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Highlights

Tennessee Pre-K Study Released Highlight Need for Quality

Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education and Human Development and the Tennessee Department of Education released results from the TN-VPK Effectiveness Study about the results of a randomized control trial of state's Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Initiative (VPK). The researchers report that children who attend VPK made greater gains on a range of early achievement measures, compared to children who did not attend, and were rated by teachers as more prepared for kindergarten. However by the end of kindergarten, researchers found, there was no significant differences between the two groups. The researchers hypothesized that the decline could be due to variability in the quality of VPK classrooms, as well as insufficient resources in the later years to support the needs of at-risk children who attended VPK. Read more about the study [here](#) and media coverage [here](#) and [here](#).

In response, US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood Development Linda Smith released a statement highlighting similar hypotheses for the faded gains including program variability and insufficient resources, in addition to whether starting at birth, as neuroscience suggests or providing better alignment between Pre-K and elementary schools would alleviate the drop. Read her response [here](#). Nobel Prize-winning University of Chicago economist James Heckman called into question the methodology of the study as well as the program quality [here](#) and University of California Berkeley public policy professor David Kirp published an op-ed in *The New York Times* about the need for quality preschool and early learning education [here](#).

Metro Nashville Public Schools is continuing to develop quality early learning centers that the Vanderbilt team will be studying separately and "the district is putting a strong emphasis on early grade alignment" in light of the study results. Read more [here](#). First Five Years Fund (FFYF) also responded about the importance of quality early childhood education [here](#).

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Federal Updates

Appropriations

Congress approved a stop-gap measure right at the start of the new fiscal calendar year that began October 1. The continuing resolution will fund the federal government agencies through December 11, but President Obama vowed not to sign another short-term solution after that date. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

- US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced he will resign and return to Chicago before the year ends, leaving Deputy Secretary of Education and former schools chief of New York State John King Jr. Read more about Duncan's departure here and King successor [here](#).
 - *Education Week's* Alyson Klein interviewed US Department of Education's Secretary Arne Duncan in which he says chief among the goals he'd like to accomplish before leaving, he'd "love to see Congress [invest more] in early childhood education". Read more [here](#).
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Preschool Development Grants (PDG)

- In light of the current absence of the PDG program from both House and Senate appropriations bills, Sens. David Vitter and Robert Casey organized a bipartisan letter about the importance of the PDG program and its support of high-quality preschool access. Read more [here](#).
 - US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Early Learning Libby Doggett delivered a similar message during a visit to a New York preschool. Read more [here](#).
 - Meanwhile, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the 18 states that will receive a total of \$237 million in the PDG program's second-year [awards](#).
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Universal Preschool

Maryland's Rep. John Delaney introduced The Early Learning Act (H.R. 3542) that would establish access to free preschool for all 4-year-olds by creating the Early Education Trust Fund for states to expand or establish pre-K programs by increasing taxes on individual income, dividends and capital gains. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Poverty and Health Insurance

The US Census Bureau announced that 46.7 million people were in poverty in 2014 making the official poverty rate for the nation 14.8%. Neither the number of people in poverty nor the poverty rate were statistically different from prior year estimates. On the other hand, the number of people and percentage of people without health insurance declined to 33 million and 10.4% from 41.8 million and 13.3%, respectively, in 2013. The Census Bureau also released data on the supplemental poverty rate. See the official data release [here](#), and read analyses and commentary from the [White House](#), [First Five Years Fund](#) (FFYF), the [Center for Law and Social Policy](#) (CLASP), the [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) (CBPP), and the [Food Research and Action Council](#) (FRAC).

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Speculation about the prospect of ESEA or No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization continues to grow after the announced departures of three key legislative players: Secretary Arne Duncan, Speaker John Boehner, and Rep. John Kline. Read more [here](#).

Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) system

Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Acting Assistant Secretary Mark Greenberg announced the cross-sector Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) system that will bring the T/TA system together through a network of six new national centers, in addition to a several other national centers that support ongoing projects. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

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Policy Trends and Analysis

Child Care

- The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) released "Volatile Schedules and Access to Public Benefits," that includes the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). Read more [here](#).
 - CLASP, the Urban Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) hosted a public forum about the next steps in health and human services integration following the King v. Burwell decision on the Affordable Care Act. Watch [here](#).
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Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) updated its report, "EITC and Child Tax Credit Promote Work, Reduce Poverty, and Support Children's Development, Research Finds" that outlines how the EITC may improve infant and mother health and boost academic achievement. Read more [here](#).

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- CLASP released "TANF and the First Year of Life; Making a Difference at a Pivotal Moment," a new report that provides an innovative framework for looking at the intersection of the TANF program and the support it can have for child development. Read more about the possibilities for achieving two-generational goals [here](#).
 - The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPE), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), published the "Welfare Rules Databook: State TANF Policies as of July 2014." Read more [here](#).
 - The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) released its version of state fact sheets on "How States Have Spent Federal and State Funds Under the TANF Block Grant," that outline key areas of TANF and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) expenditures on items including child care. Read more [here](#).
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New Research

Food Security

Researchers from the Ohio State University College of Medicine published a study in the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association* about the number of households with children with severely-low levels of food security. Using data from the National Health and

Nutrition Examination Survey, they reported that these levels nearly doubled between 2003 and 2010. Read more [here](#).

Child Exposure to Violence

The Office of Justice Programs' Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) within the US Department of Justice (DOJ) released, "Children's Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse: An Update," a study with results from the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV). The authors reported that nearly 58% of children and adolescents were exposed at least once to violence. Read more [here](#).

Family Engagement

The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) released a new research-to-practice brief, "Assessing Quality in Family & Provider-Teacher Relationships: Using the FPTRQ Measures in Conjunction with Strengthening Families™ and the Head Start Parent, Family & Community Engagement Frameworks & Self-Assessments." Read more [here](#).

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Upcoming Events

October 23

Illinois Association for Infant Mental Health Fall 2015 Conference

This year's conference will feature Oscar Barbarin, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Psychology at Tulane University. Barbarin's research focuses on the development of boys of color and the relationship of parenting practices.

[Register Here](#)>

November 6

Bright Futures Illinois Learning Event Series

Series offers an opportunity for parents, community leaders, and education professionals to learn about universal children's savings account (CSA) programs.

[Learn More](#)>

News and Resources

Child Literacy

NPRed's Cory Turner interviewed surgeon and Thirty Million Words® Initiatives founder Dana Suskind in light of the September release of her new book, *Thirty Million Words: Building A Child's Brain*. Read the article [here](#).

Early Childhood Investment

- Moms Rising and other advocacy organizations organized a relay race featuring toddlers in order to promote the importance of funding and supporting early education programs. Read more [here](#).

- UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Shakira called on global leaders to increase investments in early childhood development at an event with United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and other dignitaries and business leaders. Read more [here](#).
- A collaboration of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Washington, DC-based Amalgamated Bank, the National League of Cities, the First Five Years Fund (FFYF), and Invest in Us, led to the creation of a \$100 million loan program for infrastructure improvements and innovations in early childhood classrooms. Read more [here](#).

Head Start Performance Standards

- Multiple organizations and coalitions including the [Ounce of Prevention Fund](#), First Five Years Fund ([FFYF](#)), the Educare Learning Network ([ELN](#)), the National Head Start Association ([NHSA](#)), the Center for Law and Social Policy ([CLASP](#)), and [New America](#) submitted comments to the Office of Head Start in response to the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for the Head Start Program Performance Standards. All public comments can be viewed [here](#).
- *Education Week's* Christina Samuels read hundreds of the public comments submitted about the Head Start Performance Standards and highlighted the differing views over the full-day proposal [here](#) and [here](#).
- Montana Sen. Jon Tester wrote to Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Burwell about the implications of full-day, full-year classes on Montana students and House Republicans' proposed budget plan that cuts \$19 billion from Head Start. Read more [here](#).

Technology

- New America's Lisa Guernsey and Michael Levine released a new book, *Tap, Click, Read: Growing Readers in a World of Screens*, and launched a complementary website [TapClickRead.org](#) to house tools for educators, parents and advocates interested in modernizing early literacy. Read more [here](#).
- New America reviews the findings from a recent US Department of Education (ED) convening of early childhood experts about using technology with children. Read more [here](#).
- A company called codeSpark created a software-The Foos-that teaches "the ABCs of coding" to children as young as 5 years old. Read NPR's article [here](#).

Poverty

- Urban Institute's Christina Ratcliffe writes about the consequences of children living in poverty in a piece for the organization's blog, the Urban Wire. Read more [here](#).
- In a *Huffington Post* op-ed, Children's Defense Fund Executive Director Marian Wright Edelman reflects on Pope Francis' assessment of child poverty as a 'scandal' during his visit to United States. Read more [here](#).

Child Care

- Vox's Matthew Yglesias reviews the high-quality child care tax credit proposed by the Center for American Progress (CAP). Read Yglesia's review [here](#) and about the proposal [here](#). CAP also followed up its report with a second one called, "How a High-Quality Child Care Tax Credit Would Benefit Millennial Families." Read more [here](#).
 - Urban Institute's Elaine Maag outlines the fact that current child care tax subsidies do not always help the families that need them the most in the *The Christian Science Monitor's* Tax Vox column. Read more [here](#).
 - *The Military Time's* Karen Jowers highlights the difficulties the United States Army has had with its child care subsidy program and the transition back to a contractor after the General Services Administration (GSA) failed to manage it. Read more [here](#).
 - Rachel Harris writes a post for *Slate* about the lack of child care at academic conferences despite the fact many of these conferences are discussing the topic. Read more [here](#).
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Preschool

- American Enterprise Institute research fellow Katharine B. Stevens published an op-ed in *U.S. News and World Report* arguing that universal preschool is not the silver bullet for reforming the education system and that crucial brain developments begins much earlier. Read more [here](#).
 - The Brookings Institute's new project "Evidence Speaks" includes a new report about the current status of the United States achieving universal pre-K and what that means for proposals by presidential candidates. Read more [here](#).
 - Newt Gingrich and an American Enterprise Institute intern call for creation of charter pre-K programs in *The Washington Times*. Read more [here](#).
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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Children's HealthWatch published "Diluting the Dose," a Policy Action Brief about the impact of the 2013 rollback of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's SNAP benefit increase on food insecurity in families with young children. Read more [here](#).

Parenting Resources

ZERO TO THREE created a Parent Portal with evidence-based resources for parents and providers wanting to have a positive impact on the first 1,000 days of a child's development. Read more [here](#).

Early Math

Too Small to Fail announced it is going to include early math in its portfolio of work on early language and brain development. Read more [here](#).

Education Policy

The Education Commission of the States, the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program, the Council of Chief State School Officers and the State Legislative Leaders Foundation

created a checklist aimed at policymakers interested in developing legislation around education policy. View the checklist [here](#).

US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Politico's The Agenda profiles Secretary Arne Duncan's tenure at the Department of Education and the growing backlash against his legacy projects. Read more [here](#).

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News From The States

[AZ](#) | [CA](#) | [CO](#) | [GA](#) | [IL](#) | [LA](#) | [MA](#) | [NE](#) | [NM](#) | [NY](#) | [OR](#) | [TX](#) | [DC](#)

Arizona

Arizona's First Things First discussed the benefits of quality early childhood experiences for children later in life in *The Arizona Republic*. Read more [here](#).

California

- The California legislature passed a bill to expand the state's preschool program to all low-income 4-year-olds, and if Gov. Brown signs the legislation, it is estimated that as many as 81,732 additional children could be eligible for a spot. This number could be an overestimation, as it includes all children who may qualify under income regulations and are not in preschool or transitional kindergarten, but by accounting for children in Head Start, lowers the unmet demand to roughly 35,000 preschool spots. Funding for the bill remains to be seen and could cost upwards of \$351 million. Read more from *Education Week* [here](#).
- The Hechinger Report profiles the issue of how many early childhood workers are poorly compensated and face many of the same financial struggles the families they serve face. Read more [here](#).
- A retired school teacher and grandmother published an op-ed in *The San Diego Union-Tribune* about the rules around California's transitional kindergarten program that restrict the program to certain ages and exclude many children including her granddaughter. Read more [here](#).

Colorado

- The New Legacy Charter School is a new charter school opened in Aurora, Colo., that enrolls pregnant and parenting teens and their children. The school will serve about 90 students who are teen parents, ages 14 to 21, and 45 of their children. Read more [here](#).
- The Colorado Children's Campaign released "Young Minds Matter: Supporting Children's Mental Health Through Policy Change," a new policy brief on early childhood mental health in the state. This brief and others can be found [here](#). Leaders from state agencies and mental health initiatives throughout the state will gather on November 13 for A Children's Mental Health Summit at Clayton Early Learning and participate in a half-day session designed to build consensus around policy change.

Georgia

The University of Georgia and Georgia State University conducted a study for Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning about the economic impact of the early learning industry in Georgia-estimating that it is a \$2.45 billion industry and reinforcing Gov. Nathan

Deal's recent proposal to reverse the cuts he made to class size and teacher pay, and increase public funding overall. Read more from the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* [here](#).

Illinois

- Thousands of families and their children continue to experience the negative impact of the state's emergency rule changes to the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that restricts eligibility, as well as the overall budget impasse. Read more [here](#).
- State Comptroller Leslie Munger announced that the state will resume payments to providers of the Early Intervention program services for children with developmental delays after it was determined that there is an existing federal consent decree requiring payment. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- Nonprofit Quarterly published an article about the budget stalemates in Pennsylvania and Illinois and the impacts on local governments and nonprofit organizations. Read more [here](#).
- Chicago Public Schools' CEO Forrest Claypool warned that CPS may start issuing layoff notices if there is no signed state budget, as the district's approved budget assumes \$480 million in state assistance. Read more [here](#).
- The Superintendent of Glenbard High School District 87 wrote about the negative implications for students and school district budgets if Gov. Rauner's two-year property tax freeze is implemented. Read more [here](#).
- The Illinois House Executive Committee voted out of committee a \$3.8 billion human services bill that would fund emergency fund assistance and mental health, among other services. Read more [here](#).
- Illinois Action for Children released a policy brief report about the impact of the emergency child care assistance eligibility rule changes on providers and families called "Survey Confirms Devastating Impact of Child Care Changes on Children and Working Families." Provider impact ranges from full closures (100 in Cook County alone) to consolidations and other cost-cutting measures. Additionally, the number of applications submitted is down almost 50% (between August 2014 and 2015), and the CCAP caseload decreased by 9% in one month. Read more [here](#).

Louisiana

- In anticipation of the November elections for a new governor, legislature members, and State Board of Education (BESE) members, Louisiana's Policy Institute for Children created an Election Alert that includes questions to ask of and recommended policies for candidates in addition to background on early care and education in the state. Read the Election Alert [here](#). A number of other organizations included early care and education in priority platforms for candidates including [The Council for a Better Louisiana](#) (CABL), [One Acadiana](#), the [United Way of Southeast Louisiana](#), and the [Louisiana Platform for Children](#). In response, [The Times-Picayune](#), [The New Orleans Advocate](#), and the [Louisiana Public Broadcasting](#) covered the guide and other early care and education platforms.
- Kimberly Brenneman, a program officer for the Heising-Simons Foundation, gave a presentation in Baton Rouge titled, "The Early Years Count: Why STEM Matters for Young Children." Read more [here](#).

Massachusetts

The state's commissioner of Early Education and Care and other education officials testified before the legislature's education committee cautioning that rapid transition to universal pre-K could sacrifice quality. Read more [here](#).

Nebraska

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Education and Human Science announced the creation of the Nebraska Early Childhood Research Academy (NECRA). Read more [here](#).

New York

- The *New York Daily News* reports that half of children living in NYC shelters are now in the city's pre-K program - which represents an increase from the 31% in 2013 and 45% in 2014. Read more [here](#).
- *ProPublica*, with the help of UC Berkeley professor Bruce Fuller, analyzed data on pre-K registration in NYC and found that zip codes with the lowest 20% of household income saw very little increases in registrations. Read more [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).
- Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced \$30 million to expand pre-K programs in 34 high-need schools including the Niagara Falls School District and Rochester School District. Read more [here](#).
- The Campaign for Children is arguing that NYC needs to also focus its attention on increasing supply and access to low-cost child care for infants and toddlers in as many areas serve extremely-low percentages of eligible infants and toddlers. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Oregon

- New America profiles Oregon's move to full-day kindergarten and dismisses concerns about the price tag with a review of positive benefits from this move. Read more [here](#).
- Oregon State University released a report on the cost of child care in the state, finding the median cost to be \$12,000 a year. Read more [here](#).

Texas

The Texas Workforce Commission is seeking feedback on the administration of its low-income child care program through public forums. Read more [here](#).

Washington, DC

For 20 years, the Briya Public Charter School and neighboring Mary's Center have educated low-income immigrant women and their children simultaneously. Read more [here](#).

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The [Ounce national policy team](#) partners with and supports early childhood leaders in states as they advance a comprehensive agenda for at-risk children and families. We do this by providing individualized strategy and policy consultation and resources; facilitating peer-to-peer learning and networking across states; and supporting Educare Schools and the Educare Learning Network in the development of their policy and advocacy work.

The National Policy Digest is a bi-monthly newsletter that shares up-to-date and noteworthy developments in state and federal early childhood news, policy and funding changes, research, policy trends and analyses, upcoming events, etc. culled from diverse sources in the field. To subscribe, please contact Sharrell Hibbler (shibbler@theounce.org)



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