



The Call to End Preschool Expulsion

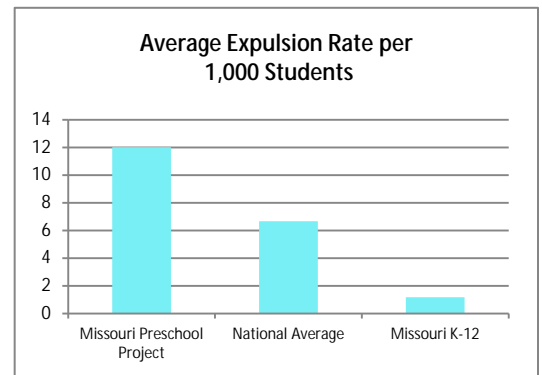
Prevention and Intervention Strategies

Among the 40 states who fund early childhood education, Missouri ranked 10th in highest number of children expelled from a preschool setting due to discipline problems.¹

The Problem: Missouri Preschoolers are Being Expelled at Alarming Rates

Data from the National Prekindergarten Study¹ finds that **12.02 children per 1,000** enrolled in the Missouri Preschool Project (MPP), the state-funded preschool program, are expelled every year. These statistics are even more alarming when compared to the national average and data from K-12 education. Nationally, 6.67 students per 1,000 are expelled from preschool yearly.

In Missouri's K-12 educational setting, 1.18 students per 1,000 are expelled yearly or 10.4 preschoolers to every 1 K-12 student. Minority and culturally diverse children are most vulnerable for being both unprepared for kindergarten and also expelled from preschool. Nationally, African American preschoolers are twice as likely as European American preschoolers to be expelled.¹ Of all African America students expelled from preschool, boys account for more than 91 percent¹.



The Costs of Preschool Expulsion: Individual, Societal and Monetary Outcomes

Preschool behavior problems are the *single best predictor* of adolescent delinquency and adult imprisonment.² Expulsion from preschool leaves young children without access to the educational and intervention supports they critically need. Without the needed supports, these children are most likely to develop chronic behavior problems, contributing to³

- school failure, peer rejection, substance abuse, truancy, incarceration, unemployment, divorce, psychiatric illness, and early death in adolescence and adulthood.
- more costly and long-term interventions just to keep these problems “in check”.

Untreated problem behaviors can cause significant monetary and intangible burdens to society.⁴

- High School Dropout: **\$300,000 to 400,000** in lower earnings and fringe benefits.
- Drug Abuse: **\$650,000 to 740,000** in reduced productivity, medical costs, premature death, and criminal justice resources.
- Career Criminality: **\$2.1 to 3.7 million** in victim costs, criminal justice system costs, and lost opportunity while serving prison time.

The Resolution: Policy Recommendations

- 1. Develop a statewide policy to require early intervention.** Require all child care settings to avoid expulsion by seeking early consultation and intervention strategies. Teachers should document their efforts to prevent and reduce the problem behaviors.
- 2. Provide statewide access to behavioral consultation for all early childhood teachers.** Behavioral consultation has been found to predict lower expulsion rates, reduced problem behaviors, and increased social skills.⁵ Consultation should be provided as part of a statewide network including program-wide topics and individual child concerns.

3. **Support teacher training in the area of classroom behavior management.** Training and technical assistance in effective classroom behavior management is needed. Programs such as *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA)*, the *Incredible Years Teacher Training Program*, *Incredible Years Parent and Child Training Series*, and *First Steps to Success*⁶ should be considered. Current levels of pre-service and in-service teacher training on classroom behavior management are inadequate and this contributes to child behavior problems and increased levels of teacher stress. In fact, high levels of teacher stress predict increased behavior problems and expulsions in child care settings.¹
4. **Require early childhood programs to implement program policy and practice strategies to support behavior management.** State policy should require early childhood programs to adopt policies and strategies focused on the prevention of behavior problems. One example of this is *Program-Wide Positive Behavior Supports* which is a variation of *School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports*. This program has been successfully implemented throughout Missouri (<http://pbissmissouri.org>) and the nation (www.pbis.org). It has been shown to significantly reduce problem behaviors and increase school engagement.⁷
5. **Support teacher training in cultural awareness.** In-service teacher training should include knowledge and instructional practices to help teachers develop a greater awareness about the cultural-base of the local community where they teach.⁸
6. **Provide consistent policy development and funding to fully support teacher training, consultation services, and intervention strategies.** To fully implement these recommendations requires policy development and funding. Although the preschool expulsion data is limited to the 3-5 age range, significant behavioral concerns occur prior to that age group (infant/toddler) and extend into the early years of elementary school. Therefore, policy development and the provision of funding and related resources should be consistent across the early childhood years of birth – age 8.

Impact on Children and Society

Many of the problems associated with juvenile and adult criminal activity, including substance abuse, can be reduced with effective early childhood intervention and prevention services. This includes addressing young children's behavior concerns prior to school entry. The early childhood setting, including care for infants and toddlers as well as preschoolers, provides a significant opportunity to support young children's growth and development. To do this with a high degree of effectiveness requires supporting program directors and teachers with pre-service and in-service education and classroom-based mentoring.

¹ Gilliam, W. S. (2005). Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems. New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center.

² Dishion, T.J., French, D.C., & Patterson, G.R. (1995). The development and ecology of antisocial behavior. In D. Cicchetti & D.J. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental Psychopathology, Vol. 2: Risk, Disorder, and Adaptation* (pp. 421-471). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

³ Lipsey, M. W. & Derzon, J. H. (1998). Predictors of violent or serious delinquency in adolescence and early adulthood: A synthesis of longitudinal research. In R. Loeber & D. P. Farrington (Eds.), *Serious & Violent Juvenile Offenders: Risk Factors and Successful Interventions* (pp. 86-105). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁴ Cohen, M. A., Piquero, A. R., & Jennings, W. G. (2010). Estimating the costs of bad outcomes for at-risk youth and the benefits of early childhood interventions to reduce them. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 21, 391-434.

⁵ Perry, D.F, Dunne, M.C., McFadden, L., & Campbell, D. (2008). Reducing the risk for preschool expulsion: Mental health consultation for young children with challenging behaviors. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 17, 44-54.

⁶ Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. S. (2003). Comprehensive evidence-based social-emotional curricula for young children: An analysis of efficacious adoption potential. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 23, 62-73.

⁷ Bradshaw, C.P., Mitchell, M.M., Leaf, P.J. (2010). Examining the effects of Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on Student Outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 12, 122-48.

⁸ Abbate-Vaughn, J. & Wright, B. L. (2010). Preparing early childhood teachers: Policies, transitions and school readiness challenges. In I. M. Saleh & M. S. Khine (Eds.) *Teaching Teachers: Approaches in Improving Quality of Education*. Nova Science Publishing Inc.

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