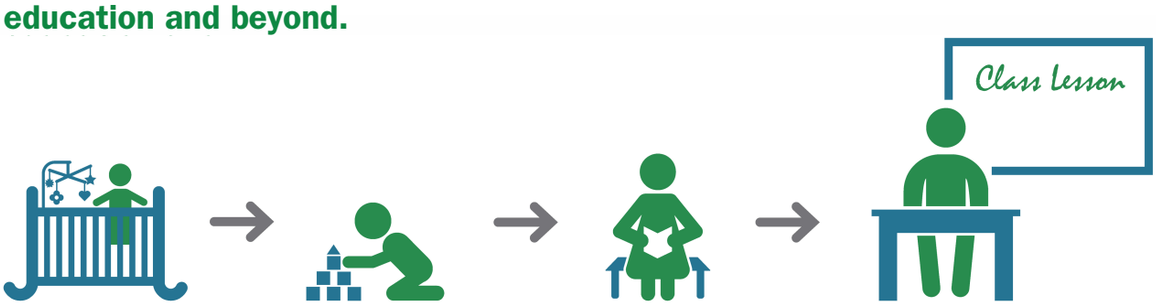
REL MIDWEST
Regional Educational Laboratory
at American Institutes for Research

Early childhood education

? Why is high-quality early childhood education important, and what is known about access to high-quality programs?

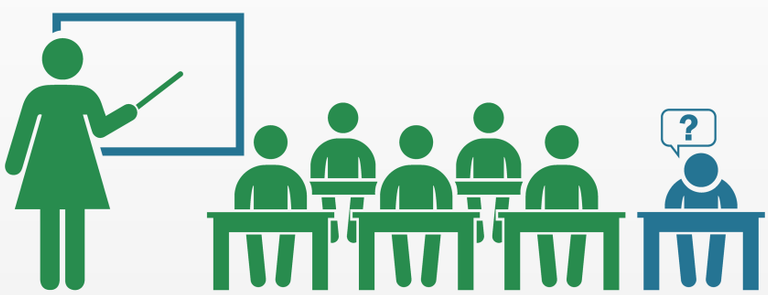
Experiences in high-quality early childhood education (ECE) programs can set the context for success in elementary school and beyond.[1] Early childhood programs for children through age 8, including prekindergarten or preschool programs as well as child care and infant and toddler programs, can be a vital support for young learners. Research points to the positive cognitive, physical, and social-emotional outcomes of ECE for all children. Research also suggests that ECE programs can have especially strong impacts for low-income children and children for whom English is not a first language. In some instances, ECE can even help to narrow the gaps in learning achievement between low-income and higher income children.[2]

Early childhood experiences set the context for success in elementary education and beyond.



However, only about two in five eligible 4-year-olds are enrolled in a state-funded preschool program or Head Start.[3]

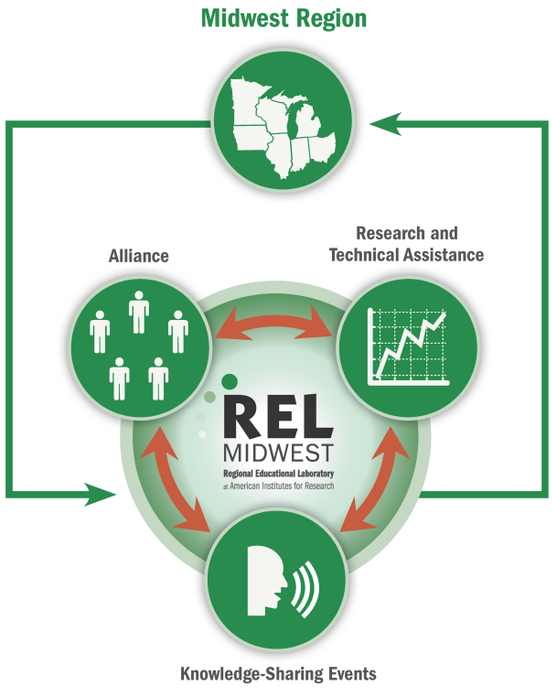
Even for those children who do participate, programs may not be of sufficient quality to improve student readiness for school success.[4]



This work was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under contract ED-IES-12-C-0004, with REL Midwest, administered by American Institutes for Research. The content of the infographic does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

How is REL Midwest supporting high-quality ECE?

REL Midwest supports high-quality ECE through the work of the **ECE Research Alliance,** a researcher–practitioner partnership. The goal of the alliance is to use research to define, measure, implement, and evaluate the elements of quality in the context of today's ECE systems. Our current research and technical assistance projects include the study of quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs), professional development and quality improvement supports, and data system integration to link data on young children. In addition, the alliance guides the development of REL Midwest ECE knowledge-sharing activities. Through these activities, REL Midwest helps connect regional stakeholders to emerging ECE practices and research. Ultimately, we hope that the lessons learned from regional projects inform evidence-based policy and practice in the Midwest. For more information about alliance projects, please contact Ann-Marie Faria (afaria@air.org).



QRISs

A QRIS is a "method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings."[5] All states in the Midwest region have a QRIS for ECE programs.

REL Midwest examined how recent changes in Michigan's QRIS rating calculations are related to changes in the distribution of QRIS program ratings in the state.[6]

REL Midwest is conducting a regional scan of QRISs to better understand the features, success, and challenges associated with developing and implementing a statewide QRIS.

REL Midwest is helping Iowa investigate how professional development is related to improved quality of ECE programming by developing a survey instrument that will measure the types of quality improvement activities undertaken by participating programs in each Midwestern state's QRIS.

ECE quality improvement supports

Research on ECE has produced numerous evidence-based recommendations that practitioners can draw upon.

REL Midwest hosted an interactive Web-based workshop designed to educate practitioners on how to develop and administer quality surveys.[7]

REL Midwest hosted a full-day, in-person event in Minnesota on the effects of early childhood academic content, particularly mathematics and reading content, on later student achievement.[8]

REL Midwest hosted a public television broadcast in Ohio. The broadcast provided practical recommendations on how to improve early childhood literacy skills across early childhood care and education contexts and at home.[9]

Early childhood data systems

Statewide early childhood data systems, especially those systems that link data held across various state agencies such as education, social services, and health into a single system, can provide valuable information for policymakers and practitioners, as well as families and caregivers.

REL Midwest is helping the Illinois Early Learning Council understand how states facilitate interagency collaboration to support the development of an integrated early childhood data system in Illinois.

REL Midwest hosted an interactive webinar on the development of early childhood data systems in states across the country. The webinar provides practical recommendations for developing these types of systems.[10]

REL MIDWEST Regional Educational Laboratory at American Institutes for Research

REL Midwest is one of 10 regional educational laboratories (RELs) funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES). Each REL serves a designated region of the country, with REL Midwest serving the educational needs of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. For more information, please visit http://www.relmidwest.org

1311_06/15

REL MIDWEST
Regional Educational Laboratory
at American Institutes for Research

Infographic resources

Endnotes

[1] Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (Eds.). (2000). *From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development.* Washington, DC: Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development; Board on Children, Youth, and Families; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine; National Academy Press.

[2] Dearing, E., McCartney, K., & Taylor, B. A. (2009). Does higher quality early child care promote low-income children's math and reading achievement in middle childhood? *Child Development, 80*(5), 1329–1349; Pianta, R. C., Barnett, W. S., Burchinal, M., & Thornburg, K. (2009). The effects of preschool education: What we know, how public policy is or is not aligned with the evidence base, and what we need to know. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 10*(2), 49–88; Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early interventions on cognitive and social development. *Teachers College Record, 112*(3), 579–620; Gormley, W. J., Phillips, D., & Gayer, T. (2008). Preschool programs can boost school readiness. *Science, 320*(5884), 1723–1724.

[3] Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Squires, J. H., & Clarke Brown, K. (2013). *The state of preschool 2013.* New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from http://nieer.org/sites/nieer/files/yearbook2013.pdf

[4] Sabol, T. J., Soliday Hong, S. L., Pianta, R. C., & Burchinal, M. R. (2013). Can rating pre-k programs predict children's learning? *Science, 341*(6148), 845–846.

[5] Mitchell, A. W. (2005). *Stair steps to quality: A guide for states and communities developing quality rating systems for early care and education.* United Way Success by 6.

[6] Faria, A.-M., Hawkinson, L. E., Greenberg, A. C., Howard, E. C., & Brown, L. (2015). *Examining changes to Michigan's early childhood quality rating and improvement system (QRIS)* (REL 2015–029). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL2015029

[7] **Link:** http://www.relmidwest.org/research-alliances/early-childhood-education-research-alliance

[8] **Link:** http://www.relmidwest.org/events/bridging-link-between-early-childhood-and-kindergarten-readiness

[9] **Link:** http://www.relmidwest.org/events/developing-early-literacy-skills

[10] **Link:** http://www.relmidwest.org/events/building-early-childhood-data-systems

Additional information

For more information about this infographic, contact REL Midwest by e-mail (relmidwest@air.org) or by phone (866-730-6735).

This work was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) under contract ED-IES-12-C-0004, with REL Midwest, administered by American Institutes for Research. The content of the infographic does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations.

1311_05/15