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Infant and Toddlers

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Early Learning

Early learning is education outside of the home for children under 5 years old. This is a subject many parents are worried about. They may ask themselves when is too early? What is the best type of program to use? Should they do homeschooling, public school or private school? How much is too much? Elected officials realized that children in low economic and middle class families benefit more from early learning. Higher income and wealthy families could afford privately run daycares and preschools that teach children at early ages. Congress and other officials heard this cry. This brings into question, “how important is early learning?”.

The topic of early learning is becoming more and more important. Teaching children skills in social and educational aspects can be challenging as they get older. Exposing children to the school environment at younger ages, gets them interested in school early and helps them develop better social skills. According to an article written by John Hopkins University, “…a child’s early years lay the foundation for all that is to come.” (Shonkoff and Phillips 2000). The original teachers of early learning came from professional backgrounds that did not include education. The main purpose of early learning is not subject matter according to David Elkind from Community Playthings. Early childhood was created to start with the child and getting to know them first and teaching subjects “at” them. According to Elkind, “this is what makes it unique”. There were many contributors to the philosophy of early childhood. Some were: John Amos Comenius, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau. More than likely the foundation was grounded and created by theories and research by: Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson. After everything was researched and combined, main aspects were ironed out. The findings were that early childhood curriculum and practice must be changed and built to fit the maturing needs, abilities, and interests of the children. It beneficial for families in this socioeconomic bracket, because parents spend so much time working, there isn’t time to teach the foundations that children need.

Scientists have proven that children who attend early childhood learning and children who wait until kindergarten to go to school are academically equal by the time they are in 2nd grade. In the same study done by John Hopkins University, scientist found, early intervention actually contributes to both cognitive and socio-emotional gains. Children in low income environments who have not been exposed to early learning take longer to adjust socially, emotionally, and educationally. This is important so that it is easier for children to learn and understand teaching if they are well adjusted. This is why social skills are more important than subjects at this age. At this age, children are learning more about life, how to handle life’s situations. This helps them as they become older to shape their interests in learning and find out their own likes and dislikes.

The topic of early learning has now reached Congress. During the presidency of President Obama, he has recently introduced a new bill to add money and reevaluate the structure of early learning. Centers such as Center for Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) was established in 1966 has and still is conducting research and studies to prove how effective early learning is. Since its existence its theory has been that, “changes in the structure of an environment will produce changes in the attitudes, behaviors, and accomplishments of the people in that environment.” Locally, helping more low income families understand and sign up for early learning helps the community grow closer. Introducing community members to programs they may never have heard of, or have never had information before creates trust and respect. If this topic was not addressed, and Congress was not aware of this need for families, more children would enter kindergarten unprepared. Teaching or reteaching social skills, and other skills learned in early learning, would put the entire class at a disadvantage. Having to stop lessons or repeat them because the child was not mature enough hurts others from learning.

Even though efforts are being made to suggest children enroll in early learning, many people still don’t know it exists and are confused on who can attend and what it does. More information should be available in doctor offices, WIC offices or even welfare offices to bring awareness to low income, new, or expectant mothers and fathers. Another great place is low income housing offices or meeting spaces. Targeting areas where families meet and receive needed information would all be ideal places. Getting the word out helps promote and encourage more successful adults. Researching and spreading information to others can help low income families. Another thing I could do is continue to write or call our local government officials.

In conclusion, children grow and mature at different ages and rates. Helping these parents understand and seek research on this topic benefits the children and parents. Parents can get the wrong message and treat it like day care. In the meantime, the child suffers. As he goes into kindergarten he is unprepared. Starting in early learning helps the child with balance and being calm as others learn.