

Not All Preschools Are Created Equal: What Matters Most and How Best to Measure Quality

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Ready for School, Ready for Life

Institute for Policy Research Policy Briefing with
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The Honorable Dan Lipinski (D-3rd) of Illinois

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Preschool Quality...

the new buzzword in policy and research

“We must expand access to **high-quality early learning** to ensure that all children graduate high school prepared to succeed...”



U.S. Department of Education

“The evidence based on preschool...
Quality preschool education is a profitable investment.”

Society for Research in Child Development

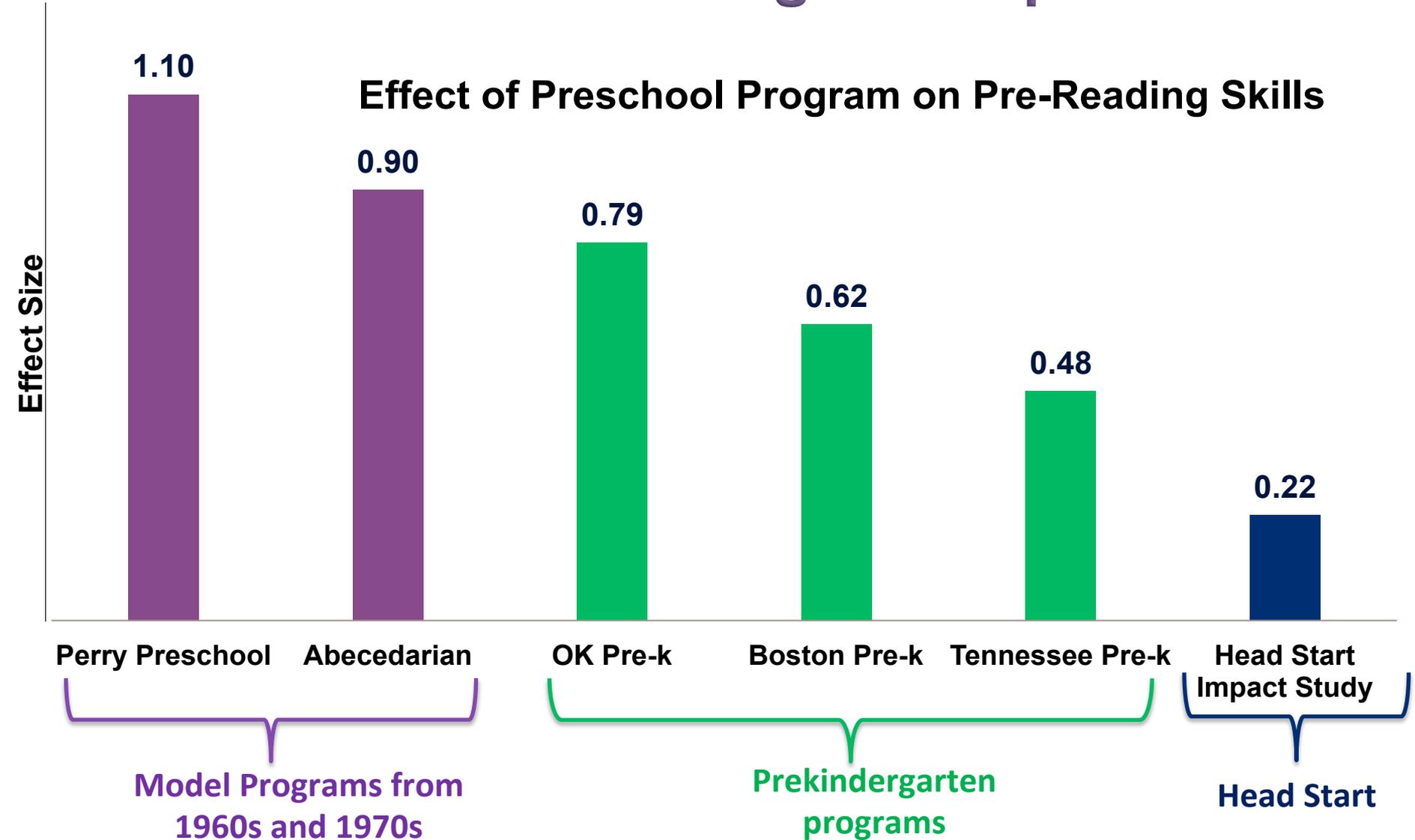
FOUNDATIONFORCHILDDEVELOPMENT

“What Exactly Is ‘**High Quality**’ Preschool?”



Defining Quality Based on Preschool Program Impact

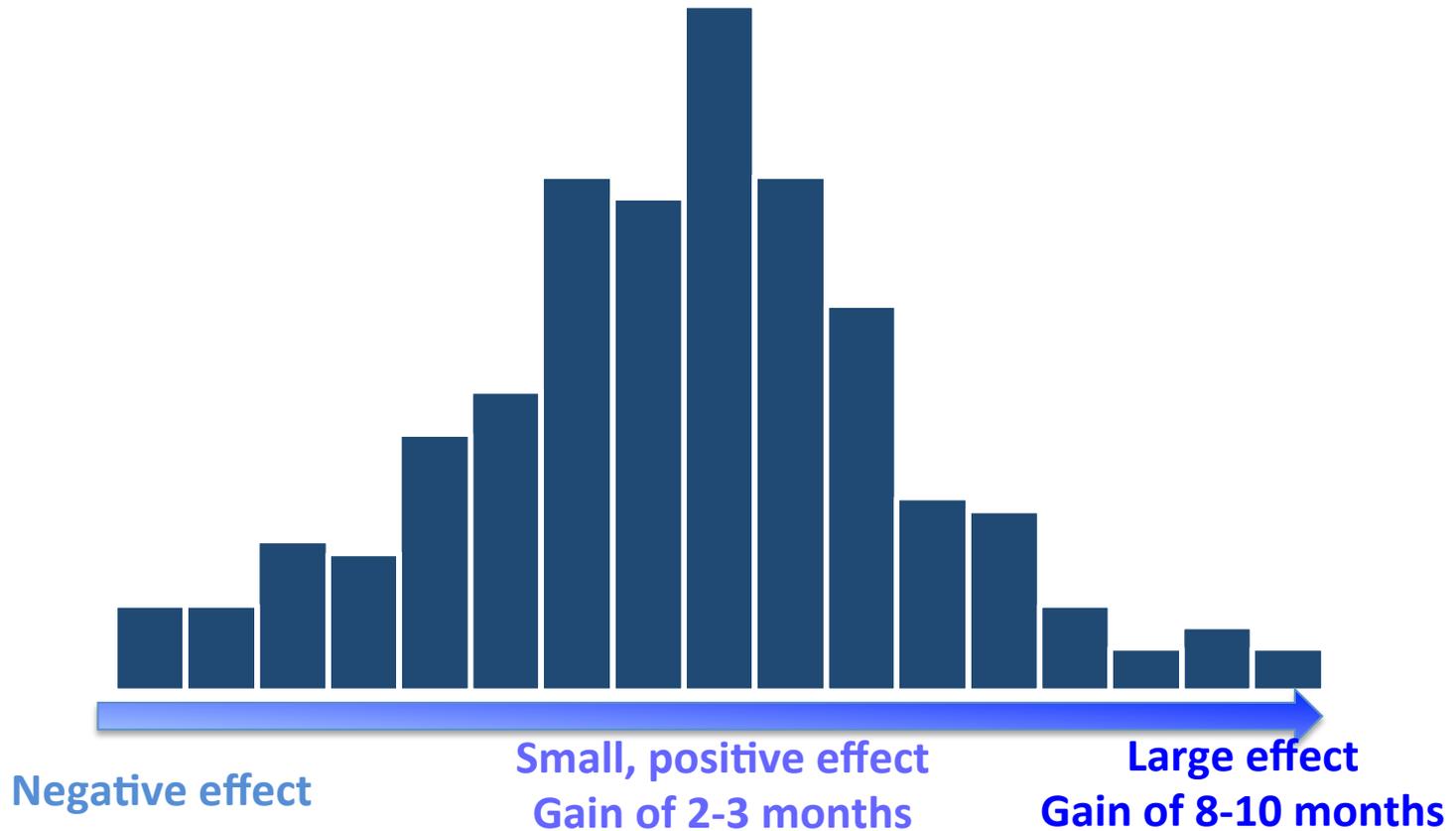
Effect of Preschool Program on Pre-Reading Skills



Large Range of Impact Within Head Start

Effect of Individual Head Start Program on Pre-Reading Skills

Percent of Head Start Centers



A Model of Preschool Quality

Structural Features

- Health and safety
- Class size and child-adult ratio
- Staff qualifications
- Curriculum



Process quality

- Classroom environment
- Teacher-child interactions

State and Federal Systems to Monitor and Rate Preschool Quality



Head
Start



NIEER



Do Pre-k Quality Ratings Relate to Child Outcomes?

- **Conducted a “simulation study”**
 - **Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)**

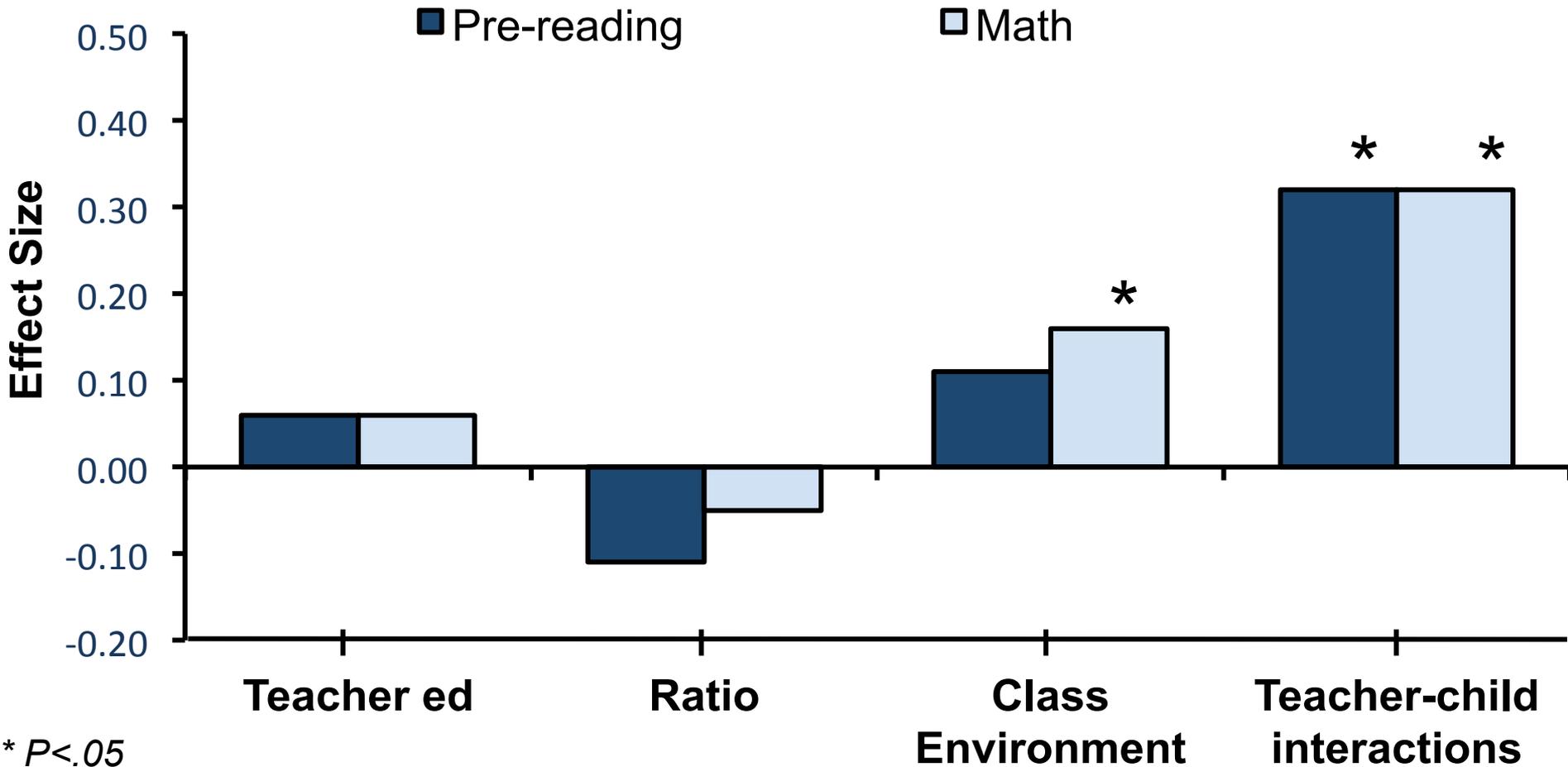
| Quality Measure | % of states use for rating |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Staff Qualifications | 100% |
| Classroom Environment | 92% |
| Ratio and Group Size | 50% |
| Teacher child interactions | <50% |

QRIS Compendium 2010

- **Regulated state-funded pre-k programs**

Pre-k Quality Ratings and Child Outcomes

Relation between Quality Measure Rating and Pre-Reading and Math Skills



* $P < .05$

Implications for Measuring Preschool Quality



Policy Implications

- **Invest in quality preschool to ensure that children are prepared to succeed in K-12 and beyond**
- **Move beyond “checking a box” to measure quality**
- **Focus on where learning occurs: teachers and children**
- **Opportunities to improve quality to maximize preschool investment**