Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

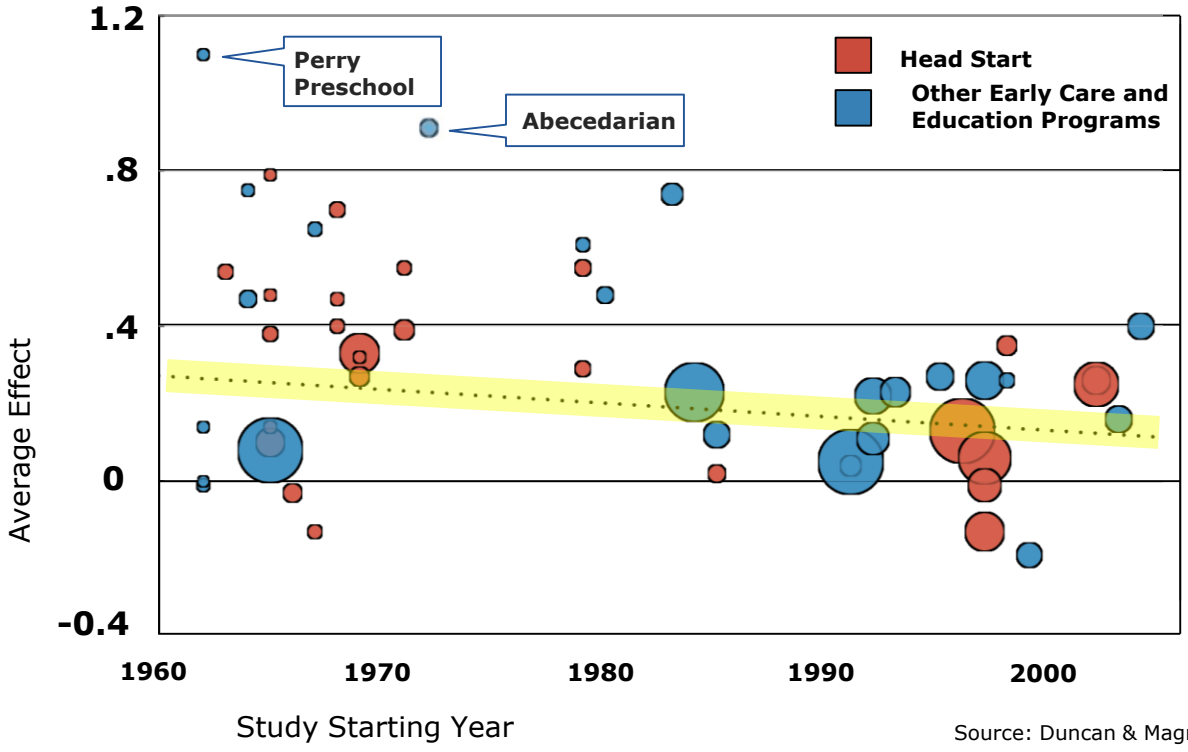
Driving Science-Based Innovation to Achieve Larger Impacts at Scale for Young Children Facing Adversity

JACK P. SHONKOFF, M.D.
Julius B. Richmond FAMRI Professor of Child Health and Development,
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Harvard Graduate School of Education.
Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School and Boston Children's Hospital.
Director, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

Plenary Session
Federal Reserve System Community Development Research Conference
Washington, DC | March 23, 2017

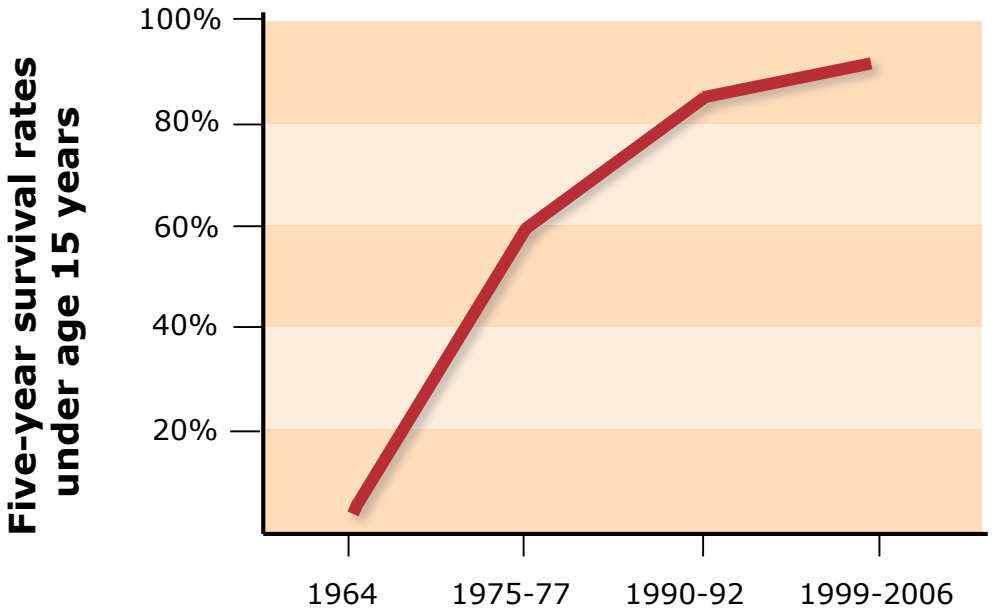
@HarvardCenter

The Evidence Base: 50 Years of Research on Early Childhood Programs Show We Need New Strategies



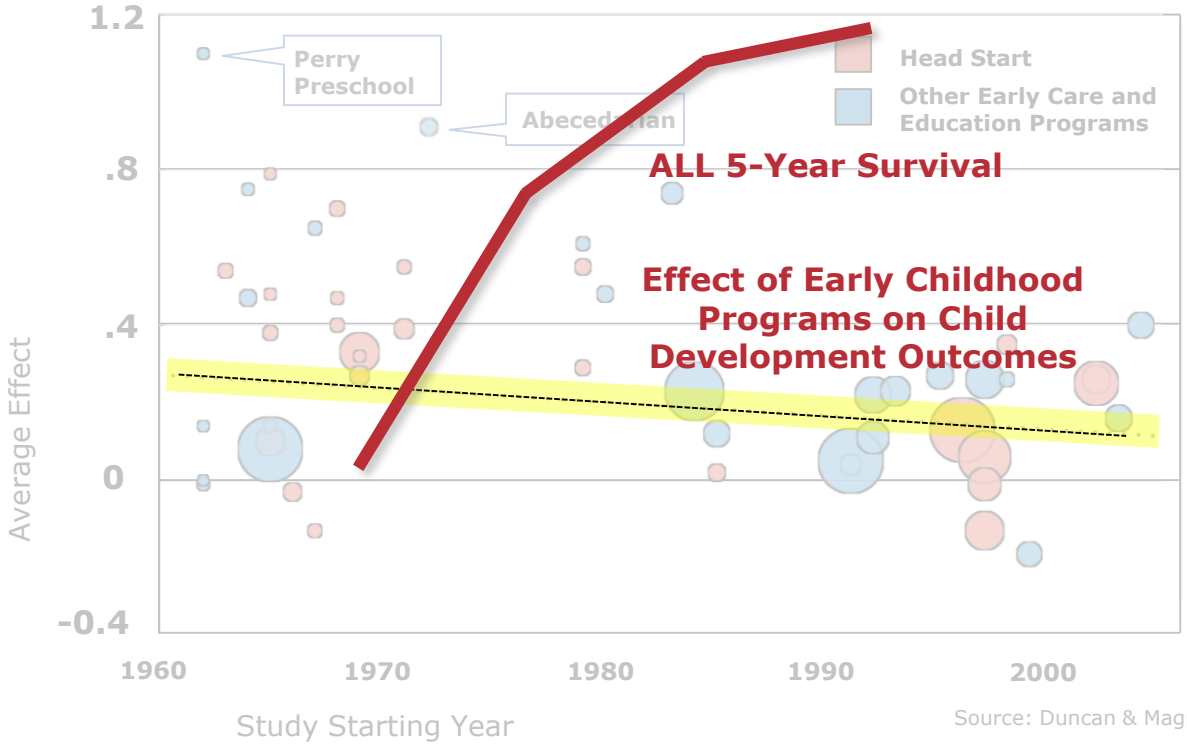
Source: Duncan & Magnuson (2013)

The Vision: Learning from 50 Years of Progress in Treating Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia



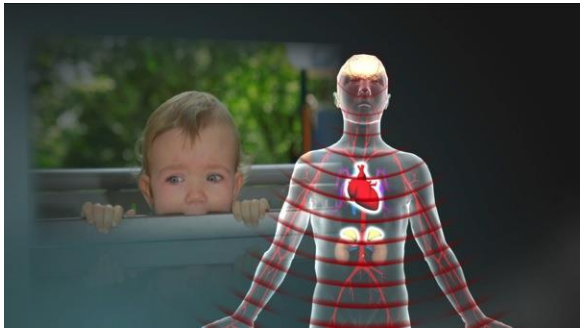
Source: Hunger, Lu, Devidas (2012)

What Can We Learn from These Contrasting Stories?



Source: Duncan & Magnuson (2013)

21st-Century Science Suggests New Ways of Thinking About Intervention in the Early Years

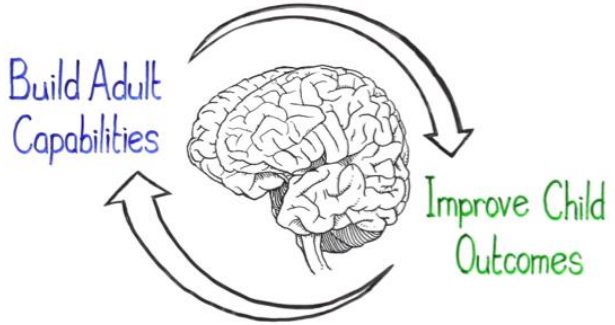


Attention to development should begin at birth (or even prenatally), not at age 4 or 5.

Early experiences affect lifelong health, not just learning.

Healthy development requires protection, not just enrichment.

Achieving far better outcomes for young children facing adversity requires that we: (1) support the adults who care for them to build their own capabilities; and (2) strengthen the capacity of communities to support families raising children under difficult circumstances.

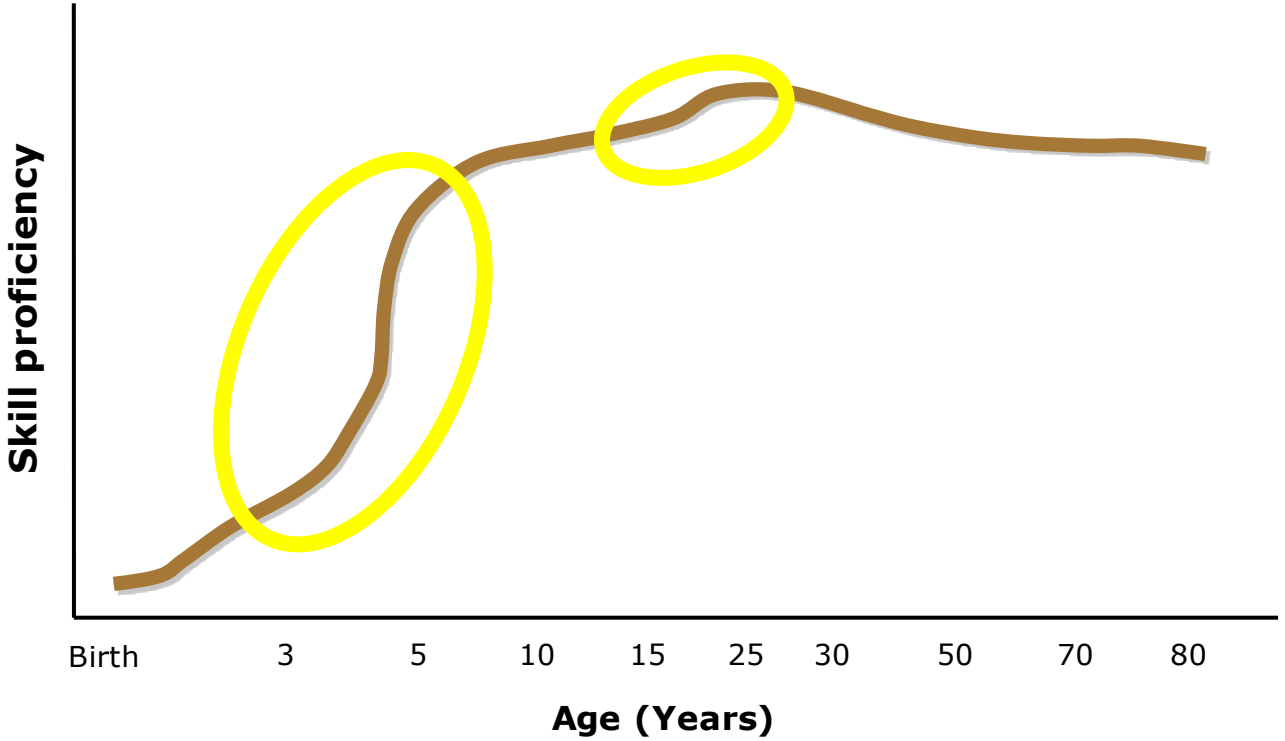


Capabilities that Promote Both Effective Parenting and Economic Productivity are Built on Foundational Skills in Executive Function and Self-Regulation

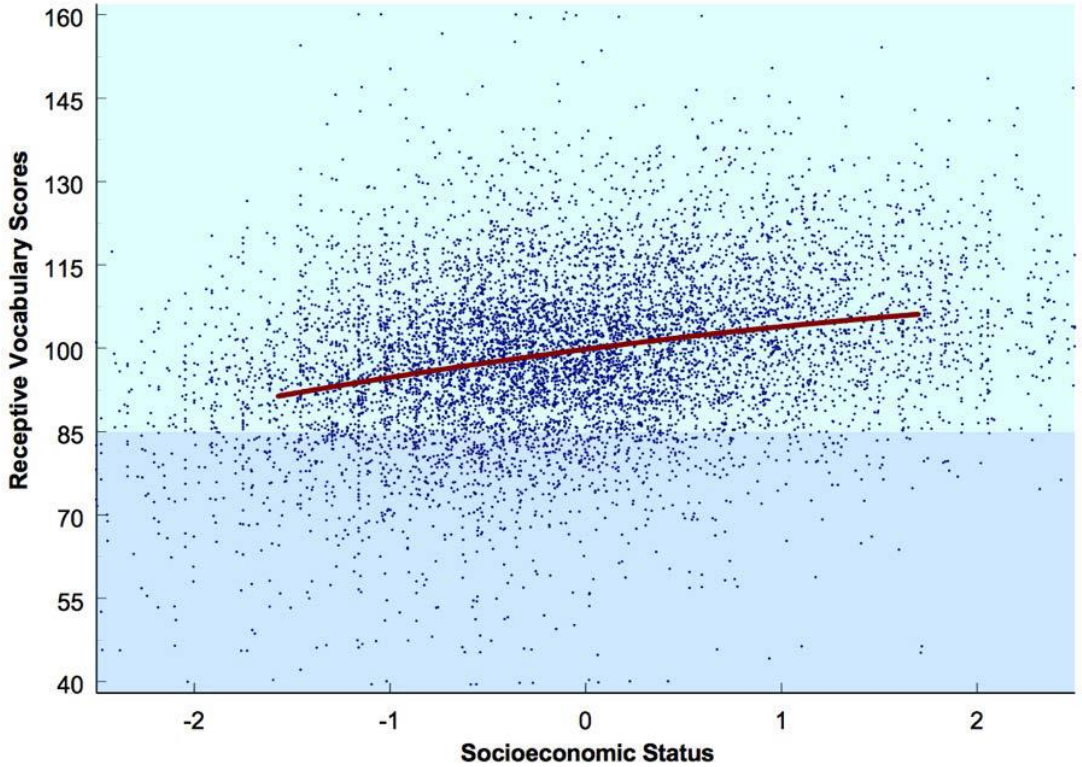
These core dimensions of adult competence include the ability to:

- focus and sustain attention
- set goals, make plans, and monitor actions
- make decisions and solve problems
- follow rules, control impulses, and delay gratification

Two Windows for Intervention: The Development of Executive Function Skills Begins in Early Childhood and Extends Into the Early Adult Years

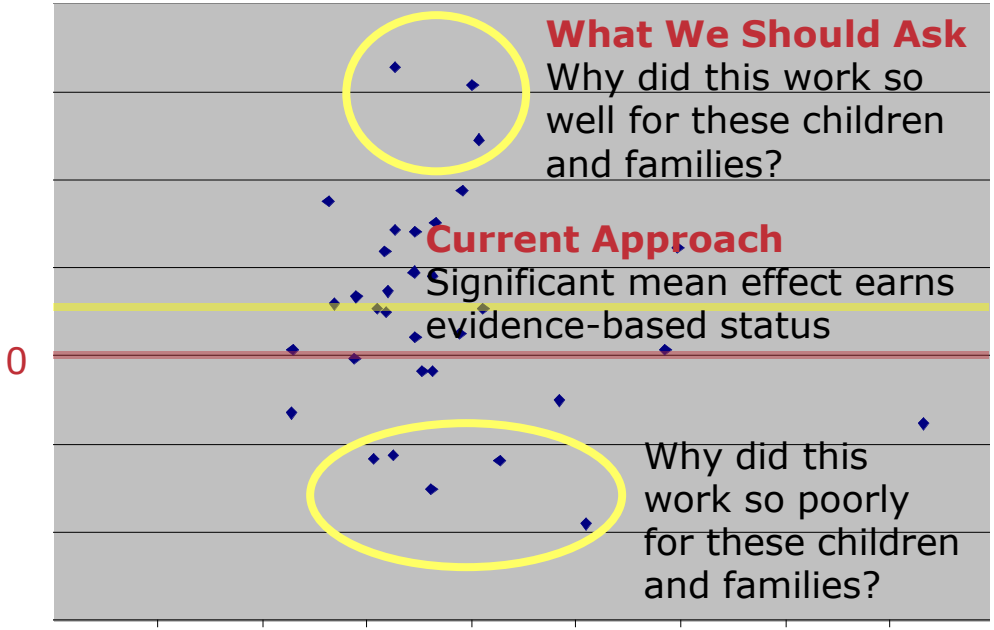


Understanding Human Variation is the Key to More Effective Policies and Programs

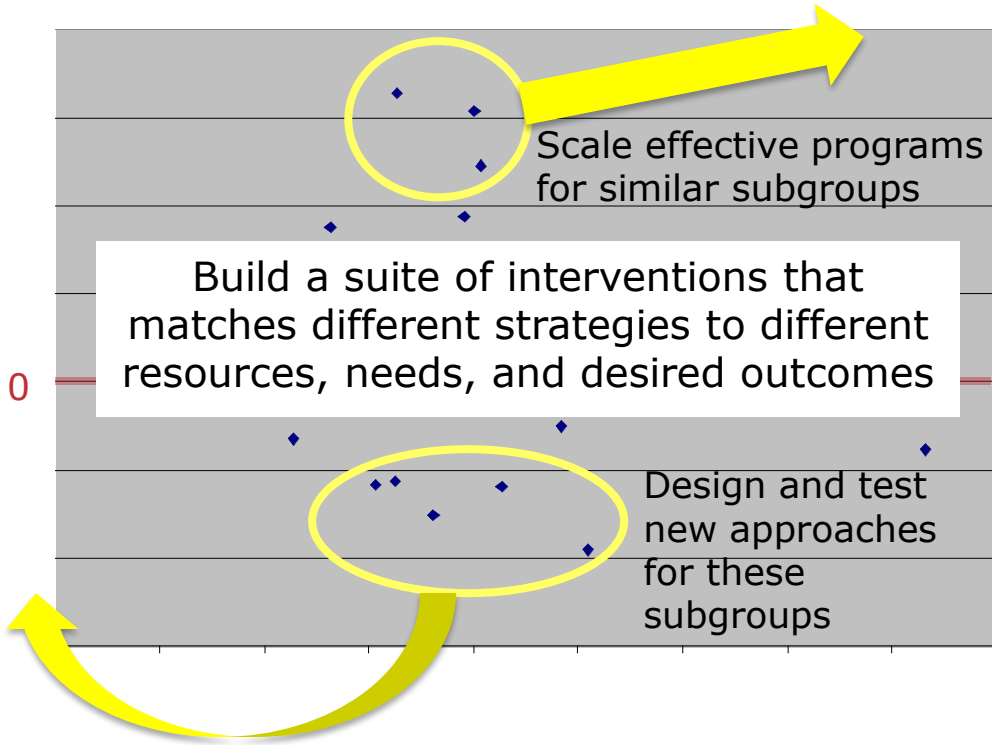


Source: NLSCY, Cycle 4 (2000-01)

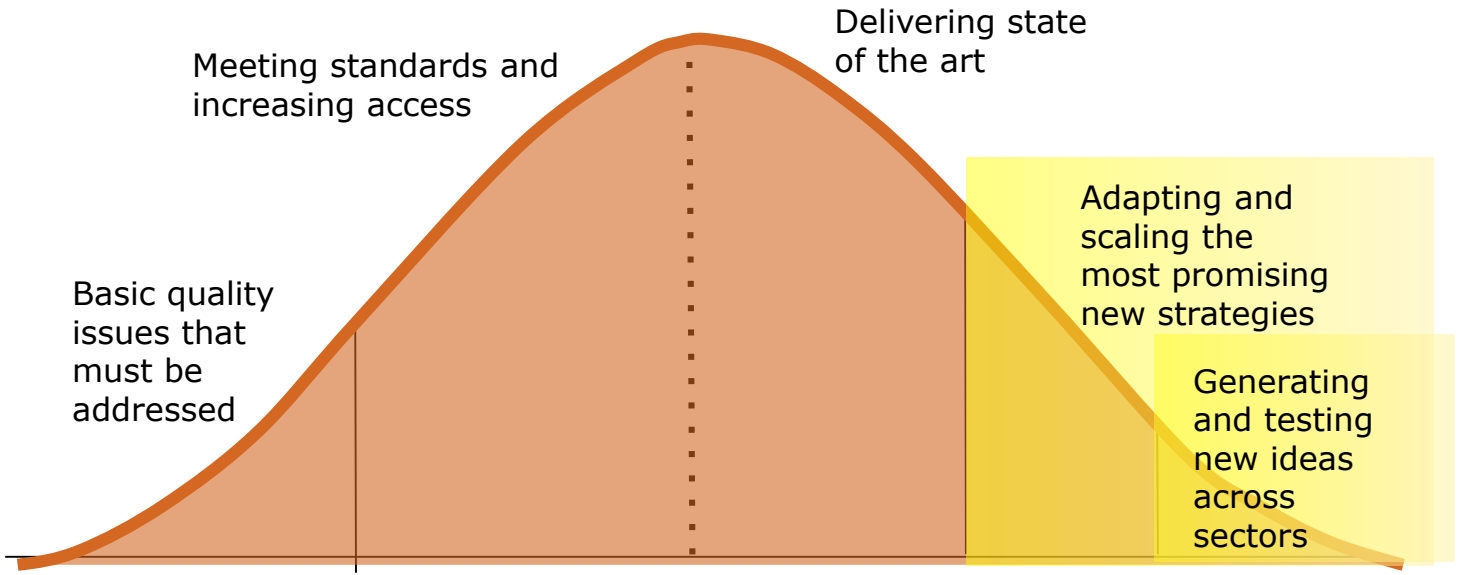
Achieving Greater Impact at Scale Requires Rethinking the Criteria for Defining Evidence-Based Programs



Achieving Greater Impact at Scale Requires Rethinking the Criteria for Defining Evidence-Based Programs

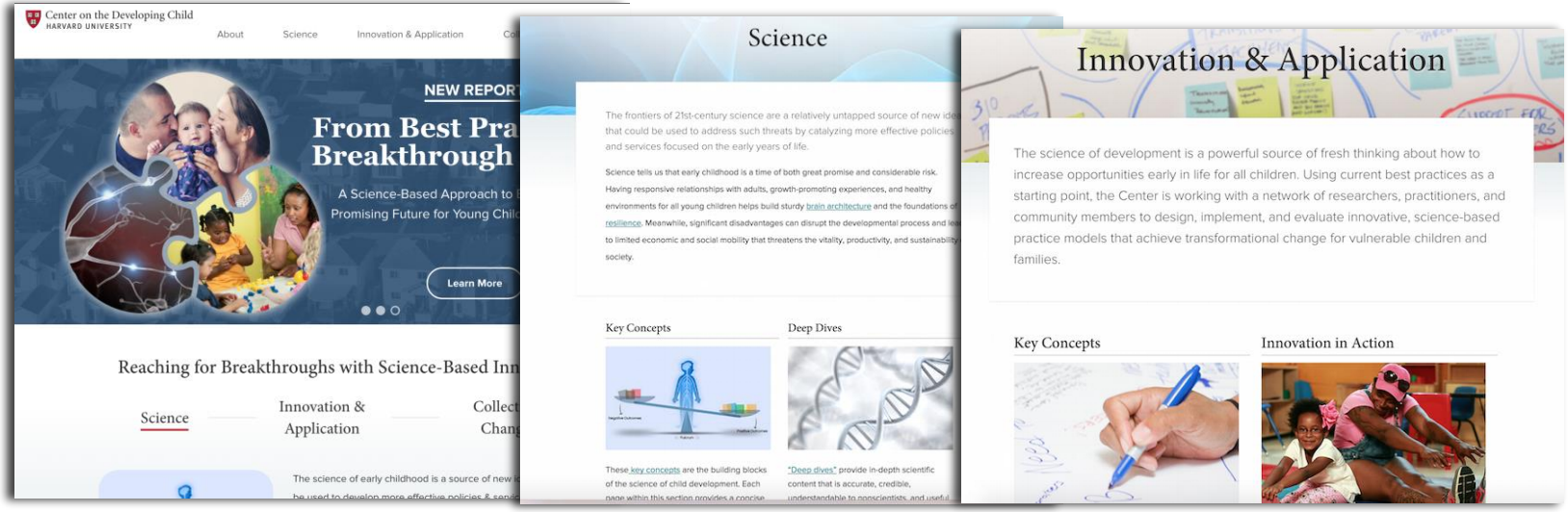


A Diversified Investment Portfolio Offers a Mix of Objectives, Timelines, Risks, and Rewards



(Adapted from Everett Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations,* 2003)

Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



www.developingchild.harvard.edu

@HarvardCenter