

The Third Step

QUALITY PRESCHOOLS

This fall, over four million youngsters started school—not as kindergartners or first graders, but as three- and four-year-olds off to their first day of "preschool." Today, approximately ten million children under the age of six have fathers and mothers who work outside the home. Most are in the form of child care. ^{in some} ^{of the homes} and the quality of this experience, unquestionably, will affect ^{surely} how ^{these} children grow and determine, in very fundamental ways, their readiness for school.

Placing a young child in the care of others is, for many parents, a difficult decision, one born of necessity. A mother of a three year old told us: "I hate dropping my son off at 7:30 every morning. We've hardly had time to grab a bite of breakfast, and when we meet again at night it's ^{lost-} food time and off to bed. But I'm a single parent and frankly have no choice."¹ Another working mother said: "It's just a fact of life that my husband and I are going to work. We need the two incomes to have anything approaching a comfortable life. That means our little girl has to go to day care" ^{And a} and ^a single mother noted: "The debate over the pros and cons of day care has become tiresome. I need the help. That's the reality of the situation."

^{more had} There has been a dramatic four fold increase, since the 1970s in the ^{in child care in recent years} number of children placed in ^{for up to} child care centers outside the home, ^{has grown four fold.} The type of care is shifting. For example, today 28 percent of all employed mothers use ^{Also kind} child care centers, up 13 percent since 1977. ^{App. to about 1000} And 19 percent depend on ^{written} relatives to care for their children, down from 31 percent in the 1970s. Those ^{wh} using a caregiver in their home has ^{gone down} declined from 7 to 3 percent. The number

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^{child} first five years of their children's lives. A follow-up study ten years later compared
^{program} children who had been in the program with others ^a of similar background ^{group} who had not. The
^{program} children - and especially the girls - were ^{did} doing far better in school. Almost twice
^{as many of the} ~~as many of the program children expected to~~ remain in school for the following five years.
~~And as young adolescents, the non-program boys~~ had committed roughly four times as many
^{not in the program} offenses ^{as} had the program boys, ^{and} their offenses were far more severe. ^{more school}

But good pre-schools, helpful though they can be, face the same problem that schools
 do: many children come to them poorly equipped to learn. Pre-school programs find
 themselves having to help 3 and 4 years olds overcome delayed development and alter self-
 defeating attitudes already deeply ingrained. When pre-schools succeed at those tasks they
 perform an immensely valuable service. But prevention is better still. And prevention must
 start earlier still--in the first weeks and months of life, because it is then that children begin
 to try to understand and master their environment, and find those efforts encouraged - or
 not; first attempt to concentrate and find it possible--or not; first conclude that the world is
 orderly and predictable--or not; first learn that others are basically supportive and caring -
 or not. It is in those years that the foundations for later learning are laid down. Or are not.

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drawn, more resentful and, in some cases, more disruptive through each grade.

Does that mean that the quality of schooling doesn't matter; that the readiness of the student is everything? No. The quality of schooling matters greatly. Schools can make a difference and, in a democracy, schools must take children as they find them and do their best for all. Moreover, even poorly prepared children can be helped by individualized attention from devoted and persistent teachers, especially if the children's families are also involved. But that kind of attention is not always available. And, in any event, in education as in medicine, preventing problems is far more effective than trying to cure them. All of our children should arrive at school ready to learn.

That truth has been recognized for some time, and it is ~~cause of the current concern about the quality and availability of child-care and pre-school programs.~~ High-quality ^{child care or preschool} programs clearly do have a positive effect on children's development and help prepare ^{them} children for school. (A ^{careful} recent study comparing the effects of an ~~intense,~~ ^{with one that offered basic} comprehensive child-care program ~~as against~~ ^{the results would be} medical care only, ~~for~~ ^{not} almost 1,000 low birth weight infants and their families, ~~found~~ ^{that} that at 3 years of age ~~of~~ ^{the} children receiving medical care only were three times as likely to have IQ scores classified as "mentally retarded," and a higher incidence of behavior problems. ^{judged mentally deficient}

Another ^{careful} study traced the long-term consequences of an extensive program ^{from the} that offered day care and family support ^{why the} to low-income families in Syracuse, New York over ^{Fact}

~~preschools in the area. The school subsidizes low-income children through a subsidy from local foundations and social agencies.~~

~~Independence was the first school district to try this sort of integrated program. But with state support, a similar program is now operating in three schools in Hartford, Connecticut. At the R.E. Betances School, in low-income urban area, a mother drops off two children, a six-year-old boy and his three-year-old sister, at 7:30 a.m. The two siblings play for a half hour until 8:00 a.m., when the six-year-old goes to his first grade class. The three-year-old stays at the center all day. At 3 p.m., her brother joins her there again. The mother picks up the children after work at 6 p.m. She told us, "It is comforting to know that my children are in a safe place all day and down the street from where I live."~~

~~Several years ago, the Orangeburg, South Carolina, school district established an all-day program for four-year-olds "at risk." Youngsters receive extra help in basic skills, while their parents attend a training program to reinforce the children's learning. Orangeburg's test scores have increased, and its ~~rate~~ ^{drop-out} has decreased. School officials are convinced that their early intervention program made the difference. Other cities are planning such initiatives. Still, high-quality preschool remains the exception, not the rule.~~

Finding quality preschools for three- and four-year-olds is one thing. But finding good care for ~~the~~ ^{our} littlest children—the infants and toddlers—is quite another.

One mother we talked with ~~said~~ ^{for example} that before returning to work she wanted to place her new baby in a home environment, but no relatives were available to help. She thought about hiring a nanny, but could not afford the cost. Her choice was then between a private day-care home and a center. Unfortunately,

the family day-care home she liked best had a long waiting list. "I had my name on lists for nine months," she recall, "and it was within ten days of when I had to go back to work, and I had no place to keep the baby. I finally found one place that could take her for several months, but it's all so temporary."

Women with children under the age of one are, in fact, the fastest growing segment of the nation's work force. Their children need special care, but Americans are deeply ambivalent about just what our policy should be. Many feel that these little children should be with their ^{parents} mothers, and some experts agree. For instance, Burton White, director of the Parent Education Center in Massachusetts, takes this position: "I firmly believe that most children get a better start in life when, during the majority of their first three years, they are cared for by their parents or other nuclear family members, not by any form of substitute care."³

*Ed
Lynn
Little*

~~(International paragraph)~~

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Absent a national policy in ~~this country~~, many day-care services operate "underground," and it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many there are. What is known, however, is that they vary widely in quality. ~~One center we~~ visited in New Jersey had a well-deserved reputation for high quality.⁴ It remained open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Its rooms were large and cheerful with lots of play and activity spaces. Children had easy access to toys and books, and the playground outside was attractive and well-equipped. Youngsters came from a broad range of family backgrounds. Teachers were well-trained and reasonably well-paid. Turnover was minimal.

At another center we visited by contrast, doors were locked to prevent children from straying. Rooms were cluttered and the atmosphere chaotic.

With a rapid turnover of demoralized, poorly-paid staff, children were barely supervised, seldom comforted, and almost never taught.⁵ Could parents have known what was happening at this center? It's hard to know, because the directors were deceptive in describing the program and parents were not encouraged to visit. Is day care an area in which we have to apply the principle, "Let the buyer beware?"

→ The first three years of life, perhaps more than any other, are precious and crucial, and it seems quite impossible to imagine fulfilling the nation's first education goal if ^{young} little ones are not well cared for. And yet, the truly disturbing fact is that far too many are placed in centers that are custodial, not caring.

ch According to a National Academy of Science study, the biggest childcare challenge facing the nation is infant care.

^{get other} Few creative options are available. However, new federal legislation passed last year may offer some relief. Under this program—called the Child Care and Development Block Grants—^pparents with young children are eligible to receive certificates and vouchers to help pay for a child-care service of their choice, either in the home or away. However, nearly 20 percent of the money appropriated for this program has been set aside to support new initiatives, making it possible for states to expand day-care services. We urge that *the new federal child-care initiative should be used by every state to start new programs and expand the quality of care for small children, especially in disadvantaged communities.*

(INSERT EXAMPLES)

507 In light of the increase in federal support as well as the growing need for childcare states will have a larger role to play not only in distributing money and starting new programs, but in assuring quality as well. Right now, 40

looking down the road

but at the day care program must also hope to include.

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Some states have already been taken.

The Children's Defense Fund surveyed the 50 states in October to see how the states planned to use the set aside money for early childhood programs. Arizona is designing new infant toddler care. Connecticut will use the money for expanding Head Start to year round programs. Florida will use money to train child care providers especially for children with special needs. New Mexico is giving priority to those programs which offer family support services. Oklahoma plans to use its grants to develop programs for children in families that are homeless.

New Jersey is starting "Good Start", an early childhood initiative in five different areas of the state that is targeted for infants and toddlers in urban school districts.

Ohio has one of the broadest initiatives to expand the services for infants and toddlers. It is setting up a full-time, full-year program in high schools and in low-income areas and expanding part-time programs into full-day programs.

Oregon plans to use federal funds for start-up grants to school districts starting and operating on-site child development centers for preschool children and programs that link child care with half day preschool programs such as head Start or Oregon's prekindergarten program.

South Carolina plans to use funds to extend the school day for children ages three to five to meet the needs of working parents and to expand services for children with special needs.

Tennessee plans to expand family home networks and coops with senior citizens.

to state is applying it as program by
high income children security services citizens to care
for infants & toddlers in their homes.

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~~But~~ the reality is that the need for care for infants and the support of mothers is enormous. But care in the child's home is increasingly used by only a small percentage of families--only four percent. If indeed it is the most serious crisis we face in child care, than we must find a way to provide family day care arrangements. Right now, family day care centers may be the best form of support for infants where infants and toddlers can be in a small setting.

~~We need to encourage the development of more such family day care settings that are of high quality and where the care givers are trained in developing all the dimensions of readiness in a child. The National Family Day Care Project, sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women builds partnerships between the volunteers in the projects and community groups. (footnote Children's Defense Fund.) The volunteers survey their local community first to see what the day care needs are. They then recruit new family day care providers, assist with an orientation program, and work with municipalities in establishing zoning laws that do not prohibit family day care home. The project works with other philanthropic groups such as the Junior League and Kiwanis Clubs in publicizing the program. Over the last four years the project has spread to 20 states creating 700 new family day care homes with 3,000 new spaces for young children.~~

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percent of all children in home care are not protected by any state regulations.

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Even where licensing does exist, ~~according to the Children's Defense Fund~~, standards are often too weak and inadequately enforced. Indeed, many care providers are exempt from "minimal health and safety standards." *(cite Child Defense Fund)*

Moreover, ^{child care} standards vary widely, from state to state. Consider, for example, child-to-staff ratios. For one-year-olds, the maximum ~~ratio~~ permitted in California is 4 to 1; in Delaware it is 7 to 1. For four-year-olds, the maximum ratio in Illinois is 10 to 1; in Delaware, it is 15 to 1. And there are

~~other differences:~~ For example, consider also ^{very general} space requirements. One state specifies ~~twenty~~ ^{thirty} five square feet per child in any day care facility, while in another it's only three. Further, Delaware requires training for day-care providers; California and New York do not. Nebraska permits corporal punishment; California does not. Darlene Bolig of the Delaware Education Department summed up state child-care standards and regulations in one word: "patchwork."

~~In addressing this set of issues, we need to break down the imaginary barrier between "caring" and "education."~~ *on framing new standards for child care we have greatly*

Early childhood specialists have organized themselves into two warring camps—with the "day-care" people on one side and the "preschoolers" on the other—as if little children ~~could be~~ *fall into one*

~~shunted back and forth between~~ *their development forced into* bureaucratic boxes. Now is the time to end the bickering that feeds the egos of adults, but diminishes the school readiness of our children. We need to develop national standards that integrate day care and preschool; that focus on the needs of the whole child—from physical well-being to moral awareness; and that apply to all preschool youngsters.

~~Years ago, Bettye Caldwell at the University of Arkansas coined the wonderfully descriptive term "educare."~~ *day care and* It captures, precisely, the goal we have

defeat

Clearly, we need more explicitly not more gently in the regulations governing day care in any state. The state should be able to say more when it comes to child personnel programs & rules should be able to say

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somebody more it grants them "Bettye Caldwell"

in mind. Education is a seamless web. Common standards should apply to both day care and preschool programs.

"All providers have to pull down their fences and stand side by side to meet the needs of children," said Muriel Lundgren, director of the Lab School and Children's Resource Center at Miami-Dade Community College. "We've always segregated services, only focusing on one part of the child, when in reality, children are integrated beings. We need to tap all the resources and bring them together to meet children's needs."

~~We are encouraged that the well-regarded National Association for the Education of Young Children has a procedure for accrediting, on a voluntary basis, early childhood programs with ten or more children. In support of that procedure, the association developed its own child care standards.~~ At least seven other national groups have their own recommended standards, including The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Public Health Association, which just jointly published a new report on standards that covers almost every relevant topic, ranging from security conditions to playground equipment.

These national efforts are impressive. However, state practices are still uneven, and we clearly lack in this country a consensus as to what the basic standards for child care should be. We believe that state and national leaders should come together to establish for the first time an agreed-upon framework to guide each state in shaping its own child-care regulations, which would in turn lead to the registration of all child-care centers. We recommend, therefore, a National Child-care Forum should be convened by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and other interested state and national groups to develop common standards for day care and preschoolers. The goal would be to ensure the licensing of day-care centers in every state, at least by the year 2000.

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In the end, high-quality child care depends on high-quality staffing. Our best teachers simply must be assigned to young children. ~~And~~ yet, the pattern is often quite the opposite. Preschool teachers receive the worst pay and the lowest status. Former Secretary of Commerce, Peter G. Peterson, challenged national priorities when he asked: "Why do we continue to devote so many resources to comforting us at the end of life . . . while we pay a Head Start teacher less than \$10,000 to prepare us at the beginning of life?"

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Head Start
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have declined since the 1970's
1970's
Head Start
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It is shocking that the average annual salary for those who provide early childhood education is far less than what public school teachers receive. Indeed, the average salary is less than \$6.00 an hour, not much more than the minimum wages that teenagers receive for making French Fries at McDonalds. This sends a powerful signal about how we value little children. Since the mid-1970s the real wages of day-care teachers have actually declined by a quarter, and now average \$11,000 per year.

Is it any wonder that the annual turnover among staff has tripled in the last decade, to well over 40 percent in many places? In describing how good teachers must abandon their first love of working with young children because of the low salaries, Mary Renck Jalongo, an early childhood specialist, notes, "It is more politically expedient to exploit child-care workers than initiate and fund a national system of quality child care." We simply cannot deliver good child care on the cheap.

preschool

States can play a role in increasing the compensation of child care staff. Michigan, for example, calls for the payment of preschool teachers at the level of elementary teachers in the state. Seven states—from Connecticut to Minnesota—have provided state funds to compensate staff in preschool programs. Connecticut established a cable TV training program. Rhode Island

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paid for the funding of training non-English speaking staff in state operated programs.

Better training is essential, too. ^{AP insert 15A} In France, early childhood teachers have the equivalent of a master's degree.¹⁰ The director of a child-care center is a pediatric nurse with training in public health and child development. Staff assistants usually have two years of college, plus a two-year course in child development. By contrast in the United States, about one-third of the teachers in preschool centers have had informal child-related training, and only 24 percent have a "Child Development Associate" credential, as recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children—that may or may not require a two-year degree.¹¹ Even worse, thirty-one states require "no training" for home care providers, another sad commentary on the priority we attach to children.

Let's agree that educating little children is at least as important as educating graduate students, that the first years of learning matter most. We simply must change our thinking. Guiding little children is an awesome responsibility. It is at the very heart of our society, and it is not something that "just anyone" can do well.

What we propose is not only a new attitude, but a new status for "educare" professionals—one in which they are well regarded, well paid, and well trained. To reach this objective, the nation's community colleges should become vigorous partners in the ready-to-learn campaign.

← A new degree program ^{showed} be created to educate child-care professionals. The curriculum for this program would include courses on child health and physical well-being, the emotional development of the child, ways to build social confidence in children, moral development, activities for language enrichment, and experiences for developing general knowledge in a child—all

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insert preschools ~~###~~

While many teachers in our kindergarten survey called for increased funding for preschools, many also called for more training of preschool staff.

"Preschools and day cares are staffed all too often by people who are not properly trained," said one kindergarten teachers. "All too often developmentally inappropriate programs are occurring. My heart would break when I observed children who had been in day care becoming bullies, chronically depressed, and very insecure. Better

training could help children with those problems before they come to school.

...tied to the dimensions of readiness. Threaded through the courses would be an emphasis on pedagogy for young children and on child psychology.

Community colleges, perhaps more than any other type of higher learning institution, are deeply rooted in their communities. Their mission is service, and helping to shape and improve early education is one of the most important services that the community college movement could aim to provide. *are in a unique position to search, develop, and support such programs.* *RTL* *as we head into a new century.*

But the linkage we have in mind goes further. We imagine that every one of the more than 12,000 community colleges in the country could connect up with ~~all~~ of the day-care and preschool programs in the area it serves, helping not only with the front end education of staff workers, but also with their continuing education, giving them professional support and status. Further, colleges could help to recruit young students as well as midcareer people and retirees to the profession. All of this will help to create and maintain a top quality system of child care—which goes to the very heart of the community college's new commitment to "building communities." *thus,*

Every community college should establish, as a special priority, an associate degree in child care, leading to the designation of each graduate as a Child-Care Professional.

made to 17

And to support such efforts
A The Board of Regents in New York State has proposed a new certification for pre-elementary teachers and *in New York, increase grants* *courses* *for young children* *deduct* *Students are given field experience outside their college* *before graduation* *classroom* *help* *before graduation* *5-6* *set* *assistants at child-care centers in the area, the other half transfer to a four-*

year degree program at a state university. Duchess also offers an evening child growth and development course for those already in the field.

to improve the skills and effectiveness of current community child care providers
 Standing Rock Community College in Fort Yates, North Dakota, will offer a two-year degree program in early childhood education beginning next fall.

Standing Rock, a small institution located on an Indian reservation, will include in its program courses in the liberal arts and child development, as advocated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

practical
 Standing Rock will also provide students with supervised training to give them experience working in a child-care setting.

Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, also has a two-year associate degree program in early childhood education that provides training for child care providers. Cuyahoga used public service ads to recruit new students for the program. Also the college established a not-for-profit placement and referral service for graduates. The state of Ohio then established standards for the training, which included classes on how to work with young children who have special needs. "Across the country, there are a lot of workshops and training, but generally the classes do not lead to a degree," said Joan Neth, administrator for the program. "For the most part, providers have wanted training at a minimum cost, and quickly because the whole profession is poverty stricken." Cuyahoga's community set up a grant program for home day-care providers who need training, by figuring out how the providers could qualify for federal money.

Miami-Dade Community College is another example, offering an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood—a sixty-two credit program with a base in the liberal arts, a core of early childhood courses and electives, and practical experience. Also on site is the Children's Resource Center, which works with handicapped students. The Center sponsors two annual conferences each year

for professionals in the field of Early Childhood education, and also offer High Scope Training for campus faculty and public school teachers. Another unique aspect of Miami-Dade is its Post-Secondary Vocational Adult Education Program, which offers a competency based, 750 hour certificate program in Childcare of Infant/Toddler Care to adults without high school diplomas.

Miami-Dade
~~The community college~~ has forged alliances not only with the Miami public schools, but with social service agencies for young children. In the planning stages are classes on child care for parents and a foster parenting program. According to Muriel Lundgren, director of the Children's Resource Center and the Lab School, the goal of Miami-Dade Community College is to offer a complete family-oriented program that meets the needs of children from birth to age 8, by providing child care courses for parents, students, and professionals, and efficiently coordinating other available services. This kind of comprehensive program is precisely what is needed in communities to meet the vital needs of our children.

Nationally
 Overall, about thirty-seven two-year colleges offer preschool education programs. *according to the latest federal statistics* In 1989, about 700 students received degrees through these programs. Many other colleges offer free classes on child care.¹² But it is difficult for students who are not pursuing a degree to obtain financial aid. To attract people into the profession, we also must have scholarships and loan programs.

Several bills now in Congress seek to improve the quality of elementary and secondary teachers by providing new loans, new scholarships, and new incentives to attract students into the profession. There is also proposed legislation to create scholarships for paraprofessionals to become certified teachers; to establish "teaching schools" that would link elementary and secondary schools to higher education institutions; to provide grants to colleges

to train teachers for elementary and secondary schools in low-income areas; and to fund teacher fellowships and mid-career teacher-training awards for nontraditional students. We urge that day-care and preschool teachers be included in any legislative initiative aimed at improving the pool of teachers.

One final point. The financial incentives are still far too low. Yet working with the littlest children can be rewarding and we urge that every high school encourage students not only to volunteer as aides but also to consider preschool education as a profession, and community college might consider offering scholarships to attract leaders into the profession. In France, for example, students of preschool education can attend college tuition-free and receive a stipend in return for pledging to work in a preschool program for five years after graduation. We simply must find better ways to make the provision of child care ^a more respected profession with high standards of quality.

Most children who come to kindergarten will have spent thousands of hours in such programs, and the quality of their experiences there will shape profoundly the quality of their schooling. We agree with a Colorado teacher who said, "The most important step this country can take is to make sure that each child is offered the opportunity for preschool programs that provide child care." Another teacher added, "If every child could have a preschool year, ^{high-quality} many of our problems would be solved. They would have better language skills, better motor capabilities, a broad base of knowledge, and I'd be thrilled."