

**THE NEW YORK CITY COMMISSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE CAMPAIGN FOR FISCAL EQUITY**

Hearing IV: Pre-K and After School

Testimony from

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I am the state director of FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS *NEW YORK*, an anti-crime organization made up of more than 240 police chiefs, sheriffs, district attorneys and victims of violence. We are part of a 2,000-plus member national group. Our mission is to take a hard-nosed, skeptical look at what works to keep kids from ever becoming criminals. Our members know that New York's anti-crime arsenal contains no weapons more powerful than proven programs that help kids get the right start in life. Some of these key programs include early care and education including pre-kindergarten and after school programs. Our members issue reports, work through the media, and communicate with policy makers, such as you, to help them understand what really works to prevent crime.

I also wear a second hat. I am the co-author of *Ghosts from the Nursery: Tracing the Roots of Violence* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998) which looks at the astonishing new research coming out on early brain development and explores the vulnerabilities and opportunities that are present in the earliest months and years of life. The child development/brain development research on the importance of the earliest years of life is mounting—if we wait until age five to begin the education process, we are missing an important development window, particularly for disadvantaged children, to place them solidly on track for school success and ultimately for life success.

In grasping the enormity of the opportunity presented by making pre-k for three- and four-year-olds available, it might be useful for you to consider it in the context of the “Trim Tab.” Architect, scientific designer, mathematician and inventor, Buckminster Fuller, coiner of the phrase “Spaceship Earth,” introduced the concept of trim tab into the public policy discourse. As a student at the Annapolis Naval Academy he became intrigued with the question, when it comes to great transport operations that involve moving millions of people and supplies across the oceans of the world, how can we do more with less? As he considered this question, he quickly became fascinated with the enormous value of the trim tab. A trim tab is a very small addition to the trailing edge of a gigantic rudder on a ship or airplane. This small addition allows you with a minimal

amount of effort and resources to move an enormous battleship ship ploughing through the ocean or a multi-ton jet hurtling through the sky in a desired direction.

It didn't take Fuller long to translate the concept of trim tab into the public policy arena in analyzing the functioning of big systems and major issues. Trim tabs are those strategic points where well designed and relatively small additions or alterations to a huge existing system, such as the New York City Public Schools, will exponentially maximize the results of your efforts and optimize the rate of your returns for the resources expended. I encourage you in your considerations of where to put the CFE dollars, to ask yourselves where are the trim tabs? How can you take advantage of this extraordinary opportunity that will likely never again come your way, to fundamentally alter the direction of the behemoth ship known as the "New York City Public Schools?" How can you place the schools on a course that will land the vast majority of New York City children in a place where they are succeeding in school and in life after graduation?

Given what the research is telling us about the importance of early learning for optimum child development, pre-kindergarten for three- and four-year-olds is a trim tab that will help steer you to that destination. Early education is a clear point of leverage, where the resources expended on quality pre-kindergarten will pay huge cumulative dividends—positively altering outcomes in both the short term and the long term for thousands and thousands of New York City's children.

There are several rigorous longitudinal studies that document the positive impact of pre-k on high-risk children. To name and highlight a few:

- **Chicago Child-Parent Centers**—served 100,000 inner-city 3- and 4-year-olds since 1967 in a federally funded program. A study comparing 989 children who participated in the pre-k program with 550 similar children who did not showed that children who did not participate were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18. (See slide attached as exhibit A, Chicago Child-Parent Center Crime Data)

- **Syracuse University Family Development Program**—combined weekly home visits with high quality pre-k beginning prenatally through age five. Ten years after the study ended, children who were not included in the program were ten times more likely to have committed a crime than comparable children who were enrolled in the program.
- **North Carolina’s Smart Start**—studied the impact of early education programs on low-income children. Children who were not in the program were twice as likely to have behavioral problems such as aggression, poor temper control, anxiety and hyperactivity in kindergarten than children who attended centers with the Smart Start services. From a crime prevention perspective, these research findings are important because research shows that 60 percent of children with high levels of disruptive, aggressive behavior in early childhood will manifest high levels of antisocial and delinquent behavior later in life.
- **Head Start:** a large national survey of Head Start graduates found that African-American adults who graduated from Head Start have lower crime rates than their siblings who did not attend Head Start. Additionally, a Florida study found that girls who had not attended Head Start were three times more likely to be arrested by age 22 than comparable girls who had participated in Head Start.

So, you may be asking yourself at this point, “What does crime prevention have to do with school success and the CFE school funding formula issues?” The answer is everything. Kids who stay out of crime are the kids who are succeeding in school. Our law enforcement leaders and victims of violence know that crime prevention and school success are inseparable, like the front and the back of the hand. They are each the flip side of the same discussion. Furthermore, when you look at the early brain development research, it quickly becomes obvious why early investments yield such a handsome payoff. No fewer than 17 studies led the Center for Disease Control in 2002 to conclude

that early childhood programs are effective in preparing children for school, reducing rates of teen pregnancy and delinquency and increasing rates of employment.

The early months and years of life are a period of explosive brain development that are never again repeated in our lifetime. Seventy-five percent of brain growth occurs before age five. Eighty-five percent of a person's intellect, personality and social skills are developed by age five. It's crucial to understand here that it isn't just cognitive learning that takes place during this early period of human development. As important, or perhaps even more so, is the social and emotional learning that is taking place that forms a template for how a child sees and interacts with his or her world. Studies show that important characteristics of school success are personality traits such as curiosity, playfulness, the ability to listen and to take directions from teachers, the ability to get along with other children. This early social and emotional learning is crucial. It sets a child up to succeed in the classroom as they enter kindergarten and go on to the first and second grades.

Public schools, as we now know them, were basically designed in the 19th century. They were based on the best of what we knew at the time about human development. The new brain development research tells us that we need to re-evaluate what we are doing in our schools and incorporate what we now know about the importance of the earliest years of life into the basic school services. Currently we are doing the opposite. Our spending on our children is in an inverse correlation to the opportunities presented by how the human brain develops. When the brain is at its most malleable, when the opportunity for laying a strong foundation for life-long learning is at its greatest during the first five years of life, we spend the least in dollars and efforts to lay down the foundations for life-long social, emotional and cognitive learning. (see exhibit B, Dr. Bruce Perry, Child Trauma Center, Houston, Texas, "Mismatched Opportunity").

Kindergarten teachers know the value of pre-k. All you have to do is ask them and you will get an ear full. In a recent poll conducted by Mason-Dixon Polling and Research,

Inc. pollsters interviewed a national sample of kindergarten teachers (see attached exhibit C pre-k kindergarten teachers' poll graphic). Among the poll's findings were:

- In nearly half the classrooms kindergarten teachers said that at least one out of five kids was inadequately prepared for kindergarten when they started school last year.
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- Eighty-six percent said the time spent dealing with disruptive behavior by poorly prepared children and helping them catch up, negatively affects the progress of well-prepared children. One out of ten kindergarten teachers said that more than half of classroom time is spent coping with noise, horseplay or fighting.
- A huge majority of kindergarten teachers said children who had attended quality pre-k programs were more likely to get along with others and be sensitive to their feelings, follow directions, were far less likely to be disruptive.
- Nine out of ten teachers agreed that “substantially more’ children would succeed in school if all families had access to quality pre-k programs. The agreement rate rose to nearly 100 percent among teachers with mostly poor, minority children.

The evidence of the importance of pre-k to school and life outcomes continues to mount. Three weeks ago the High Scope Perry Preschool Study released it's 40-year follow-up on the study they have been conducting since the 1960's on the impact of high quality early education on low-income three- and four-year-olds. They found that 36 years later, adults who had participated in a high quality pre-school program made major gains in a host of desirable outcomes in three key areas: education, economics and crime prevention.

Among the study's major findings in the education area are:

- More participants graduated from high school than non-participants. (84 percent vs. 32 percent).
- Fewer female participants required treatment for mental impairment than non-participants (8 percent vs.35 percent) or had to repeat a grade (21 percent vs. 41 percent).
- Program participants outperformed the non-program group on various intellectual and language tests during their early childhood years, on school achievement tests between ages nine and 14, and on literacy tests at ages 19 and 27.

Gains made in the economic area are:

- More of the program group were employed at age 40 than non-participants (76 percent vs. 62 percent).
- The Perry Preschool participants at age 40 had median annual earnings of more than \$5,000 higher than the non-program group (\$20,800 vs. \$15,300).
- More of the participants at age 40 owned their own homes than non-participants.
- More of the participants had a savings account than non-participants (78 percent vs. 50 percent).

Gains made in the area of crime prevention are:

- Program participants had significantly fewer arrests than non-participants. (36 percent vs. 55 percent arrested five times or more)
- Significantly fewer members of the Perry Preschool group were ever arrested for violent crimes (32 percent vs. 48 percent), property crimes (36 percent vs. 58 percent), or drug crimes (14 percent vs. 34 percent).

Overall, the study documented a return to society of more than \$17 for every tax dollar invested, with \$11 of that alone in saved crime costs. This is where deploying that pre-k trim tab can take us. In reviewing the remarkable results of the study, Nobel Prize winning economist, James Heckman, said,

“This report substantially bolsters the case for early interventions in disadvantaged populations. More than 35 years after they received an enriched preschool program, the Perry Preschool participants achieve much greater success in social and economic life than their counterparts who are randomly denied treatment.”

Law enforcement leaders know that investing in high quality pre-kindergarten programs can make every New York family safer from crime and violence. Key to preventing crime is integrating the best of what we know about child development into the public schools. Early learning is a trim tab. Quality early childhood learning provides the

foundation for more complex feeling, thinking and behaving—all of which continue to develop and unfold as the child moves through the school system and into adult life.

Law enforcement leaders are determined to put dangerous criminals behind bars, but they also know that the most powerful weapons we have against crime are the ones that keep kids succeeding in school and on the right track. In a survey of national law enforcement leaders, 71 percent chose providing “more after school programs and educational child care programs” as the most effective strategy for reducing youth violence and crime over other options such as hiring more police or using metal detectors in schools. Nine out of ten chiefs also agreed that “If America does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare and other costs.”(See Exhibit D, Poll of Law Enforcement Leaders).

The infusion of CFE dollars coming into the New York City Schools is an opportunity that will never come again, at least not in our lifetime. This is an unparalleled strategic opportunity to set a pre-k trim tab onto the rudder of the gigantic ship called “New York City Schools” and turn it in a direction that will significantly improve the outcomes for thousands and thousands of children in the coming years.

Investing in high quality pre-kindergarten can make every family in New York safer from crime and violence. Law enforcement leaders want to see more kids earning diplomas instead of rap sheets. They know that we aren’t going to incarcerate ourselves out of our current crime problems. Education holds the key. And, central to a sound basic education is early learning. To win the war on crime, we need to be as willing to guarantee our kids space in a pre-kindergarten program as we are to guarantee a criminal a prison cell.