

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from scanned originals with text recognition applied
(searchable text may contain some errors and/or omissions)



MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
Augusta, Maine 04333

Report of
THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ON
EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION
DECEMBER 1988

Rep. James R. Handy, Chair
Sen. Stephen C. Estes, Co chair

Staff: David C. Elliott, Principal Analyst

Office of Policy and Legal Analysis
Room 101, State House--Sta. 13
Augusta, Maine 04333
(207) 289-1670

COMMISSION TO STUDY EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

(Resolve 1987, ch 64 and ch 110)

Rep. James R. Handy, Chair
Lewiston

Rep. Omar P. Norton
Winthrop

Sen. Stephen C. Estes, Co-Chair
Kittery Point

Rep. Marjorie L. Kilkelly
Wiscasset

Sen. Edwin C. Randall
E. Machias

Phillip Hayes
Grade 7-12 Teacher

Ms. Debbie Dunn
So. Kennebec Preschool Project

Dr. Ralph Ryder
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Roland Burns
University of Maine
at Fort Kent

Ms. Belinda Carter
Head Start Director

Jennifer Van Duesen-Henkle
Dept. of Educational and
Cultural Services

Laurel Daigle
Guidance Counselor

Ms. Roberta Flynn
Day Care Director

Paul Frost
School Principal

Ms. Janie Lander
Transition Grade Teacher

Ms. Patricia Lemaire
Kindergarten Teacher

Ms. Barbara Collier
Department of Human Services

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
I BACKGROUND	1
II THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT	2
III STUDY FOCUS - HUMAN DEVELOPMENT	3
IV GENERAL POLICY GOALS	4
V RECOMMENDATIONS	5
A. Appropriate early childhood programming	5
B. Institutional changes-coordination and related issues	18
VI STUDY AND EVALUATION	24
APPENDIX A	25

REPORT OF THE
SPECIAL COMMISSION ON
EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

I BACKGROUND

Until recently the educational reform movement has focused primarily on secondary schools and students. In the last few years, the focus of reform has expanded to include the earlier years of childhood. For example, in Maine in 1988, the Commissioner's Middle Level Task Force issued a report on the unique and important role middle schools play in the development of successful students; and the Legislature's Special Commission on School Entrance Age released its report which stressed the importance of the early elementary years in the development of children.

These and other actions indicate the interest of the Governor and the Legislature in early childhood development and education. This commission is now adding its voice to the growing list of Maine educators, policy makers and parents who recognize the importance of the early childhood years.

Maine is certainly not alone in its recognition of the importance of appropriate early childhood programs in preventing school failure, truancy and dropouts and a host of other social, economic and academic problems. Nationally, we have witnessed in the last several years a proliferation of task forces and study commissions which have recommended the establishment or expansion of programs for young children.

Long term studies of early childhood programs have shown that they are successful and have demonstrated that money spent on those programs has a multiplier effect on money saved in future years for remediation, treatment and social benefits. These programs may also have a substantial but less tangible benefit. By encouraging the development of productive citizens, they permit those individuals to lead happy, successful lives - a benefit to society in itself.

The national and state interest in young children derives from many sources. First, are demographic causes. There have been dramatic recent increases in the number of single parent families and two working parent families. The resulting demand by parents for child care has often been carried over to concern for quality early elementary school programs by those same parents. The transition from preschool to early elementary school programs is an area which we highlight in our report as needing attention.

A second cause for the increased interest in early childhood programs is the media's popularization of research findings on the importance of the early years in a child's growth and development. On this point, we believe some caution is in order. Not all children benefit equally from the provision of a program. The research indicates that appropriate, quality early childhood programs are beneficial, particularly for economically and socially disadvantaged children as well as children with special needs.

The final element in the increased attention paid to early childhood education is the coalescence of the pressures for increased excellence in schools and for reform of social services spending. The "excellence in education" movement has recently recognized the importance of the early school years. The pattern for success is often laid in the first years of school. The opposite is, perhaps, even more true. In addition, pressure for welfare reform and more efficient provision of social services has led to the recognition of the cost effectiveness of providing positive experiences in early education programs. Recent studies show that quality early childhood programs can prevent the later onset of social, emotional and economic difficulties and save significant public monies in the long run.

Taken together these factors have led to the recognition on a public policy level of more appropriate approaches to early childhood education and have spread the demand for programs incorporating those approaches among a broader constituency.

II THE SPECIAL COMMISSION ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The trend toward increased examination of early childhood education is continuing in Maine. School readiness and school entrance age were the issues which served initially to focus attention on the need for appropriate early childhood education programs. During 1987, two bills were introduced to the First Regular Session of 113th Legislature proposing increases in the minimum age for entrance into public school. The rationale for the legislation was that older children would do better in school because they would be developmentally ready for kindergarten. In response to the proposed legislation, the Legislature created a Special Commission to Study School Entrance Age. The commission reported to the First Regular Session of the 114th Legislature in March, 1988.

The School Entrance Age Study Commission recommended that Maine's school entrance age cut-off date of October 15 be retained provided that the special commission be continued in existence to study several key issues identified in the report related to early childhood education and that the 114th Legislature address those issues.. In the commission's view, the critical issue was not one of age or even assuring that

some specific level of development has been achieved by each child at school entrance. The critical issue was viewed as developing appropriate and effective educational programs that create the most favorable conditions for learning for each child, regardless of the age at which the child enters school. In other words, the real focus of early childhood education is to make sure that the school is ready for the child, not that the child is ready for the school.

In 1988, the School Entrance Age Study Commission was reconstituted as the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education and representatives of the Department of Educational and Cultural Services and the Department of Human Services were added. A copy of the legislation is attached. (See Appendix A)

The authorizing legislation directed the commission to examine 9 separate early childhood related issues. The commission met 8 times over the summer and fall to do that and to prepare this final report and recommendations. Appropriate legislation to implement the recommendations will be introduced to the First Regular Session of the 114th Legislature in January 1989.

III STUDY FOCUS - HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

It is accepted that individuals go through generally predictable and sequential stages of development. With respect to young children, those stages consist of milestones in their physical, cognitive and psychological development. The stages of development, however named, are age-related but not age-specific. Educational theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, and Gesell, have identified certain well-marked phases of child development but use different models to describe them.

The Commission believes it is the responsibility of our schools to respond to the sequential development of children. In other words, it is the school's responsibility to be ready for the child, not the opposite. The Commission believes that is true through all years of schooling, K-12. The Report of the Middle Level Task Force, Schools in the Middle, recognizes the need for attention to the special curriculum needs of middle school students in grades 5-8. In this report we make the case for a developmentally appropriate curriculum for each child in the early elementary grades. Traditionally, early elementary education has been thought of as spanning grades K-3. We have expanded the traditional definition to include grade 4 in order to dovetail with the middle school recommendations.

Finally, we recognize that human development is a lifelong process and that developmentally appropriate curriculum is a

necessary ingredient through all the school years. However, our charge is focused primarily on the early elementary years - ages 4-9. The policy goals and recommendations which follow reflect that fact.

IV GENERAL POLICY GOALS

In carrying out its assigned study responsibilities, the Special Commission on Early Childhood Education and Development has developed several specific recommendations designed to encourage and support high quality, developmentally appropriate preschool and K-4 programs. These recommendations are directed at identified groups or agencies and call for direct action.

We have also agreed on a few more general policy guidelines which will enhance or facilitate the implementation of our recommendations. These guidelines are not directed at specific persons and do not call for direct, identified courses of action. Rather they address overall goals for early childhood programs and set the stage for specific program recommendations. Although the goal statements are generally couched in terms of state level policies, we believe that policy makers at all levels involved with early childhood programs should strive to incorporate these goals into their programs.

Goal #1: That comprehensive early childhood programs should contain both child care and developmentally appropriate education components. The programs should offer a continuum of services spanning the needs of children and their families including, but not limited to, health, social services, nutrition, transportation, program facilities, and adult basic education. All programs must also be sensitive to the culture and language of the child and family.

Goal #2: That Maine should establish standards and regulations to ensure high quality comprehensive early childhood services, including but not limited to: developmentally appropriate practices; intense parent involvement and education; and appropriate adult-child ratios, facilities, staff training and credentialing, and full-day and full-year schedules.

Goal #3: That Maine should establish competency-based standards for differential staffing levels of preschool services. Supervision and ongoing training should be provided by qualified staff persons at each site.

Goal #4: That Maine develop an integrated, unified policy and action plan for children and families which encompasses the continuum of statewide services and requires collaboration among all agencies providing services to children and families.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are the recommendations of the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education. Our recommendations are divided into 2 major parts (a) appropriate early childhood programming and (b) institutional change and coordination issues

A. Appropriate early childhood programming

Following on the recommendations of the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education. Our recommendations are divided into 2 major parts: (a) appropriate early childhood programming and (b) institutional change and coordination issues. Each major part is further divided into several more specific issues.

1. Developmentally sound, child centered programs - kindergarten through grade four

The commission supports the work of such professional groups as the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the implementation of developmentally sound early elementary curriculum.*

Specifically, we believe that the K-4 curriculum should focus on the total child, including cognitive, emotional, psychological and motor development. Young children should be encouraged to learn through their own action - that is through concrete experiences, exploration and play. The goal of early elementary education should be to instill self-esteem and positive feelings toward learning and toward society.

The concept of developmentally appropriate practices encompasses two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. Is the activity suitable for a child of this age recognizing that there are certain universal, predictable sequences of human development which occur in children ages birth to nine? Is the activity suitable for this particular child taking into account the unique individual pattern of growth, personality, learning style and family background of each child? To provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum means using what is known about child development to establish the learning environment and then blending that knowledge and adjusting that environment to meet the individual needs of each student.

* See Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8, NAEYC, Sue Bredekamp, editor.

Recommendation #1: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services continue and expand its efforts to encourage the development of integrated, individualized and child-centered early elementary curricula by public schools and to enhance such programs where they already exist.

Recommendation #2: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services revise, as necessary, and redistribute to teachers and administrators the guide entitled: "Kindergarten Curriculum - for Conceptual Language Development".

Recommendation #3: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services develop a comprehensive public relations campaign stressing the importance of a developmentally appropriate curriculum to reach educators, parents, school board members, municipal officials and the general public.

Recommendation #4: That, in order to assure the broadest possible dissemination of information on developmentally appropriate curriculum, the Department of Educational and Cultural Services distribute or make available to all teachers technical assistance in the form of instructional guidelines and bulletins and widely advertise the availability of information for the general public in the form of brochures and other informational materials.

Recommendation #5: That legislation be introduced and Department of Educational and Cultural Services guidelines be revised governing the Early Childhood Education Plan grants program which will accomplish the following:

- a. Expand the funds available in the program to \$400,000 in FY 1990-91 and \$600,000 in FY 1991-92 and establish an individual grant ceiling of \$50,000.
- b. In addition to grant areas emphasized in current law, the program should cover proposals designed to address (1) the needs of 4 year olds, including preschool handicapped and "at-risk" children, (2) the need for a smooth transition from preschool programs (preschool coordination programs, Head Start, day care programs or nursery school programs) to public school and (3) the development of parent outreach and support programs designed to improve school/parent relations and parenting skills with an emphasis on techniques which enhance child development.
- c. Waive the current local participation requirement.
- d. Expand Department of Educational and Cultural Services technical assistance to local school units to help those units produce successful grant applications in order to broaden participation in the grant program.

e. Provide for revamping the Early Childhood Education Plan grants program consistent with the above, but with two components or parts:

(1) A component similar to the current one with grants awarded on a competitive basis for early childhood programs proposed by schools.

(2) A second component designed to develop regional training/demonstration sites administered by public schools for preschool children, starting with four year olds and phasing in earlier ages over time. Based on a regional needs assessment by the Department of Educational and Cultural Services and other concerned groups, the Department of Educational and Cultural Services would develop criteria for the requests for proposals for establishment of model regional early childhood programs. Local school units, with other interested groups, could submit applications to the department to provide these programs. The intent of the sites is to act as a regional resource for pre-service and in-service staff training, as a source of information for preschool educators and parents, and as demonstration sites for schools or others interested in setting up such programs. Criteria for approval of requests for proposals should include evidence of involvement in the planning process by local Head Start and preschool coordination sites, a commitment to mainstreaming exceptional students and training others in this component (using materials such as those designed by Head Start), providing for Child Development Associate training, and meeting other local needs. Sites should give evidence of commitment to pursuing accreditation by the NAEYC. There should be training in exemplary curriculum models (such as the High/Scope model*), and provisions for the training of trainers in those models.

2. Alternative programs

One result of the recent emphasis on early childhood education has been an increase in what may be termed

* High scope is a model program developed by the Perry Preschool Project of Ypsilanti, Michigan. It was designed to test and compare longitudinally the effectiveness of providing high quality preschool programs for at-risk children against other methods of providing similar services.

alternative structures for the traditional early elementary grades in Maine. Programs for transition grades from K to first grade and between first and second grades are increasingly common. Early K for 5 year olds or pre-kindergarten classes for 4 year olds also exist. Another approach - full day kindergarten - has achieved some support in other states.

While the structure and implementation of these alternatives may vary, the objective of each seems to be basically the same. They appear to be an attempt to recognize and take into account the differing rates of educational development for 4 - 9 year olds. The Commission recognizes the need and difficulty in providing educational programs for children at different developmental levels with varying rates of development in the traditional K-4 grade structure. However, we see alternative programs such as those described above as serving a temporary, transitional role to begin to meet the educational needs of young children while school systems around the State move toward developmentally appropriate curricula as described in section A above. They should not be relied on indefinitely to meet differing curriculum needs.

One type of so-called alternative program which we have observed in Maine does offer promise. The ungraded classroom concept as practiced in several school systems appears to be an approach which meets the curriculum needs of students.

Recommendation #6: That each school administrative unit adopt and pursue the goal of developmentally appropriate curriculum for each young child and that alternative programs such as transition grades and early kindergarten may be used as transitional tools to move toward a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

3. Class size

Maximum student-teacher ratios permitted by current Department of Educational and Cultural Services rules are 25:1 per class for kindergarten and 30:1 per class for grades 1 through 8 (25:1 on a school-wide basis). Waivers are available in certain circumstances.

The Commission believes that development and implementation of appropriate early childhood curricula will be impossible given classes of the size allowed by current law. It is simply not possible to provide the individual attention necessary in grades K-4.

It is the position of the majority of the Commission, supported by research in this area, that implementation of the maximum class size schedule set out below will establish a better learning environment in grades K-4, allow for more individualized instruction, and encourage better student achievement, especially by at-risk students.

We recognize that implementation of the class size recommendations will have significant cost implications. At the time the Commission finalized its recommendations, data were not available to make specific findings on what the costs might be. We believe the data ought to be available in a more useable form.

Recommendation #7: That legislation be introduced establishing maximum student-teacher per class ratios for grades K-4 as follows:

Kindergarten	
School year -	
1990-91 & 91-92	22:1
1992-93 & 93-94	19:1
1994-95	
& thereafter	15:1
Grades 1-4	
School year -	
1990-91 & 91-92	25:1
1992-93 & 93-94	22:1
1994-95	
& thereafter	18:1

Recommendation #8: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services be authorized to promulgate rules which: (1) describe situations when waiver of the maximum K-4 student-teacher ratios is appropriate and (2) establish appropriate higher ratios when a teacher aide or assistant is present in the classroom, including minimum credentials or training for that person. No more than one aide or assistant shall be employed in each classroom, and the maximum number of students per classroom when an aide or assistant is present shall not exceed 120% of the number allowed when only a teacher is present.

Recommendation #9: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services incorporate into its October and April collection of enrollment data from schools specific information by grade and class on enrollment, staffing patterns and space availability which will facilitate projection of costs of changing student-teacher ratios.

4. Preschool programs

Longitudinal studies have demonstrated the economic and social benefits of preschool programs. Several in-depth studies*, have shown that high quality preschool programs for low income youngsters are beneficial.

Children participating in such programs have been shown to benefit educationally by being more likely to stay in school, graduate and go on to post-secondary study, and socially by being less likely to be involved in teen pregnancy, drug abuse and other criminal activities and more likely to hold jobs. See Figure 1 on the benefits of preschool program and Figure 2 for a cost-benefit analysis of such programs.

In Maine, preschool programs are provided principally by Head Start (a federally and state funded program primarily for low income children and their families) and by private as well as publicly funded providers. The type and quality of services vary greatly from small to large groups and from basic care to those offering child development and educational components. Private child care serves principally families who are able to pay for the program. Publicly funded programs serve children of families who are clients of child protective services, children who are in the custody of Department of Human Services and those whose families are low income or receiving training.

One preschool area where the commission has a concern is the regulation of nursery schools. Aside from the most basic health and safety requirements, there are no standards for the operation of nursery schools. Furthermore, although the name implies it, there is no guarantee that a nursery school will provide an educational component to its program; or if it does, that the program will be appropriate for the age and developmental level of the child. This level of regulation appears to be much less than that which exists for other preschool programs or child care situations and which is advisable to assure quality programs.

In the Head Start area, the State has made a significant contribution toward increasing the level of programs available in Maine. As part of the early childhood component of the Educational Reform Act of 1984, the Legislature appropriated \$1.7 million for expansion of

* See Schweinhart, Lawrence, David Weikart, and Mary Larner 1986. "Consequences of Three Preschool Curriculum Models through Age 15." Early Childhood Research Quarterly, Vol. 1, pp 15-45.

Head Start services for fiscal years 1985 and 1986. The amount of supplemental State assistance was increased to \$1.9 million in each of fiscal years 1987 and 1988. The purpose of this supplemental funding was to serve a higher percentage of the Head Start eligible children in all counties and to equalize the percentage of children served between counties throughout the State. The additional money allowed the level of Head Start service to increase to the current level of approximately 1 out of 4 eligible children in Maine (nationally about 1 of 6 eligible children are served).

Over the last 4 years, the program costs for Head Start have increased dramatically, especially for staff salaries. This has occurred while the amount of State funding has remained nearly static. In order to just maintain the current level of Head Start services, the contributions by the State must be raised.

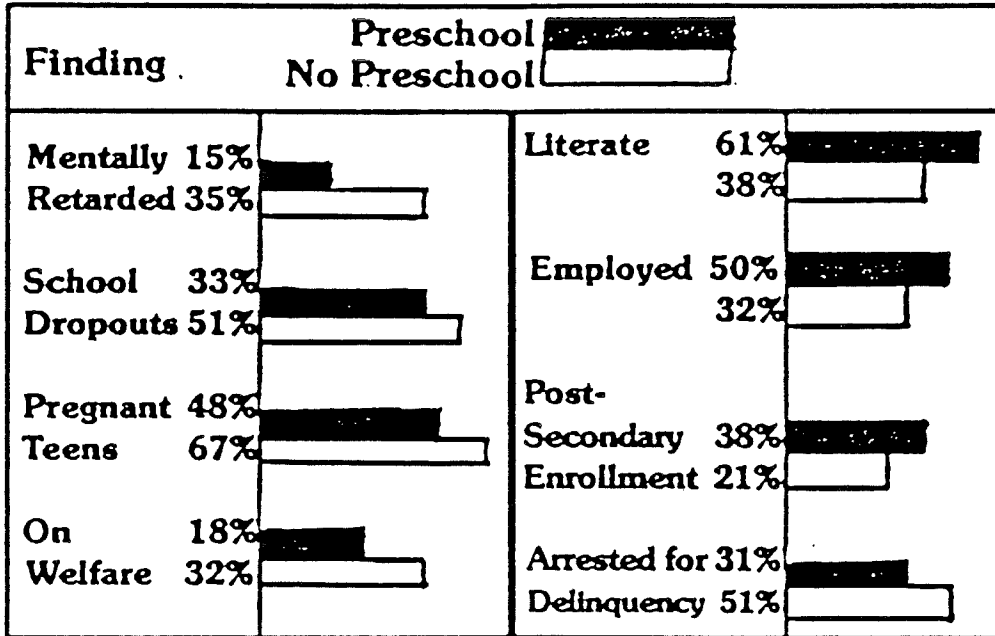
The Commission believes that although the efforts to expand the availability of Head Start programs in Maine is admirable, we as a State are still short of where we should be. In light of the documented benefits from the Head Start program for children and families, our objective should be to make appropriate, quality preschool programs available to all Head Start eligible children. Our recommendations establish that as a goal by the year 2000 and establish interim targets to allow the State to reach that goal.

There is no doubt that implementing our Head Start recommendation will be expensive. Our rough calculations indicate it will cost approximately \$18.7 million in today's dollars to make quality preschool programs available to all Head Start eligible families by the year 2000. We believe that it will be money well spent.

Finally, in the preschool area, the Commission believes that, in addition to Head Start, private and publicly funded preschool programs, the public schools can play an important role in preschool services, especially for 4 year olds. In doing so, public schools should take a page from the Head Start book by providing for a developmentally appropriate program and for parental involvement. Care must be taken, however, to assure that any public school programs do not duplicate services offered by Head Start, private or publicly funded preschool programs or compete for the same children. There are, after all, plenty of unserved children and a great demand for quality, affordable preschool services.

Figure 1

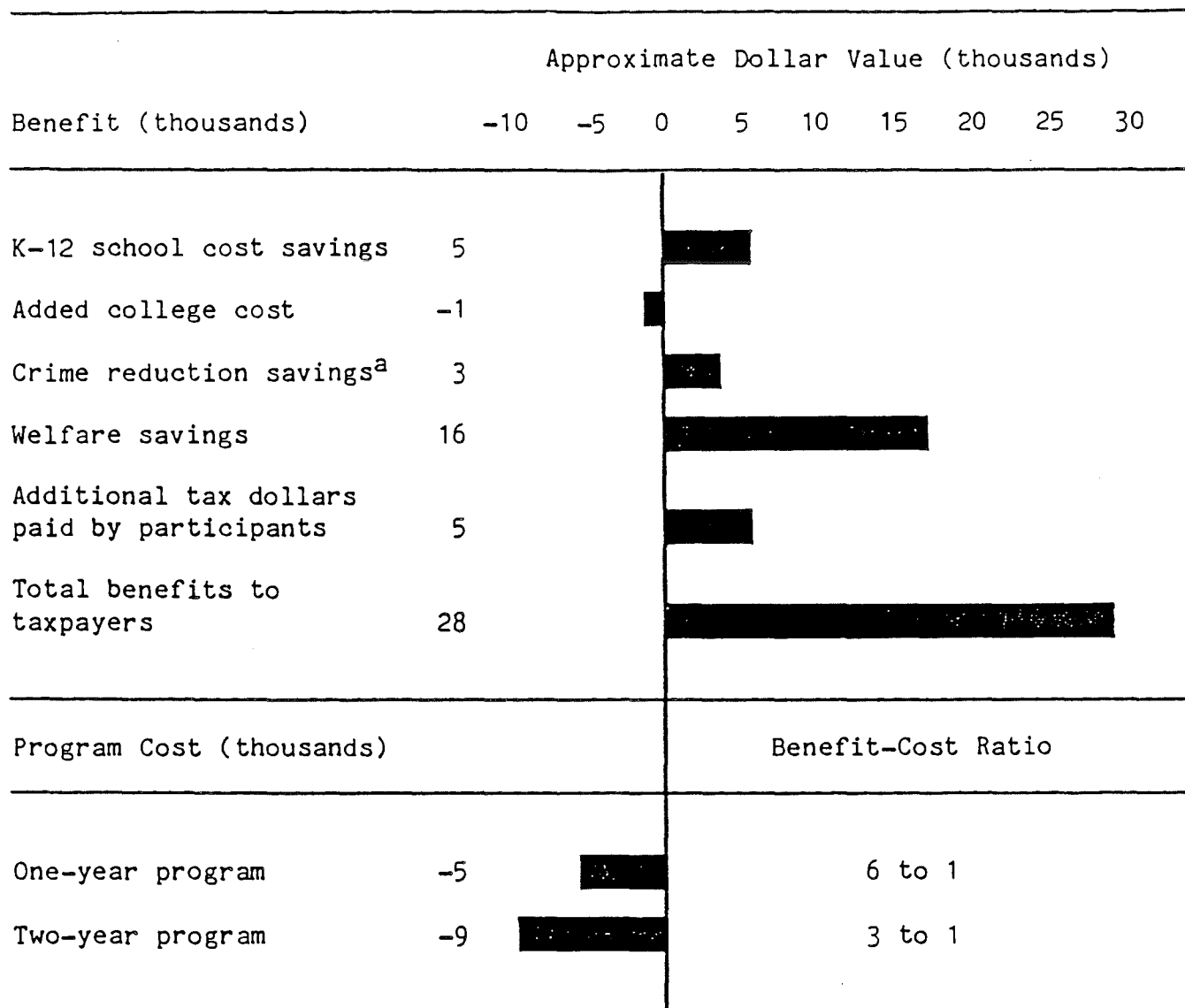
High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Age 19 Findings



From Good Preschools for Poor Children are Cost-effective,
High/Scope Press, Ypsilanti, MI.

Figure 2

PERRY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM PER-CHILD
COSTS AND BENEFITS TO TAXPAYERS



Note. Table entries are constant 1981 dollars, discounted at 3% annually. Adapted from John R. Berrueta-Clement, Lawrence J. Schweinhart, W. Steven Barnett, Ann S. Epstein, & David P. Weikart, Changed lives: The effects of the Perry Preschool program on youths through age 19, Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 8 (Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press, 1984), p. 91.

^aSavings to citizens as taxpayers and as potential crime victims.

From The Preschool Challenge, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, MI.

Recommendation #10: That legislation be introduced appropriating \$500,000 in 1989-90 and \$630,000 in 1990-91 of additional state monies to fund cost-of-living increases and to expand services to eligible families through state-funded Head Start programs.

Recommendation #11: That by the year 2000 every child eligible for Head Start be served by a Head Start program or other appropriate program and every family which desires it has access to an appropriate, quality, publicly funded preschool program for their 4 year old. In order to meet the year 2000 goal of an appropriate program for all 4 year olds where families desire it, interim goals should be established as follows: By the year 1992 such programs should be available to 50% of those eligible, and by 1996 to 75%.

Recommendation #12: That the Department of Human Services conduct a review of laws and rules governing the licensing and regulation of nursery schools, including the need for complete health and safety inspections, space requirements, staffing patterns and program guidelines. The department should consult with the Department of Educational and Cultural Services and with Head Start directors on questions of appropriate programming. The department shall present its recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by January 15, 1990. (By implication, this recommendation supports the department's request for an additional staff position in the child care licensing unit.)

Recommendation #13: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services encourage appropriate, quality preschool programs for 4 year olds through the Early Childhood Education Plan grants program.

5. Parental role

The Commission believes strongly in the important role the family plays in the development and education of young children. In our view, there are two components to that role.

First, the positive actions of parents play a critical role in preventing learning problems and encouraging the positive development of their children beginning at birth. Second, once young children enter formal schooling, parental involvement in the schooling process has a positive effect in creating a favorable learning environment, in reducing the risk of student failure and increasing student success, and in the academic, physical, emotional and social development of young children.

Recognizing the individual and private nature of the parent child relationship, the Commission has grappled with

the appropriate role of outside interests in enhancing that relationship. We have concluded that there is a role; although it should be available on a voluntary basis and should be clearly structured to enhance the family relationship.

a. Birth through school age

The importance of the first years of life has been demonstrated; and the role of parents in shaping the success of those years is clear. We believe that the provision of family education and support services can assist parents in their role and begin to create a partnership between parents and schools in the development of children. The goal of support services should be to promote parental competencies that enhance positive child development.

The idea of outside-the-family involvement to enhance the parental role is gaining acceptance nationwide. In Maine, the University of Maine is beginning to develop a program in this area; small-scale local programs also exist. The University of Maine has established the Early Childhood Parent Education Program to provide statewide leadership and coordination in the area of parental education. The University of Maine has also established a parenting skills pilot project to field test a model for providing parental education.

The Commission believes that given its public outreach responsibilities and its statewide experience in community education through the Cooperative Extension Program, the University of Maine is an appropriate institution to pursue the role of early childhood parent education in Maine. The University of Maine has done a thorough job of reviewing existing and planned programs, visiting operating sites, and considering a wide range of issues in setting up their parenting skills pilot project.

In the establishment and evaluation of early childhood family education programs, the Commission believes there are certain basic principles or considerations which should be incorporated in any program. They are:

- (1) Parental participation must be voluntary.
- (2) Availability of the program must be open to all parents.
- (3) The program must be available from birth until entry into the school system.

(4) The program must be community based and offered in a setting and manner in which all parents and children are comfortable.

(5) The program must coordinate community services to families, including prenatal services.

(6) The program must educate parents on how to relate to public schools, e.g. who to contact, how to find out how a child is doing in school, the kinds of questions to ask educators, and how to impart important information about a child to educators.

Taking these principles into account, we encourage the University of Maine to continue its exploratory efforts in the area of early childhood family education. We encourage statewide application through the University of Maine System if that is appropriate and suggest that the University of Maine report to the Legislature in two years on the results of its project. If the elements of a successful statewide model have been established, the report should make recommendations on that point. The report should include anticipated costs of implementation. We believe the costs will be money well spent.

Recommendation #14: That the Special Commission supports the efforts of the University of Maine to establish an early childhood family education program and requests that the University submit an update on the program to the Second Regular Session of the 114th Legislature by January 15, 1990 and a final report on its recommendations for the implementation of a statewide program to the First Regular Session of the 115th Legislature by January 15, 1991.

b. Parents and the school

It is accepted that parental involvement with their child's school improves the child's achievement and improves the quality of the school. The home and the school are the two basic ingredients affecting a child's development. When the two form an effective partnership, the child's development is greatly enhanced.

There seems to be a perception that schools have frequently not gone far enough in reaching out to parents. When that perception is accurate, it likely stems from several causes. Teachers are the educators in the best position to interact with parents. Because of lack of time, training in family needs and functioning, and administrative support, many teachers are unable to make the necessary effort. Parents may have difficulty participating in school activities

where meaningful opportunities do exist because they are uncomfortable in schools or dealing with education professionals or because of work commitments.

A third party in the relationship of parents with their child's school is the parent's employer. Because of the prevalence of two working parent families and single parent families, the employer is increasingly in an important role with respect to issues such as child care and providing opportunities and encouragement for parents to participate in school related activities.

There appears to be a growing awareness on the part of Maine employers of the potential benefits of having workers who are satisfied that the child care and educational needs of their young children are being met. An employee not burdened with worries on those points is likely to be a more productive worker. The costs to employers of assisting in those areas can be minimal in relation to the benefit of more productive workers.

We applaud the efforts of employers who have already begun to provide child care for their employees. We do believe more needs to be done in this area and to encourage employees to play an active role in the schooling of their children. One mechanism for identifying the needs and developing strategies in this area is the Maine Aspirations Compact.

The Commission has made recommendations which will enhance the school-parental relationship in section II-C on interagency coordination and cooperation. In addition, we make the following recommendations:

Recommendation #15: That the University of Maine System incorporate into each of its teacher education programs a component on family functioning and interacting with parents. That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services, in conjunction with the University System and local school systems, develop in-service programs on the same topic and encourage that those programs be taken by current teachers.

Recommendation #16: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services publicize the availability and encourage the use of the school-based child care and child development training program for student parents provided in PL 1987, chapter 767.

Recommendation #17: That the Maine Aspirations Compact continue and expand its efforts to develop innovative strategies to encourage employees to offer child care opportunities for their employees and to recognize the benefits of encouraging employee participation in their child's school activities.

B. Institutional changes/coordination and related issues

In order to afford early childhood education the attention it deserves as demonstrated by recent findings of both national and in-state studies, the Commission believes that changes in institutional structures and goals and coordination of efforts by various institutions and agencies is necessary.

1. Department for Children

In the following sections, the Commission makes several recommendations for immediate action regarding changes in institutional relationships and coordination of efforts in order to better provide early childhood programs. In this section, we are making a recommendation for a change which we believe should be made, but only after some time spent carefully considering how it should be accomplished.

We believe a state cabinet level department for children should be established. The new department would combine and coordinate the various child related programs and services now housed in several state departments including Education, Human Services, Mental Health and Retardation and Corrections.

Recommendation #18: That legislation be introduced creating a blue ribbon commission to make recommendations for the establishment of the Department for Children to the First Regular Session of the 115th Legislature.

2. Realignment within the DECS

To provide the necessary emphasis on early childhood education at the state level, it is necessary that the subject occupy a position of prominence within the DECS. Such a change will demonstrate the State's commitment to early childhood education and will make it easier for members of the public to contact the appropriate State officials for assistance. This change may call for additional resources and perhaps, realignment within the department's organizational structure.

Recommendation #19: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services establish an early childhood

education "office" (at least parallel to the middle school level office recommended by the Middle School Task Force). The purpose of that office shall be to:

- a. Administer the expanded early childhood grants program including the establishment and monitoring of model demonstration early childhood sites;
- b. Provide technical assistance to LEA's in such areas as development of appropriate curriculum, screening, assessment and placement, transition from preschool to public school programs, parental involvement in early childhood development and grant application writing;
- c. Assist in the coordination of efforts between providers of early childhood programs.
- d. Coordinate the early childhood public awareness program.

Recommendation #20: That adequate additional resources be provided to the Department of Educational and Cultural Services to carry out its new responsibilities.

3. Coordination of efforts between agencies and institutions

It appears to the Commission that in too many instances agencies or institutions involved with early childhood development and education are each pursuing their goals individually and without regard to what other agencies or institutions are doing or can offer in way of expertise in this area. We do not question the motives of the agencies involved. However, we believe that resources could be used more efficiently and services coordinated more effectively.

a. Transition to public school

One area which the commission has identified as needing attention is the transition of young children from Head Start or preschool programs to the public schools. Too often valuable information on a child's developmental level, family situation or program needs is lost during that transition. To provide developmentally appropriate programming, it is vital that this issue be addressed cooperatively by the schools, preschool agencies and parents. Some possible actions are (a) that the Head Start summary prepared on each Head Start child be reviewed for appropriate follow-up within the public school, (b) that an expanded, early and on-going role for parents be developed for each K-4 classroom and (c) the use of a "mini day" or "visitation day" in the Spring

or Summer to familiarize incoming students and parents with school procedures and personnel, school layout, bussing, etc.

While the commission recognizes that appropriate transition practices must originate and occur at the local level, we believe that a strong position by the Department of Educational and Cultural Services can help school administrative units recognize the needs for such practices. We believe the Department of Educational and Cultural Services can play a facilitating role here.

Recommendation #21: That the Early Childhood Office in the Department of Educational and Cultural Services correspond with school superintendents at least twice annually stressing the needs of kindergarten students in the transition from preschool programs to the public school.

Recommendation #22: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services distribute, to Head Start directors and preschool coordination site coordinators, copies of the curriculum guide "Kindergarten Curriculum - for Conceptual Language Development."

Recommendation #23: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services convene a task force to discuss transition issues, including follow-up meetings to discuss the success of implementing its recommendations. The task force should consist of representatives of various involved groups, including public schools, Head Start, other preschool programs, the Maine Association for the Education of Young Children, etc.

Recommendation #24: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services task force develop and disseminate to all schools, Head Start and preschool directors, a manual of best practices for providing for the transition of young children into the early elementary grades and that this subject be emphasized in departmental workshops.

b. Interagency coordination

The commission has found an element of competition or mistrust sometimes exists between the various agencies and organizations providing services for preschool and early elementary age children. This competition exists partially as a result of long-standing philosophical differences in the historical goals of various institutions. There does appear to be a high degree of cooperation between Head Start, preschool programs and other community-based programs, but less between those programs and the public schools. The commission believes that the competition is also largely the result of

misunderstanding or lack of familiarity with the goals and philosophies of other agencies. This shortcoming can be addressed to a great extent by providing a formal mechanism by which representatives of the various agencies and organizations can discuss their programs with each other.

Recommendation #25: That a subcommittee of the present Children's Policy Committee of the Interdepartmental Committee be established with additional representation from the Division of Community Services for the purpose of providing a forum for the discussion of early childhood issues and sharing resources in the provision of appropriate services.

4. Training, certification and staff development of K-4 staff

In order for teachers in grades K-4 to develop and implement appropriate early elementary curricula, it is essential that those teachers be properly grounded in early childhood development. It is vital that teachers of young children be aware, not just of the cognitive developmental needs of their students (which may be different than those of older children) but also of the development of the whole child.

It is the position of the Commission that every child in grades K-4 should be taught by a teacher knowledgeable about child development and family functioning and who is able to apply that knowledge in his or her teaching. That knowledge is, in many cases, distinct from the knowledge appropriate for teaching older elementary school students.

Under the current certification rules of the State Board of Education, elementary school teachers must be certified to teach and possess an endorsement to their certification as an Elementary Teacher. An Elementary Teacher endorsement covers grades K-8 and does not distinguish between the early elementary grades and the later elementary grades. Nor is there any specific academic or professional study requirement of exposure to early childhood development. We feel this is a serious oversight.

Recommendation #26: That the State Board of Education amend its certification rules to provide for a separate voluntary early childhood endorsement covering grades K-4 for teachers and guidance counsellors. Discussions on the provisions of that endorsement should include early childhood development specialists in the Department of Educational and Cultural Services and institutions of higher education within the State.

Recommendation #27: That the University of Maine System and Department of Educational and Cultural Services should participate in the development of a national clearinghouse on model programs, effective practices, and relevant research. Maine should include in the Maine Resource Bank and Information Exchange information on the benefits of early childhood services for children, their families and the community.

Recommendation #28: In-service training and staff development for public school staff should be restructured to provide opportunities for consideration of the developmentally appropriate curriculum needs of students. See Recommendation # 30 under Restructuring of Schools and the School Year.

Recommendation #29: That the State Board of Education convene a task force for the purpose of developing and implementing a plan for Maine institutions of higher education to offer early elementary teacher education degree programs and early elementary concentrations within administrator and guidance preparation programs.

5. Restructuring of schools and the school year

The Commission is convinced that even if all our recommendations regarding early childhood education programs are implemented, they will have less than their desired effect unless there is also a fundamental restructuring of how our public schools are organized and operate. As long as students are identified and educated on the basis of age, grade level and test scores, rather than individual educational needs, there will exist a pressure downward on early elementary teachers and administrators to prepare young students for the next standard or milestone, e.g. promotion to the next grade level with the ability to perform expected academic functions or to score well on assessment tests.

One of the basic structural changes which the Commission believes is necessary is an alteration in the way school systems provide in-service training for their teachers. Presently, the school year is interrupted many times for training sessions, conferences and other similar activities. Those activities are nearly always of short duration - a day or less - and cover a variety of subjects with little effort to coordinate the content with the overall goals of the school. Furthermore, under current law, no more than five days of the minimum school year of 180 days may be devoted to staff development activities. We believe that the minimum 175 instructional days should remain but that schools need more opportunity within a

concentrated timeframe to plan for developmentally appropriate programming for their students and to provide time for school staff to identify and discuss the educational needs of their students.

We believe there should be a concentrated period of time - up to 5 full days - set aside at the beginning of the school year for planning, goal setting and staff development activities in each school. That time should be carefully coordinated in each school to provide for discussion by administrators, regular classroom teachers, teachers of exceptional and gifted and talented students, and guidance counselors of the needs of incoming students, matching the school's resources to provide developmentally appropriate programs to meet those needs, and a statement of objectives or goals which will indicate that those needs have been met. Time for staff development activities to provide teachers the skills necessary to meet those needs should be woven into that preschool year session.

The additional days would be in addition to the minimum 5 administrative days provided by current law. At least 3, and up to 5, days should be added at the discretion of the local school unit. The State would pay for the additional personnel costs.

In addition, the Commission believes that the current school year could be arranged more efficiently. Blocks of instructional time could be organized with an emphasis on educational continuity. Those blocks could be arranged more productively around existing holidays, and vacation periods could be relocated to provide logical breaks between blocks of several weeks of instruction. In-service training programs would benefit from a more systematic placement throughout the year. Like the preschool year planning/training period, consolidated blocks of in-service training would be more beneficial to the staff and would break up the educational year less.

Recommendation #30: That legislation be introduced, effective for the 1990-91 school year, providing for an additional 3 to 5 days to be added at the beginning of the school year. That additional time is to be used for the school planning and professional staff development necessary to assure a developmentally appropriate curriculum for each student.

Recommendation #31: That the Department of Educational and Cultural Services convene a working group to examine the more effective use of the school year. The group should consist of representatives of superintendents, principals, teachers, the Department of Educational and Cultural Services, the Legislature, the Higher Education Council and parents.

VI STUDY AND EVALUATION

The Commission has made numerous recommendations to improve the educational opportunities for students in grades K-4. We are aware of the cost implications of these recommendations and have addressed that issue directly. Our legislative recommendations will include the necessary appropriations to fund our recommendations. The money necessary to fund those recommendations in the coming biennium and in future years constitutes a significant investment by the State.

It is an investment which the Commission is convinced will pay dividends in the long run. To monitor the implementation of our recommendations and evaluate their effectiveness, we believe a longitudinal study of the recommendations should be carried out over at least 10 years. Such a study will guide future legislatures, educators and policy makers in deciding whether adjustments should be made in programs and in evaluating the effect of this major investment.

The Commission believes the University of Maine System is the appropriate institution to oversee that study.

Recommendation #32: That the University of Maine System conduct a longitudinal analysis of the implementation of the major recommendations of this study and present its conclusions to the Legislature in 1995, including whether additional study is needed. Annual updates on the progress of the analysis should be provided to the Joint Standing Committee on Education. The University should include representatives of the Department of Educational and Cultural Services, local school administrative units, and Head Start and other preschool programs in the analyses.

APPENDIX A

7163m

APPROVED.

CHAPTER

APR 28 '88

110

BY GOVERNOR

RESOLVES

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-EIGHT

H.P. 1874 - L.D. 2566

RESOLVE, To Amend the Duties, Title and Reporting Date of the Special Commission to Study School-Entrance Age and Preschool Services.

Emergency preamble. Whereas, Acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, the Special Commission to Study School-entrance Age and Preschool Services has identified lack of school readiness as a critical problem; and

Whereas, that problem is caused by several related factors and not by the school entrance age alone; and

Whereas, the special commission has recommended that the present school-entrance age not be changed provided other related issues are studied in the coming year; and

Whereas, issues related to developmentally appropriate early childhood curriculum need to be studied and addressed immediately; and

Whereas, failure to do so will result in negative consequences for many school children; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following

legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Special commission renamed. Resolved: That the Special Commission to Study School-entrance Age and Preschool Services, established by Resolve 1987, chapter 64, is renamed the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education; and be it further

Duties. Resolved: That the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education shall examine issues related to early childhood development and appropriate educational programming, including the following:

1. Establishment of developmentally appropriate early childhood curricula;

2. Alternative structures for early childhood educational programs;

3. Appropriate class size and student-teacher ratios for early elementary grades;

4. Appropriate preschool services, including the possibility of targeting at-risk children;

5. Appropriate preservice training, certification and staff development requirements for early childhood teachers;

6. The role parents play in the development of their child and how that role may be enhanced;

7. The appropriate role of the private sector in the provision of child care and preschool services and ways to enhance that role;

8. Current state initiatives for early childhood education and child care services and ways those initiatives may be coordinated; and

9. Changes in relationships between and responsibilities of various institutions and agencies which will result in the provision of more appropriate early childhood educational programs; and be it further

Report. Resolved: That the special commission shall issue its report, including any necessary implementing legislation, to the First Regular Session of the 114th Legislature no later than December 1, 1988; and be it further

Membership. Resolved: That in addition to the members provided for in Resolve 1987, chapter 64, the special commission shall also include one member familiar with early childhood educational programs representing the Department of Educational and Cultural Services appointed by the Commissioner of Educational and Cultural Services and one member familiar with child care services representing the Department of Human Services appointed by the Commissioner of Human Services. Both of those members shall be full voting members; and be it further

Transition. Resolved: That, except as otherwise provided in this resolve, compensation and staffing requirements established by Resolve 1987, chapter 64, for the Special Commission to Study School-entrance Age and Preschool Services shall continue for the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education. Funds appropriated by Resolve 1987, chapter 64, and not expended shall be carried forward and may be used by the Special Commission on Early Childhood Development and Education to carry out its responsibilities; and be it further

Appropriation. Resolved: That the following funds are appropriated from the General Fund to carry out the purposes of this resolve.

1988-89

LEGISLATURE

Special Commission on Early
Childhood Development and
Education

Personal Services	\$ 715
All Other	6,000
Total	<u>\$6,715</u>

Provides funds for the
per diem, travel and
related expenses of
the special commission.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency
cited in the preamble, this resolve shall take effect
when approved.