

# Tulsa to Toronto:

## Lessons Learned From Assessing Early Childhood Environments and Outcomes

May 3, 2010

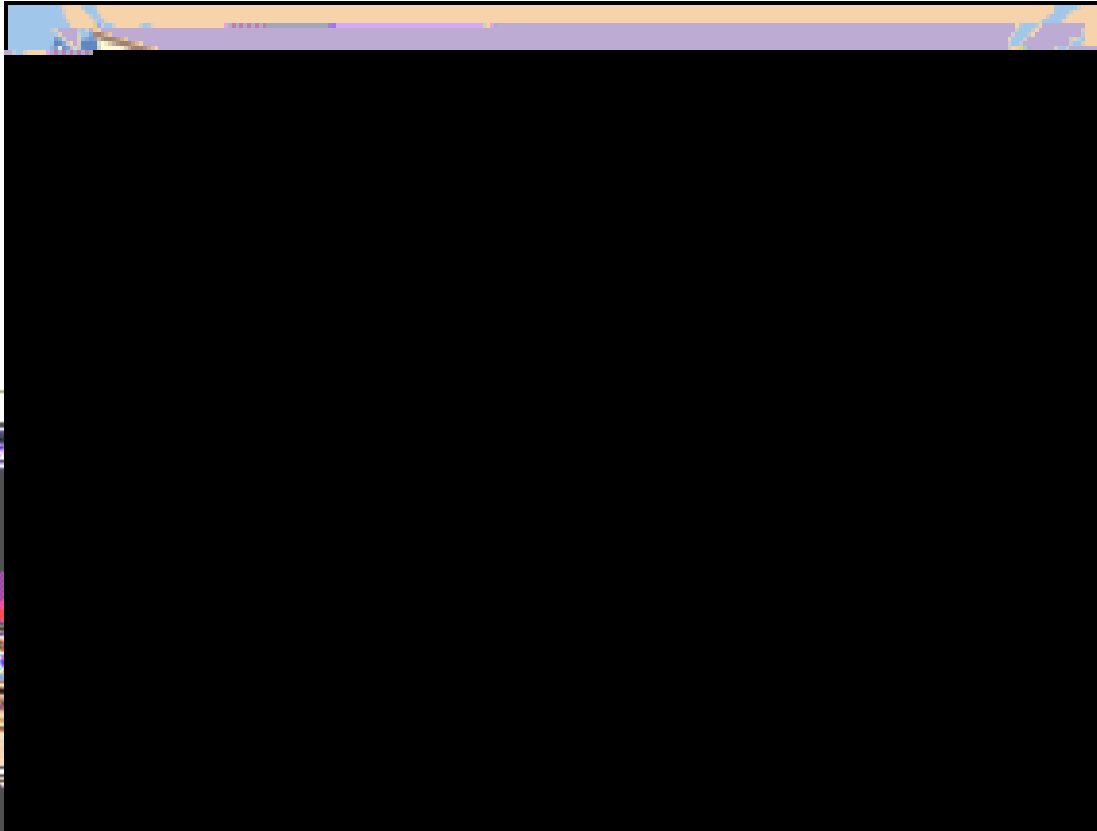
Atkinson Centre

OISE University of Toronto

Deborah A. Phillips, Ph.D.  
Professor of Psychology and Public Policy  
Georgetown University  
Washington, DC



# Tulsa pre-K Study



# Tulsa pre-K Study

Targeted program (1990) became universal  
1998

99% of OK school districts participate

\$140 million in state funds: \$3,966 per child

Now # 1 in U.S. in % 4-year-olds  
served (71%)

All lead teachers: B.A. degree, early  
childhood teacher certificate

Lead teachers paid at public  
school wages

1:10 ratios, 20-child group size

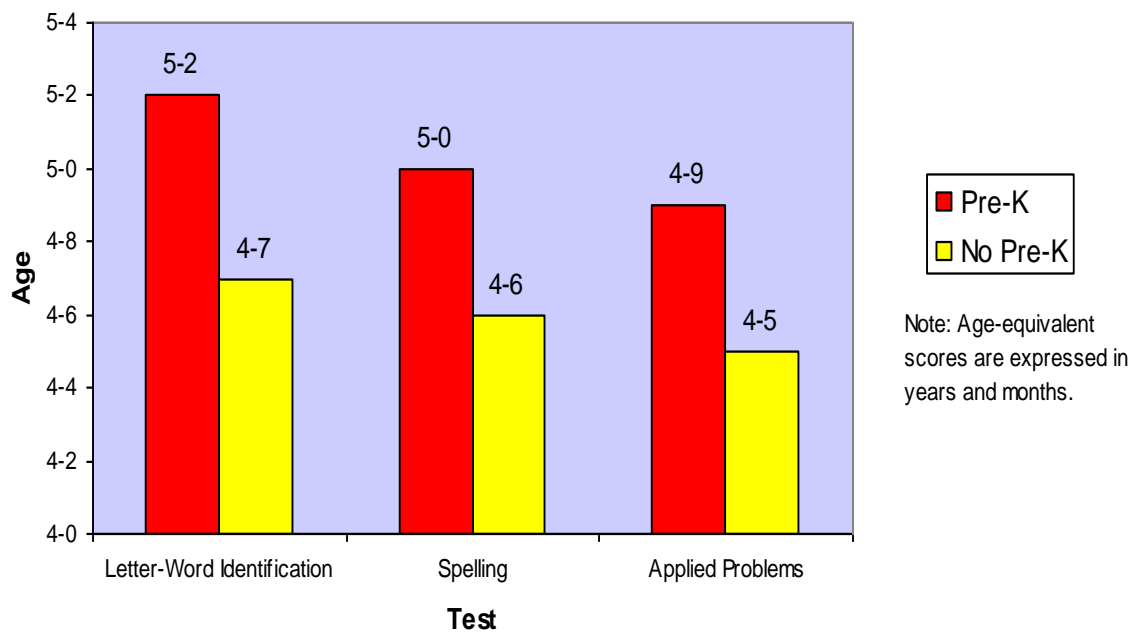
# Regression Discontinuity Design with Effective Treatment

Figure 1

Control (Younger Children)

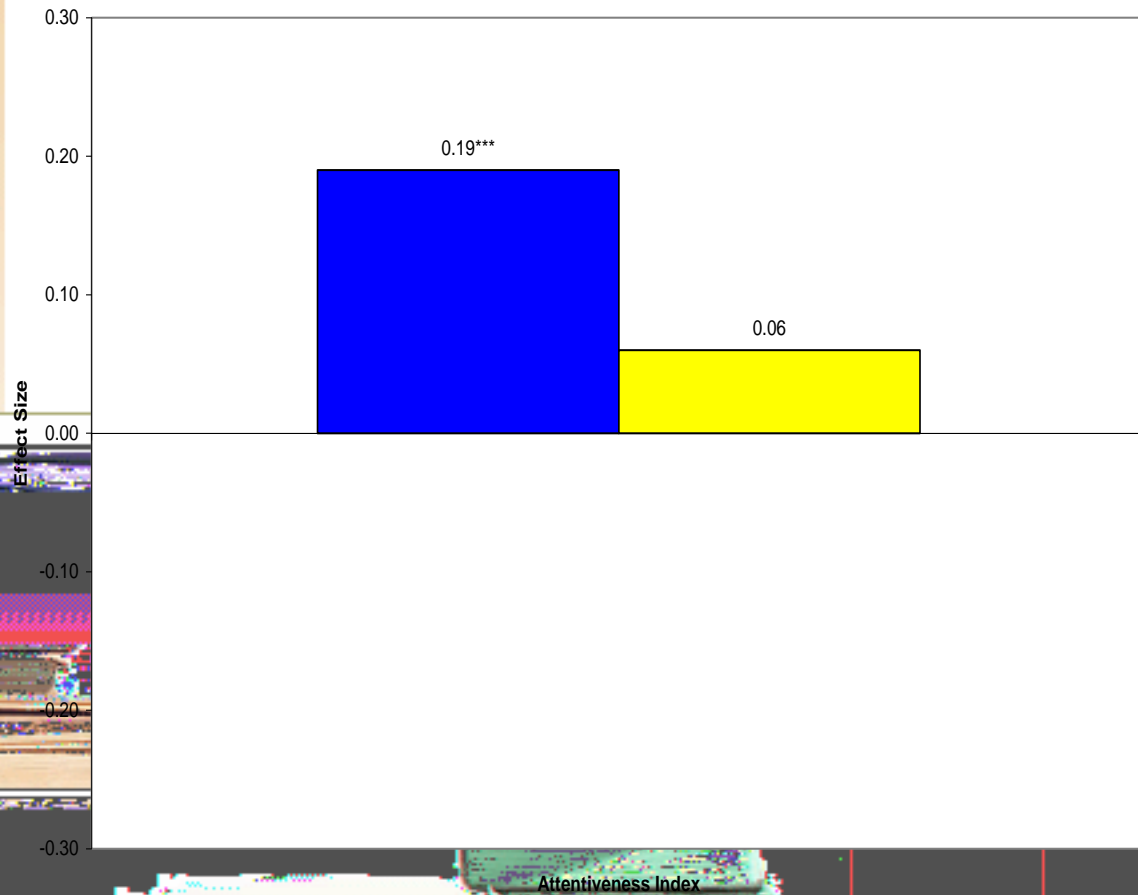
Treatment (Older Children)

Cut-off Birth Date  
Age



Students in Tulsa pre-K advance several months beyond other students.

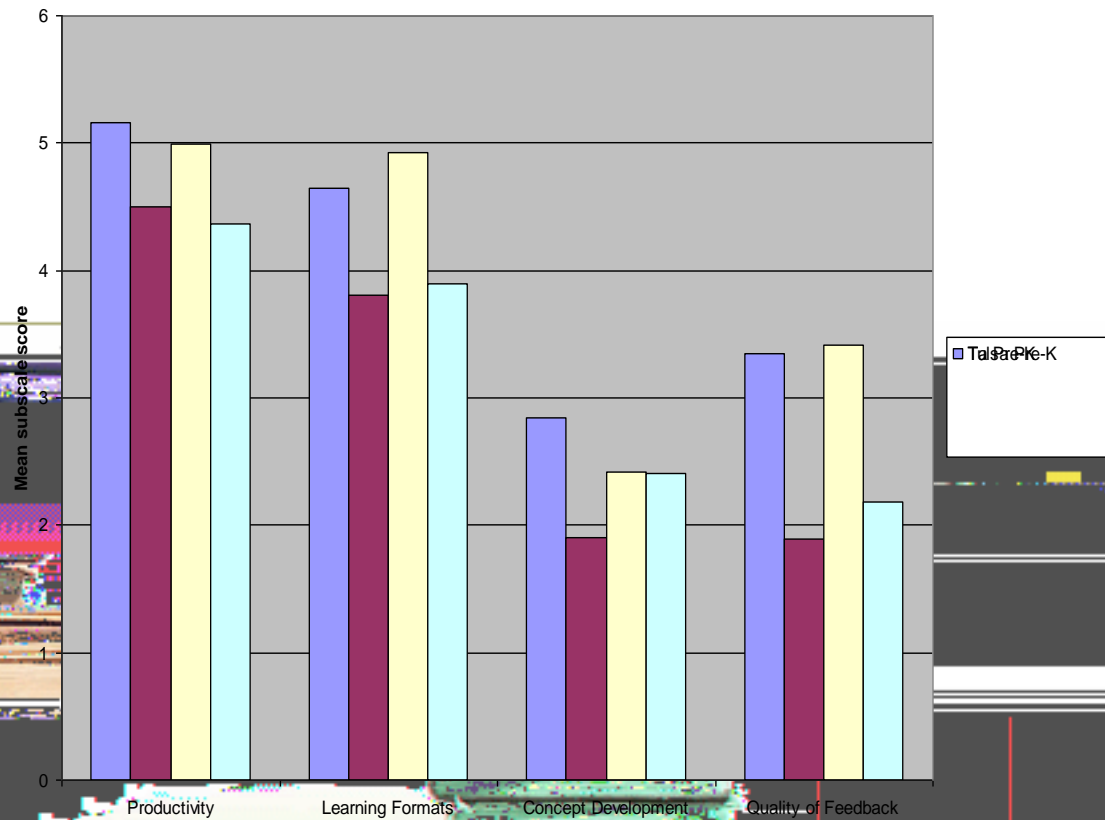
# Social Developmental Outcomes



# WHY? Classroom Quality



Tulsa vs. Other State Pre-K: CLASS







# quality classroom processes

None of our inputs predicted  
CLASS scores

Time dedicated to literacy  
activities predicted by

and, at marginal level, to  
reliance on curricula that  
focus on tightly organized  
literacy instruction

# So, what is going on?

All BA-level teachers with ECE certification

All 1:10 ratios

Pre-K classrooms in elementary schools

Students? 2/3 in poverty

Salaries/benefits

## Other candidates

Mental health: 23-30%  
depression rates among  
child care staff

Quality of undergraduate  
education

Enjoyment of/commitment  
to teaching career

Support from educational  
leaders

Community pride

# Differing Goals for Quality Measurement

Understanding active ingredients for child development

Understand impacts of ECE  
Hold programs accountable

Public (parent) education/  
empowerment/transparency

# Differing Strategies

## Inputs:

Teacher qualifications,  
compensation, turnover

Class size and ratios

Curriculum/Activities

## Outputs:

Child assessments (for what  
purpose?)

# QRIS: Insights from U.S. Context

Dependent on:

provision of financial resources and incentives

dissemination of information to parents/public

Independent system for observing/rating by validated monitors

Relationship to licensing?

Accreditation?

# QRIS: Assuring Effectiveness

Are consumers/parents involved in the development and evolution of the QRS?

for the ECE system?

Are ratings related in predictable way to more intensive, process quality assessments (validity)?

Are some programs not participating?

Are lower rated programs moving up?

Is an adequate number of programs achieving top ratings?



# QRIS: Assuring Effectiveness

development in a clear and consistent way? Is there any evidence of a threshold effect?

Are parents aware of and using the QRIS?

Over time, are subsidized children participating in higher quality programs?

Are families with low-incomes exiting the formal market to use lower-priced informal care?

# Quality: Why bother?

Tulsa story

New NICHD evidence

Hours more strongly predicted  
externalizing behavior in lower-quality  
care

Emerging stress story:

Some children exhibit elevated  
cortisol in child care

Mediated by group size (peers)?

Mediated by quality?

Mediated by temperament?

# Persistent Dilemmas

Dealing with mixed delivery system within ECE

Cultural clashes across ECE and elementary education

Goal confusion: safety or development or education?

Monitor inputs vs. outputs?

Costs re: supply, hours, quality?

William Gormley, Megan  
Gunnar, Nathan Fox, Co-  
Investigators

Tulsa, OK teachers,  
administrators  
Colleagues on panel