

## **PART 3 – RESEARCH IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF OUR CHILDREN**

### **Section One – A Critique of the Pascal Report:**

Pascal's report has numerous misrepresentations of the accurate research and data on early childhood education, often going so far as to cite studies which adamantly do not support his recommendations in a manner that makes it appear they do. In this section, we list Pascal's citations, then what the **studies actually say**.

We give you six examples of Pascal citing research or researchers whose work does not back-up his overall claims and recommendations in the Early Learning Report. We have listed contact information for these researchers. **Please contact them directly and ask:**

*“Does your research support the conclusion that there are benefits (above costs) for children and society as a whole through the delivery of a universal, state-run childcare program for children under the age of 4 and for all-day schooling, with provisions for an all-year, extended day program (7:30 in the morning to 6:00 at night) for 3 to 5 year olds?”*

#### **Example 1**

**PASCAL:** *“Nobel laureate economist James Heckman... calculates a 7:1 return on public investments for programs for young children compared to a 1:1 payback for adult education.”*

**WARD:** James Heckman is recognized as the foremost researcher regarding cost-benefit analysis of early childhood programs but he is on record numerous times as not recommending “universal” systems like Pascal's even if they are accompanied by targeted interventions. Heckman's '7 to 1' return on public investments refers only to programs which target very under-privileged children with additional problems who are in very intensive programs, intensely involving the mothers. When the true costs of a universal program are included, there is no 'return on the dollar'.

In fact, over and over, we are told that multi-billion dollar 'early learning programs' are not 'costs' but 'investments' with dividends paid down the road in 'human capital development'. A group of British Columbia universal childcare promoters, the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), have actually claimed, using Heckman data, that Canada would reap \$3.1 trillion in economic returns from these programs! But there is no body of work which proves these claims.

Pascal is misleading the Ontario public by implying that Heckman and his critically acclaimed research support universal childcare and early learning programs. Pascal is promoting a program that will cost all of us in both real dollars and in the lost opportunity to use those real dollars in a way that truly benefits all children, particularly the needy.

## **HECKMAN actually said:**

- "None of this evidence supports universal preschool programs."
- "The solid evidence for the effectiveness of early interventions is limited to those conducted on disadvantaged populations"
- "Advocates and supporters of universal preschool often use existing research for purely political purposes."

**Contact Information:** Dr. James Heckman University of Chicago; Nobel Prize Winning Economist; child policy consultant to President Obama

**Phone:** 773-702-3478

## **Example 2**

**PASCAL:** *"Early childhood programs that offer full-year, full-time options support the ability of parents to earn a living without compromising children's early experiences ( ... NICHD – Early Child Care Research Network 2004a, 2004b;...)"*

**WARD:** The US National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Child Care study is the most rigorously designed, peer-reviewed, expensive, study ever of the children in "child care": it defines "child care" as non-maternal care of any type over 10 hours per week. The most recent published phase is up to grade 6. Pascal had available to him but chose not to cite their findings from this latest research published in 2007.

## **NICHD CHILD CARE STUDY:**

- "high quality" "child care" **of all types** is associated with some cognitive advantage. Some of these fade and some persist (eg memory) to grade 6
- "The highest level of positive care-giving was provided by in home caregivers, including fathers and grandparents, caring for only 1 child, closely followed by home based arrangements with relatively few children per adult. The least positive care-giving was found in center-based care with higher ratios of children to adults." [NOTE: All-Day Kindergarten will be center-based care with higher ratios of children to adults as this new policy would allow ratios & group sizes to almost double compared to that which children currently enjoy in daycare centres!]
- Children who entered kindergarten at an older age outperformed those who entered at a younger age.

**Dr JAY BELSKY** is lead researcher on the **NICHD** and **United Kingdom** studies and consultant to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. **He has actually stated:**

- "Tax policies should support families rearing infants and young children in ways that afford parents the freedom to make child-rearing arrangements that they deem best for their child," he added.

- "...the value I am inclined to champion is that of **choice**. So rather than implement policies that promote certain choices, be they to enable mothers (or fathers) to remain at home caring for their youngest children, **as surveys indicate parents want to do (and as children surely want them to do)**, or to enable them to enter the workforce and rely on child care, I would encourage policymakers to offer families real choice. Payments made directly to families with children would seem to be an excellent way of enabling parents to exercise true freedom of choice. They could use the money to supplement family income should mother (or father) choose not to seek paid employment. Or the same money could be used to purchase child care should both parents (or the single parent) seek paid employment."

**Contact Information:** Dr. Jay Belsky - US NICHD and UK child policy advisor to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Sure Start research head, University of London

Mobile: 0750 764 0064

Office: 0207 079 0835

Email: j.belsky@bbk.ac.uk

### Example 3

**PASCAL:** *"Early childhood programs that offer full-year, full-time options support the ability of parents to earn a living without compromising children's early experiences"* (Baker, Gruber, & Milligan, 2005... )

**WARD:** Pascal references the Baker, Gruber & Milligan study of Quebec's Universal Daycare Program, a study which was published in the prestigious **Journal of Political Economy** and won the **2008 Purvis Prize** in Canadian economics. David Leonhardt of the New York Times used this award-winning study to write a widely read article explaining why **universal** childcare programs are problematic. ***The Baker, Gruber & Milligan study did not find what Pascal reports – in fact it found the opposite.***

### **BAKER, MILLIGAN, GRUBER actually found:**

- **On the front page of their report:** "We uncover striking evidence that children are worse off in a variety of behavioural and health dimensions, ranging from aggression to motor-social skills to illness. Our analysis also suggests that the new childcare program led to more hostile, less consistent parenting, worse parental health, and lower-quality parental relationships."
- "The consistency of the results suggests that more access to childcare is bad for these children."

### **Contact Information:**

Dr. Kevin Milligan – University of British Columbia

604-822-6747

Dr. Michael Baker – University of Toronto

416 - 978-4138

Dr. Jonathan Gruber – M.I.T.

(617) 253-8892

[gruberj@mit.edu](mailto:gruberj@mit.edu)

#### Example 4

**PASCAL:** *“More than one in four children enter grade one significantly behind their peers. Too many never entirely close the gap and go on to disruptive behaviour... Too many end up leading lives of misery, harmful to themselves and others”*

**WARD:** By claiming that large numbers of young children are “behind their peers”, the argument is made for ‘universal’ programs instead of specific ones that help needy children. Pascal refers continually in his report to the EDI (Early Development Instrument) as the gold standard measurement tool of young children. However, it is not clear from where he derives the estimate of “one in four” or his term “significantly behind” as this is not a term found or defined in EDI information but is apparently his interpretation.

The EDI was designed and is conducted by the Offord Centre at McMaster University. Though the EDI is used by Pascal and others to promote increasing institutional child care/learning and school all day for ages 3-5, this policy conclusion is not supported by the EDI findings. Pascal implies that children who lack “school readiness to learn” – Offord terminology – should go to school for longer hours and at a younger age to address this lack of school readiness. This is not logical, nor is it supported by empirical research. ***The Offord Centre’s website homepage says only 1 in 20 – not 1 in 4 – kids enter school ‘without the skills they need to learn’.***

**What the OFFORD CENTRE, McMASTER UNIVERSITY actually reports:**

- On its homepage: "1 in 20 children enter kindergarten without the skills they need to learn." <http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/>
- From its [School Readiness to Learn National SK Cohort Results](#):
  - The percentages of SK kids in Canada with ‘multiple challenges’ is only **4.2%** (p. 4)
  - That the age of the SK child was as much a determinant as other factors regarding their ‘readiness for grade one’ (p. 11). Any parent who has an early in the year or late in the year child knows this.
  - That children in **part-time** childcare scored higher in all 5 measurement domains than those in **full-time** childcare. (p.14)
  - Boys and children whose first language is not English were also more likely to lack “school readiness to learn”. (p.1 & 15)

## Contact Information:

<http://www.offordcentre.com/contact.html>

### Example 5

**PASCAL:** *“Results from Canadian studies concur with US research: full day preschool programs promote children’s successful transition to formal schooling. Children attending Full day programs had better academic performance and social success as they entered grade one than children who attended half day programs”*

**WARD:** Pascal lists three studies in his note. Two are non-peer reviewed presentations at US education conferences. The other is a study of half versus full day Ontario French preschool at age 4. It found those in preschool half or full day were far below those with no preschool. It found behavioural problems for all-day children. The assessment was not of long-term effects as it was done just one year later in Kindergarten. ***Pascal left out crucial findings from the Ontario study, findings that highlighted low rates of vocabulary development and teachers’ concerns about the effect of All-day programs on the young children in their care.***

### From the All-day versus half-day Ontario study – what Pascal left out:

- “... children who attended the preschool program for 4-year-olds still score below the pan-Canadian average for vocabulary development.... Indeed, children attending the program on a half-day basis obtained a percentile ranking of 28 compared to children who attended the program on a full-day basis who scored, on average, 35 on a percentile range. **Both of these fall below the mean percentile score of 50.**”
- “Teachers even noted an **increase in behaviours linked to hyperactivity and lack of attention** as well as a **decrease in academic behaviours** such as “Being attentive in class” and “Listening carefully to instructions” ...These two results could be explained by a higher level of **fatigue** among children who attended the full-day program for 4-year-olds.”
- “... the children in the full-day program were **tired** at the end of their day in class. These results are surprising as prior studies had unanimously claimed that preschool programs facilitated social adjustment...”
- “...there was a **diminishment in the motor development** of children who attended the full-day program as compared to those in the half-day program.”

## Contact Information:

“Effects of a Full-Day Preschool Program on 4-Year-Old Children”

<http://www.ecrp.uiuc.edu/v9n2/herry.html>

## Example 6

**PASCAL:** *“The Ypsilanti, Michigan study has spent 40 years tracking the cost-benefits of a preschool and family intervention program on a group of inner city minority children. It calculates \$17 savings on health, justice and social welfare savings for every \$1 spent on the program.”*

**WARD:** This is the infamous Perry Preschool Project which Pascal is apparently avoiding naming perhaps because it has been discredited publicly many times. Arguments for ‘universal’ programs start with Perry and such ‘hot house’ targeted intervention projects, skew findings and costs, and then propose “scaling up” to mass programs. In nearly half a century it has never been repeated. The \$17 savings – later scaled down to \$16 when double counting was found – was self-published in a non-peer-reviewed paper by the High/Scope Foundation which conducted the project years ago, and which makes money selling its pre-school teaching materials to states.

### The Perry participants

- only 58 children in the project, 65 children as a control group
- in a high crime, American inner city area, African-American children only
- children were required to have low I.Q.s – averaging 70
- children were required to be of very low assessed ‘socio-economic’ standing

### The Perry program

- not daycare or preschool or all-day kindergarten or ‘extended day’
- conducted 48 years ago in 1962 in Ypsilanti, (Detroit) Michigan
- was a highly targeted, carefully designed, experimental project which has never been repeated
- **mothers participated** in "regular" meetings; teachers (who were specially trained with graduate degrees) did 1½ hour weekly home visits
- children spent **only 2½ hours per day** in classroom settings for **30 weeks** per year for 2 years.

### EPPI Centre (University of London) on Perry:

“Politicians and policy-makers **should stop basing the case for expanding early years** provision on old, inaccurate and decontextualized data about long-term economic benefits, a research study has concluded.”

- “On the basis of this review, the widespread international use of the most favourable headline findings, and **in particular of the Perry High/Scope study, is unjustified.** Apart from the variation within and between studies, and problems of interpretation of the results, especially crime figures, there is also a problem about the context in which these studies were carried out.”

- "Care should be taken in the reporting of cost–benefit analysis. **Headline figures given as point estimates (e.g. \$7 saved for every \$1 spent) can be misleading.**"

**Contact Information:**

+44 (0)20 7612 6391; [eppiadmin@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:eppiadmin@ioe.ac.uk)

EPPI-Centre

Social Science Research Unit

Institute of Education

18 Woburn Square

London

WC1H 0NR