

# Study Finds Kids Who Attend State-Funded Pre-K Fare Worse Than Their Peers

Brittany M. Hughes , @RealBrittHughes  
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A new study found that children who attended state-funded preschool programs wound up doing worse in school by the end of the 6th grade than their peers who didn't participate in the programs.

The study, which followed nearly 3,000 Tennessee students from preschool through Grade 6 to find out whether enrolling low-income children in a government-run Pre-K program, including Head Start, actually set the students up for success.

As it turns out, the answer was a pretty resounding “no.”

The study followed 2,990 students separated into two groups: children who applied to a state-funded Pre-K program and were accepted, and those who applied but were not admitted into a program and instead attended another program or had home-based care.

According to the study published by the American Psychological Association, researchers at Vanderbilt University found that among the children accepted into a state-funded program, whatever positive impact it may have had on the children had plateaued by the end of kindergarten and had actually turned negative by the end of third grade.

“By the end of sixth grade, the children in the study who had been randomly selected to attend the state’s pre-K program were more likely to be referred to special education services than their peers who had not secured a spot in the program,” the study found, adding that “Data through sixth grade from state education records showed that the children randomly assigned to attend pre-K had lower state achievement test scores in third through sixth grades than control children, with the strongest negative effects in sixth grade.”

Researchers also found students who attended the preschool programs were also more likely to have discipline issues down the road.

“At least for poor children, it turns out that something is not better than nothing,” Dale Farran, a professor in Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College, said, calling the study's

findings "alarming" and adding that "[t]he kinds of pre-K that our poor children are going into are not good for them long term."

Universal taxpayer-funded Pre-K has been a major part of the Biden administration's "infrastructure" plan.

Biden proposed \$2 billion in federal spending for universal preschool in his spending bill last year.

Education    Pre-K    Kindergarten  
preschool    vanderbilt

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