



February 2012

News

[Kids Missing From State of the Union](#)

by Billy Shore in Huffington Post

Billy Shore, whose wonderful keynote from our Winter Leadership Institute can be watched on [the NHSA website](#), wrote about the event for the Huffington Post. In this article he reflects on how critical early childhood education is to the future of the United States and why it's disappointing that the President's discussion of education reform didn't touch on Head Start and other early learning programs. As he concludes, "In his speech, the president used the massive bail-out and subsequent turn-around of the auto industry as an example of how we can be successful in creating a built-to-last economy. Upon hearing that, it's hard not to imagine what we could do for our schools, economy and society with a similar investment in our children, if we only had the will."

[The Next 'Race to the Top' Competition: At the State or District Level?](#)

by Lisa Guernsey for Early Ed Watch Blog

The exact format of the next Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) is yet to be determined, and in this piece Lisa Guernsey of the New America Foundation's Early Education Initiative explores how either a state-level or district-level competition might affect Head Start providers. You can also [view the letter](#) from 46 members of the House of Representatives advocating for another RTT-ELC competition at the state level.

Resources

[Putting Children and Families First: Head Start in 2010](#)

CLASP's latest Head Start Trend Analysis breaks down PIR data from 2010 and briefly describes what the data reflects about the Head Start student characteristics, teacher qualifications, and service provisions.

[Watching Teachers Work](#)

Early Childhood Education scholars and practitioners reflected on using data from classroom observations to improve teaching in this panel discussion hosted by the New America

Foundation. The recording can be accessed as either video or audio.

Research

[Children's Schooling and Parents' Investment in Children: Evidence from the Head Start Impact Study](#)

by Alexander Gelber and Adam Isen for the National Bureau of Economic Research

In this important analysis of data collected as part of the Head Start Impact Study but not previously analyzed, Gelber and Isen show statistical proof of something that has long been intuitive to the Head Start field: Head Start causes parents to invest more time and energy in their children's education, both during the program and after children move on to the K-12 system. Notable findings included that Head Start parents were found to read to their children more often and that Head Start fathers who did not live with their children spent more time with them both during and after children's participation in the program.

The authors used econometrics to try to understand why the program produces such results. One finding was that those programs that increased children's cognitive scores most also led to greater parent-child involvement. Gelber and Isen theorize that parents are more interested in spending time with their children when their children have benefited from the cognitive and social-emotional development supported by Head Start, and that over time greater parental investment contributes to the many benefits Head Start children experience in adulthood.

The study itself is available to read but contains very dense econometrics jargon; a longer summary is available on the [EdWeek blog](#).

[Children's Early Child Care and Their Mothers' Later Involvement With Schools](#)

by Robert Crosnoe, Jennifer March Augustine & Aletha C. Huston for Child Development

As a remarkable complement to the economic perspective provided by Gelber and Isen, this paper from a team of sociologists also finds that high-quality early childhood experiences lead to increased long-term parental involvement in children's education. Crosnoe, Augustine and Huston analyzed data collected about 1,352 children in the NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development and found that the amount of time children had spent in high-quality care settings predicted both children's academic skills and the quality of their home environments when the children were 4½. Those skills and environmental factors then predicted the level of mother-teacher contact. The authors repeatedly mention Head Start as an example of high quality.

Of note for discussions on Early Head Start and Head Start, the authors concluded:

1. Child care quality during preschool mattered less than the history of quality child care since birth.
2. Quality of care was more important than setting.
3. Children's increased academic skills were linked to increased maternal involvement when children entered schools - possibly because mothers' interactions with schools were more positive because their children were more successful.
4. Supporting development of the home environment contributed to mothers' investment in education over time.

This study is available only to those who subscribe to *Child Development*, but a summary is [available from NIH](#).