Access to high-quality childcare betters outcomes in the following domains: neurotypical brain development; reading and associated competencies (vocabulary, language performance, and emergent literacy); and social-emotional development (emotional understanding, social problem solving, and learning engagement). It yields the highest short and long-term benefits for low-income children relative to their higher-income peers.

Multiple studies found association between parental warmth, acceptance, and responsiveness and child language performance as well as later academic and social performance.

A child’s home learning environment (HLE) is critical to their development. HLE, which has been linked to improved outcomes in literacy and kindergarten reading success, includes active (shared readings) and passive (seeing parent read the newspaper) activities; consistent bedtimes and books in the home; and amount of time and type of TV programming watched by young children. Further, shared reading or reading to children itself has been linked to higher literacy and language competencies.

Multiple measures of health, including current health status and low birth weight, have been found to be strong predictors of school readiness. Infants born premature (association stronger in boys) are more likely to display lower school readiness, and low birth weight is associated with an increased risk for learning disabilities. A lack of access to prenatal care for pregnant women is associated with low birth weight and premature birth. These pre-existing factors are often amplified by a lack of subsequent access to primary care to identify, treat, and prevent issues that may negatively impact a child’s healthy development.

Poor nutrition has been linked to a child’s ability to learn effectively, concentrate, and perform academically in school. In addition, poor nutrition is associated with a suite of social and emotional challenges in school, including: behavioral, emotional, and academic problems; increased displays of aggressive and anxious behaviors; and as teens, more disciplinary conflicts and increased difficulty getting along with peers. Finally, poor nutrition is also a risk factor for health issues, including increased susceptibility to illness and obesity, which can affect a child’s school readiness and academic performance.
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18. Buckingham, Beaman, Wheldall argue that the “evidence of the impact of poor health on literacy development is weak,” although specific measures (premature birth and low birth weight) have strong evidence.


