Do High Quality Kindergarten and First Grade Classrooms Mitigate Preschool Fadeout?

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ABSTRACT

Prior research shows that short-term treatment effects from preschool may disappear, but little research has considered which conditions might sustain the academic advantages from preschool into elementary school. Using two random assignment preschool studies, we investigate whether two features of the elementary school environment help to sustain the academic gains made during preschool: 1) exposure to advanced and high quality instruction in kindergarten and first grade; 2) professional supports to coordinate curricular instruction and transition. Across both studies, our measures of kindergarten and first grade classroom instruction did not explain of the fadeout observed after the preschool interventions. However, results indicated that targeted teacher professional supports substantially mitigated intervention effect fadeout between kindergarten and first grade. Future research should investigate aligned preschool-elementary school curricular approaches to sustain the benefits of early childhood education programs for low-income children.