

Preschool CAN Help Kids—If it Includes This Element, Study Finds

The last year hasn't been very kind to ardent fans of universal preschool. Rather than help children get ahead in school as has been long promised, [studies have shown](#) that it can actually hurt.

But a new study published by [JAMA Pediatrics](#) shows something a bit different. It examined a preschool program known as ParentCorps and found that the enrolled low-income preschoolers had “better mental health and academic performance 3 years later.” Finally, a victory for universal preschool, right?

Not so fast. There's one element of this study that seems to have made the difference. In a word? Parents.

Contrary to many universal preschools today, this particular program used a “family-centered” approach by incorporating weekly training for the parents of preschoolers alongside school for the children. Such a tactic is similar to those used by the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian Project, the two most famous poster children for preschool education.

Thus, as Brookings Scholar Dale Farran [noted](#) earlier this year, to say that preschool successes like Perry, Abecedarian – and now even this latest ParentCorps study – are a sign that we should pursue preschool at all costs for every child is simply misleading.

Although it's never mentioned, the modern push for preschool gets children out of the home and into the school system at an early age. Is such a move a mistake? Would we be better off looking for ways for early childhood education to bring

children and parents together, instead of separating them as universal preschool seems to do?