



HIGHLIGHTING STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

One state-funded pre-K program led to 'significantly negative' results for kids

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY 26, 2022

9:35 AM |

KAREN D'SOUZA

Children who attended Tennessee's state-funded voluntary pre-kindergarten program during the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years were doing worse than their peers by the end of sixth grade in academic achievement, discipline issues and special education referrals, [as Hechinger reported](#).

These are the findings of a [multiyear study](#) that followed 2,990 children in Tennessee schools to look at the long-term impact of the state's public pre-K program. The results may bring more scrutiny to public pre-kindergarten programs, now a large part of the national conversation, and raise the question of whether they adequately set low-income children up for success.

"At least for poor children, it turns out that something is not better than nothing," said Dale Farran, a professor at Vanderbilt University's Peabody College, director of its Peabody Research Institute and one of the authors of the study. "The kinds of pre-K that our poor children are going into are not good for them long term."

The study is part of a series of reports by Farran and fellow researchers at Vanderbilt about Tennessee's [voluntary pre-K program](#). The team's [findings](#)

surprised many early childhood advocates who widely herald high-quality pre-K as a necessity to help prepare children, especially those from low-income families, for kindergarten.

The quality of the state's pre-K program could be partly responsible for the negative results, [as Hechinger reported](#). Although Tennessee technically meets [9 out of 10 quality benchmarks](#) set by the National Institute of Early Education Research, Steven Barnett, director of the institute, [has previously said those standards are just minimum guidelines](#); in practice, all classrooms may not be meeting those standards. A [2014 study](#) found that when classrooms across the state were evaluated using a widely accepted research tool, there was “great variation” in their quality scores. The vast majority, 85% of the classrooms studied, scored below the level of “good” quality, [as Hechinger noted](#).

Latest updates:

Monday, January 31, 2022, 12:45 pm

West Contra Costa Unified, teachers union, reach tentative agreement on safety protocols

Monday, January 31, 2022, 10:46 am

New program recognizes California schools that serve military families

Monday, January 31, 2022, 9:27 am

Teachers, San Francisco Unified reach one-year deal

Friday, January 28, 2022, 10:24 am

Education secretary urges more tutoring, mental health support

Friday, January 28, 2022, 10:23 am

Sacramento school district fires teacher who used racial slur