EARLY LEARNING

Rowena Phair, OECD.
To cover:

- The impacts of early learning
- Trends in early childhood education
- Assessing the impact of early childhood education
- What you can do
- Questions/comments
Some views on early learning and ECEC …

• Prior to starting school, children are too young to “learn”

• Early education is harmful

• Home circumstances are over-riding

• Any positive effects of ECEC “fade out” in early schooling.
Yet early learning is predictive of a broad set of positive outcomes …

- Educational attainment
- Employment and earnings
- Physical and mental health
- Civic engagement
- Law abiding
- Happiness and life satisfaction.
Some early learning matters most …

- Self-regulation
- Verbal/communication skills
- Emotional skills
- Numeracy
- Social skills
Early learning starts in the home ...

(Source: EPPE, 2004)

Effect sizes on literacy, age 5
ECEC effects are positive, but variable

Change between 2003 and 2012 in the relationship between students’ mathematics performance and their attendance in pre-primary school

Score-point difference in mathematics performance between students who reported that they had attended pre-primary education (ISCED 0) for more than one year and those who hadn’t

OECD average 2003

2003: [Bar chart with countries and score-point differences shaded in purple for 2003]
2012: [Bar chart with countries and score-point differences shaded in red for 2012]

Countries listed with score-point differences:
- Slovak Republic: 74
- France: +34
- Belgium-China: +54
- Switzerland: +28
- Czech Republic: +41
- Greece: +28
- Denmark: +31
- Italy: +31
- Austria: +28
- New Zealand: +31
- Germany: +31
- Spain: +31
- Turkey: +28
- Hong Kong-China: +28
- Sweden: +19
- Macao-China: +19
- Luxembourg: +26
- Netherlands: +15
- Mexico: +20
- Japan: +15
- United States: +20
- Brazil: +20
- Norway: +20
- Russian Federation: +20
- Tunisia: +20
- Canada: +20
- Korea: +20
- Ireland: +20
- Latvia: +20
High quality ECEC is especially positive for disadvantaged children (Source: Bartik, 2014)
Although increasing participation in ECEC does not always lift outcomes ...

Correlation between the raise in enrolment rates in ECEC and the increase in PISA mathematics scores

% change in mathematics scores between 2006 and 2012

% change in enrolment rates in pre-primary education between 1996 and 2002

$y = 0.0038x + 0.0017$

$R^2 = 0.00066$
More is being invested in ECEC
But countries struggle to measure the quality and impact of ECEC?

• Measures of quality:
  - Tend to focus on structural aspects
  - Have weak predictive capability
  - Are subject to variability, and
  - Are costly.
Interest from countries in children’s early learning outcomes has arisen from:

– Concerns about uneven quality of ECEC provision and poor measures for assessing quality
– Intentions to lift ECEC participation, and wanting to ensure quality and impact
– Interest in improving equity for disadvantaged children
– Interest in getting the maximum value from ECEC for their students.
Purpose of the Study

• To help countries improve children’s experiences and outcomes
  – at a critical point in their development
  – across emotional and social well-being, and emerging cognitive skills
  – in the context of children’s individual characteristics, their home environment and their early learning experiences.
• Encourage evidence-based approaches, ie evaluations and comparative research
• Don’t assume inputs = outcomes
• Insist on information about impacts on students
• Encourage your countries to join the new OECD Study.

What you can do …
Questions/comments?