

SHOULD FREE, PUBLIC PRESCHOOL BE UNIVERSALLY AVAILABLE?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA PRIOR TO THE LESSON, ACTIVITY TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Learners can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

BIDEN EXPECTED TO UNVEIL AMBITIOUS (AND EXPENSIVE) EDUCATION PROPOSALS

NPR | April 28, 2021 | Audio | [Transcript](#)

3:55 minutes

This segment discusses the “ambitious and expensive” education proposals included in President Biden’s 2021 American Families Plan.

- President Biden’s proposed \$2 trillion plan covers provisions such as universal preschool, free community college and billions of dollars to make childcare more affordable.
- The plan includes universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, which would cost roughly \$200 billion and would involve state spending in the future.
- Research on preschools suggests the benefits of high-quality preschool include a higher likelihood that children will graduate high school and go to college, have higher earning potentials, and have better health outcomes.

SINCE THE 1960S, RESEARCHERS TRACK PERRY PRESCHOOL PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

NPR’s Hidden Brain | May 23, 2019 | Audio | [Transcript](#)

3:46 minutes

Researchers followed the participants of a preschool program from the 1960s and found that it had long-term social and economic benefits.

- The Perry Preschool project began in the 1960s, when educators enrolled children from poor families in a preschool program in Ypsilanti, Mich.
- The study showed that early childhood interventions have powerful effects for disadvantaged kids.
- Researchers found that kids who went through the program had more earnings, more stable long-term relationships, and less trouble with the law than the control group.
- The program provided an environment where kids could learn communication skills, basic arithmetic, and skills such as how to cooperate with others and persevere through challenging tasks. The program also sent teachers into kid’s homes, where they worked with the parents to design at-home activities to continue learning and growing their skills.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help learners to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

PRE-K: DECADES WORTH OF STUDIES, ONE STRONG MESSAGE

NPR Ed | May 3, 2017 | Article

785 words

This article discusses research findings related to the effects of preschool in a report titled "The Current State of Scientific Knowledge on Pre-Kindergarten Effects." The research and report are by Deborah Phillips of Georgetown University, Mark W. Lipsey of Vanderbilt, Kenneth Dodge of Duke, Ron Haskins of the Brookings Institution and others.

- While all kids have been shown to benefit from preschool, poor and disadvantaged kids (such as those who have had early experiences of economic scarcity and insecurity) often make the most gains.
- There is evidence that dual-language learners who are mostly low income, Spanish speaking children, make large strides in preschool. These students have been shown to have "stronger brain circuits that support self-regulation" because they are learning two languages, which may explain why preschool can help them make quick progress.
- High quality preschools which include "a well implemented, evidence-based curriculum" and continued teacher education have been shown to result in the greatest success for children.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your learners and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Universal preschool
- Intervention
- Curriculum

CONTEMPLATE

Learners will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help learners answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form evidence-based responses to the debate question.

Thinkalong is designed to help learners engage with real issues that are relevant to their lives. [Structured discussions](#) allow learners to practice their critical thinking skills through evidence-based debate with their peers. Discussions are designed to take about 30 minutes. Educators are encouraged to modify aspects that work best for their learners.

To encourage civil discourse, please review the [Code of Conduct](#) with your learners.

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