**Early Childhood Education**

**早期儿童教育**

Preschools—educational programs for children under the age of five—differ significantly from one country to another according to the views that different societies hold regarding the purpose of early childhood education. For instance, in a cross-country comparison of preschools in China, Japan, and the United States, researchers found that parents in the three countries view the purpose of preschools very differently. Whereas parents in China tend to see preschools primarily as a way of giving children a good start academically, Japanese parents view them primarily as a way of giving children the opportunity to be members of a group. In the United States, in comparison, parents regard the primary purpose of preschools as making children more independent and self-reliant, although obtaining a good academic start and having group experience are also important.

由于不同社会持有的关于儿童早教目的观点的不同，学前班（5 岁以下儿童的教

育项目）的形式在不同国家也大不相同。比如说，在一项中、日、美三国的跨国

学前班调查中，调查者发现这三个国家的父母对学前教育的看法大相径庭。中国

的父母大都认为上学前班可以帮孩子们打开学术上的大门，日本父母则把它们看

做是一个使孩子融入集体的一个好机会。相比之下，美国父母认为学前班最主要

的目的是让孩子减少依赖性并变得更加自立，尽管获得一个良好的学术开端和团

队经验同样很重要。

While many programs designed for preschoolers **focus** primarily on social and emotional factors, some are geared mainly toward promoting cognitive gains and preparing preschoolers for the formal instruction they will experience when they start kindergarten. In the United States, the best-known program designed to promote future academic success is Head Start. Established in the 1960s when the United States declared the War on Poverty, the program has served over 13 million children and their families. The program, which stresses parental involvement, was designed to serve the "whole child", including children’s physical health, self-confidence, social responsibility, and social and emotional development.

许多为学龄前儿童设计的课程项目主要集中在社会因素和情感因素上，而有些主要是为提升学龄前孩子们的认知能力和给他们提供开始上幼儿园后会经历的正规指导。在美国，众所周知的为促进未来学术成功设计的项目叫“Head Start”，它是在 20 世纪 60 年代美国开始“对贫穷开战”时建立的。这个项目已经为超过 13,000,000 孩子和他们的家庭提供了服务。它强调的是家长参与，是为培养“全方位儿童”所设计的，包括孩子们的身体健康、自信心、社会责任感以及社交与情感的发展。

Whether Head Start is seen as successful or not depends on the lens through which one is looking. If, for instance, the program is expected to provide long-term increases in IQ (intelligence quotient) scores, it is a disappointment. Although graduates of Head Start programs tend to show immediate IQ gains, these increases do lot last. On the other hand, it is clear that Head Start is meeting its goal of getting preschoolers ready for school. Preschoolers who participate in Head Start are better prepared for future schooling than those who do not. Furthermore, graduates of Head Start programs have better future school grade. Finally, some research suggests that ultimately Head Start graduates show higher academic performance at the end of high school, although the gains are modest.

Head Start 的成功与否取决于人们看待的角度。比如说，如果人们希望它可以带来智商的长期增长，那它终将是令人失望的。因为尽管 Head Start 可以使智力迅速地提高，但这种增长并不会持续太久。而另一方面，很显然，Head Start 的目标是让学龄前儿童做好上学的准备。相对那些没参加 Head Start 的孩子们而言，参加了这个项目的孩子门对未来的学业有着更充分的准备。而且，Head Start 的毕业生今后的学习成绩会更好。最后，一些调查表明，虽然收获一般，但最终Head Start 的毕业生在高中结束时会取得更高的学术成就。

In addition, results from other types of preschool readiness programs indicate that those who participate and graduate are less likely to repeat grades, and they are more likely to complete school, for every dollar spent on the program, taxpayers saved seven dollars by the time the graduates reached the age of 27.

此外，从其他类型的学龄前预备项目的结果来看，那些参加过学前项目的毕业生

很少重读，他们更愿意完成学校而不是预备项目。在毕业生长到 27 岁时，纳税

者在这个项目上花费的每 1 美元都可省下 7 美元。

The most recent comprehensive evaluation of early intervention programs suggests that, taken as a group, preschool programs can provide significant benefits, and that government funds invested early in life may ultimately lead to a reduction in future costs. For instance, compared with children who did not participate in early intervention programs, participants in various programs showed gains in emotional or cognitive development, better educational outcomes, increased economic self-sufficiency, reduced levels of criminal activity, and improved health-related behaviors. Of course, not every program produced all these benefits, and not every child benefited to the same extent. Furthermore, some researchers argue that less-expensive programs are just as good as relatively expensive ones, such as Head Start. Still, the results of the evaluation were promising, suggesting that the potential benefits of early intervention can be substantial.

最近关于早期介入项目的综合评估表明，总的来说，学前项目可以带来巨大的收

益，政府在早期投入的资金最终会减少未来的花销。比如说，与没有参与早期介

入项目的孩子相比，参加了各种项目的孩子在情感和认知能力上得到了提高，改

善了教育成果，提高了经济的自足性，减少了犯罪行为的发生，改进了健康行为。

当然，不是所有的的项目都能产生这样的收益，也不是每个孩子都能得到同等程

度的提高。此外，一些调查者称那些相对便宜的项目和昂贵项目一样好。评估的

结果仍然很乐观，它认为早期介入的潜在好处是不可估量的。

Not everyone agrees that programs that seek to enhance academic skills during the preschool years are a good thing. In fact, according to developmental psychologist David Elkind, United States society tends to push children so rapidly that they begin to feel stress and pressure at a young age. Elkind argues that academic success is largely dependent upon factors out of parents’ control, such as inherited abilities and a child’s rate of maturation. Consequently, children of a particular age cannot be expected to master educational material without taking into account their current level of cognitive development. In short, children require development appropriate educational practice, which is education that is based on both typical development and the unique characteristics of a given child.

并不是所有人都认为在学前期追求学术上的提高是一件好事。事实上，据发展心

理学家大卫·艾尔凯德所说，美国社会急于催促逼迫孩子，以至于让小小年纪的

他们感到压力。艾尔凯德认为学术上的成功主要取决于父母控制以外的因素，如

天生的能力和孩子的成熟速率。因此，如果不考虑特定年龄段孩子们目前的认知

发展水平，就不能期待他们掌握教材。总之，孩子们需要发展适当的教育实践，那就是基于孩子的典型发展和独特性的教育。