

Early Childhood Research and Technical Assistance

at American Institutes for Research



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AT THE HEART OF OUR WORK is a passion to improve the lives of young children from birth to age 8, especially children from families facing historical disadvantages.

What We Do

We work with early childhood service providers and policymakers nationwide to find solutions to practical challenges in early childhood education and care. We identify evidence-based answers to major questions in the early childhood field, such as:

- How can the quality of early educator practices and early education and care programs be improved?
- How do early learning experiences and school readiness approaches affect young children's language, literacy, early mathematics, and social-emotional skills?
- What types of professional development best support teachers' and caregivers' needs?
- Do kindergarten entry assessments measure children's school readiness in intended domains?

*"[We] invested in our first randomized control trial, one which would study the impact of our home visiting programs for families of at-risk infants and toddlers. We had a great deal to learn about this process, and we count ourselves really fortunate that we were working with AIR!... **Their sensitive professionalism has made this a great experience for us.** We can't recommend them highly enough, and will certainly work with them again in the future."*

- Claudia Quigg, Founding Executive Director, Baby TALK



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How We Work

American Institutes for Research (AIR) uses a wide range of tools and strategies for our clients.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

- Experimental and quasi-experimental impact studies
- Formative and implementation evaluation
- Policy analysis
- Literature reviews and meta-analyses
- Cost analyses and cost estimates

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Translation of research to practice
- Strategic planning
- Training facilitation
- Program standards articulation and alignment
- Support child-serving agencies

MEASUREMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

- Integration of existing data sources
- Development of child assessments
- Validation of quality rating systems and child assessments
- Large-scale data collection, including classroom observations and child assessments

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*“Our partnership with AIR helped us win the i3 award. We greatly appreciate the AIR’s team’s deep knowledge of rigorous experimental design, general methodological expertise, and literacy knowledge ... **We have found AIR to successfully build relationships and communicate effectively with schools and districts.**”*

– Children’s Literacy Initiative

Our Focus

QUALITY LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS. Examining early learning environments and promising instructional practices that support children’s development and helping practitioners and policymakers identify areas that need improvement.

Example projects include:

- New York City Pre-K Program Assessments: Classroom Assessment Scoring System
- California Preschool Math Teacher Survey
- Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey Projects

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND COACHING. Investigating professional development and coaching initiatives, developing training systems, and facilitating training for educators and caregivers.

Example projects include:

- Head Start Professional Development: Developing Evidence for Best Practices in Coaching
- Evaluation of Head Start Early Learning Mentor Coaching Grants
- Early Educators Excel Coaching Model Evaluation

QUALITY RATING AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEMS (QRIS).

Supporting states and local agencies in designing, validating, and evaluating quality improvement strategies and systems.

Example projects include:

- California Race to The Top-Early Learning Challenge QRIS Evaluation
- Iowa QRIS Study
- Excellent Schools Detroit- Developing Early Learning ScoreCard Metrics

PROGRAM IMPACTS. Examining the effects of early education and care programs across a variety of settings using rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental designs.

Example projects include:

- IES Efficacy Trial of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum
- Children’s Literacy Initiative—Investing in Innovation Validation Study
- First 5 Los Angeles Family Literacy Initiative Evaluation

SCHOOL READINESS. Working with practitioners and policymakers to develop valid and reliable measures of children’s readiness for kindergarten as well as evaluating school readiness programs.

Example projects include:

- Expert Review of Vermont Kindergartners’ Readiness
- Pennsylvania Kindergarten Entry Inventory Validation Study
- Evaluation of the Texas Early Childhood School Readiness Demonstration Projects

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND PARENTING SUPPORTS. Identifying best practices in family engagement and evaluating programs to support parents, examining instructional practices in early intervention and special education, and measuring the impacts of programs for families whose children have special needs.

Example projects include:

- Technical Assistance Partnership for Child and Family Mental Health Baby TALK Home-Visiting Efficacy Study
- Families and Schools Together (FAST) Investing in Innovation Validation Study



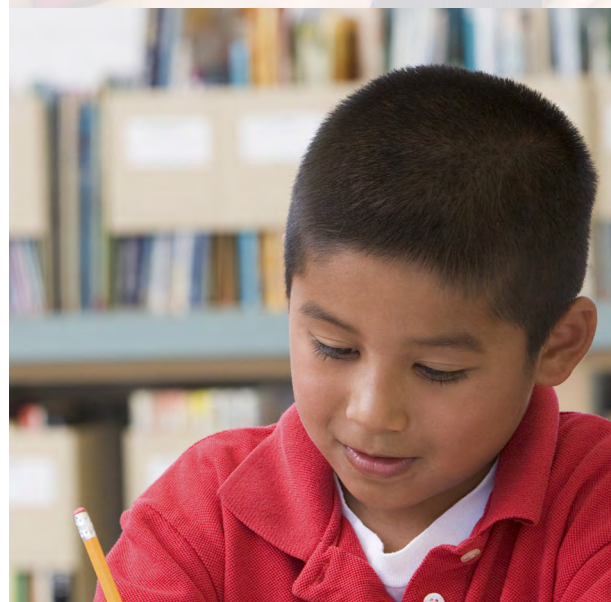
*“The AIR team brought **extensive knowledge of indicators of program quality** in early childhood and worked with us to develop a measure of program quality that was comprehensive and easy to use.”*

-Denise Smith, Excellent Schools Detroit,
Vice President-Early Childhood



*“Midwest Comprehensive Center (MWCC) at AIR served as **outstanding thought partners** in the statewide implementation of full-day kindergarten and the planning for professional learning communities to support effective teaching and learning in kindergarten.”*

- Minnesota Department of Education



*“The staff at AIR were **very open and collaborative**, taking time at key junctures to ensure their efforts included the evolving needs of our advocacy work... Their expertise, analysis and tools have been instrumental in our work...”*

-Vickie Ramos Harris,
State Director of Policy and Practice, Early Edge California

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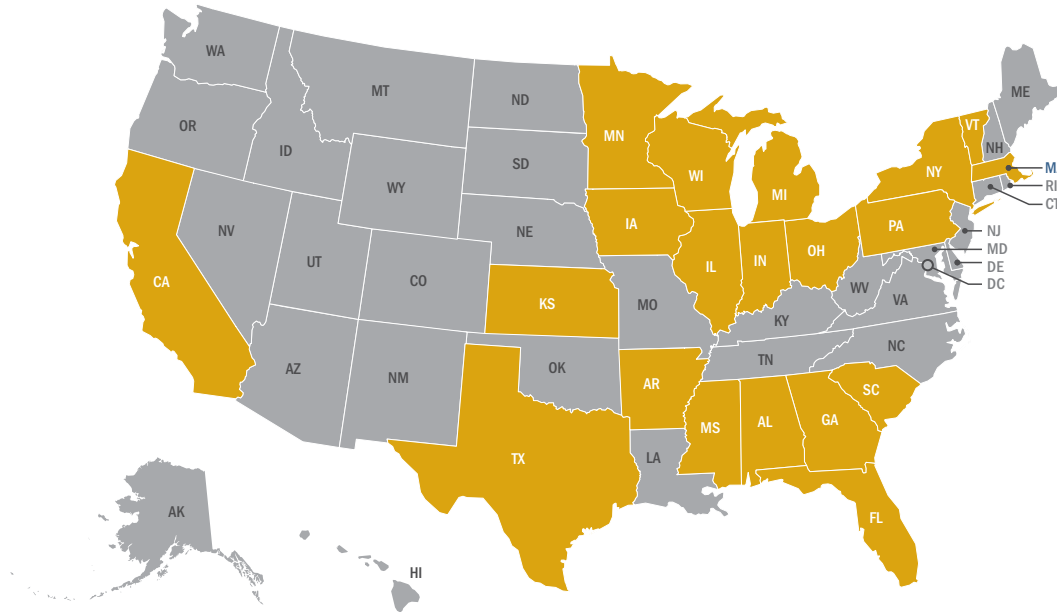
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Where We Are

Complementing our national studies and international work, AIR's early childhood team has recently provided state or local support in the following states:



- Alabama
- Arkansas
- California
- Florida
- Georgia
- Illinois
- Indiana
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Massachusetts
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- Mississippi
- New York
- Ohio
- Pennsylvania
- South Carolina
- Texas
- Vermont
- Wisconsin

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Visit our website for more information on our early care and childhood development work and our **early childhood experts**.

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About American Institutes for Research

Established in 1946, American Institutes for Research (AIR) is an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research on important social issues and delivers technical assistance, both domestically and internationally, in the areas of education, health, and workforce productivity.

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