



# Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High-Quality Childcare

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New report released in June—

*Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow:  
The Business Case for High-Quality Childcare*

Why childcare?

A strong education system is the key  
to a nation's long-term prosperity

*“The central determinant of the supply of skills available  
to an advanced economy is its education system.”*

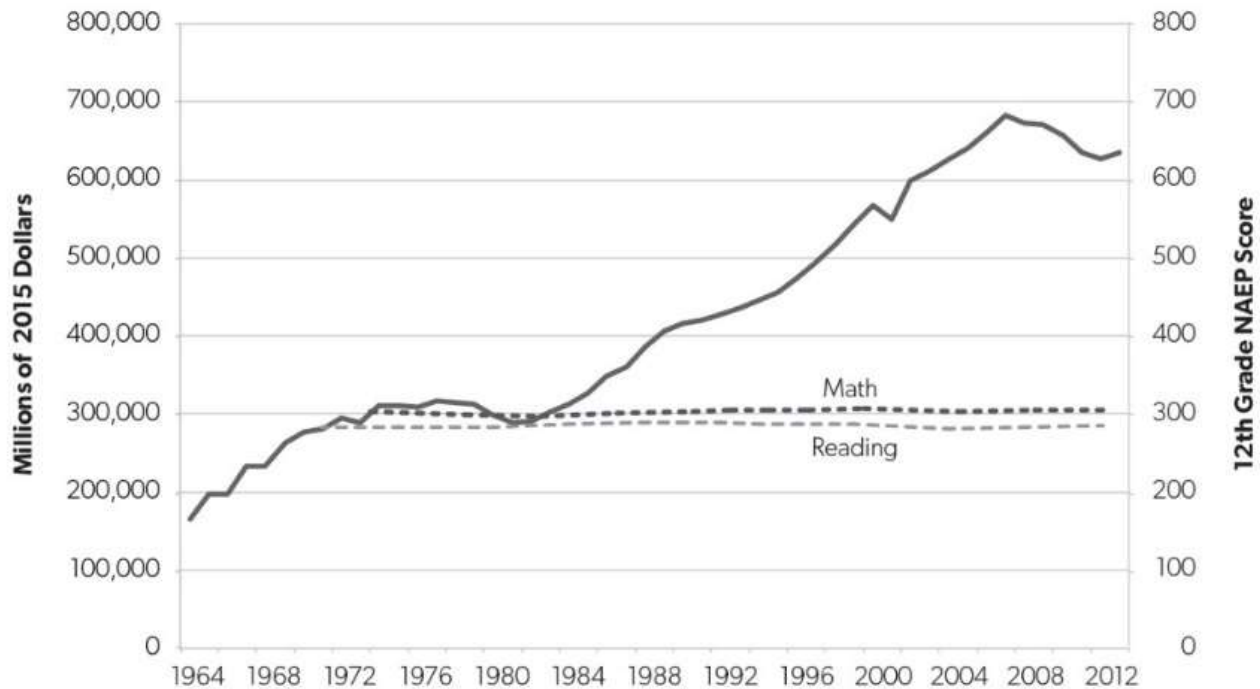
*– David Autor, MIT Economist*

# K-12 schools are falling short in preparing new generations for productive work

- Two-thirds of 4th graders and 8th graders are below proficient in reading
- 60% of 4th graders and 67% of 8th graders are below proficient in math
- Among 12th graders, 63% are below proficient in reading and 75% are below proficient in math
- Of the 72 countries participating in the OECD's 2015 PISA exam, US 15-year-olds ranked 25th in reading and 35th in math

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## Total Public Spending on K-12 and Achievement of 17-Year-Olds (on the National Assessment of Education Progress)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

# Gaps emerge very early in life

- Gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children begin emerging as early as 9 months of age
- By 18 months, toddlers from low-income families can already be several months behind in language development
- By age three, children with college-educated parents have vocabularies as much as three times larger than those whose parents did not complete high school
- Gaps continue to widen, leaving disadvantaged children up to two years behind by age five

# The root of the K-12 problem

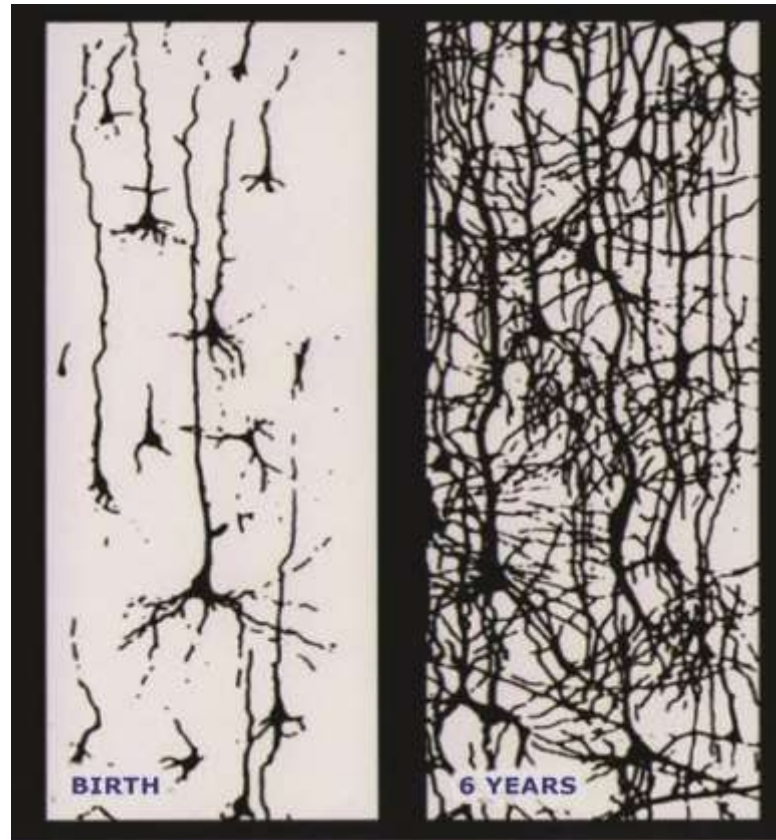
- Many children enter school unprepared to succeed
- Schooling doesn't close those initial gaps
- What we've been missing is the importance of children's earliest years



# Early childhood is the most critical period of human development

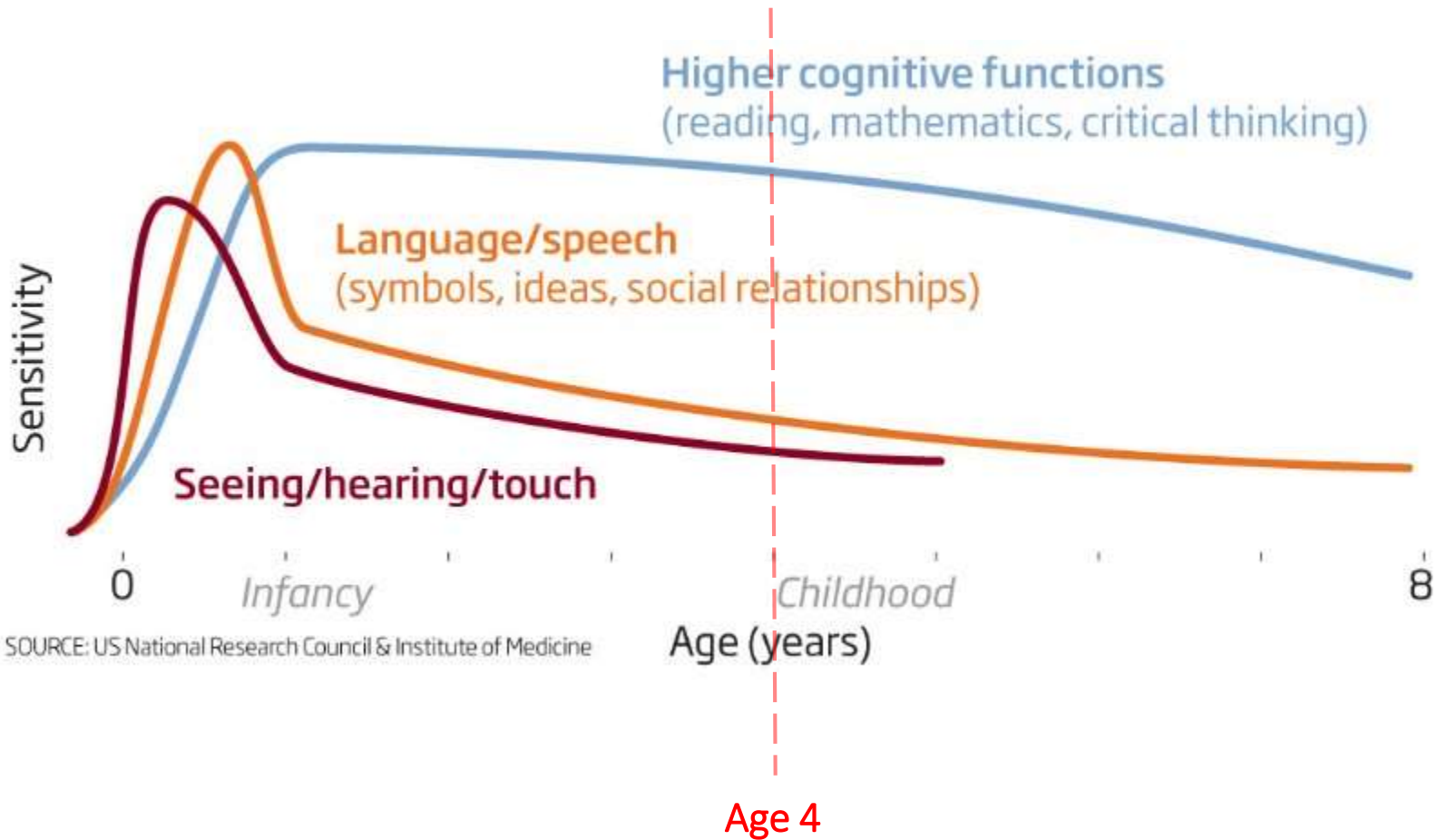
- Children are rapidly and continuously learning, beginning at birth
- The bedrock for all subsequent learning and development is laid in the first years of life
- Early experiences build brains

# Development of brain “synapses” (connections) from birth to age 6

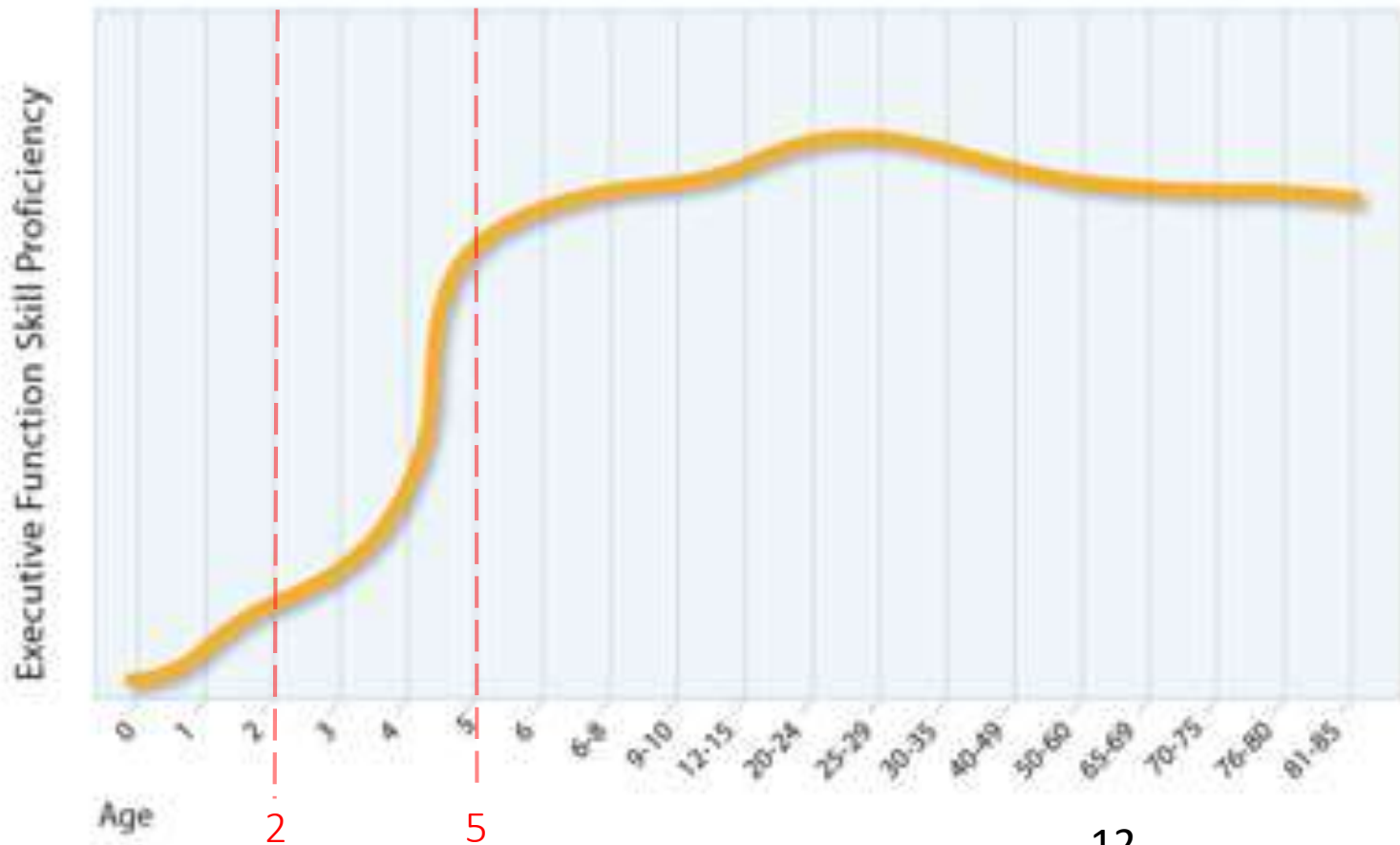


Source: Conel, J.L. The postnatal development of the human cerebral cortex. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1959.

# Critical period for physical, linguistic, and cognitive development



Critical period for development of “Executive Function” (behavior and emotional control)



# Children's early lives have changed

- Almost two-thirds of mothers with children under 6 are working outside the home—compared with fewer than one in 10 in 1940
- Nearly three in 10 mothers now return to work within two months of their baby's birth
- Almost 40% of mothers with an infant under a year old are employed full-time.
- **Two-thirds of children under age five now have all residential parents in the workforce**

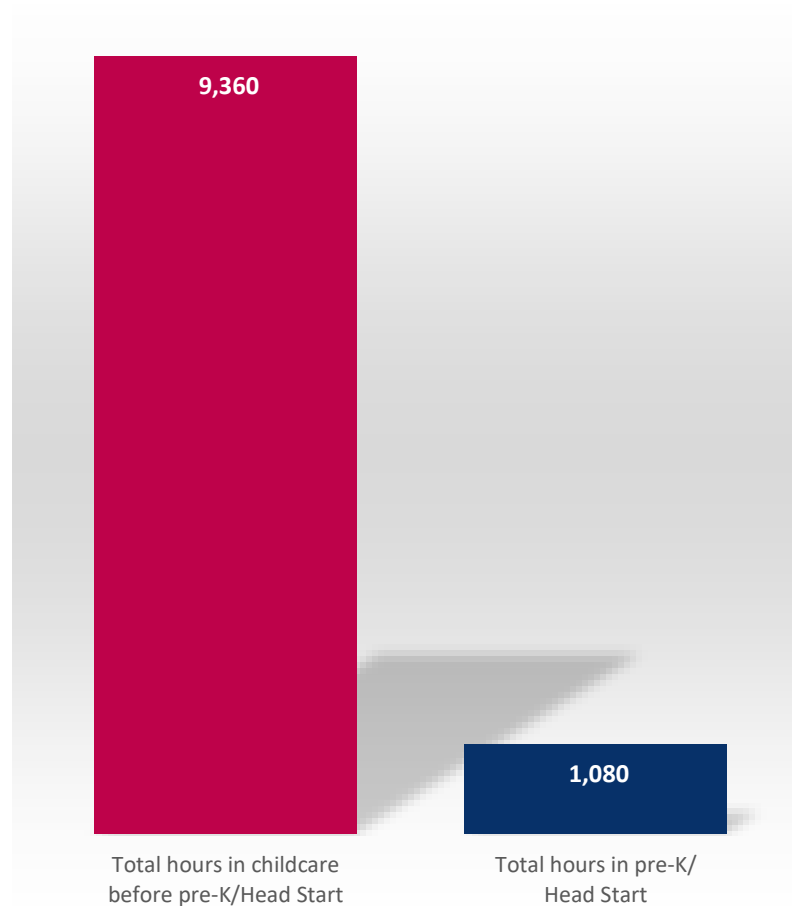
## The bottom line:

Most young children today are spending much of their early years—often starting in infancy—in the care of people other than their parents

# Where are children learning?

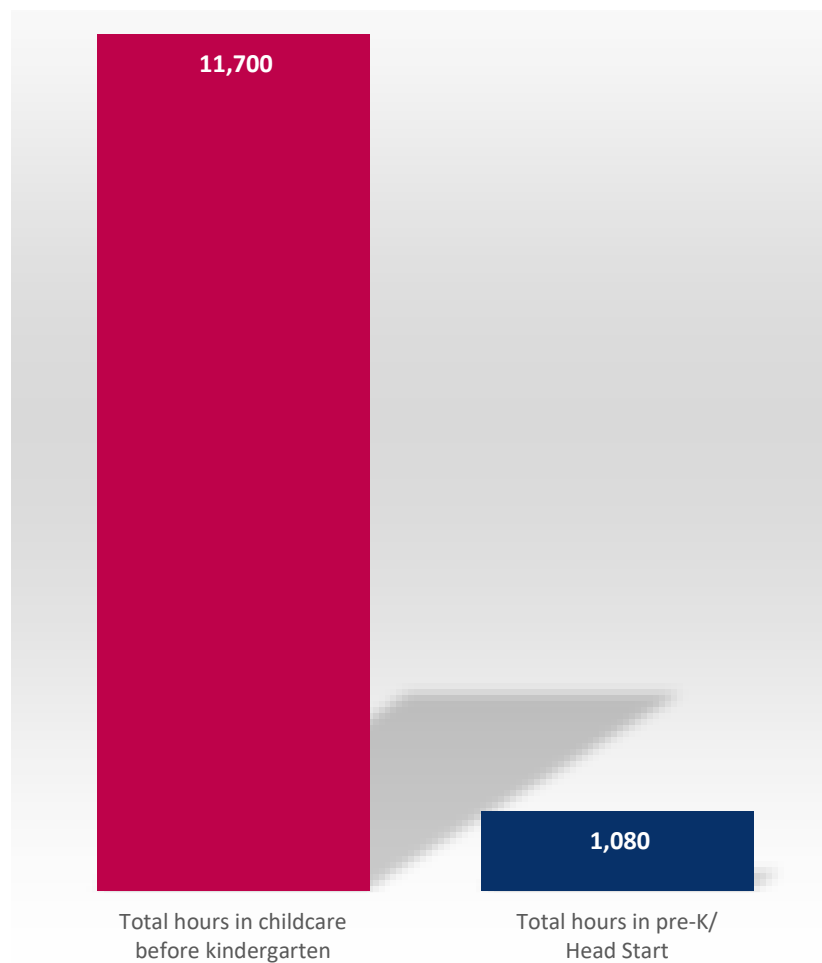
- *Wherever they are*
- Every environment is a learning environment for young children
- Common distinction between “childcare” and “preschool” is false
- What matters is the quality of children’s early environments

Total hours in childcare from birth to age 3  
(vs. a year in pre-K/Head Start)





...Total hours in childcare prior to age 5



# Childcare *is* early education

- Childcare supports working parents—and also has a critical impact on children during the most crucial period of human development
- What we call it or what building it occurs in makes no difference
- The question is only whether it's advancing or impeding children's learning

Childcare is our nation's most  
important early education program

# High-quality childcare serves two crucial purposes simultaneously

- Supports working parents—enabling parents of young children to contribute as productive members of the workforce today
- Ensures that young children have the chance to develop well and begin kindergarten ready to learn—laying the groundwork for a productive workforce tomorrow

Childcare is a powerful two-generation approach to building the strong workforce that our nation's prosperity depends on— today and for decades to come

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