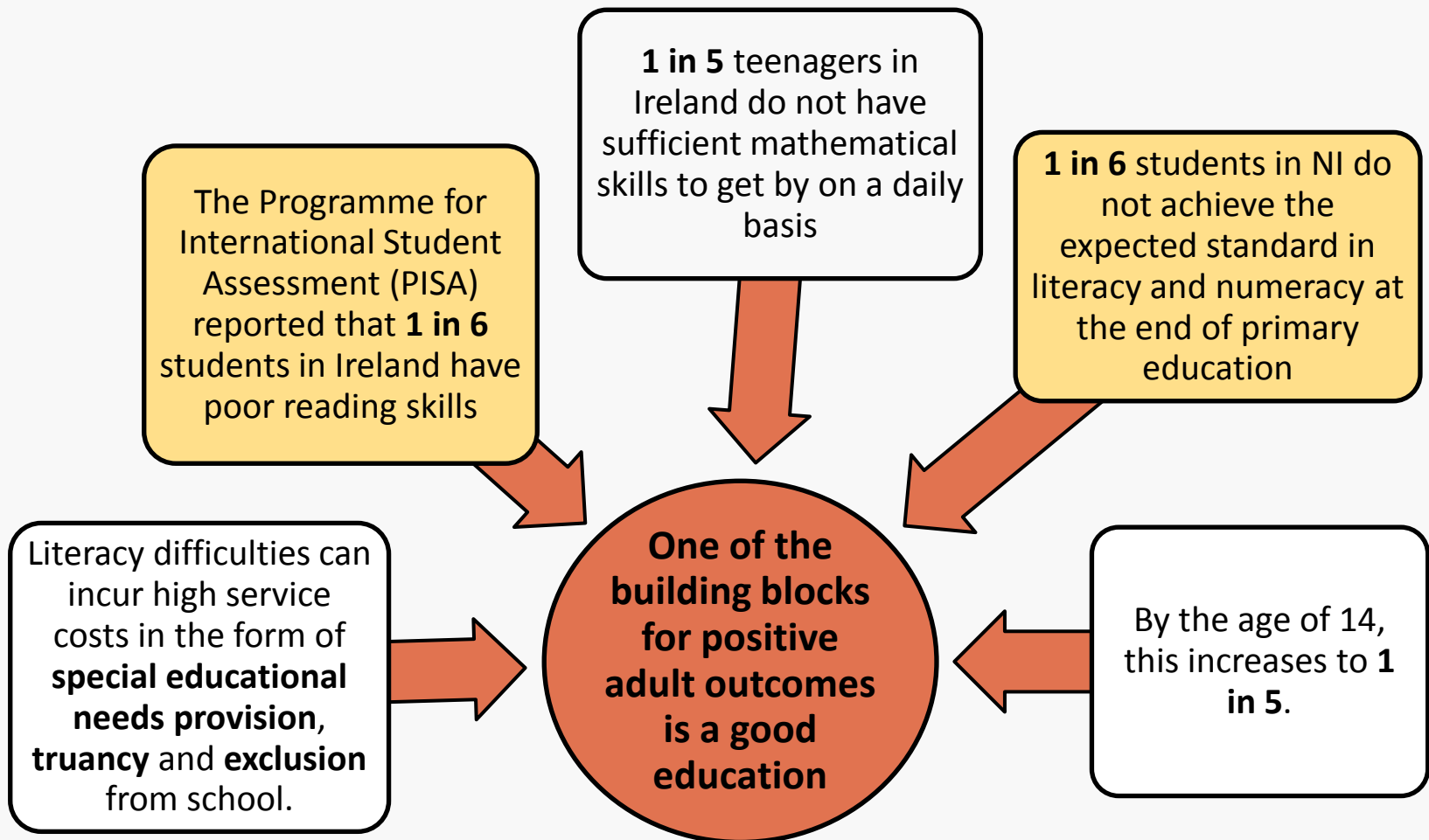




Children's Learning: Insights from Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative and Growing up In Ireland

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30th September 2013

Why is Children's Learning Important to Invest In?



Possible Consequences of Poor Educational Outcomes



Reduced
work options



Poorer
physical
health



More likely
to be
depressed



Criminal
justice
system

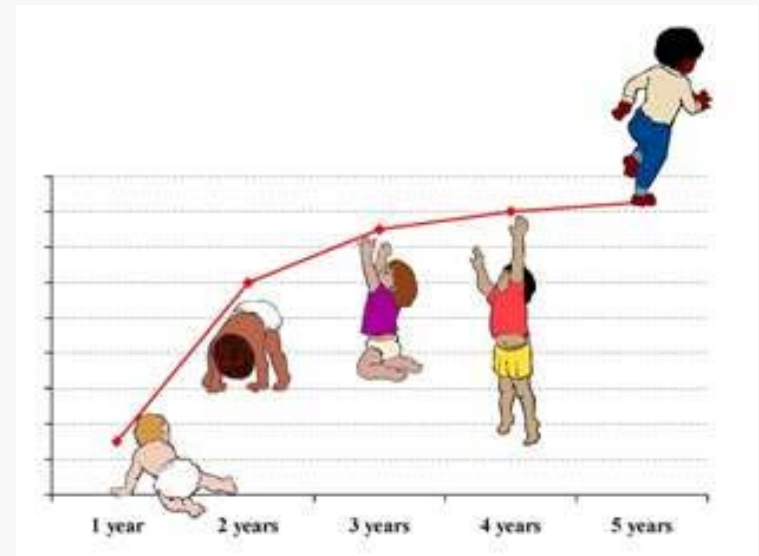


Increased
costs to the
State



Children's Learning from a PEI Perspective

- School 'unreadiness' is expensive and difficult to catch up later
- Learning is not just for schools
- Transitions are very important
- Initial costs might be incurred by one Department but long term savings accrued by another



Key Elements of Children's Learning

Children's learning begins before birth & has to be supported in different ways depending on the age of the child, their needs & circumstances.

Need to promote a love of learning as well as focus on specific skills

Transitions are key and must be prepared for in advance and supported

Supporting Children's Learning

Delivery setting, content and engagement all key to success

Work with Parents – they are a key ingredient for helping their children learn

Work with Teachers & Early Years professionals – support practice development and mainstream innovations

No Magic Bullets to Improve All Outcomes

Decisions about which approach to take must take the **evidence** of what has already shown to be effective into account

Local **community engagement** is key in assessing fit to the local context and target group needs

The **resources and readiness** of existing services to adopt the new approach must be considered

The **initial exploration and planning** phase is important and may require separate funding to allow the process adequate time.

But Improving Outcomes is Possible

It is possible to take effective approaches developed elsewhere & translate them to work within local services. Attention needs to be paid to **fit to local context & modification** may be necessary.

Developing 'home grown' programmes to improve outcomes can also be effective. Challenges include **design, maintaining momentum & consistency in delivery.**

Overview

- Criteria: Echo PEI, Central to GUI, Support in international lit and have policy/practice implications. Three broad implications
- Interaction of domains of development and broad competencies
- Home-school and extra-curricular activities: How resources are used
- Implementation of changes: Importance of 'hard' information

Domains of Development are Not Discrete

- Structural Associations: Family type
- Importance in social-emotional factors PEI programmes
- Social emotional effects on achievement
- SDQ and Achievement: significant correlation of conduct disorders and emotional problems with achievement ,
- International literature (CASEL): contention that socio-emotional programmes as effective as cognitive interventions for achievement
- Bullying and socio-emotional effects: More likely to have Problems as measured by SDQ
- Effects on absences and subsequent academic performance
- Adverse events and school achievement

Holistic Effects (cont'd)

- Adverse events...other adverse events...factors that promote resilience
- Holistic influences in educational disadvantage: role of social and emotional factors
- **New direction:** Broadly based competencies, interface of social-emotional and cognitive
- Ability to understanding difficulty and effort
- Ability to monitor outcomes
- Significance for specific learning difficulties

‘Not what you have....but the use you make of it’

- Role of extra-curricular activities in children’s lives at age 9
- Measured frequency of activities outside school and identified five groups (i) Cultural activities (25%), (ii) sports and computer games (20%), (iii) social networkers (18%), (iv) busy lives (15%) and (v) TV and sports
- Differences in school performance according to type of activities: Cultural and social networkers..better at reading and mathematics
- Too many activities reduces benefits of cultural activities
- Lowest achievement associated with unstructured activities (TV)

‘Not what you have....but the use you make of it’ (cont’d)

- Greater extracurricular effects for literacy than for maths...policy implications
- May mediate gender and social background differences: Girls most likely to be involved in cultural activities
- **Technology** and school outcomes
- International literature : Review by Slavin (2009) teaching more important than technology
- Access to computer: depends on use. Project work vs. communication
- Time spend on homework per se, no major effect:

Implementation: Some Successes and Challenges

- Active teaching methods: Variation and association with experience (not schools)
- More differentiated activities in small classes
- Only a minority dislike school (10% of boys)
- Dramatic drop in smoking (age 13)
- Relationships and Sexuality Education: 'Nobody I can talk to' (14%)
- Self-esteem improvement but gender issue

Implications

- Need for hard evidence: Health and activity, judgement of weight by parents
- Self-evaluation by boys vs girls
- Whole-school momentum: relevance for cohesion and community involvement
- Emphasis on broadly based competencies and self regulation: next phase of curriculum reform
- Linking of school with home for extra-curricular activities
- Programmes that enhance social-emotional development

Key Take Home Messages

- Strategies need to actively link home, school and community
- Learning should be supported from birth in age appropriate ways
- Social emotional development should be promoted as a core skill as well as literacy and numeracy
- Interventions should be based on evidence. Implementation plans and sustainability plans should be drawn up from the start
- Coordinated support needs to be given to early years staff and teachers to change practice
- Prevention & Early intervention can be cost-effective. Joint funding of initiatives between Departments may be necessary.

Further Information

For more information about Growing Up in Ireland visit

www.growingup.ie

For more information about the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative visit

www.effectiveservices.org/prevention/early-intervention