

# Tulsa to Toronto:

## Lessons Learned From Assessing Early Childhood Environments and Outcomes

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# Background

- How and how much do early care and education experiences affect children's development?
- Active ingredients?
- Staffing Study
- NICHD SECCYD
- Tulsa, Oklahoma pre-K study
- Individual differences



# Tulsa pre-K Study



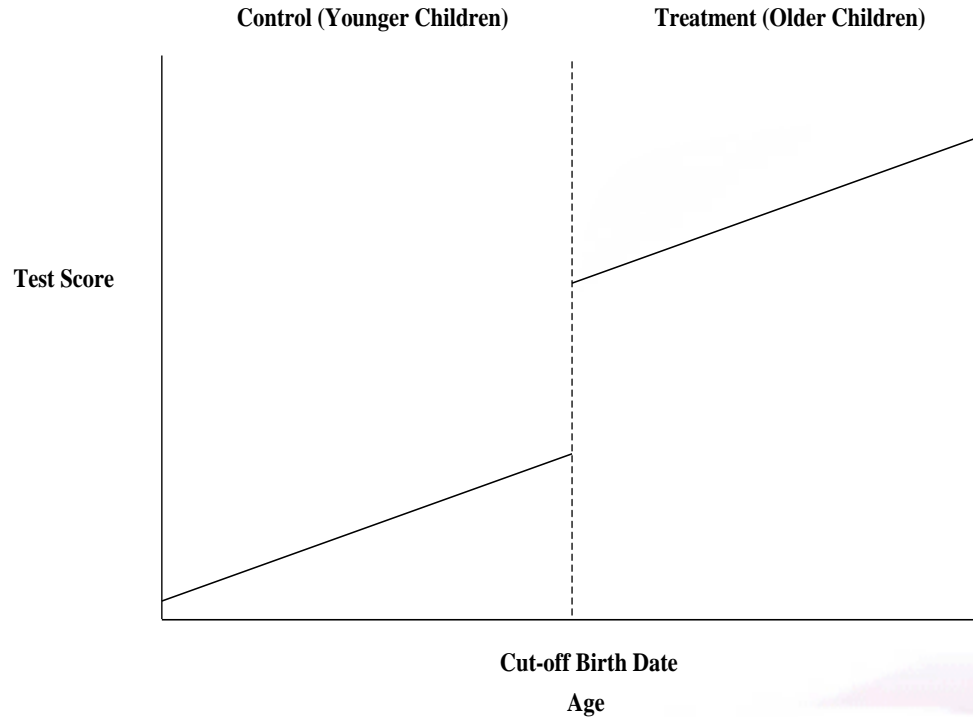
# Tulsa pre-K Study

- 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

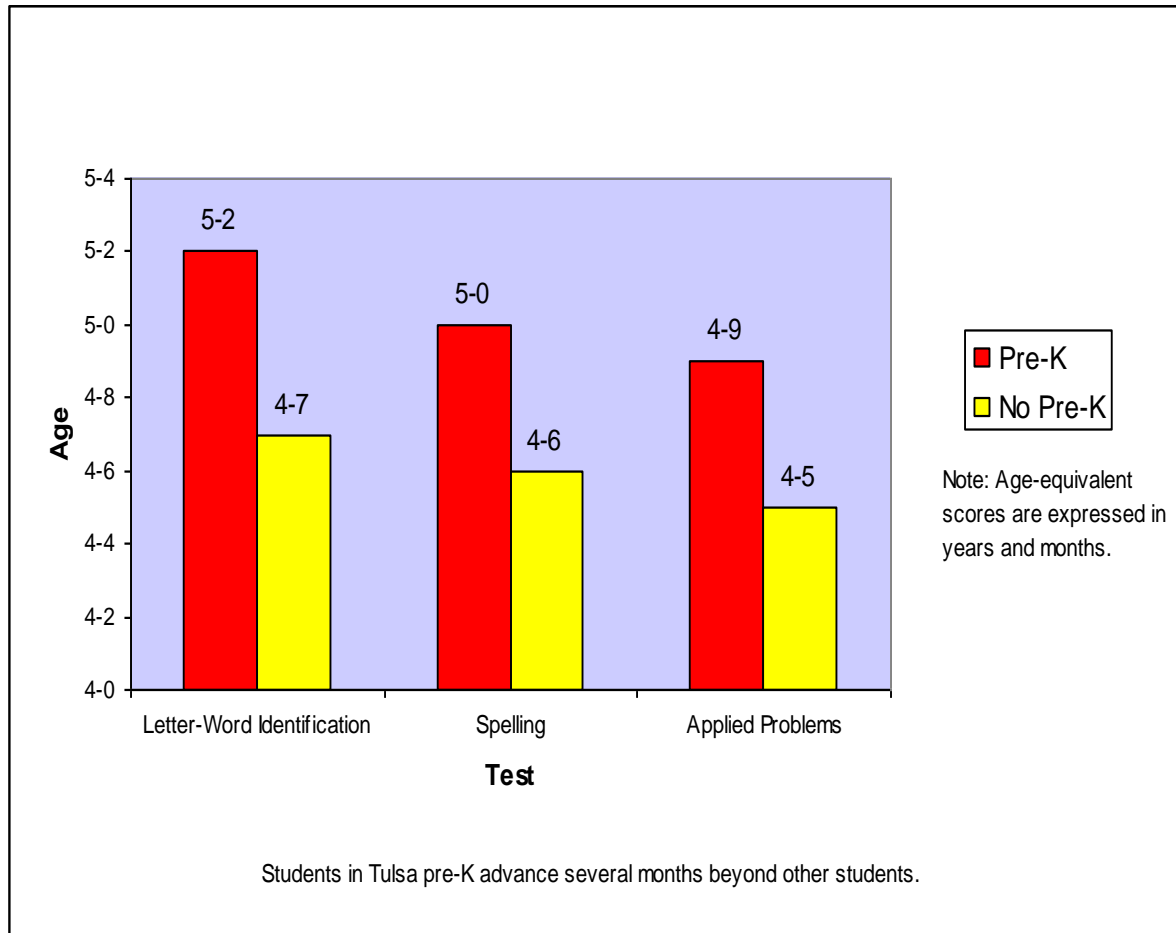


# Regression Discontinuity Design with Effective Treatment

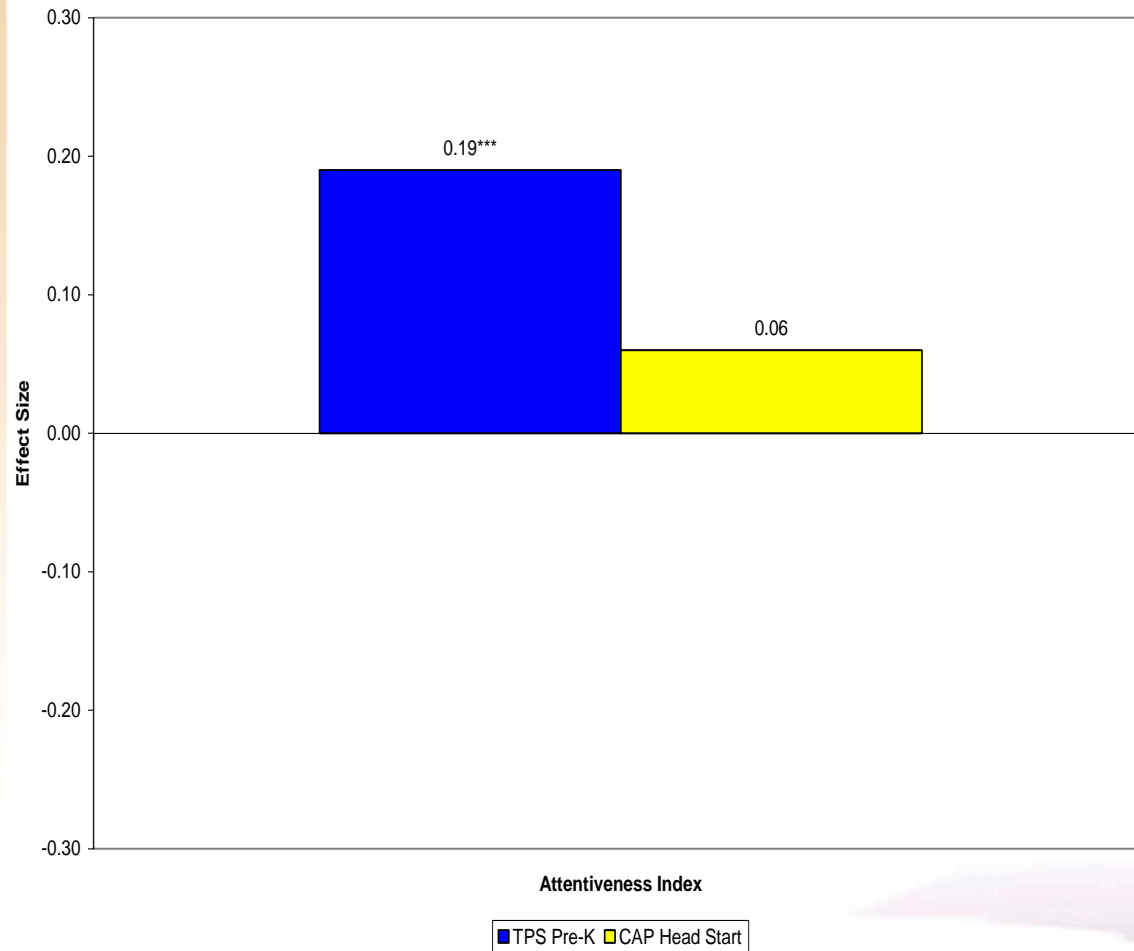
Figure 1



# Tulsa's Cognitive Test Score Gains

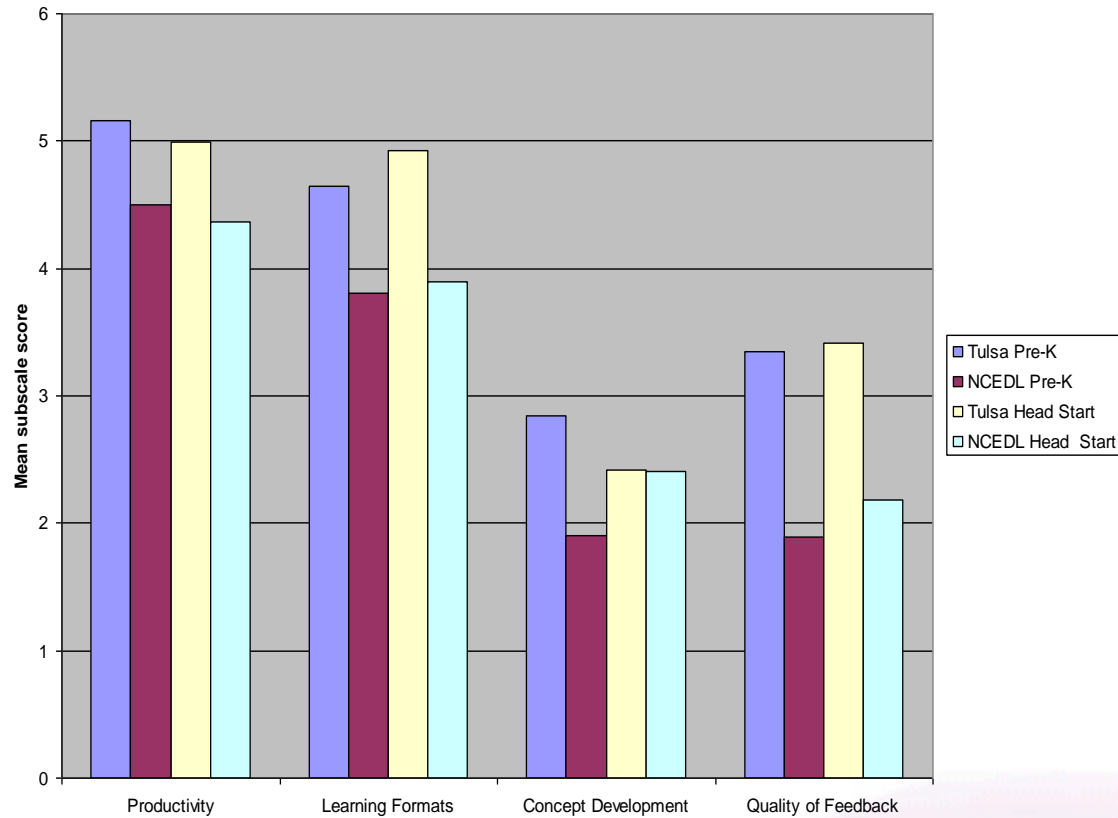


# Social Developmental Outcomes



# WHY? Classroom Quality

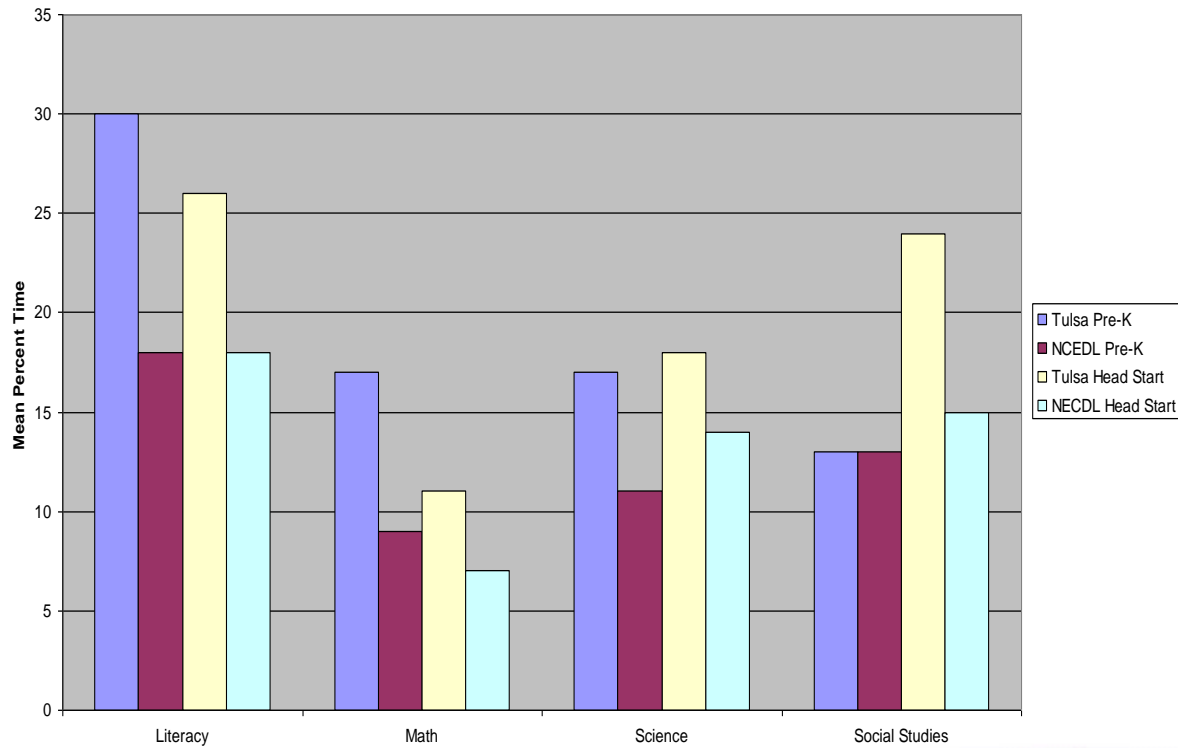
Tulsa vs. Other State Pre-K: CLASS





# WHY? Classroom Quality

Tulsa vs. Other State Pre-K: Time Allocation



# But...difficult to predict higher quality classroom processes

- None of our inputs predicted CLASS scores
- Time dedicated to literacy activities predicted by teachers' years of experience 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



# What is going on, cont'd

- 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 status of ECE “system”
- Understand impacts of ECE
- Hold programs accountable
- Improve the “system”
- Public (parent) education/empowerment/transparency



# Differing Strategies

- Inputs:
  - Teacher qualifications, compensation, turnover
  - Class size and ratios
  - Curriculum/Activities
  - Observations of “process quality”, children’s experiences
- Outputs:
  - Child assessments (for what purpose?)



# QRIS: Insights from U.S. Context

- QRIS as “living” process
- Dependent on:
  - provision of financial resources and incentives
  - dissemination of information to parents/public
  - T & TA system (“I” part)
  - 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?
- Do the ratings capture Toronto's priorities 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

- Are rating levels linked to (all) children's development in a clear and consistent way? Is there any evidence of a threshold effect?
- Are parents aware of and using the QRS?
- 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?



# Thanks to....

- William Gormley, Megan Gunnar, Nathan Fox, Co-Investigators
- Tulsa, OK teachers, administrators
- Colleagues on panel

