



Parenting Education is Economic Development

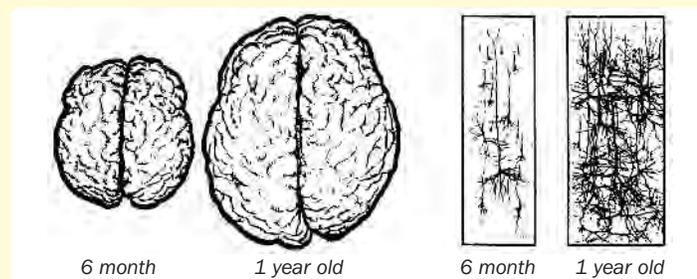


The impact of good parenting goes far beyond its influence on individual children.

Our entire nation's economic health and societal well-being are significantly enhanced when parents have the tools they need to help their kids start school prepared to learn, develop the social skills necessary to pay attention and work in teams, and grow up to be productive adults. So for any business leader concerned about the quality of his future workforce, or the quality of the communities where her business is located and employees live, promoting good parenting is good business.

A growing body of research on the physical development of the infant brain, as well as evidence from behavioral and cognitive studies, shows just how important good parenting is, from the very earliest days of life. Before they even open their eyes, babies start processing the world around them, and their brains rapidly begin to develop—or fail to develop—in response to the stimulation they receive.

Brain Growth: Physical size, increase in number and complexity of neuronal processes¹



A child's brain increases substantially in size and complexity between the ages of 6 months and one year. Ensuring parents have the tools they need to ensure positive cognitive and behavioral development is an investment in future success.

37.52	AmSitter	.801	1.5	71.89	-23	72.97	37
35.00	AREnot	.801	7	86.04	-1.16	131.00	35
37.72	AmSitter	.72	18	58.00	+42	50.47	37
27.35	AmLower	pc	41.34	+35	641.54	27	
29.53	APlastic		24.25	+75	46.10	29	
20.54	AmelCap		23.21	-14	25.85	20	
21.27	AmSitting		17.87	+53	34.99	21	
10.49	AmSitting		14.18	+73	13.09	10	



7	85
19	59
pc	47
36	36
25	25
73	73

Babies learn whether the world is a predictable, nurturing, safe place, or not, from what happens to them when they cry and seek comfort. Indeed, according to Harvard professor Jack Shonkoff, infant brains develop 700 neural connections every second—the connections that help them learn. It is also well-established that parents with multiple risk factors—youth, poverty, single parenthood, lack of education, and drug and alcohol abuse—are less likely to interact with their

babies and toddlers in positive ways that set them on a productive life course.

The good news is that parenting education can counter those factors. Two new studies on the impacts of effective parenting programs, one of which was conducted for the Partnership for America’s Economic Success, clearly demonstrate a positive return on investment. In addition, longitudinal studies are beginning to paint a clear picture of which parenting supports have the most impact.



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Understanding What Works

No single program can address the needs of all parents and communities. But examining the specific results of each type of parenting support enables policy makers to adopt or design programs tailored to the challenges they face, thereby reducing costs. In their review, Sharon McGroder and Allison Hyra found ten parenting programs strong enough to have a possible economic impact. (The full report, available on the website, includes other promising programs.) Specific outcomes include:

The good news.

While there is much more to learn, evidence strongly suggests that substantial benefits can be gained through investments in programs that focus on:

- **Establishing an early parent-child bond and helping parents set realistic expectations based on their child’s developmental needs.**
- **Teaching parents how to nurture their children to reach their full potential.**
- **Helping parents manage behavioral and school-readiness issues with preschoolers.**
- **Empowering parents to establish boundaries and discipline effectively.**
- **Preventing abuse and neglect.**
- *Nurse Family Partnership*, a nation-wide program of nurse home visits serving low-income, pregnant teens from their first pregnancy through their child’s second year, has been studied rigorously for several decades. It has consistently shown reduced abuse and neglect, parental welfare dependence, and drug- and alcohol-related impairments; and decreased the chance that children will run away or be arrested or convicted 15 years later.



- *DARE to be You*, a set of 10 intensive workshops for parents of children between three years and school age offered in diverse areas of the country, reduced parents' negative views of their kids and harsh parenting, and improved communication and limit-setting, leading to less oppositional behavior in their children.
- *Incredible Years*, parenting workshops conducted at 11 Chicago child care centers serving low-income, mostly minority parents, increased positive parenting strategies such as praise and physical affection, reduced children's poor behavior and improved their ability to interact positively.
- *Triple-P Positive Parenting Program*, which provided therapy and training on communications skills to parents in Australia, reduced both mothers' and fathers' tendencies to "under-" or "over-parent" and improved mothers' sense of parenting competence. It also substantially reduced children's disruptive behavior.
- *Reach Out and Read*, a national program in which pediatricians encourage parents to read to their kids, improved word recognition and vocabulary among low-income toddlers.
- *Families and Schools Together*, an eight-week program for Native American children ages 4-9 and their parents in the mid-West, reduced children's aggression, withdrawal and anxiety, and improved their attention and academic competence.
- *HIPPY*, a nation-wide, two-year program of visits to low-income mothers to teach skills around reading and stimulating play, improved preschool children's cognitive skills, reading scores and overall classroom adaptation.
- *Family CheckUp*, a three-session counseling service in Pittsburgh to assess needs of low-income families and support parenting, increased maternal involvement and reduced boys' destructive behavior.
- *Parent Education and Support for Teen Mothers*, which provided group support for at-risk teen mothers in Virginia, substantially reduced rates of child abuse and neglect for a period of at least three years.
- *Early Head Start*, a federally funded program providing early learning and parent support for low-income infants and toddlers across the United States, led to more books in participants' homes, more daily reading to kids, better parent teaching activities and overall home environment, and higher household income, as well as children with fewer behavior problems and better approaches to learning when they entered kindergarten.

Some of these programs have calculated dollar savings; for example, benefit-cost ratios for Nurse Family Partnership averaged almost 3:1 for the full sample of participants, with a much higher ratio of almost 6:1 for high-risk mothers, resulting in an average lifetime cost savings of approximately \$26,300 per family.

37.52	AvcoKdl	4.36	1	20.74	-1.88	38.7	72.97	57
35.00	AREnat	.801	1.5	71.89	-23	131.00	35	
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7	85
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20	47.3
25	36
25	25
37	72

Good Parenting and Crime Reduction

In addition to short-term societal benefits, researchers have long cited the capacity for effective parenting education programs to reduce later criminal activity.

Reducing Later Criminal Activity

Criminologist Alex Piquero and his colleagues find positive parenting interventions can lead to a reduction of between 11% and 22% in the chance of children later committing crime, along with the associated negative economic impacts.



One recent report pooled results from 55 rigorously-designed studies from a range of countries and found a very strong relationship between participation in a high-quality parenting program and lower crime rates.² Children of parents who participated were as much as 22 percent less likely to later commit a crime.

This policy brief is part of a series documenting both the societal costs of adverse early childhood conditions, and the short- and long-term economic benefits of public investments in young children. ■ **This report**, written by Elaine Weiss and Grace Lee, is based on two papers: *Developmental and Economic Effects of Parenting Programs*, by Sharon McGroder and Allison Hyra at the Lewin Group (available at www.PartnershipforSuccess.org), and *Family Programs Implemented up to Age 5: Effectiveness in Reducing Later Antisocial Behavior/Delinquency* by Alex Piquero, et al. (available at www.campbellcollaboration.org). The views expressed are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the institutions at which the authors are employed or The Pew Charitable Trusts.

Conclusion

High-quality parenting education programs, implemented wisely, can sharply increase children’s odds of healthy social, behavioral and cognitive development, helping them become the engaged citizens and productive workers our country needs. In addition, reductions in costs related to crime—from victims’ costs to police, court and prison expenses—are substantial. These findings make a strong case for greater investment in effective parenting programs and highlight the need for additional research to more fully understand how and why promising initiatives achieve positive outcomes.



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- 1 These images are from research by Dr. Paul Lombroso, M.D., “Development of the Cerebral Cortex: VI. Growth Factors” I, *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry*, 37(6):674-675, 1998. Used with permission.
- 2 The meta-analysis team identified 55 studies on parenting programs of varying sample sizes that used rigorous methods to determine programs impact. Most of these studies were carried out the United States (n=39), with the remainder in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and China. They span over thirty years, from 1976 through 2008, and most (37) had samples under 100.

For more information

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The Partnership for America’s Economic Success was created by a group of business leaders, economists, advocates, and 13 funders to document the economic impacts to the nation of investments in children from before birth to age five. The Partnership is housed at and managed by the Pew Center on the States.

Effects of Early Family/Parent Training Programs on Antisocial Behavior & Delinquency

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Background

- Early antisocial behavior is a key risk factor for continued delinquency and crime throughout the life course.
- Early family/parent training (EFPT) has been advanced as an important prevention effort.
- Relevance of EFPT to the prevention of crime has been suggested in developmentally-based criminological and psychological literatures.

2 Types of EFPT

- 1. Home visitation, with/without additional services.
 - Work with at-risk mothers to improve their prenatal health status, reduce birth complications, and provide guidance and support in caring for the infant and improving the quality of their own lives.
- 2. Combine parent training, daycare, and preschool for parents with preschool children.
 - Advance cognitive and social development of the children, as well as the parenting skills of their caregivers, so that participants will be better prepared and more successful when they enter regular school.

Why EFPT May Reduce Behavior Problems & Have Non-Crime Benefits

- Based on the notion that quality of parent-child relations will facilitate learning of control over impulsive, oppositional, and aggressive behavior, thus reducing disruptive behavior and its long-term negative impact on social integration.
- Attempt to change the social contingencies in the family context and provide guidance to parents on raising their children or general parent education.

Policy Relevance

- Growth in the use of EFPT in many Western nations as a method to prevent crime.
- Canadian province of Quebec has taken on family prevention as a key social policy.
- Expanding into Dublin and Paris.
- Research by Nagin, Piquero et al. (2006) indicates that the public believes in prevention efforts (such as early-child/nurse-home intervention programs), and funding such efforts at an increase to taxes.

Our Study

- “What is the effectiveness of early family/parent training programs implemented in early childhood in reducing child behavior problems including antisocial behavior and delinquency?”
- Assess research evidence on the effects of EFPT on child behavior problems including antisocial behavior and delinquency.
- Investigate, to the extent possible, the settings and conditions that make it most effective.
- Focus is on EFPT programs through age 5 (of the child) in preventing child behavior problems including antisocial behavior and delinquency.

Main Findings

- EFPT is an effective intervention for reducing antisocial problems and delinquency.
- EFPT is also effective in reducing delinquency and crime in later adolescence and adulthood.
- Findings support the continued use of EFPT to prevent antisocial behavior and delinquency.
- EFPT effect is robust across various weighting procedures, and across context, time period, sample size, outcome source, and based on both published and unpublished data.

Conclusions

- Our review advanced prior efforts by: (1) allowing for interventions through age 5; (2) separating various types of interventions (parent training vs. home visitation); and (3) updating database regarding EFPT programs through 2008.
- EFPT should continue to be used to prevent behavior problems in the first five years of life.
- EFPT has few negative effects and clear benefits.

Future Research

- Important that more stringent, experimental evaluations be carried out and its outcomes assessed over the long-term:
 - More follow-up periods;
 - Into late adolescence and adulthood;
 - Include outcomes in non-crime life domains;
 - Include information on who delivered the intervention, professional vs. paraprofessional;
 - Parcel out and specifically focus on the effect of early family/parent training on unique behavior problems including antisocial and delinquent behaviors.
 - Conduct comprehensive cost-benefit analyses;
 - Examine how different theoretical and operational definitions of aggression, antisocial behavior, and delinquency vary across studies and over time and how this translates into outcomes.
- Future research should be designed to test the main theories of the effects of EFPT, including better articulating the causal mechanisms by which EFPT reduces behavior problems.