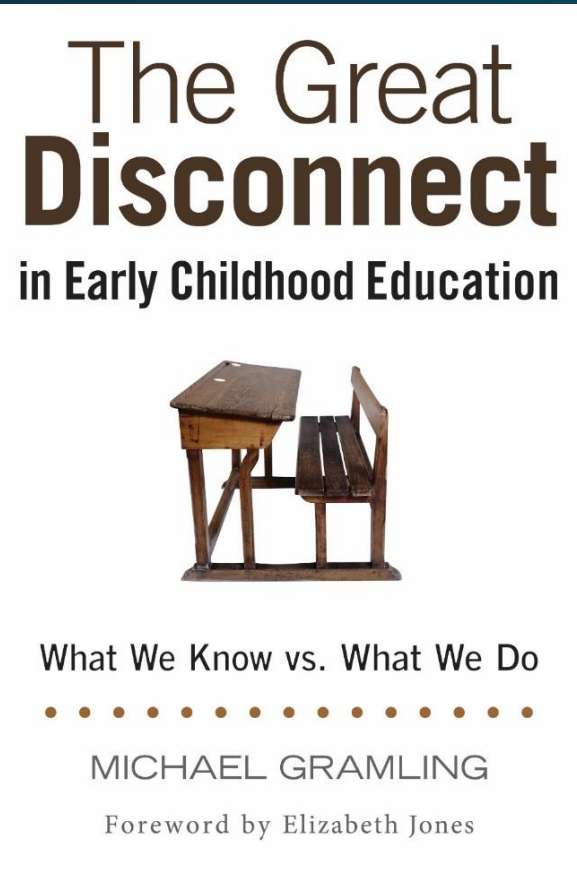


# Poverty Perpetuated: Early Childhood Education in America

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# Inexcusable Inequality

- Poor Nutrition
- Lack of Medical Care
- Lack of Dental Care
- Developmental Disabilities
- Chaos and Trauma (Toxic Stress)
  - Language Deprivation

# Head Start is Born...

Food Security

Medical Home

Dental Home

- Family Services
  - Disability Services
  - Early Childhood Education
- 
- It was the right thing to do.

# And Pre-K soon follows

- Eligibility initially based on income and or disability.
- Schools hire social workers, serve breakfast, offer after school care and free and reduced lunch.
  - Learning Standards
    - Decoding Print
  - Kindergarten Readiness

# And Head Start Soon Follows

- Learning Standards
- Decoding Print
- Kindergarten Readiness

- Up to 40% of age eligible children are now enrolled in some sort of school readiness program.
- But according to Robert Pianta, in a study of 700 programs across 11 states ...
  - only about 15 % of these programs provide high quality interactions.
  - Who attends the programs that are not high quality, and what are the consequences?

# Early Childhood Education...

- Swiss Psychologist Jean Piaget demonstrated early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that young children think differently, learn differently and process information differently than do school age children and adults.
- It was a fair assumption, therefore, that the brain works very differently during the early years than it does in later life.
- Those assumptions have been completely validated by modern research.

# Early Childhood Education

- But if the brain operates very differently in early childhood,
- Shouldn't Early Childhood Education look very different?
  - Isn't that why we call it *Early* Childhood education?



# Early Childhood Education

- There was a time when it was in fact quite different.
  - Kindergarten was once the “Child’s Garden.”
    - Now it is the Child’s Job.

# The Child's Job

- Ask any group of teachers, for example, how they “individualize.”
  - They will respond in terms of learning standards or “school readiness goals.”

# The Child's Job

- Can the child name alphabet letters?
- Does the child know basic prepositions like on, under, inside and outside?
- Can the child follow directions, attend to tasks, follow the daily routine and participate in groups?
  - Can the child stand on one foot to the count of ten?

# Key Strategies: Achieving School Readiness Goals

Teach to the test.

Replicate Kindergarten

And where does this approach to education come from?

# The Output Model (The Student Will...)

- Popularized in the 1950s and 60s by Educator  
Ralph Tyler  
the “Father of Performance Objectives”



# Who believed that education was a process of ...

- Formal Assessment
- Identification of Incremental, Discrete “Objectives”
- Lesson Planning Designed to “Work” on Objectives
  - Identification of the Next Incremental Objective

- This is a great way to teach chemistry or algebra or the rules of grammar.
- It has nothing to do with how children's brains work in early childhood.



# Early Childhood Education

- Perhaps Mr. Tyler was right about education.
  - Everyone seems to think so.
- But he is dead wrong about Early Childhood Education.

# The Brain in Early Childhood

- All of us are born with the same potential. Human babies across cultures and “race” and family income have the same number of brain cells at birth.
- But even in the womb and for five or so years afterwards, it begins an extraordinary process of “wiring” itself. Neurons connect, pathways are made, and abilities are acquired.

# The Brain in Early Childhood

- Healthy brain development depends on adequate nutrition, rich sensory input, (including human touch), a secure emotional environment, protection from toxins like lead, (and toxic stress) and...
  - Language rich experiences.
- There is a brief window of opportunity in early childhood for this “wiring” to occur. Children who suffer deprivation during these early years may never fully recover.

# Here is the problem.

- Low income children in America suffer language deprivation.

- “On average, children growing up in low- income families have dramatically less rich experience with language in their homes than do middle-class children.
- They hear far fewer words and are engaged in fewer extended conversations.

By 36 months of age, substantial socioeconomic disparities already exist in vocabulary knowledge.”

- (NAEYC Position Statement DAP)

- It is time for early childhood educators everywhere in every program – pre-K and Head Start - to get out of the business of school readiness and early literacy.
- It is time to get back into the business of brain development.

# Sean Reardon Stanford University

- “Consider two children, one from a family with income of \$165,000 and one from a family with income of \$15,000.”
- “In the 1980s, on an 800-point test scale, the average difference in test scores between two such children would have been about 90 points.”
- “Today it is 125 points.”
  - No Rich Child Left Behind 2014

# Dr. Anne Fernald Stanford University

- At 18 months of age, children from low income homes process language at a measurably slower rate than children from more affluent homes.
- By 24 months the gap has widened.
- Stanford Report, September 25, 2013



- But why should income predict success in school?
- What is provided to more affluent children that is not provided their low income competitors?

# Hart and Risley

## Meaningful Differences

- 42 million words overheard
  - 20,000 word vocabulary
- 12 million words overheard
  - 5,000 word vocabulary

# The Great **Disconnect**

in Early Childhood Education



What We Know vs. What We Do



MICHAEL GRAMLING

Foreword by Elizabeth Jones

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- The human brain is already pre-wired to acquire language as fast as it is exposed to it.
- Children acquire language, skills and information simultaneously from direct experience with multiple sources . Their proficiency with language – the ability to communicate that will see them through to college and beyond – is largely formed by age five.

•

- At a time when the brain is a sponge and needs to be immersed in an ocean of words, we administer language with an eyedropper.
- Such is the outcome of accountability in publicly funded early childhood education.

- The “accountability” model assumes that children from low income families simply are not capable of learning in the same way as their more affluent competitors, and
  - Must therefore be relentlessly spoon fed the same basic information in a tedious and mind-numbing fashion so that they can be “ready” for Kindergarten.

# But Where do Rich Kids go to Pre-school?

- The achievement gap between the wealthy and the middle class is also growing because wealthy parents are investing in early childhood education. Their children programs like
  - Waldorf
  - Montessori
  - Regio Emilia
- Where they explore, create, and discover. Where everyone assumes they are smart. Where they are exposed to language-rich experiences all day long. Where they are read to intimately throughout the day.

- But children born in Washington Northeast have the same potential as do children born in Georgetown or DuPont Circle.
- Their parents cherish them just as much and have the same dreams for them as you and I.
  - These children deserve better.
    - It's the right thing to do.



# The Great Disconnect

in Early Childhood Education



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