outweigh the negatives. Many critiques compare Head Start to Universal Preschool programs, which is an unfair comparison. Zigler makes an important point about this as he says, “The economists make their predictions and build their cost-benefit analyses mainly based on two model programs- the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian project.”⁸⁸ This is a problem because those two programs differ from Head Start significantly. The two programs cannot be realistically compared to Head Start as they didn’t truly represent the poor population. However, improvements to the program can be made.

Need for quality teachers for Head Start

Preschool programs over the years have proven that, “good teachers and good schools have significant long-term payoffs.”⁸⁹ Many people can agree that in order to give low-income families a quality education there are certain standards that need to be met. Therefore, one investment in this federally funded program should be excellent teachers. When the summer program first started, the program would take anyone who would volunteer. However, there was a shortage of quality teachers as time went on.⁹⁰ Many people felt, “Office of Economic Opportunity had placed too much emphasis on the goal of providing jobs for low-income parents at the expense of the quality of the children’s program...In many instances, there were not enough job applicants at any training level to fill all the necessary positions.”⁹¹ This reveals one of the past and current problems with Head Start today. Head Start’s goals always included

⁸⁷ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 330.

⁸⁸ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 349.

⁸⁹ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 41.

⁹⁰ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 44.

⁹¹ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 45.

parent involvement through giving them jobs, if needed. However, it has become a clear downfall of the program as the parents weren't necessarily trained enough to do the job. The lack of teaching credentials has and can negatively impact the children. This can be seen as researchers have found that teachers with a bachelor's degree or a child development associate credential are able to get a higher quality response from children.⁹² In order to get qualified teachers in the classroom, one thing must change. The compensation of preschool teachers seem to be all over the board.⁹³ Most preschool teachers earn less because their lack of teaching credentials. However, even if they do have a bachelor's degree, they tend to make less than most teachers. The average pay for a childcare provider is a little more than \$8.⁹⁴ This low payment tends to turn off the more educated teachers. This is a problem as director's struggle to find adequate teachers to teach. Therefore, they must go with the less qualified teachers. Another issue with Head Start is that it is marketed as a program for all children under the poverty line.

The accessibility to the program

One huge issue within the Head Start program is the eligibility and number of children the program can take. Head Start has just celebrated their fifty-year anniversary. There have been ups and downs in the journey, but improvements are still needed. In 2005 over 6.8 billion dollars went into the program.⁹⁵ While this money was spent to keep Head Start standards up to par, it lacked the ability to increase the number of eligible children that could attend the program.

⁹² Edward Zigler, Walter S. Gilliam, and Stephanie M. Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 110.

⁹³ Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 113.

⁹⁴ Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 113.

⁹⁵ Chester E. Finn, *Reroute The Preschool Juggernaut* (Stanford, California: Education Next Books, 2009), 66.

Although Head Start is marketed as a program where children below the poverty threshold are eligible to enroll, 10% of slots are open to families with higher incomes.⁹⁶ Head Start has also never been able to enroll more than 50-60% of those eligible due to budget constraints and lack of space.⁹⁷ This eligibility claim is very misleading because the areas where Head Start provides a program has many families who are need of child care, but they can't take everyone. The 10% of slots open to families with higher incomes are rarely used for these families as there are so many other families who are below the poverty line that get the spots.⁹⁸ This lack of space is a major flaw to the program. This also raises the question of whether Head Start is meeting their goal of helping the less fortunate children? If more than half of the kids aren't receiving the education through Head Start it most likely means they aren't getting an education at all due to not being able to afford the expensive programs. That is why one thing on the to-do-list of Head Start leaders should be to increase the number of kids that Head Start can take or open up more centers. However, one problem with this is if more centers continue to open with a maxed-out capacity of children, will the quality of the center drop? The issue of quality over quantity is a conundrum as the point of Head Start is to reach out to the kids living in poverty and give them a Head Start, but can the United States really do that if they continue to grow in size, but lower quality? Many of these questions have been asked by policymakers, families, and government officials. Even though there have been a multitude of negative impact studies on Head Start, the program is still going strong today. There have been major steps to correct these flaws.

Case for Head Start

⁹⁶ Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 69.

⁹⁷ Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 90.

⁹⁸ Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 69.

In September 2016, the office of the administration for Children and Families Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center came out with new performance standards for their Head Start program.⁹⁹ This was an important step as many people believe that Head Start hasn't made much of a difference. As mentioned before, while Head Start shows positive short-term effects, the long-term effects are lacking. In order to work on the lack of results, changes have been made. An important comment about the change in standards is the fact that, "the standards have been trimmed by 30%, to help Head Start directors focus on what's most important."¹⁰⁰ While this trimming of standards lets teachers emphasize certain standards, does this take away from the quality program even more?

One of the standards that Head Start is trying to work on is adding longer hours. The leadership team agrees that the program cannot making lasting gains in the children if they are only there for a couple hours. Previously, many programs offer a half day program. This new standard requires each Head Start program to have a full day.¹⁰¹ With this new change, the quality should improve as the kids will all be getting a full day versus a mix of hours. Another important distinction in this performance standard is the fact that they are using term assessments. Linda Smith, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Early Child Development at HHS says, "We use the term assessment very intentionally...We're not testing children the way schools do."¹⁰² This is an important distinction because testing children at such a young age has caused uproar with some parents. By using assessments, it takes the pressure off the kids as they are being observed and not given a pencil and paper and must complete tasks. This brings up the

⁹⁹ "NPR: The big move to improve Head Start," nprEd, last modified Sept 21st 2016.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/09/21/494274755/the-big-move-to-improve-head-start>.

¹⁰⁰ "NPR: The big move to improve Head Start"

¹⁰¹ "NPR: The big move to improve Head Start"

¹⁰² "NPR: The big move to improve Head Start"

problem with many schools is the fact that they are testing too much. All the concerns that families, policymakers, and administrators have are valid, but maybe they should be questioning the goal of Head Start.

President after president continues to throw money at the program. They can't be doing this blindly, they really believe that the program is creating a new generation of kids who can achieve greatness even if their economic situation is not great. The United States should consider the following statement when working on their early childhood education issue. Zigler points out, "We must give up the magical thinking that Head Start or any preschool intervention program can put poor and middle-class children on a level playing field."¹⁰³ Although the purpose of the War on Poverty was to help the poor get a "head start," what's to say that they aren't given a head start in life by coming out of Head Start with life skills. Head Start not only helps out the children become school ready, but also the parents are given skills to promote a healthy lifestyle and studious habits for their children to thrive once they leave the program. It is clear that, "Head Start provides both hope and promise to the poor segment of our society, and evidence is now conclusive that participants leave the program better off than when they arrived."¹⁰⁴ Case and point that the program might not give the critics the IQ scores they are constantly searching for, but the program gives the parents and students life skills and connections needed to positively impact their life. Head Start has also been a pioneer in the early child development field.¹⁰⁵ Head Start struggled to stay relevant, but clearly proved the importance of early childhood education and the need for quality education for low-income

¹⁰³ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 332.

¹⁰⁴ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 332.

¹⁰⁵ Zigler and Styfco, *The Hidden History of Head Start*, 336.

children. Not unlike Head Start, Kindergarten also struggled to become relevant. However, once it became nationally recognized, it changed the education system forever.

History of Kindergarten

In order for preschool to be an important building block in a child's life, Kindergarten had to be created. The creation of Kindergarten is important because this is the beginning of the twelve years of schooling for kids. The road to Kindergarten also gives the early childhood education road hope. The concept of Kindergarten was created by Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel.¹⁰⁶ He believed Kindergarten was a necessity because he, "became concerned about the children's lack of appropriate preparation for school and mothers' lack of training in how to nurture and educate their children."¹⁰⁷ There needed to be a place where children learned skills outside of the home. The concept was based on Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johannan Herich Pestalozzi's ideas.¹⁰⁸ Froebel, "the use of crafts and manipulatives, such as small building blocks or puzzles."¹⁰⁹ This was an important part of Kindergarten as it was play-based learning through group work. He also believed that, "early education can be a joy and effective when well trained kindergarten teachers are encouraged to think of young children as healthy flourishing plants. Like plants, children, in their quest for growth and development, required watering (nurturing) and care (health)."¹¹⁰ This is an important point because it focuses on the

¹⁰⁶ Harry Morgan, *Early Childhood Education: History, Theory, and Practice* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield Education, 2007), 19.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: The Culture of Young Children from the Colonial Era to the Present* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University, 1995), 40.

¹⁰⁸ Angele Sancho Passe, *Is Everybody Ready for Kindergarten? A tool Kit for Preparing Children and Families* (Washington, D.C: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2012), 42.

¹⁰⁹ Passe, *Is Everybody Ready For Kindergarten?*, 42.

¹¹⁰ Morgan, *Early Childhood Education*, 19.

nurturing of the child, but also the importance of interacting with peers. Froebel's curriculum differed from previous educational theories because he included twenty gifts and occupations that would maximize children's experience.¹¹¹ The different items and activities then would expand the children's knowledge of the world around them. Froebel was successful because he wrote a book about the educational ideas and how to understand the behavior of the children.¹¹² This Kindergarten movement in Germany eventually made its way to the United States.

Margarethe Meyer Schurz brought the system over when she moved to the United States.¹¹³ She had learned about the Kindergarten system in Germany and decided to open one in her own home in 1856.¹¹⁴ She was a Kindergarten pioneer as she brought the idea of motherhood and learning outside of the home to America. She was key to the Kindergarten curriculum as her ideas and Froebel's taught teachers how children learn and what should be taught.¹¹⁵ The Kindergarten phenomenon continued as Elizabeth Peabody opened the first American English-language Kindergarten in 1860.¹¹⁶ She had always been interested in the education of children, but did not think of opening a Kindergarten until she met Margarethe Schurz. When she opened her own Kindergarten, it became, "An extension of home and was based as much as possible on mother love."¹¹⁷ An important point about these schools is that beginning they were only welcomed by upper and middle class families.¹¹⁸ This is an important distinction because again only the well-off people had access to this education. Kindergarten

¹¹¹ Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 43.

¹¹² Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 45.

¹¹³ Morgan, *Early Childhood Education*, 28.

¹¹⁴ Morgan, *Early Childhood Education*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Morgan, *Early Childhood Education*, 29.

¹¹⁶ Morgan, *Early Childhood Education*, 25.

¹¹⁷ June Edwards, *Women in American Education, 1820-1955: The Female Force and Educational Reform* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 25.

¹¹⁸ Edwards, *Women in American Education 1820-1955*, 25.

was a radical idea at the time because women were expected to take care of the children at home. Peabody's teaching methods were also different for the time. This caused problems because many people criticized her for being out of place.¹¹⁹ Just like today, people believe that women should be at home with the kids instead of sending them off to school. However, the road to Kindergarten was about to end.

Road to get Kindergarten added to elementary school

Kindergarten is important when thinking about the preschool movement because like the preschool movement it wasn't always popular with the public. There was pushback, but ultimately led to an educational breakthrough. This can be seen as Kindergarten pioneers attempted to get it added to the national public schools. One key person during this initiative was Pauline Agassiz Shaw. She asked the Boston Public School committee to consider adopting her free Kindergarten program.¹²⁰ When she petitioned for this they said, "here is just one way in which the financial difficulties can be removed, and that is by means of an object lesson long enough continued to convince people that every dollar that goes into the payment for kindergarten instruction is a dollar better expended than any other dollar in the whole school expense."¹²¹ This was key as she was in fact able to prove that it would be worth the committees dollars and time. A big part of adding Kindergarten to public schools was the push to Americanize children.¹²² This was clear as, "Kindergartens were particularly effective method of

¹¹⁹ Edwards, *Women in American Education 1820-1955*, 30.

¹²⁰ Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 102.

¹²¹ Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 102.

¹²² Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 105.

Americanization because they reached children when they were very young and their natures were ‘still plastic.’”¹²³ Kindergarteners were easy to mold as they were still developing.

Although there was a push to add Kindergarten to public schools, there were issues. There was a huge pay disparity due to the lack of hours children would spend at Kindergarten. This lack of time also revealed a disparity between the effort Kindergarten teachers would put in and their salary.¹²⁴ There was also the question of quality of each individual program. This was seen as, “Initially many public kindergartens functioned like separate programs, their environments, philosophies, and methods so different from those of schools that kindergarteners and school personnel alike worried that the gap between kindergarten and first grade might cause difficulties for young children.”¹²⁵ This is important to the Preschool movement because it shows the struggle to get Kindergarten added to the elementary school system, but also the growing realization that it was a step in the right direction. Like preschool, there were questions of quality of teachers and program differences. However, it eventually reached national recognition of a problem with the outcome of a new program.

¹²³ Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 105.

¹²⁴ Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 103.

¹²⁵ Beatty, *Preschool Education in America*, 126.

Chapter 3: The importance of preschool & the history of Universal Preschool in the States

What is Universal Preschool? Why is it important?

While Head Start has made an impact, some states have chosen to go the Universal Preschool route. Universal Preschool is defined as a preschool program that is available free of charge to any child regardless of where they live, race, gender, etc.¹²⁶ Being available to all regardless of many factors is an important distinction because it differentiates universal preschool from Head Start. As previously stated, Head Start is only available to families that live below the poverty line. Even with that distinction, every child that is below the poverty line

¹²⁶ Laura J. Colker, “Pre-K (What Exactly Is It?), *Teaching Young Children*, accessed february 21, 2017, 23.

does not necessarily get a spot in that program. That is why Universal Preschool is more effective as enrollment is open to every child. Universal Preschool is also important as it is free of charge because each state finds a way to pay for each child. While both the eligibility of the program and the cost are great, there are some factors that are not set in stone. These factors would include the quality of the program and can vary because each state is in charge of their own and can set different standards. The number of programs is also tied to the quality. Head Start is available in every state and even in a couple tribal communities.¹²⁷ On the other hand, the Universal Preschool movement is still fairly new and only truly available in three states. This distinction is needed as many states including New York, West Virginia, and Tennessee are working towards having Universal Preschool programs, but don't hold that status yet. I will be focusing on Universal Preschool Georgia, Oklahoma, and Florida, which have been paving the way in the Universal Preschool movement. In order to understand how these three states were pioneers in the universal preschool movement, the history of how universal preschool began is important. Why is Universal Preschool even being talked about today?

Background on Universal Preschool

Two studies paved the way for the select states that have Universal Preschool today. The Abecedarian Project and the Perry Preschool Project revealed promising results about the importance of preschool and early childhood education in general.

¹²⁷ "About US," Head Start: An office of the Administration for Children and Families Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center, accessed January 31, 2017, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/about>.

The Abecedarian Project was an experiment in 1972 that gave researchers results that revealed how early childhood education can be a benefit to lower-income children.¹²⁸ The project focused on a group of 111 children in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.¹²⁹ Fifty-seven children would end up receiving the high-quality program.¹³⁰ The children received an eight hour educationally-enriched program five days a week for fifty weeks.¹³¹ The families also received medical care, dietary supplements, and social services.¹³² The project is important to Universal Preschool as it gave administrators and researchers an idea of how important early childhood education is to the brain and development. The children that participated had follow-ups at five, twelve, fifteen, and twenty-one years old.¹³³ The follow-ups resulted in evidence that showed the children's intelligence had gone up. While the outcomes were great for these select children, there are problems that have resulted in critiques and general criticism of the whole project.

These critiques have rendered the project as irrelevant in the Universal Preschool world for some researchers. Two major critiques include the bias in finding and the organization of the project itself. The outcome of the project was that the IQ's were raised. However, this is a false conclusion as the evaluations were made based on combining four cohorts when only two of the four had scores that actually improved.¹³⁴ This bias in the results also points to the flaw of having the people who conducted the project to also evaluate the program. They clearly were

¹²⁸ Zigler, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 45.

¹²⁹ Zigler, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 45.

¹³⁰ David J. Armor, "The Evidence on Universal Preschool: Are benefits worth the cost?," *Cato Institute*, Number 76, Oct 15, 2014, 3.

¹³¹ Armor, "The Evidence on Universal Preschool," 3.

¹³² Dacy Ann Olsen, "Universal Preschool Is No Golden Ticket: Why Government Should Not Enter the Preschool Business. Policy Analysis No. 333, *Cato Institute*, February 9, 1999, 15.

¹³³ "Groundbreaking Follow-Up Studies," *The Carolina Abecedarian Project*, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://abc.fpg.unc.edu/groundbreaking-follow-studies> .

¹³⁴ Olsen, "Universal Preschool Is No Golden Ticket", 16.

going to have bias towards their own program, which leaves researchers, policymakers, and the public to decide whether or not they think the results are accurate and can actually be used to discuss how important early childhood education is. Lastly, the project is flawed as the same project has not been replicated. Replication is important to science research experience in order for them to be valid. This project has not made it to that point, which means the results are really inconclusive. The project might have worked for these specific children, but the same can't be said for children that would try to replicate this experience. Therefore, the Abecedarian project, can't actually support the claim that universal preschool would reduce the number of children who perform poorly. Researchers cannot and should not be basing policy recommendation on this study.

Another study that is frequently cited as proof that universal preschool would be a positive outcome is the Perry Preschool Project. This project involved 123 Black children in Ypsilanti, Michigan who received three hours a day educational enrichment five days a week for two years.¹³⁵ Problem solving was frequently emphasized throughout the program, instead of the typical learn through playing structure.¹³⁶ The program differed from typical programs because teachers made weekly home visits to go over routines the parents could be doing at home.¹³⁷ The goal of the program was to see the impact of pre-k on children's lives as well as the outside visitation. The program was special as the classrooms had incredibly small teacher-student ratios.¹³⁸ It also differed as most teachers had master's degrees.¹³⁹ While the program itself looks ideal, there were problems with it. A major critique of the program is the fact that it has

¹³⁵ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 52.

¹³⁶ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 52.

¹³⁷ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 52.

¹³⁸ Armor, "The Evidence on Universal Preschool," 3.

¹³⁹ Armor, "The Evidence on Universal Preschool," 3.

not and most likely could not be replicated. The small class size and ratio would be practically impossible to replicate in this day and age as there isn't funding and there are way too many children for this to be possible. The number of funds, time, and effort put into the program would be very difficult to put together today. Also, the fact that hasn't been replicated makes it clear that it was a once in a lifetime program.

Even though both experiments were incredible experiences for the students that got a chance to explore the high-quality programs, the studies themselves ultimately can't be used to talk about how to design programs today. However, they do give researchers and administrators a wake-up call about how important early childhood education is. Some states have begun to create universal preschool programs because of these findings.

I researched the universal preschool programs in Georgia, Oklahoma, and Florida. I chose these three states because they are the only states that have 100% universal programs. Many States have plans in place or have offered services to low-income families. New York, Tennessee, California, Michigan, and others are on the road to becoming 100% universal, but have not quite made it. While I am writing a historical analysis on each state, the National Institute for Early Education Research has assigned each state a benchmark number that allows the public to compare each state's program and quality standards. NIEER evaluates each state based on 10 benchmarks:

1. Early Learning Standards
2. Teacher degree
3. Teacher specialized training
4. Assistant teacher degree
5. Teacher in-service

6. Maximum class size
7. Staff child ratio
8. Screening/referral and support services
9. Meals
10. Monitoring ¹⁴⁰

Universal Preschool in Georgia

Georgia was the first state to offer a universal preschool program for all four-year-olds.¹⁴¹ There was a need for a sustainable, high-quality preschool program as there were low educational rankings in 1980.¹⁴² Georgia also had a very low expenditure for their students, which resulted in lower high school graduation rates.¹⁴³ A revamping of the preschool program was needed, the process started during the 1990's as Governor Zell Miller was completely committed to the preschool effort.¹⁴⁴ His dedication to preschool showed as he held a conference about early childhood education.¹⁴⁵ Governor Miller was able to get support for his preschool

¹⁴⁰ "State Public Preschool Quality Standards Checklist," *The National Institute for Early Education Research*, accessed February 21, 2017, <http://www.megrants.org/programs/201006earlychildhoodfundings/nieer%20standards.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ W. Steven Barnett, G.G. Weisenfeld, Kirsty Brown, Jim Squires, and Michelle Horowitz, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality: A State and Local Policy Scan" (New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2016), 70.

¹⁴² Debra J. Ackerman, W. Steven Barnett, Laura E. Hawkinson, Kirsty Brown, and Elizabeth A. McGonigle, "Providing Preschool Education for All 4-Year-Olds: Lessons from Six State Journeys, *NIEER Preschool Policy Brief*, issue 18, March 2009, page 4

¹⁴³ Anthony Raden, "Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia: A Case Study of Georgia's Lottery-Funded Pre-K Program" (New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development, 1999), 15.

¹⁴⁴ "History of Georgia's Pre-K Program," Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, accessed January 25, 2017, <http://dec.al.ga.gov/Prek/History.aspx>.

¹⁴⁵ Brenda K. Bushouse, *Universal Preschool: Policy Change, Stability, and the Pew Charitable Trusts* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2009), 21.

initiative by selling his program as an educational enhancement and tax relief.¹⁴⁶ He passed a proposal in 1992, that would support the development of a preschool program.¹⁴⁷ The program began as a pilot program in 1993 with 8,700 at-risk children that was funded by the state.¹⁴⁸ After this pilot program, the state decided to pursue a preschool program for all.

In 1995, Georgia opened the first universal preschool program in the United States.¹⁴⁹ It costs the state \$9,099 per child per year.¹⁵⁰ The state funds it by pouring all lottery funds into the program.¹⁵¹ That first year, they had \$475 million for the program. It utilizes both private and public settings.¹⁵² Every four-year-old is able to attend preschool for 6.5 hours a day, five days a week for 180 days.¹⁵³ For many years, Georgia's preschool program was able to meet 10 NIEER benchmarks, but as they struggled with funding, they got bumped down to 8.¹⁵⁴ They reach the benchmarks in early learning standards, teacher degree, teacher specialized training, assistant teacher degree, teacher-in service, screening/referral and support services, meals, and monitoring.¹⁵⁵ Getting eight out of ten benchmarks is an accomplishment as many other states fail to do so. Georgia has defined what they believe makes a child ready to start Kindergarten. They define it as:

¹⁴⁶ Raden, "Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia," 11.

¹⁴⁷ "History of Georgia's Pre-K Program"

¹⁴⁸ "History of Georgia's Pre-K Program"

¹⁴⁹ "History of Georgia's Pre-K Program"

¹⁵⁰ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 70.

¹⁵¹ Fawn Johnson, "How Georgia Got Republicans and Democrats to Embrace Universal Pre-K," *The Atlantic*, May 7, 2014.

¹⁵² Raden, "Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia," 27.

¹⁵³ "Georgia's Pre- K Program 2016-2017 School Year Pre-K Providers' Operating Guide," *Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning*, accessed on January 31, 2017, decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/guidelines.pdf, 7.

¹⁵⁴ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 70.

¹⁵⁵ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 70.

1. Possible health barriers that block learning have been detected
2. Suspected physical or mental disabilities have been addressed
3. Enthusiasm, curiosity, and persistence toward learning is demonstrated
4. Feelings of both self and others are recognized
5. Social and interpersonal skills are emerging
6. Communication with others is effective
7. Early literacy skills are evident
8. A general knowledge about the world, things, places, events, and people has been acquired¹⁵⁶

The program's first year started off with 44,000 four-year olds.¹⁵⁷ Every year, the number of student enrolled increased by the thousands. By 1999, Georgia was serving 75-80% of the eligible four-year-olds.¹⁵⁸ The program utilizes public as well as private providers.¹⁵⁹ When the program first opened in 1995, there was some pushback. Religious organizations disagreed with the lottery funds being used for the program because of the apparent state endorsement of what they perceived to as immoral behavior.¹⁶⁰ To fight the opposition that thought it would create a gambling problem, Governor Miller proposed a program with supportive services for gamblers.¹⁶¹ There was also a question of the amount of revenue the

¹⁵⁶“Georgia’s Pre-K Program Content Standards,” *Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning*, http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/sites/dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/files/imported/DHR-DFCS/DHR-DFCS%20CAPS/Files/2010-2011CCDFStatePlan/Attachment5.2.1B_Pre-KContentStandards.pdf, 9.

¹⁵⁷ Raden, *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ Raden, *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia*, 10.

¹⁵⁹ Raden, *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia*, 10.

¹⁶⁰ Raden, *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia*, 12.

¹⁶¹ Raden, *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia*, 15.

lottery would generate.¹⁶² Governor Miller continued to push promising the program would be a success, and finally got his chance to run the program in 1993 as a pilot program. After that first year, an assessment was made to see if the program had benefits after the children's first year of Kindergarten. Three-hundred seventeen students were randomly selected and revealed that the Prekindergarten had enhanced the children's development.¹⁶³

Georgia's program is progressing, which is reflected in the state increasing their teacher credential requirements. They figured out that teacher quality is important to the quality of the program. In 2008, they only required teachers to have a Child Development Associate Credential.¹⁶⁴ By 2010, teachers needed a bachelor's degree for the lead teacher position.¹⁶⁵ This is an important characteristic because it reveals the changing demographic of preschool teachers. They aren't just babysitters, they are teaching the kids and using their degree.

One positive addition that is part of the program is the strategies to support English language learners. The state realizes that not everyone will be from a home where English is the first language learned. They focus on these children by offering a language rich classroom with support.¹⁶⁶ The Bilingual preschool program started in 2009.¹⁶⁷ In a 2011 evaluation of classroom experience, researchers found that children who were Spanish-speaking dual language learners increased their English and Spanish language skills.¹⁶⁸ The state is also constantly

¹⁶² Raden, Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia, 13.

¹⁶³ Raden, Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia, 21.

¹⁶⁴ W. Steven Barnett, Carolan, M.E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J.H, "*The State of Preschool 2012: State Preschool Yearbook*," New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research, 48.

¹⁶⁵ Barnett, "The State of Preschool 2012," 48.

¹⁶⁶ "Georgia's Pre-K Program Content Standards," 14.

¹⁶⁷ Barnett, "The State of Preschool 2012," 48.

¹⁶⁸ Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, Jennifer Schaaf, and Dore LaForett, "Children's Growth and Classroom Experiences in Georgia's Pre-K Program: Findings from the 2011-2012 Evaluation Study," <http://dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/GAPreKEval2011-2012ExecSum.pdf>, 1

updating and revising standards. One way they do this is by using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System.¹⁶⁹ This system monitors the program quality and allows them to monitor and assess.

One problem with the program is the funding. While Georgia was the first universal preschool program, it has struggled since its opening. They rely on funding from the lottery system, but due to the economies' fluctuations, the funding for the program has suffered immensely.¹⁷⁰ Although there are these funding issues, there are still significant gains are clear as there is research that shows significant gains on cognitive development tests.¹⁷¹

Universal Preschool in Oklahoma

Oklahoma started on their journey towards universal preschool in 1990.¹⁷² The state was in need of a high-quality preschool program as there were declining school enrollments.¹⁷³ There was also a problem with Kindergarten enrollment as parents began enrolling their four-year-olds early.¹⁷⁴ In order to fix this educational issue, Ramona Paul, the former state's assistant superintendent of public education, started working towards universal preschool for Oklahoma in 1980.¹⁷⁵ When Paul came up with a preschool program, it originally was targeted towards low-income households, but the program became a universal preschool program in 1998 after

¹⁶⁹ Barnett, "The State of Preschool 2012," 48.

¹⁷⁰ Johnson, "How Georgia Got Republicans and Democrats to Embrace Universal Pre-K."

¹⁷¹ William T. Gormley, Jr., "Is it time for Universal Pre-K?," *The Education Digest*, December 2005, 52.

¹⁷² Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 8.

¹⁷³ Ackerman, "Providing Preschool Education for All 4-Year-Olds, 1.

¹⁷⁴ William T. Gormley, Jr., "Is it time for Universal Pre-K?," *The Education Digest*, December 2005, 50.

¹⁷⁵ Sharon Lerner, "Pre-K on the Range," *The American Prospect*, December 4, 2012, accessed January 25, 2017, <http://prospect.org/article/pre-k-range>.

positive impacts were found.¹⁷⁶ Paul claimed, “Why would we want to educate just a certain group of children?”¹⁷⁷ Controversy came up as people had strong opinions about where women belonged. Legislators claimed, “if we provide preschool women will go to work.”¹⁷⁸ There was some pushback on her preschool program as people during the time believed women belonged in the home. Regardless of the pushback, the pilot went through.

Paul’s dream was further enhanced as legislator, Joe Eddins, supported her ideas. Eddins was convinced that, “school failure was sending a growing number of Oklahoma’s kids down a life path of poverty and underperformance.”¹⁷⁹ He agreed with Paul’s push for preschool because it was developmentally inappropriate to have four-year olds in Kindergarten.¹⁸⁰ He changed the state education law to include preschool. The choice became overcrowding the Kindergarten’s or creating a quality preschool program.

Oklahoma officially instated universal preschool in 2003, when Gov. Brad Henry signed legislation allowing all four-year-olds high-quality preschool.¹⁸¹ Oklahoma offers a half day and full day option.¹⁸² Oklahoma is able to fully fund their program through the state’s school finance formula.¹⁸³ The formula makes preschool a part of the K-12 budget. Preschool being

¹⁷⁶Suzy Khimm, “Is Oklahoma the right model for universal pre-K?,” *The Washington Post*, February 14, 2013, accessed January 25, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/02/14/is-oklahoma-the-right-model-for-universal-pre-k/?utm_term=.7c0a46030a21.

¹⁷⁷ Lerner, “Pre-K on the Range.”

¹⁷⁸ Bushouse, *Universal Preschool*, 36.

¹⁷⁹ Lerner, “Pre-K on the Range.”

¹⁸⁰ Bushouse, *Universal Preschool*, 41.

¹⁸¹ Randy Krehbiel, “Oklahoman of the Year,” *Oklahomtoday.com*, January 2010, accessed January 25, 2017, <http://www.oklahomtoday.com/documents/2009RamonaPaul.pdf>, 42.

¹⁸² Daphna Bassok, Maria Fitzpatrick, and Susanna Loeb, “Does state preschool crowd-out private provision? The impact of universal preschool on the childcare sector in Oklahoma and Georgia,” *Journal of Urban Economic* 83 (2014): 2, accessed January 26, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2014.07.001>.

¹⁸³ Barnett, “Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality,” 199.

part of the main education budget is important because it makes a controversial statement that most states haven't acknowledged. Steven Barnett, the director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, gave testimony to this as he said, "Oklahoma provides universal preschool as part of the public education system..So that means bringing all the quality standards."¹⁸⁴ This means that Oklahoma is one of the first states to publically acknowledge preschool as vital to success in the elementary school setting. The formula allows Oklahoma to spend \$7,672 per child.¹⁸⁵ The program is taking off as seen through its enrollment numbers. Oklahoma is serving 75% of four-year-olds.¹⁸⁶

The program has been talked about a great deal and frequently copied as the program meets 8 out of 10 of the quality benchmarks.¹⁸⁷ The quality also surpasses many of the other programs after the law in 1998 gave more funding to the program, required teachers to have a college degree and a certificate in early childhood education, and required that their pay was the same as elementary school teachers.¹⁸⁸

One constant problem for the Oklahoma program is the lack of funding. From 2013-2014, funding for the program decreased.¹⁸⁹ This could have played into the students as Oklahoma scored low on math and reading in grades 4 and 8.¹⁹⁰

One positive change from most other universal preschool programs is the fact that the teachers are paid on the same level as elementary school teachers in the state.¹⁹¹ Since the state

¹⁸⁴Lillian Mongeau, "Why Oklahoma's public preschools are some of the best in the country," *The Hechinger Report*, February 2, 2016, accessed January 26, 2017, <http://hechingerreport.org/why-oklahomas-public-preschools-are-some-of-the-best-in-the-country/>.

¹⁸⁵ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 199.

¹⁸⁶ Lerner, "Pre-K on the Range."

¹⁸⁷ Zigler, Gilliam, and Jones, *A Vision for Universal Preschool Education*, 8.

¹⁸⁸ Khimm, "Is Oklahoma the right model for universal pre-K?"

¹⁸⁹ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 199.

¹⁹⁰ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 199.

requires the teachers to have more credentials, it not only helps the students, but also helps the pay rate. This pay rate is also important as it changes the attitudes of the teachers, rather than being thought of as a babysitter, they are a valued part of the education system.

The gains for the children who have attended the program are clear. Bill Gormley, a professor at Georgetown, did a study of the impact of early education in 2002.¹⁹² His study found that the children who attended the voluntary preschool were nine months ahead of their peers in reading and seven months in pre-writing.¹⁹³ He was able to compare the kids who attended the program and those who didn't, which revealed that while the low-income children benefitted most from the program, everyone did in fact have gains.¹⁹⁴

Universal Preschool in Florida

Florida's journey to universal preschool has been long and strenuous. The process started in the late 1990's when Florida decided to follow in the footsteps of two other states.¹⁹⁵ At this point, there was a multitude of early childhood programs in the state. One of these programs was Florida's Pre-Kindergarten Early Intervention program. This program was very similar to Head Start as it was targeted at the high-risk children in low-income areas.¹⁹⁶ By 1999, Florida's Governor Lawton Chiles, realized that it was time to get Florida's programs in line.¹⁹⁷ The programs were somewhat effective, but could be more effective if they had a statewide

¹⁹¹ Lerner, "Pre-K on the Range."

¹⁹² Lerner, "Pre-K on the Range."

¹⁹³ Lerner, "Pre-K on the Range."

¹⁹⁴ Lerner, "Pre-K on the Range."

¹⁹⁵ Daphna Bassok, Luke C. Miller, Eva Galdo, & Amanda J. Johnson, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program: An Overview of the Largest State Pre-School Program in the Nation, *University of Virginia EdPolicy Works*, Nov 2014, 1.

¹⁹⁶ Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 1.

¹⁹⁷ Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 1.

curriculum and set of standards for all sites. In order to achieve this goal of almost standardizing the programs in all counties in Florida, the School Readiness Act was passed in 1999. The Act outlined a plan to merge all of the early childhood programs and establish a board that would create, regulate, and maintain standards and policies.¹⁹⁸ The School Readiness Act was only so helpful as many people were not able to get into the program due to a large quantity of people who were seeking it. Therefore, when there had been some talk of universal preschool, David Lawrence and Alex Penelas were eager to bring it to Florida.¹⁹⁹ David Lawrence became interested in the preschool issue after Governor Lawton Chiles asked him to write a piece.²⁰⁰ After doing research, he was hooked. Alex Penelas, Miami Mayor, was interested in the preschool issue after his son attended a costly preschool, but knew it was worth it because his son learned a lot.²⁰¹ Lawrence was a vital asset to the creation of Florida's voluntary preschool program as his motto was that, "[they] could never build a real movement for 'school readiness' unless [they did] so for everyone's child."²⁰² This is important because in order to get people interested in universal preschool, Lawrence stressed it was for the rich as well as the poor. He had to make them believe that it was an all-inclusive idea that would benefit all. He was further interested in the investment in early childhood education after researching the French model for preschool.²⁰³ In 2002, the amendment was signed with a 58.6% vote.²⁰⁴ Legislatures came up

¹⁹⁸ Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 2.

¹⁹⁹ Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 3.

²⁰⁰ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 188.

²⁰¹ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 189.

²⁰² Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 3.

²⁰³ Gormley, "Is it time for Universal Pre-K?," 51.

²⁰⁴ Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 3.

with a bill to design this universal preschool program. In December 2004, HB 1-A was signed for 2005 by Governor Jeb Bush.²⁰⁵

After years of pushing for a quality preschool program, they created a voluntary universal pre-K program. The program is unique because all four-year-olds have the option of enrolling in a 300-hour program during the summer or a 540-hour program during the school year.²⁰⁶ This becomes a free three-hour program, five days a week for four-year-olds.²⁰⁷ Florida's preschool is funded through general revenue.²⁰⁸ In 2013, Florida spent \$2,383 per child.²⁰⁹ Florida spends the least amount of money on preschool education per child. In 2014, Florida's government spent 381.1 million dollars on the program.²¹⁰ With the funding they have, they created a very vague set of standards that the program hopes will impact the children. These seven standards are:

- Health and social development
- Emotional development
- Motor development
- Language and communication
- Emergent literacy
- Cognitive development
- General knowledge²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 3.

²⁰⁶ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 63.

²⁰⁷ Finn, *Reroute The Preschool Juggernaut*, 54.

²⁰⁸ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 63.

²⁰⁹ Bassok, "Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program," 8.

²¹⁰ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 63.

²¹¹ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 55.

***Although they are standards, Florida just mandates the program be developmentally appropriate.²¹²

In 2006, Florida's Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) had 126,000 children enrolled in the program, which was about 55% of the available children.²¹³ This was only the second year of the program, which is continuously expanding. This also doesn't include the number of kids who were already enrolled in private preschool providers.²¹⁴ The children who were in VPK were assessed at the end of the year in order to determine if the kids were in fact "ready" for Kindergarten. Administrators found this data by using the Readiness Screener instrument, which indicates basic early literacy skills, alphabet recognition, and initial sound recognition.²¹⁵ The findings were important as children who attended the first year of the program were ultimately more ready for Kindergarten than the children who did not attend preschool.²¹⁶ Even though the children were more ready for Kindergarten, Florida has the legacy of being the lowest quality preschool program.

One problem with the program is the fact that the state doesn't seem to have concrete standards all sites have to follow. These include standards for the curriculum as well as teacher credentials. Four hundred ten operators of the program were judged low-performing during the first year.²¹⁷ The teacher credentials also seem questionable as the teachers don't even require an

²¹² Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 59.

²¹³ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 57.

²¹⁴ Finn, *Reroute The Preschool Juggernaut*, 57.

²¹⁵ Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability, "61% of Voluntary Prekindergarten Children Are Ready for Kindergarten; Accountability Process Needs Improvement," *Office of Program Policy Analysis and Accountability*, Report No. 08-23, April 28. <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/0823rpt.pdf> page 3

²¹⁶ Finn, *Reroute The Preschool Juggernaut*, 58.

²¹⁷ Finn, *Reroute The Preschool Juggernaut*, 59.

associate's degree.²¹⁸ This lack of standards and cohesive curriculum is evident as Florida's program only reaches three out of ten benchmarks on NIEER's quality standards.²¹⁹ This lack of quality is also relevant as Florida is regarded as one of the weakest preschool programs in the states.²²⁰

The universal preschool problem had funding problems, which created a lack of resources and enrollment limitation.²²¹ The lack of resources also created a space problem. The act mandated that each child would be entitled to a quality preschool program, but the current preschool buildings are at full capacity.²²² This lack of space meant children only received a spot if they won one through the lottery system.²²³

Another issue with the program is the testing that is done after. Instead of working on a curriculum for the students, the state just makes them take a test in order to enroll in Kindergarten. The exam apparently gives the schools a chance to decide if the children are actually ready to start Kindergarten.²²⁴ The biggest issue with this is the fact the kids aren't tested before enrolling in the preschool program. This means that maybe the child didn't know anything before enrolling in the program and learned a significant amount in school. However, this also means that the kid could've learned a lot at home and learned nothing in school.

²¹⁸ Finn, *Reroute The Preschool Juggernaut*, 59.

²¹⁹ Barnett, "Implementing 15 essential elements for high quality," 63.

²²⁰ David L. Kirp, "How New York Made Pre-K a Success," *The New York Times*, Feb 13, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/14/opinion/sunday/how-new-york-made-pre-k-a-success.html?_r=0

²²¹ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 184.

²²² Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 184.

²²³ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 185.

²²⁴ Kirp, *The Sandbox Investment*, 185.

Chapter 4: Universal Preschool Abroad

Universal Preschool in France

The United States is quite far behind in early education; many countries have had universal preschool for a while. France began their École Maternelle program during the 1880's in order to improve early childhood education.²²⁵ There was a need for a quality program, equal opportunities, and a large percentage of primary school repeaters.²²⁶ The idea to have a quality preschool program came after the creation of écoles à tricoter (knitting schools) in 1779.²²⁷ Salles d'asile, the next kind of school began in 1826.²²⁸ The focus of Salles d'aile (a place of

²²⁵ Michelle J. Neuman and Shanny Peer, *Equal from the Start: Promoting Educational Opportunity for All Preschool Children – Learning from the French Experience* (New York: The French American Foundation, 2002), 5.

²²⁶ Gilbert R. Austin, *Early Childhood Education: An International Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1976), 186.

²²⁷ Austin, *Early Childhood Education: An International*, 177.

²²⁸ Candy J. Cooper, Michelle J. Neuman, and Susanne Kastler, "Ready to Learn: The French System of Early Education and Care Offers Lessons for the United States," (New York, NY: *The French-American Foundation*), 19.

refuge) focused on the importance of play and expression.²²⁹ In 1833, France changed their educational system to be a mixture of all previous schools, they called it écoles maternelles.²³⁰

Paline Kergomard, an inspectrice générale (inspector general), was one of the people focused on giving preschool aged children a program. She believed in the importance of play and didn't like the idea of stressing academics, which is seen in most other countries' early childhood education. Then, in 1881, a series of education laws came out, which outlined an education plan for children ages 2-7.²³¹ École Maternelle was officially established with goals in mind in 1882.²³²

This is the French version of universal preschool that is available to all. A full day of preschool is available to any child age 3-6.²³³ The program itself is controlled by the Ministry of Education, which is controlled by the French Central government.²³⁴ This major difference from the United States' state by state control is vital as there is a national curriculum that every site has to follow.²³⁵ The goal of the program is to let children express themselves through play and eventually be academically ready for elementary school. The National curriculum has five areas that the children should develop throughout their time in the program:

1. Developing oral language and an introduction to writing
2. Learning how to work together
3. Acting and expressing emotions and thoughts with one's body
4. Discovering world

²²⁹ Cooper, "Ready to Learn," 19.

²³⁰ Austin, *Early Childhood Education: An International Perspective*, 177.

²³¹ Cooper, "Ready to Learn," 19.

²³² Cooper, "Ready to Learn," 19.

²³³ John Bennett and Collette P. Tayler, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris, France: OECD, 2006), 326.

²³⁴ Bonnie R. Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France: A Personal Perspective," (Washington D.C: The National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2004), 1.

²³⁵ Cooper, "Ready to Learn," 28.

5. Imagining, feeling, and creating²³⁶

The public's acceptance to the universal preschool program differs from the United States' ideas of preschool in several ways. The biggest difference is the fact that the program is the pride and joy of France. The Minister of Education explains that, "there is an 'absolute and unquestioned acceptance of the École Maternelle by the French as something that is part of the inviolable creed and culture.'"²³⁷ This reveals the fact that attendance at preschool is expected in France. It is almost a rite of passage and each child is entitled to it. Many parents also enjoy sending their children to this program as it lets them work. It cost the government \$5,500 per child in 1999.²³⁸ The program is available to everyone because the high taxes pay for the program. France chose to fund preschool for all, "not only on humanitarian grounds but, more particularly, for political reasons, namely, a desire to achieve national unity through culture and language, to set up an enlightened democracy by means of education."²³⁹ There is a 100% enrollment in the all-day program.²⁴⁰

The program is also different from preschool in America because of the focus is on culture,²⁴¹ rather than academics as the first concern. The focus of the program is about language and culture because they want the children to be upstanding citizens. The curriculum also focuses on learning through every day experiences.²⁴² The lack of focus on academics is interesting because of the United States obsession with IQ and academics at such a young age.

²³⁶ Neuman and Peer, *Equal from The Start*, 27.

²³⁷ Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France," 1.

²³⁸ Cooper, "Ready to Learn," 13.

²³⁹ Austin, *Early Childhood Education: An International Perspective*, 194.

²⁴⁰ Npr, "French Preschools Aim to Please Toddlers, Moms," Last modified June 6, 2010, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128328858>.

²⁴¹ Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France," 1.

²⁴² Cooper, "Ready To Learn," 29.

Instead, École Maternelle's curriculum can include social etiquette and learning how to be an important part of society.²⁴³ The focus is also about learning how to speak French well.²⁴⁴ France's system is unique because the curriculum teaches the younger generation how to be an upstanding member of society.

The perception of the teachers at École Maternelle is also different because they are viewed on the same level as any other teacher.²⁴⁵ This is important because it differs so much from the United States where preschool teachers are valued less because of the lack of education and the kind of work they do. On the other hand, French preschool teachers have extensive training before they can even think about teaching, which gains them respect. To start, they must have a bachelor's degree. They also have to take an exam to get into the preparation program. Then they have to earn the equivalent of a master's degree. They then have to take a set of exams in different subjects.²⁴⁶ All this teacher preparation is important because it reinforces the reputation that preschool teachers have. They are a valued part of society and they are paid well.²⁴⁷ In 2002, preschool teachers were paid \$25,000 in France, which was above the United States' national average income.²⁴⁸ Another point of interest is the turnover rate. While in the States, the preschool turnover rate is from 25-40%.²⁴⁹ In France, the turnover rate is less than 10%.²⁵⁰ The training also doesn't end when the teacher becomes a teacher. There are

²⁴³ Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France," 3.

²⁴⁴ Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France," 3.

²⁴⁵ Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France," 3.

²⁴⁶ Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France," 4.

²⁴⁷ Hurless, "Early Childhood Education in France," 4.

²⁴⁸ Neuman and Peer, *Equal from The Start*, 27

²⁴⁹ Noriko Porter, "High Turnover among Early Childhood Educators in the United States," Child Research Net, August 17, 2012, http://www.childresearch.net/projects/ecec/2012_04.html.

²⁵⁰ Neuman and Peer, *Equal from The Start*, 39.

professional development sessions for thirty six weeks.²⁵¹ This increase in professional development and training is a key reason why preschool teachers are well regarded in France.

During my research of the French Universal Preschool, I could not find research about the impact of the program. That's when I found that, "France has no research centers specifically oriented towards early childhood, only a range of organizations which encompass research in this field within their sphere of activity."²⁵² While there are no impact studies regarding testing and IQ, there are impacts and positive reviews of the program overall.

The results of École Maternelle are clear as many studies have demonstrated positive impacts. In 1992, the French National Department of Education found that children from disadvantaged areas benefit the most from the program, but all children in general benefit.²⁵³ France is important when talking about taking steps towards universal preschool because clearly it works well there and the United States should follow in their footsteps. They could learn a lesson through the fact that the French government controls education, doesn't focus on IQ, and their teachers are actually appreciated.

Universal Preschool in England

The process to achieve universal preschool in England started in 1972 with a White Paper.²⁵⁴ Margaret Thatcher, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, outlined a ten-

²⁵¹ Neuman and Peer, *Equal from The Start*, 42.

²⁵² Tricia David, *Researching Early Childhood Education: European Perspectives* (London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd, 1998), 45.

²⁵³ Neuman and Peer, *Equal from The Start*, 36.

²⁵⁴ Mike Brewer, Sarah Cattan, Claire Crawford, and Birgitta Rabe, "The impact of free early education for 4 year olds in England," October 22, 2014, <https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/docs/MISOC%20Childcare%20briefing%20paper.pdf>, 11.

year plan for nursery education.²⁵⁵ The plan included improvements for each level of education, but specifically stated that universal preschool would be instated within 10 years. This would differ from previous programs because it wouldn't be just babysitting children. Instead, Thatcher stated, "There is no need to make a narrow distinction between educational and social needs. Both will contribute to the demand for full-time nursery places. But the main purpose of providing them is to enable children to learn and not to provide a day-care service."²⁵⁶ The first step in this process for early childhood education in England was the introduction of the voucher system. In 1995, only 4% of children under five years old were in school.²⁵⁷ The goal of the voucher system was to increase the participation in nursery schools. In 1996, families with four-year-olds were introduced to the new system, which involved them being given a voucher worth 1,100 pounds, which they could exchange for a spot in a nursery school.²⁵⁸ This voucher system increased the number of children attending programs from a quarter to 50%.²⁵⁹ The voucher system was a success, but would be replaced as a new government came to power.

When the Labour Government came into power in 1997, the education system was changed. The Labour Government began offering free part-time nursery school in 1998 for four-year-olds through an entitlement program.²⁶⁰ The entitlement program gave all four-year-olds a program that included 12.5 hours a week for 33 weeks, but eventually extended the program to

²⁵⁵ "Written Statement launching Education White Paper (A Framework for Expansion)," Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102233>.

²⁵⁶ "HC S [Education (White Paper)]," Margaret Thatcher Foundation, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/102256>.

²⁵⁷ Anne West and Philip Noden, "Public Funding of Early Years Education in England: A Historical Perspective," Clare Market Papers (2016), 6.

²⁵⁸ West, "Public Funding of Early Years Education in England," 5.

²⁵⁹ West, "Public Funding of Early Years Education in England," 5.

²⁶⁰ West, "Public funding of early years education in England," 6.

be 38 weeks.²⁶¹ Parents were able to choose where their children attend. The program cost three hundred sixty-six pounds per term for each child in the 1900's.²⁶² Now, the government spends 1,867 pounds per child.²⁶³ The government paid for the program through the Revenue support grant and local taxes.²⁶⁴ This changed in 2008 as the Early Years Single Funding Formula was introduced.²⁶⁵ This change was needed as it leveled the amount of funding for each child regardless of the setting of the program. It was implemented until 2011.²⁶⁶

England's universal preschool is unique because it has a set of standards that all children are supposed to learn through play. These standards are:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design²⁶⁷

While the children are assessed throughout the program to see if they will be ready for primary school, they aren't tested directly. Instead, they are assessed through observation.²⁶⁸

²⁶¹ West, "Public funding of early years education in England," 6.

²⁶² West, "Public funding of early years education in England," 6.

²⁶³ Kitty Stewart and Polina Obolenskaya, "The Coalition's Record on the Under Fives: Policy, Spending, and Outcomes 2010-2015," (Thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2015), 22.

²⁶⁴ West, "Public funding of early years education in England," 6.

²⁶⁵ West, "Public Funding of Early Years Education in England," 20.

²⁶⁶ West, "Public Funding of Early Years Education in England," 20.

²⁶⁷ "Early years foundation stage," Gov.UK, accessed February 22, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/early-years-foundation-stage>.

The testing doesn't start until the children are 4 years old.²⁶⁹ A study focused on the impact of free entitlement on three-year-olds was done from 2002-2007. The study revealed that the program improved the outcomes of the children at age 5 by 2%.²⁷⁰ The study also found gains in literacy, numeracy, and social development for all children that attended the program.²⁷¹ Another study done in 2005 found lasting impacts that resulted in higher math and reading test scores. The children also were more likely to be employed by age 33.²⁷²

Many changes have been made to the program since its opening in 1997. In 2004, the program was opened up to 3 year olds.²⁷³ Since then, the percent of the 4-year-olds has stayed above 95% enrollment.²⁷⁴ While the enrollment number increased significantly, the amount spent on early childhood education rose substantially. By 2012, England was spending 1.9 billion pounds a year for all 3 and 4 year olds.²⁷⁵ Since the program had been such a success and the stress of the importance of early childhood education was clear, the program expanded more as well. The program was opened up to two year olds from low-income families.²⁷⁶ As the program expanded throughout the years, the funding changed as well. The government is able to fund this part of the program through the Dedicated Schools grant.²⁷⁷ England is also moving forward with their program by making a commitment to end child poverty by 2020.²⁷⁸

²⁶⁸ "Early Years foundation stage"

²⁶⁹ "The national curriculum," Gov.UK, accessed February 22, 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/national-curriculum>.

²⁷⁰ Brewer, "the Impact of free early education for 3 year olds in England," 5.

²⁷¹ Brewer, "the Impact of free early education for 3 year olds in England," 5.

²⁷² Edward Melhuish, "Research on early Childhood Education in the UK," *Handbuch frühkindliche Bildungsforschung* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2013), 212.

²⁷³ West, "Public funding of early years education in England: an historical perspective," 10.

²⁷⁴ Brewer, "the Impact of free early education for 3 year olds in England," 22.

²⁷⁵ Brewer, "the Impact of free early education for 3 year olds in England," 2.

²⁷⁶ Brewer, "the Impact of free early education for 3 year olds in England," 2.

²⁷⁷ West, "Public funding of early years education in England: an historical perspective," 7.

²⁷⁸ Stewart and Obolenskaya, "The coalition's Record on the Under Fives," 10.

Universal Preschool in Finland

Finland spends over 75 million dollars on their universal preschool.²⁷⁹ It has been quite a success and many countries turn to Finland for educational policy help. The journey to become a leading country in education all started during the 1960's as one out of ten adults had completed more than nine years of school.²⁸⁰ That's when a decision was made to improve the education system. In 1996, an amendment helped create a program for kids who weren't old enough to go to elementary school.²⁸¹ The decision to offer a free program to all children was made because the country hopes that everyone will progress together. The idea of equality is also stressed throughout the program. Krista Kiuru, Finland's minister of education, stressed, "We decided in the 1960s that we would provide a free quality education to all... Equal means that we support everyone and we're not going to waste anyone's skills."²⁸² The focus of the education system seemed to be to find and develop everyone's skills. The program differs from the U.S., England, and France as the program starts when the children are six years old.²⁸³ It starts this late because students don't begin elementary school until they are 7 years old. This is because they believe

²⁷⁹ Tribune-Review, "Universal Preschool?: A Finnish option," *Trib Live*, May 16, 2014, <http://triblive.com/opinion/editorials/5583370-74/kindergarten-open-start>

²⁸⁰ Pasi Sahlberg, "The Secret to Finland's Success: Educating Teachers," *Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education* (2010): 1.

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a6a0/b0091c0f61493e9ea6ed98a0bc7cf90e207d.pdf>

²⁸¹ Anupama KC, "Early Childhood Education and Care Partnership in Finland," (Bachelor's Thesis, Tampere University, 2010), 9.

²⁸² Christine Gross-LOH, "Finnish Education Chief: 'We created a School System Based on Equality': An interview with the country's minister of education, Krista Kiuru," *The Atlantic*, March 17, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/03/finnish-education-chief-we-created-a-school-system-based-on-equality/284427/>.

²⁸³ Michael Alison Chandler, "Finland working to expand early education," *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/finland-working-to-expand-early-education/2014/03/04/571aacf8-a3ba-11e3-8466-d34c451760b9_story.html?utm_term=.0470598a955d.

that children are not ready to start school and need to focus on creativity and play.²⁸⁴ The Ministry Education is in charge of regulating the program as the country wants kids to do well in elementary school. The Finnish government covers the cost of preschool through an increase in taxes.²⁸⁵ The program gives families a choice of either 5-10 hours a day five days a week.²⁸⁶ In total, each child is given 700 hours of preschool.²⁸⁷

Finland's program differs from most as the focus is play, language, and the arts.²⁸⁸ Learning through play is vital to the national curriculum. The goal of the program is that, "They will retain the joy of and enthusiasm for learning and face new learning challenges with confidence and creativity."²⁸⁹ The adjective joy is key to Finland's success as they believe if there is no joy, then you will surely forget. Each program follows the National curriculum. The core content areas include:

1. Language and Interaction
2. Mathematics
3. Ethics and religion
4. Environmental and natural studies

²⁸⁴Patrick Butler, "No grammar schools, lots of play: the secrets of Europe's top education system," *The Guardian*, September 20, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/sep/20/grammar-schools-play-europe-top-education-system-finland-daycare>.

²⁸⁵ Claudio Sanchez, "What the U.S. Can Learn from Finland, Where School Starts at Age 7," NPR, March 8, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2014/03/08/287255411/what-the-u-s-can-learn-from-finland-where-school-starts-at-age-7>.

²⁸⁶ "Early Childhood education and care in Finland," Opetus= ja kulttuuriministerio, accessed February 22, 2017, <http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Koulutus/varhaiskasvatus/?lang=en>.

²⁸⁷ KC, "Early Childhood Education and Care Partnership in Finland," 15.

²⁸⁸ Boyle Swiniarski, *World Class Initiatives and Practices in Early Education: Moving Forward in a Global Age* (New York: Springer Science + Business Media Dordrecht, 2014), 10.

²⁸⁹ Finnish National Board of Education, "National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education," Opetushallitus Utbildingsstyrelsen, 2010, http://www.oph.fi/download/153504_national_core_curriculum_for_pre-primary_education_2010.pdf

5. Health
6. Physical and motor development
7. Arts and culture

The Finnish preschool program has also had an impact because the government values the teachers. The Minister of Education has said, “it’s about having high-quality teachers. Day care teachers are having Bachelor degrees. So we trust our teachers, and that’s very, very important.”²⁹⁰ Teaching is a respected profession and each teacher is treated like a professor at a university.²⁹¹

While the Finland educational system is perceived as a great system, an impact study was done in 2012 that found mixed results about the program. The structure and curriculum were found to be low quality.²⁹² Even though they are low quality, the parents still found that the program itself is effective. This could be because the children’s individuality, social needs, and interaction with peers received high-quality ratings.²⁹³ Another key finding in the study is the importance of qualified professionals. Finland’s program has its own flaws, but it continues to be a leader in early childhood education.

Finland’s preschool program has been a success and other countries have looked to it for guidance. Amanda Ripley wrote *The Smartest Kids in the World and How They got That Way*, which compared Finland, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan in terms of educational offerings

²⁹⁰ Frontiers Academy, “Pre-K Around the World: How does the U.S. measure up?,” *Frontiers Academy*, April 22, 2015, <http://frontiersacademy.org/pre-k-around-the-world/>.

²⁹¹ Abby Jackson, “Five reasons Finland’s schools are better than America’s,” *Business Insider*, September 13, 2015, <http://www.businessinsider.com/5-things-finlands-schools-do-better-than-america-2015-4>.

²⁹² Eeva Hujala, Elina Fonsén, and Janniina Elo, “Evaluating the quality of the child care in Finland,” *Early Development and Care* (2012): 305.

²⁹³ Hujala, “Evaluating the quality of the child care in Finland,” 307.

and rankings. She found that Finland is so far ahead of many countries. She makes an argument about why Finland is doing so well even though kids don't start elementary school at age 7, "Kids are almost all in some kind of day care, all of whom are working in the same curriculum that's aligned with what they're going to learn in school."²⁹⁴ Most countries don't have a level of coherence throughout the school system. Clearly, the system of having preschool at age six, learning through play, and starting elementary school at age 7 is working as Finland dominates in global tests.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Sanchez, "What the U.S. Can Learn from Finland, Where School Starts at Age 7."

²⁹⁵ Gross-LOH, "Finnish Education Chief: 'We Created a School System based on equality.'"

Conclusion:

Early Childhood Education should be the focus for all policymakers, government officials, and the public. Senator Christopher Dodd reiterated this in 2002 when he declared, “We are no longer arguing about the science of this... as far I am concerned, that debate is over with.”²⁹⁶ There is no longer a debate like there was in the 1970’s over the importance of early childhood education. The United States made mistakes, but is on the right track now. The United States could have been a leading country in the early childhood education race if Nixon had not vetoed The Comprehensive Child Development Act in 1971. This was a major mistake on the United States’ part. The proposition would have created a free half-day program for all four-year-olds. Nixon claimed, “For the federal government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development would commit the vast moral authority of the national government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against the family-centered approach.”²⁹⁷ Nixon sided with all the policymakers and government officials who claimed it was wrong for the national government to get involved in educational affairs. This change of heart was off-putting for many policymakers and legislators, as Nixon was pro-preschool program for a long time. Nixon had just claimed in 1968 that it was important, “to maintain our national commitment to preschool education.”²⁹⁸ He also opened the office of child development.²⁹⁹ These two actions made it seem like he was committed to changing the lack of

²⁹⁶ Andrew Karch, *Early Start: Preschool Politics in the United States* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2013), 162.

²⁹⁷ Karch, *Early Start*, 82.

²⁹⁸ Karch, *Early Start*, 63.

²⁹⁹ Karch, *Early Start*, 63.

early childhood education policy in the United States. Even though Nixon failed to pass this important legislation, it opened the floor for early childhood education dialogue.

Today, there is still a question of the impacts of early childhood education. However, a vast amount of research that has come out about the gains and impact of early childhood education was enough to have countries and states invest in young children. Through my research of the state programs, as well as the programs abroad, there were a few similarities in the different programs that would impact a new program for all fifty States.

1. Universal rather than only low-income
2. Learning through play
3. Quality Teachers and quality pay
4. Children and Families
5. Early Childhood
6. Funding through adding preschool to the K-12 budget

Truly Universal

It is clear that education is very important to the United States, but gains have not been made like the other countries. The real push for education at a young age started during the 1960's when Lyndon B. Johnson pointed out the pattern of poverty and lack of quality education. Even though his focus was on the poor and remedying this issue, it led to an emphasis on the education system. Head Start was created to tackle poverty and the reoccurring pattern of children who grew up in poverty leading to unemployment. The problem could not be solved unless the government started early to give these children a head start that would help them later in life. The issue with this goal is that it was and has not necessarily been solved. While Head

Start is a nationally funded program that offers healthcare, counseling, and a “quality” program for children, it has not made the impact that it was supposed to. Impact studies have found short-term gains, but the results ultimately disappear by the middle of elementary school. The program has also had inequalities among the states that offer the program. All the children that are eligible for the program cannot always get in because of a large number of applicants. The government keeps throwing money at the program, but the money is not necessarily being put to good use.

While Head Start got the early childhood education ball rolling, the United States needs to move towards Universal Preschool. The gains of Head Start are not enough and the differing quality of each Head Start program is concerning. The United States should discontinue their funding of this program, and policymakers should be working on a universal preschool program for all fifty states. The new program would be universal, meaning any child regardless of background will get a spot in the program. This is important because, “ When the public funds programs or the poor rather than for everyone, the majority of voters may be unwilling to pay for a high-quality program for a small portion of the population, despite its relatively low total cost.”³⁰⁰ Opening up the program to more people would help gain approval of this program rather than having it seem like another policy made only for the poor. This is important because having the program available to all has clearly made an impact in Finland, as the focus is to let everyone progress together. We need to value every child regardless of background and realize no matter where you come from, you deserve a quality education. One can see that being around people from different backgrounds can be equally impactful on both sides.

³⁰⁰ Ackerman, “Providing Preschool Education for All 4-Year-Olds, 2.

Learning from abroad- Joy and Play

Head Start has failed to be enough for the United States, as many people have fallen into the IQ trap, making Head Start seem like an inadequate program. The IQ trap is when administrators, policymakers, families, the public all focus on IQ scores to evaluate a program. They do not look at the other aspects of the program. The IQ trap has been a problem for more than just Head Start, the universal preschool programs in the states have fallen into this trap as many have not seen test score changes. Instead of this academic focus, the United States should try to emulate one of the abroad programs. Ideally, it would be nice if we could emulate France's program, but then a problem arises. France has and continues to be a frontrunner in the early childhood education programs. It is successful because it is a program centered around culture. While this is beneficial to the French system, it would not work in the United States. This is because the United States is a melting pot. There are too many cultures to cram into a curriculum. Cultures would be left out and then it would create a whole new problem. However, this idea of culture can be tailored to the United States through a positive reinforcement of early childhood education. The Minister of Education in France stresses the fact that enrollment in the program is expected. It is almost a right of passage to be in it. Making preschool a right of passage would help the program and enrollment numbers. Continuing off this, the United States could emulate England and Finland's programs that focus on play.

Learning through play is important as a key part of this is the fact they are not assessed directly. They are observed and then assessed without the children knowing. The United States has always had problems with testing. The pressure to perform well on a test has taken over all

areas of education and is clearly not working for everyone. Learning through play is clearly working for them, which is seen through studies that show the development of the children that attended the program has increased. Finland does the same thing as they are learning through joy. They stress the importance of joy through learning. The children are not pressured to be focused on academics instead they are learning through play and creative activities. Both are clear aspects that should be put into place when the States create a universal preschool for the whole country.

Quality Teachers and Pay Increase

It is clear through all the programs that a call for quality teachers is imperative to running a good program. David Kirp points this out when he discusses the preschool movement. A good education includes good teachers. Head Start lacks this as they tend to take anybody with any experience with children. Head Start also points to the issue of compensation and turnover rates. If the new program has highly qualified teachers, then they should be valued through better pay. That way the kids could have consistency in the classroom, rather than a different teacher every couple of months because of the turnover rate. This idea of quality teachers and pay can be seen abroad.

The French teachers are well regarded because they must go through a vigorous training. The French government requires that they have a bachelor's degree to start, but also a masters, which includes lots of experience in the classroom. Once they are finally teachers, they are then given a good pay rate, which is above the United States' pay for preschool teachers. A key part that goes hand in hand with the pay rate is the turnover rate. France has a turnover rate of less than 10 percent. Undoubtedly, pay would help keep the preschool teachers in their jobs.

The same can be said for Finland. The Minister of Education has talked about how the public trusts the teachers because they go through a rigorous training. The teachers are on the same level as university professors. Appreciating the people who are helping teach your child important life skills should be a valued member of society.

Children and Family

Many policymakers, administrators, and teachers have stressed the importance of family involvement in early childhood education. If the United States was to make a universal program, family involvement should be an integral part of it. This can be seen as parents are involved in Head Start. Head Start does a good job in getting the family involved, as there are mandatory teacher-parent conferences. There are also a lot of resources available to these parents, as one of the goals of the program is to continue the education at home through improving healthy habits and getting ongoing healthcare. Head Start wanted to stress the importance of parent involvement as there is a trend that says American families spend less time together.

This continuing parent involvement is important because the learning should continue beyond the classroom. The importance of parent involvement can be seen in the Carnegie Report that came out in 1994. The report called on parents to work on continuing attention and education at home. It pointed out the stats of the importance of it. The report said that, “Babies raised by caring, attentive adults in safe, predictable environments are better learners than those raised with less attention in less secure settings.”³⁰¹ Clearly, having parents involved will have a positive impact on these early learners. This goes hand in hand with Hilary Clinton’s call for

³⁰¹ “Starting Points: Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children,” Carnegie Corporation of New York, accessed March 2, 2017, <https://www.carnegie.org/publications/starting-points-meeting-the-needs-of-our-youngest-children/> , 3.

parent involvement as she points to the problem of the “word gap.” Reading during the early years of a child’s life is imperative as it expands their vocabulary. Clinton points out, “Children from higher-income families hear 30 million more words than their low-income peers by the time they are 3 years old. As a result, higher income children start school with double the vocabulary. But we know that parental awareness coupled with real early learning supports can close this word gap.”³⁰² Clinton’s denotes the importance of reading at home, it is important to a new universal preschool program because it points out that everyone should be reading to their children at home to help them stay ahead in school. This brings up another controversial issue in early childhood education, which is the question of how early should children start going to school?

Early Childhood Education

Countless research has been done on the importance of early childhood education to a child’s development and ultimate success in elementary school. However, how early is too early? This question came up as Finland does not start their preschool program until children are six years old. They chose to go this route because they wanted children to continue to explore and be creative without the academic stress. Even when they enter preschool, there is no pressure on academics, the program focuses on play and the creative mind of preschoolers. It is clear that this system is working for them, as Finland produces some of the smartest kids in the world. They dominate in global academic tests, and parents seem to really enjoy the whole

³⁰² Lillian Mongeau, “Hillary Clinton answers 10 questions on early education,” *The Hechinger Report*, September 5, 2016, <http://hechingerreport.org/hillary-clinton-answers-10-questions-on-early-education/>.

system. On the other hand, the United States and other countries start elementary school at the age of 5. Can we learn something from Finland?

The United States has been pushing for an expansion in Early Head Start, which is a program that focuses on infants and toddlers under the age of 3.³⁰³ The goals of this program are:

- To provide a safe and developmentally enriching caregiving which promotes the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of infants and toddlers, and prepares them for future growth and development;
- To support parents, both mothers and fathers, in their role as primary caregivers and teachers of their children, and families in meeting personal goals and achieving self-sufficiency across a wide variety of domains;
- To mobilize communities to provide the resources and environment necessary to ensure a comprehensive, integrated array of services and support for families;
- To ensure the provision of high-quality responsive services to families through the development of trained, and caring staff.³⁰⁴

The program has had support from Hilary Clinton and other policymakers. Even though the program has been successful in providing low-income families with safe, free childcare, I believe the United States needs to stop expanding programs to include younger children. David Elkind points out, “There is no solid research demonstrating that early academic training is superior to (or worse than) the more traditional, hands-on model of early education. Why take the risky step

³⁰³ “About Early Head Start,” Head Start: An Office of the Administration for Children and Families Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center,” accessed March 2, 2017, <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/about-ehs#about> .

³⁰⁴ “About Early Head Start”

of engaging in a formal academic training of the young when we already know what works?”³⁰⁵

Like the IQ trap that many people have fallen into, the public needs to stop focusing on test scores. Children should be able to discover the world around them through non-academic programs. Therefore, I believe the universal preschool program should only be available to four-year-olds as changing the whole school system to start at age six would be very difficult. Starting early childhood education at four is early enough as their brains are still developing. One of the most important aspects of a program would be how the government is going to take on paying for a quality program for all four-year-olds.

Funding through the K-12 Budget

Throughout my research of multiple universal preschool programs and their way of funding their programs, I found that adding preschool onto the K-12 budget is the financially appropriate route to go.

I came to this conclusion after looking at Georgia and Florida’s system and how it ultimately leaves the educational support up to chance because of the unknown money that they will take in through the lottery and general revenue. Georgia spearheaded the effort during the 1990’s and opened its door for all four-year-olds in 1995. The program is funded through the lottery system, which is unique as most other states do not utilize this system. Although there was a bunch of pushback during their process to become a program as people believed this would increase gambling problem, the lottery system is still used today and the program is still going. While this has worked for Georgia, I do not believe that it would work in all fifty states. Depending on the lottery system seems like it would be a risky decision as Georgia’s

³⁰⁵ David Elkind, “Much Too Early,” *Education Next*, Summer 2001, <http://educationnext.org/much-too-early/>.

experiencing fluctuations in the funding for the program because the economy has struggled. It just does not make sense to put early childhood education costs to chance. The same goes for Florida. Florida's program takes a different route as they fund their program through general revenue. This has worked for them because they spend the least amount of money on their program per child, which has not fared well for them. General revenue would not be the smart choice, as it clearly does not give the children a quality education, and even takes away from the number of space available for all children.

I found France and Finland to not be the smart choice either because of how many taxes people in the United States already pay. France and Finland pay for their universal preschool program from high taxes and England pays for the program through their funding formula and higher taxes. While each of these systems has worked for these countries, I do not feel like they would work for the United States because taxes are considered to high in many areas. I believe there would be a lot of pushback if this was how the U.S. was going to pay for universal preschool.

Oklahoma has the perfect solution for paying for universal preschool, as they designed their education budget by adding preschool to the K-12 budget. This goes hand in hand with the preschool now project, which focuses on creating a pre-K-12 system.³⁰⁶ Pew Charitable Trusts outlines this issue of the States not putting a focus on early childhood education as they write, "Early education has remained largely isolated from public education in general and from efforts to transform classrooms, schools and education systems in particular. Maintaining this wall between the early and later grades limits the effectiveness of both and threatens the return on investment from the billions of public and private dollars that are being spent on increasing

³⁰⁶ "Introduction to Pre-K Now," *The PEW Charitable Trusts*, accessed March 2, 2017, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/archived-projects/pre-k-now>.

academic achievement.”³⁰⁷ The time is now for the United States to get in front of this crisis of not thinking about the future generation. Ultimately, children are the future and we need to stop beating around the bush and face the problem full on. We can do this by creating a quality universal preschool program that is attached to the K-12 education system. By adding this to the K-12 system it tells the world that we take early childhood education seriously and the quality will be up to par with the K-12 system.

Is this plan possible?

While the idea of a universal preschool program that is actually universal, lessons are learned through playing, high-quality teachers, and quality pay, families are involved, all children are 3, 4, or 5, and each program is funded through the K-12 budget, this an idealistic dream. Head Start is already an established program for low-income families, and the universal preschool programs that are already established are funded through other channels. Trying to shut down the current programs would be one of many roadblocks. Learning through play would also be a hard quality to strive towards, as the United States is obsessed with IQ scores and academics. Every educational study is evaluated through giving children tests. It is a huge part of the American life and would be hard to pull down and just accept that kids are supposed to be creative and have fun. Changing the credentials needed to be a preschool teacher is probably the only realistic change that could be made at this time. As seen through the abroad programs and some of the state programs, the times are changing as preschool teachers need at least a bachelor’s degree, if not more. Changing the pay would be more difficult, but not impossible as the credentials needed keep increasing. Getting parents involved is also a definite possibility as

³⁰⁷ The PEW Center on the States, “Transforming Public Education: Pathway to a Pre-K-12 Future,” September 2011, 6.

some programs have utilized this and gotten parents to read to their children. The definition of early childhood is an interesting concept for the United States as child care opens up for kids younger and younger. However, it does not seem to be a problem in regards to having two year olds in school. Most preschool programs only have programs available to three and four-year-olds. Funding through the K-12 budget would be another roadblock as people are accepting that early childhood education is needed and adding it to the budget would be a milestone.

Without even taking my recommendations into consideration, creating a universal preschool program for all fifty states would be extremely difficult. Since there are already preschool programs in place, getting all programs to be uniform in quality would be almost impossible. This is because of the cost, pushback from policymakers and the public, and the fact we do not have a ministry of education like other countries. The cost would be monumental. Many policymakers today cannot even agree on what needs to be taught let alone agree if it is the government's job to step in and help parent. Lastly, we don't have a ministry of education like most countries because we let the states decide what educational standards and programs are needed.

Even though there are many roadblocks to getting universal preschool, it is time to implement it. The preschoolers do not have a voice in their education, but policymakers and parents do. As countries continue to excel in the early childhood education sector, the United States has fallen close to the bottom. Instead of racing to the bottom, the United States should strive to get to the top and be an early childhood education forerunner.

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