

Early Education Commission

A community leadership collaborative supporting the United Way's goal of ensuring children are ready for school



United Way of
Metropolitan Atlanta

Research Abstract

Title: “From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development”

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National Research Council, Committee on Integrating the Science of Early
Childhood Development

Date: 2000

Abstract

For this book, the Committee conducted a comprehensive review of research in neurobiology and the behavioral and social sciences. The committee’s findings are summarized in four major themes:

- All children are born wired for feelings and ready to learn
- Early environments matter and nurturing relationships are essential
- Society is changing and the needs of young children are not being addressed
- Interactions among childhood science, policy and practice are problematic and demand dramatic rethinking

The research indicates that human development is the result of an interaction of nature (biological factors) and nurture (experience factors), with culture affecting parenting practices. Children seek out opportunities to learn and need relationships with other humans for healthy development. However, temporary and chronic disorders can be difficult to identify as children mature at different rates with different personalities.

Effective interventions can reduce risks and improve the developmental outcomes of young children. Recommendations based on the research review include: allocate equitable resources to activities that will enhance children's emotional, regulatory, and social development as well as increase their math and language skills; respond to the mental health needs of young children; increase public awareness of quality child care programs; and provide greater access to prenatal and postnatal services. The study also suggests the creation of a multi-level task force to assess public policy on child care, early education, and economic support for families and the use of program-based research methods to ensure the applicability of findings.

(Adapted from the abstract and executive summary produced by the National Academy of Sciences)