

---

# **Economic Benefits of Pre-Schooling**

---

**Clive R. Belfield**  
**Queens College, CUNY**  
**Teachers College, CU**



---

# Research Evidence

## Evidence base:

- Randomized field trials
- Evaluations of Head Start and state programs
- Empirical research using national datasets

## Research methodology:

- High quality
  - Robust
  - Consistent
-

---

# Benefits to the child

- Better health and well-being during childhood
  - Enhanced educational attainment; lower probability of dropping out
  - Higher earnings in adulthood
-

---

# Benefits to society

- Reduced criminal activity
  - Lower welfare reliance
  - Higher tax revenues
  - More efficient schooling:
    - lower grade retention
    - lower special education placement
    - more productive learners
-

---

# Lifetime benefits easily exceed costs

- **High/Scope Perry Pre-School Program:**  
\$1 investment, >\$10 returned
- **Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention:**  
\$1 investment, \$2–\$3.66 returned
- **Chicago Child-Parent Pre-School Center Program:**  
\$1 investment, \$7.14 returned
- **Head Start:**  
Costing exercises look at short- and medium-term benefits, which offset 40-60% of total costs

(Sources: Belfield et al., 2004; Masse & Barnett, 2002; Reynolds et al., 2001; Currie, 2001).

---

# Relevance to New York Schools

- Economic model of state-wide universal pre-K using NY financial and demographic data (Belfield, 2004)
- **Spending for pre-K**  
for 80% of 4-year olds at \$7,000 each **\$1300m**
- **Cost-savings to the school system**  
in special ed., retention, resource use **\$555-\$828m**
- **Just on education budgets, cost-savings offset 41%-62% of the investment in universal pre-K**