

Great Bay Community College

English Comp 110 (10129)

Early Childhood Education:

The Need for Universal Programs and Equal Opportunity for Low-income Families

Quality early childhood education (ECE) holds the key to improving the quality of children's development enough to ultimately steer the course of their lives. Without the support that the building block of ECE provides a child, statistics show a grim future of crime, poverty, and social dependence, as they enter adulthood (Lynch). The opportunity to receive ECE services is unfortunately not a universal one. For decades the US government has been researching and talking about investing in universal child-develop programs, with little to no action being taken. During this period of time, preschool has become somewhat of an average starting point for many children's educational careers – yet, the funding for this endeavor is one that has been the responsibility of the family. There are many low-income families that don't have the option of sending their child to an early-development program, they just can't afford it. There are real consequences suffered by those children who are denied early education, as well as the society footing the bill in the long run; predominantly through the toll taken on the judicial and welfare systems. Research shows that participation in an ECE program before entering kindergarten, greatly enhances low-income children's chances of succeeding in school, completing high school, and becoming a contributing member of society (Lynch 4).

The US government has been slowly progressing in efforts to enhance the educational system over the past decades. One point of action that was taken and has persisted since, is the inception of Head Start. In 1965, Head Start was founded as a federal child-development program, geared toward fighting poverty and offering equal education opportunities (Lombardi 57). Head Start was originally conceived as a summer (booster) program for low-income children before the school-year commenced, within five years it grew to serve 800,000 children (58). During the 1980's and 90's longitudinal studies were done to measure the outcomes of students who had participated in a pre-school program. The results were positive, those of note were shown by: achievement scores, benefit from early-intervention for special education needs, grade retention (58). The Head Start program is a good thing for families in need, when considering the alternative of no program, but the quality of the programs may be in question when compared to that of privately (family) funded programs – an inequality with far-reaching repercussions, that should not be taken lightly.

Head Start is generally utilized as the ECE program of choice for low-income families because it is publicly available and accessible, even if the quality isn't the best, some might argue it's better than nothing. Gromley, sums up the current status of Head Start as a school readiness program with a broad conception of what that constitutes. As opposed to the founding goal of Head Start, which was that of a comprehensive program designed to meet developmental needs of low-income children,

encompassing; health, social services, and education (Gromley 398). After researching the comparisons of two high-quality ECE programs; pre-K offered through public school, and Head Start, Gromley determined that the school-based program was more successful improving literacy learning because of a concentrated focus on education within the program, versus Head Start's multiple objection-approach, which although it produced a better health outcome for it's students, the results of literacy learning were weak (414). Integrating the initiatives of both state-funded pre-K and Head Start programs would improve areas of weakness in each program. Both programs address educational and health needs in varying degrees of efficacy, however, one area of development that remains to be researched in detail is the social-emotional development within the program, peer influence, etc. (415). Especially paying close attention to the impact of social-emotional development as it pertains to the peer composition among Head Start programs who are servicing low-income families (415).

Lombardi, author of *Time to Care: Redesigning Child Care to Promote Education, Support Families, and Build Communities*, highlights the long-standing need for ECE funding assistance in low-income families; in 1999, 900,000 working adults were receiving government financial assistance (181), clearly people who were struggling to meet their basic life needs, before addressing their children's education and care needs. Also, between 1996 and 1999, employed single mothers nearly doubled their presence in the workforce from 1.8 million to 2.7 million (181), further increasing the need for assistance in the provision of organized care and educational centers.

In order to clarify the priority and necessity for public provision of ECE, it's helpful to look at the broader social perspective when accessing the educational needs of children from all social classes, not just low-income families. Among the post-industrialized countries who are members of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, based on a figures from 2001, data showed the average birth-rate was 1.8 children per family, with first borns belonging to 30-year-old mothers, on average. Mothers who have established careers and thereby significantly contribute to the economic balance in their society, have a necessity to return to their work after giving birth, obviously resulting in the outsourcing of their child care needs, which is where ECE comes in to play (Gammage 241). Furthermore, with the hopes of children growing up to compete for successful jobs in the global marketplace, their educational foundation should be laid in their earlier years with social and language stimulation in a secure, nurturing environment (241). This is true for all children, but more importantly, for ECE to become equal opportunity, it must be made a public priority to support universal and attainable services that benefit all social stratum equally.

Long-term studies have proven to be a profound revelatory tool for accurately accessing the far-reaching effects of ECE programs in the lives of low-income children. A comprehensive study researching ECE among low-income students was the Carolina Abecedarian Project, focused on the results of low-income children (infants – age 5) receiving full-time, high-quality educational intervention in their care settings. Follow up studies were done on the children until the age of 21. Compared to the average low-income child, those who received the enriched program boasted higher cognitive test scores throughout grade school into adulthood, in addition to consistently high achievements in math and reading (Lombardi 61). Speaking about the

benefits to society that come from investment in early childhood education, Lynch emphasizes that in order to raise high school graduation rates, improve employment and salaries, ensure stable health and less welfare use; the origins that determine these successful outcomes start with quality early childhood education programs (Lynch 3, 4).

Taking an even further look at the longterm and far-reaching effects of ECE, specifically within low-income groups, the research-based evidence is profound for demonstrating the positive impact on children's futures who have been exposed to an ECE program. Income, education, and occupation; viewed as the three conventional components of socioeconomic status (SES) were measured in a longitudinal study of 1,539 individuals who attended kindergarten programs in Chicago (Topitzes); participants were born around 1980 and assessed until the age of 24 (175). The Chicago Longitudinal Study (CLS) primarily focused on a few major questions: "what are the education-based factors that predict the following young adult outcomes: daily tobacco smoking, frequent substance use, high depression scores, and no health insurance coverage" (176). And second, "do later-occurring education-based factors mediate the association between earlier factors and these outcomes"....and if so, what are the variables and relations? (176) The participants of the CLS were specifically a group of low-income minorities who lived in urban environments. Results of the study showed that educational achievements were influential in preventing unwanted health outcomes among participants who completed high school by age 21 (188). Completion of high school was also shown to be directly related to the influence of earlier education-related factors, evidence that such a trajectory is predictive of successful outcomes (189). The major revelation of this study is that health-related outcomes for young adults can be traced back to participation in a comprehensive preschool program (191), further stressing the vital importance of implementing ECE program availability and accessibility within low-income communities. The socioeconomic impact extended over the longterm would be invaluable to society and the economy.

Jason Sachs, of Harvard University and the Center for Evaluation Studies, conducted a study in 1993, on 99 childcare centers in Boston, Massachusetts to determine the relation between family income and quality of child care. At that point in time, Massachusetts was second in the country for state and federal investments in child care subsidies (388), explaining the surplus of low-income families utilizing child care centers for their children's ECE needs.

In defining the criteria for judging quality in a child care setting, as determined by Sachs, there are two sub-categories: structural and process elements. Structural variables consist of outside influences, such as student-to-teacher ratios, while process variables (due to their intangible nature, are more challenging to regulate) consist of things like teaching style or teacher personality (385). Furthermore, there is a logical sequence of events that takes place in quality educational settings; staff who receive adequate salaries and

receive staff training, produce students with stronger language and social skills as a result (386). Simply illustrating that rewarding teachers and providing ongoing training, directly benefits the outcome of the child.

Clearly, funding and quality control within the educational system are at odds and have been for some time. The fact that America's teachers are grossly underpaid isn't uncommon knowledge, however, in the case of early childhood educators, they are not only underpaid but undereducated due to lack of uniform national regulations and expectations for excellence in ECE (French 64). Teachers who have a baccalaureate-degree have been proven to promote quality curriculums and positive child outcomes (63), but this isn't a standard qualification for ECE teachers and because standards are often low and irregular, children suffer developmentally and higher educated teachers that do filter through ECE programs tend to move on quickly to higher paying jobs; some to jobs outside of the field, where earnings of \$4.00 more per hour (\$8,000 annually) are hard to deny (63).

Robert French, PhD, is actively involved in Massachusetts, on local and state levels, advocating for increased public investment in children, youth, and families. He shares that public school systems that currently offer pre-k programs have teachers with skill sets comparable to those of K-12 teachers; who are generally most educated and best paid; ensuring job stability and quality job performance (62). Even though public school programs are growing, most ECE programs are still provided privately in the community, including programs such as: non-profit, for-profit, faith-based, and head-start (62). Due to the fact that public spending in ECE has primarily been concerned with expansion verses quality enhancement of the existing programs, they have been unsuccessful at attracting and retaining well-educated staff. Furthermore, while existing programs remain underfunded and ill-staffed, they only grow to look worse as teacher requirements increase and execution of meeting those standards fails to be realized (62). The rise in teacher qualification standards is not being backed up with the funding support to realistically employ the educators needed to fill the shoes policy makers wish to see filled (63). As it stands, poverty wages are the norm for college graduates entering a teaching position, which doesn't add up as a realistic career option for highly educated, specialized, teaching candidates. The

financial burden for career development is placed on the educators themselves, if they wish to comply with ever increasing standards that will provide them with a sustainable income and job security (63).

Speaking about the heightened emphasis on ECE in America and the related funding crisis that needs to be addressed, Mary Beth Bruder's research specifically focuses on early childhood intervention, however, some interesting ideas are presented for integrating all forms of early childhood services on a universal level. Because a universal system isn't yet in place, there are many different organizations geared toward ECE goals that are competing for funding on state and federal levels. Bruder shares that in some states there are as many as 10 state and national directives competing with one another to meet the needs of the early childhood population (350). This disorganization is hindering the efficacy of each and every separate directive, which begs the question; how can sustainable, collaborative, and effective services be provided publicly for all families? Bruder makes a clear observation that this goal can't be realized until policies, funding streams, and practices are made universally accessible by organized programs to address early childhood needs, special or otherwise (350). One collaborative strategic method that might work in efficiently merging special needs with a universal program, says Bruder, is “a strategy [that] assumes all children, regardless of ability, will participate in a broad-based, high-quality, and developmentally appropriate evidence-based curriculum” – on a need-based demand, children's behavioral or learning challenges can be individually addressed with the appropriate intensity (350).

Children from all social strata should be provided an equal opportunity for experiencing the best education available. What is being done to fix this long standing issue of neglect in the US educational system? For certain programs offered across the country, current research about the benefits of ECE has helped to tighten regulatory standards on teacher qualifications with positive results, one example of such success is exhibited in the the New Jersey Abbot Preschool Program (French 65). Consistency of program quality is still desperately needed on a national level, for such positive results to be realized on a larger scale, making quality ECE a national rule rather than the exception. The bottom line, is that in the debate over making a substantial investment in educating our children now or continuing to stall these efforts for political reasons: the betterment of our future society hangs in the balance. America needs to think long-term, as research has proven through

multiple studies, Lombardi's included, a national investment in universal ECE programs within the US, after 20 years of implementation would yield an astounding return rate of 3-1. Our society has the potential to be a very different place in as little as two decades. Falling crime rates would mean less federal funding for penitentiaries. Less poverty due to more people being adequately equipped for the work-force would stimulate the economy instead of draining it through welfare and other forms of public support. This cycle would perpetuate itself as those educated members of society go on to raise their children, by allowing them the same opportunity of a quality early education and a dependable bright future. The investment needs to be made now, with the understanding that patience is required as the process runs its course. The payoff in the end will be substantially greater than the initial monetary investment and can only grow from there.

Works Cited

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Course Content Outline

Department: English

Date: May 2007

Program: Liberal Arts

Prepared by: English Dept.

Course Number: ENGL110

Course Title: College Composition I

Theory Hours: 4 Lab Hours: 0

Credits: 4 Prerequisites: Placement Testing or a minimum grade of C in ENGL099

+

Catalog Description:

In this course students learn to write clearly and effectively for defined audiences through a variety of strategies. Emphasis is on the writing process, from drafting through pre-writing, revision, and editing. This course places reading at the core of the writing curriculum by including interaction with reading selections as the vehicle for idea development, analytical and interpretive skill, and research, and to serve as writing models.

Desired Student Competencies (Objectives):

1. Develop and expand close reading skills which will help in the development of writing skills.
2. Incorporate problem-solving techniques (including discussion) to bring focus to the writing process and product.
3. Know and apply relevant prewriting strategies.
4. Use successive drafts as a specific function of the writing process.
5. Write papers based on a variety of rhetorical modes
6. Use the research process to explore a research question or hypothesis and develop a substantive presentation of analysis and conclusions.
7. Build vocabulary usage and composition skill through exposure to words, ideas, and organizational approaches in readings and subsequent application in writing.
8. Access, use, and document sources of information appropriate to the audience and purpose of the written product.

9. Revise and edit all documents for content, organization, mechanics, usage, and consistency of language, tone, and style.

**Required Text:**

To be determined by department chair

Any fiction or non-fiction chosen by individual Instructor.

Outline of Topics to be Covered**The following topics are ongoing throughout the course:**

1. Interaction with a variety of reading selections for the purpose of content and idea development, and models for various rhetorical
2. Writing Process, including revision, peer interaction, and conferences with instructor (5-7 pages of writing per week, including process work)
3. Research techniques, strategies.
4. Documentation

Required Methods of Evaluation:

Research Paper: 8-10 content pages, not to include cover page, Works Cited, addenda, and graphic material. Question or hypothesis based analytical research required. Minimum of 5 sources, chosen for credibility and reliability, must come from valid databases and academic sources.

* Students must pass the research paper in order to pass the course

Portfolio demonstrating expectation of complex development of essay topics:

Reading-based Writing component. (12th grade level plus)

Analytical writings in addition to Personal Expressive writings

Average Writing Assignments: 5-7 pages per week (including process work)

Writing Process incorporates revision; Writing skills (composition and mechanics accrued through reading, writing, and revision.

Other Possible Methods of Evaluation

Essay exams
Oral Presentation
Journals

Assessment Addendum

Outline Includes:

1. Identify **assessment technique** used to measure student learning outcomes.
 - a. Identify the **learning objective** for this assessment. What will the student know or be able to do on completion of the course?
 - b. Identify the **outcome measures** used to document student learning.
 - c. **Criteria for feedback and grading**
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1. Research Paper: 8-10 content pages. Question or hypothesis based analytical research required.

- a. The student will be able to do quality research, which includes:
 - developing questions and theses and analyze material
 - accessing print and non print sources of information
 - evaluating those sources for credibility
 - note-taking strategies and the incorporation of those notes into a coherent organized presentation
 - drawing and presenting conclusions
- b. The student demonstrates:
 - a clear connection between question/hypothesis and conclusions
 - appropriate documentation techniques and the ability to incorporate sources without plagiarizing
 - ability to construct a structurally sound introduction, body, and conclusion with adequate supporting details
 - understanding of and ability to follow conventions of grammar and usage
- c. Individual faculty devise feedback and grading methodologies based on the following criteria:
 - knowledge of strategies
 - style and originality
 - analysis of research
 - use of supporting detail to develop content
 - focus
 - adequacy and complexity of support
 - organization and paragraph structure
 - effective introduction
 - conclusion that does more than restate thesis
 - effective transitions
 - grammar and usage

- correct documentation techniques
 - MLA or APA appropriate
 - Parenthetical citations
 - Works Cited or References entry form
2. Portfolio demonstrating expectation of complex development of essay topics:
- A. Reading-based Writing component. (12th grade level plus): the student will read and be able to respond verbally and in writing to the assigned readings
- a. The students demonstrates insight on and awareness of:
- strategy, audience, and purpose
 - Critical thinking about the authors' argument and use of support
 - students' own ideas in response to readings
- b. Individual faculty devise feedback and grading methodologies based on the following criteria:
- identification of strategy, audience, and purpose
 - summarization of the authors' argument and use of support
 - ability to go beyond summary to formulate independent thought
- B Analytical writings in addition to Personal Expressive writings. Writing 5 -7 pages per week (including process work).
- a. The student demonstrates:
- the ability to produce 5-7 pages of writing per week from process work to finished product
 - the ability to translate knowledge of various rhetorical mode techniques into their own writings
 - the ability to develop an adequately supported focus
 - ability to construct a structurally sound introduction, body, and conclusion with adequate supporting details
 - understanding of and ability to follow conventions of grammar and usage
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- b. Individual faculty devise feedback and grading methodologies based on the following criteria:
- knowledge of strategies
 - style and originality
 - use of supporting detail to develop content
 - focus
 - adequacy and complexity of support
 - organization and paragraph structure
 - effective introduction
 - conclusion that does more than restate thesis

- effective transitions
- grammar and usage

C. The student uses Writing Process to produce essays and papers.

a. The student demonstrates the ability to brainstorm, organize, draft and revise

b. Individual faculty devise feedback and grading methodologies based on the following criteria:

- the inclusion of process notes and drafts with finished products
- peer editing
- demonstrating gains in knowledge of writing process steps
- demonstrating an evolution of essays and topics from brainstorm to finished product

Note: There is not a rubric for the research paper. This is how the output and process are evaluated.

Evaluating the Research Process

This major project is the centerpiece of College Composition, and you must get a passing grade in order to pass the class. It is more than just another essay; it is an involved process designed to help you acquire, and develop a variety of academic skills. Along the way you will learn and practice search strategies, both electronic and traditional; you will employ a variety of reading skills--scanning, skimming, analytical reading; you will work with summary, paraphrase, quotation, and the corresponding methods of citation; you will work with a variety of rhetorical modes to construct and sustain an essay of substantial length; and you will become something of an expert on your topic.

This is a large, complex, and long running process and it will be evaluated as such. That is to say, the final grade for the essay will reflect every stage of the process itself. Here is a rough breakdown of the grading process.

First Source Work: 10%

Second Source Work: 10%

Outline and Opening Paragraph: 10%

Informative Essay: 15%

Argumentative Essay: 15%

First Draft (Emphasis on Content): 20%

Final Draft (Emphasis on Citation, Format, Revision): 20%