



What is the curriculum controversy in early childhood education?
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development and socioemotional development, not exclusively on cognitive development (Feeney, Moravcik, & Nolte, 2019; Follari, 2019).

Universal Preschool Education

Another controversy in early childhood education focuses on whether preschool education should be instituted for all U.S. 4-year-old children. Publicly funded preschool programs now are present in 42 states and the District of Columbia (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2016).

Edward Zigler and his colleagues (2006, 2011) argue that the United States should have universal preschool education. They emphasize that quality preschools prepare children for later academic success. Zigler and his colleagues (2006) cite research showing that quality preschool programs decrease the likelihood that children will be retained in a grade or drop out before graduating from high school. They also point to analyses indicating that universal preschool would bring cost savings on the order of billions of dollars because of a diminished need for remedial and justice services (Karoly & Bigelow, 2005).

Critics of universal preschool education argue that the gains attributed to preschool and kindergarten education are often overstated. They especially stress that research has not proven that nondisadvantaged children benefit from attending a preschool. Thus, the critics say it is more important to improve preschool education for young children who are disadvantaged than to fund preschool education for all 4-year-old children. Some critics, especially homeschooling advocates, emphasize that young children should be educated by their parents, not by schools. Thus, universal preschool education remains a subject of controversy.

How Would You...?

As a psychologist, how would you advise preschool teachers to balance the development of young children's skills for academic achievement with opportunities for healthy social interaction?



Summary

Physical Changes

- The average child grows 2½ inches in height and gains between 5 and 7 pounds a year during early childhood, although growth patterns vary from one child to another.
- Some of the brain's growth in early childhood is due to increases in the number and size of dendrites, some to myelination. From ages 3 to 6, the most rapid growth in the brain occurs in the frontal lobes.
- Gross and fine motor skills improve dramatically during early childhood.
- Too many young children in the United States are being raised on diets that are too high in fat. Other nutritional concerns include malnutrition in early childhood and the inadequate diets of many children living in poverty. The child's life should be centered on activities, not meals. Regular exercise should be a part of young children's lives.

- Accidents are the leading cause of death in young children. A special concern is the poor health status of many young children in low-income families. There has been a dramatic increase in HIV/AIDS in young children in developing countries in recent decades.

Cognitive Changes

- According to Piaget, in the preoperational stage children cannot perform operations, but they begin to represent the world with symbols, to form stable concepts, and to reason. Preoperational thought is characterized by two subages: symbolic function (2 to 4 years) and intuitive thought (4 to 7 years). Centration and a lack of conservation also characterize the preoperational stage.
- Vygotsky's theory represents a social constructivist approach to development. Vygotsky argues that it is