

Universal early learning

Distilling the evidence and checking the claims

Dr Charlene Smith – Policy Program Director, Mitchell Institute

Charlene.Smith@vu.edu.au

@charleesarah

Mitchell Institute – focus on policy & impact

THE PROBLEM

22% not prepared for school



28% don't have foundational literacy & numeracy skills



26% don't attain Year 12 or equivalent by 19



26% 24 year olds not full time learning or earning



WHAT WE'RE DOING

Delivering policy solutions for quality early education



Developing great teachers and transforming schools



Designing a better and fairer vocational and higher education model



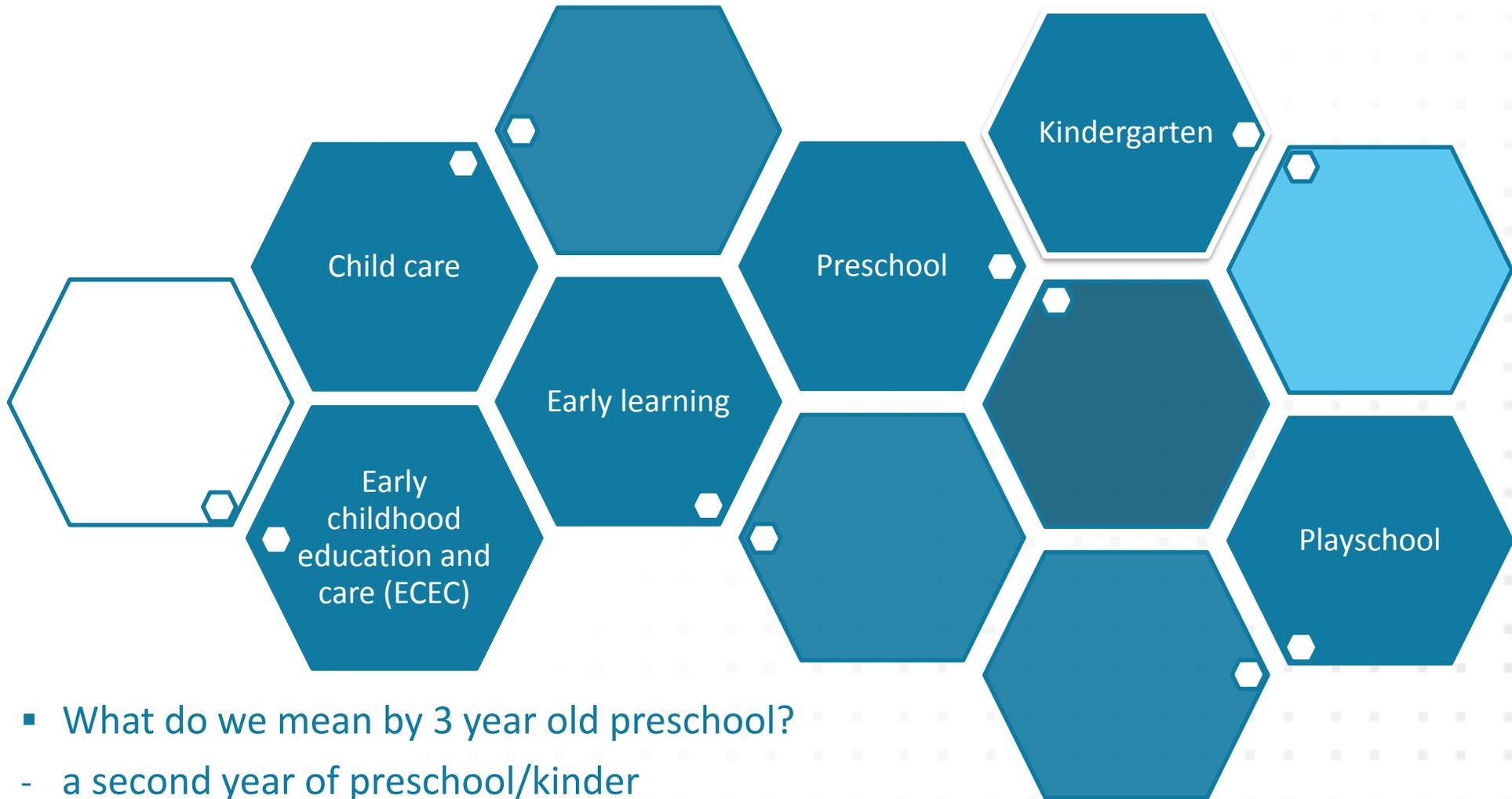
IMPACT

All kids ready for learning

Curious, creative & resilient learners

Entrepreneurial and skilled workers

What is early learning?



- What do we mean by 3 year old preschool?
 - a second year of preschool/kinder
 - usually provided in the year children turn 4
 - children with early birth dates (eg. January-April) may commence in the year they turn 3

The early learning policy context

Jobs for families (Child Care Subsidy)

- Commonwealth funding to support families for children to attend ECEC services

Nationally aligned quality and learning frameworks

- National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for ECEC Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF); National Quality Framework (NQF), National Quality Standards (NQS), Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)

Universal Access to Preschool

- National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (current extension funds until end of 2019)
600 hours of access for all children in the year before school

Compulsory schooling

- In all Australian states and territories, compulsory schooling starts in the year children turn 5 (or 6 if their birthday is after cut off date)
- All children have a right to school education

Current provision in Australia



- All children are entitled to 600 hours of access to preschool programs in the year before school

National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (current extension funds until end of 2019)

Child care subsidy (CCS): from 1 July 2018

- Subsidy level linked to family income
- Hourly fees capped by service type
- Activity test to determine number of hours of CCS
- Child care safety net

Policies and programs – state & territory

Queensland Government
The Early Years Count

LEARNING AT HOME
 Department of Education
 Public Education
 A world of opportunities
 0 to 8 years
 Activities and fun ideas to help your children learn at home. For parents/carers of young children.

STARTING EARLY FOR A BETTER FUTURE

eKindy QUEENSLAND
 playing to learn

The 'kindy tick'
Kndergarten
 Approved Program
 Queensland Government

Start Strong
 The NSW Government is committed to ensuring that all children in New South Wales can participate in 600 hours of quality preschool education in the year before school, no matter where they live or what their circumstances are.

Better Beginnings™

EDUCATION: TASMANIA'S FUTURE WORKING TOGETHER FOR 3 YEAR OLDS

ACT Government **Preschool Matters**

Launching into Learning

B4 Early Years Coalition

Child and Family Centres

Line Tasmania
 learn discover access

Kindergarten

Lift
 Learning in Families Together

EDUCATION AND CARE

Roadmap for Reform: children and families
 Progress and directions 2018

THE EDUCATION STATE

National momentum for early learning



2016 Mitchell Institute reports:

- *Quality early education for all*, Megan O'Connell, Stacey Fox, Bronwyn Hinz & Hannah Cole – key policy recommendations to improve outcomes for all young children
- *Two years are better than one* by Stacey Fox & Myra Geddes – making the case for 2 years of universal preschool

Ongoing calls for policy reform

- Early Learning Everyone Benefits – campaign coordinated by ECA
- *Lifting our Game*, 2018 Call from the states and territories to look at ECEC as a key space to promote excellence in Australian education

Early Learning
**EVERYONE
BENEFITS**



Benefits of early learning

What are the benefits?

Academic: reading, vocabulary, mathematics, attitude to school, performance at school

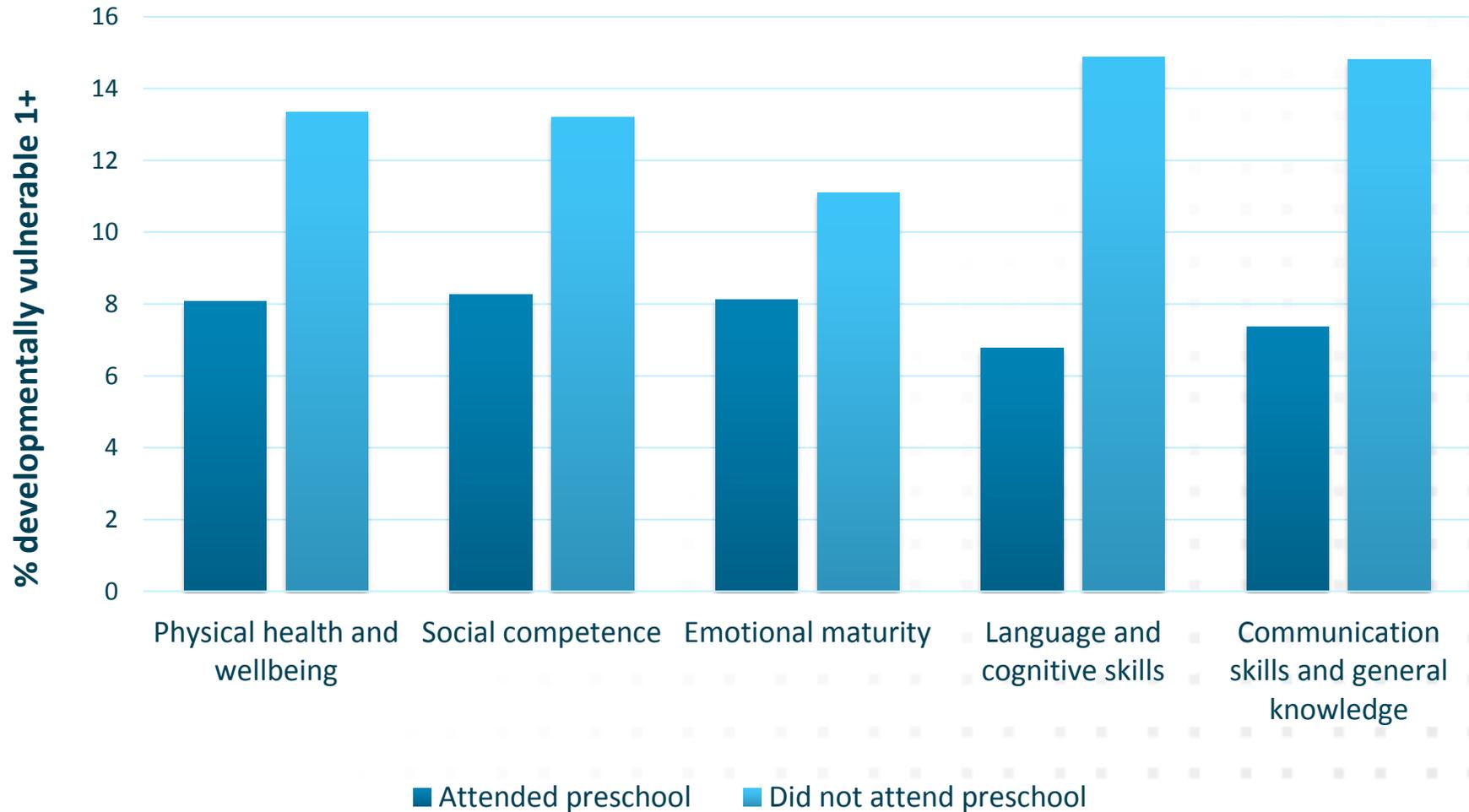
Social and emotional development, executive function

Long-term benefits: adult educational attainment, employment, service use

Workforce participation

Economic: cost-benefit analyses

Benefits of early learning



Why two years?

Longer duration, greater benefits

Improved academic outcomes: receptive vocabulary, reading, mathematics

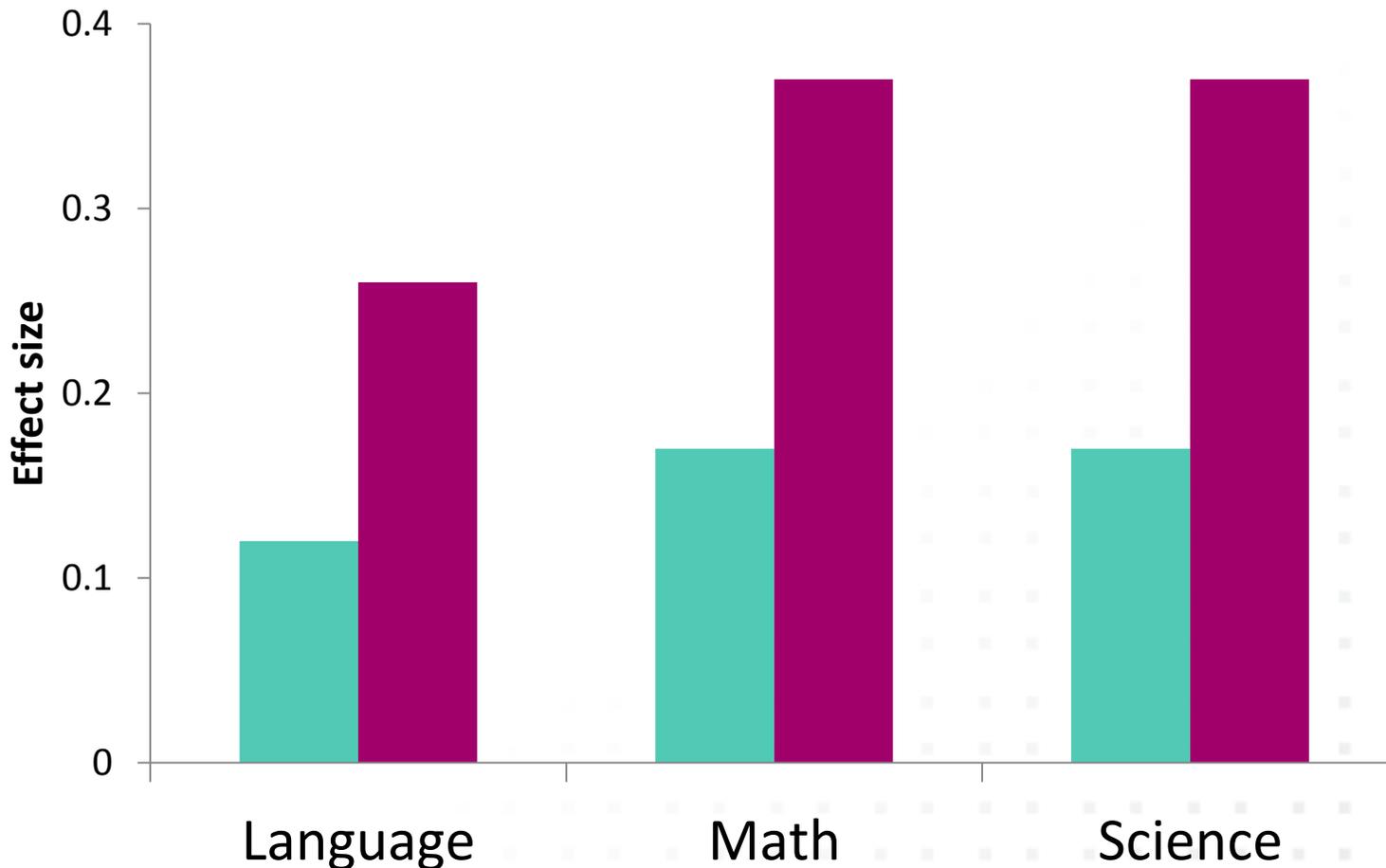
Improved executive function: working memory, mindset shifting

Improved school adjustment

» Shah et al. (2017).

Two years are better than one

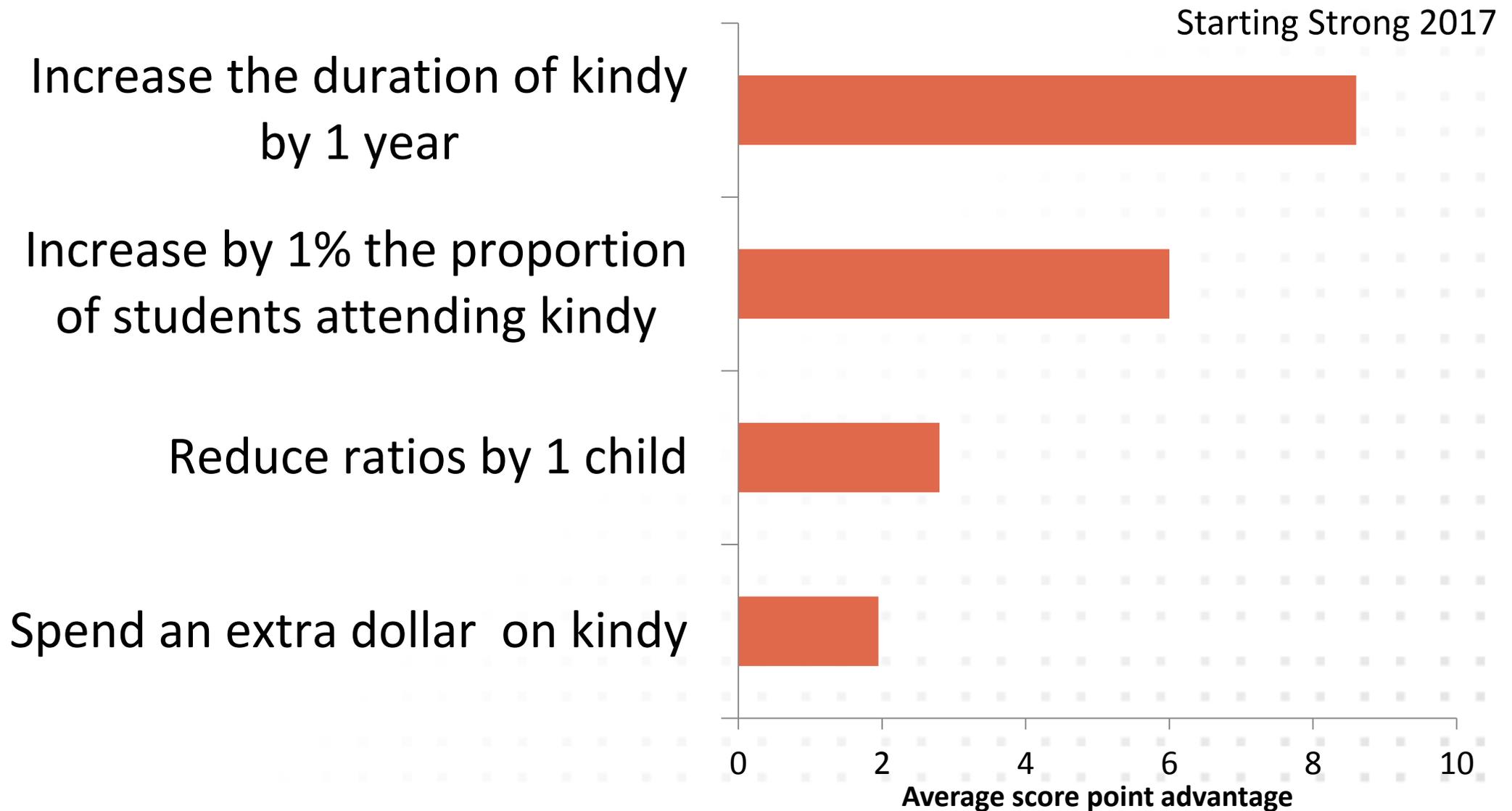
■ 1 Year ■ 2 Years



Going beyond average impacts

We need to understand what works, for whom, under what circumstances – and understand the variability masked by these overarching effect sizes

A key strategy for boosting performance



Structural inputs to improving performance at age 15

Why universal?

Why do we need the national partnership?

- All children benefit from high quality early learning, but not all children participate
- Investing in early education reaps dividends for whole society
 - Better educational outcomes – short term, school readiness, long term
 - Better social outcomes
 - Higher parental workforce participation
 - Better long term prospects – employment, justice, health, wellbeing
- Equity, access, inclusion
 - Hard to perfect targeting – where is the cut off?
 - Children from all walks of life can experience developmental and learning risk and vulnerability
- Ensures we provide ECEC for all young children, regardless of their family circumstances

What about targeted approaches?

- Need to be responsive, strategic, child-centred
 - Maintain developmentally appropriate ECEC practice
 - Provide additional wrap around services at point of need
- Some children will need more:
 - Proportionate universalism – same service, higher intensity, higher dose
- ECEC is not the be all and end all
 - Some children will have more complex needs that require responses from other providers/sectors

2 years of what?

Responsive educators with a strong understanding of how children learn

Play, inquiry, exploration: child directed -> co-directed -> educator directed

Language rich

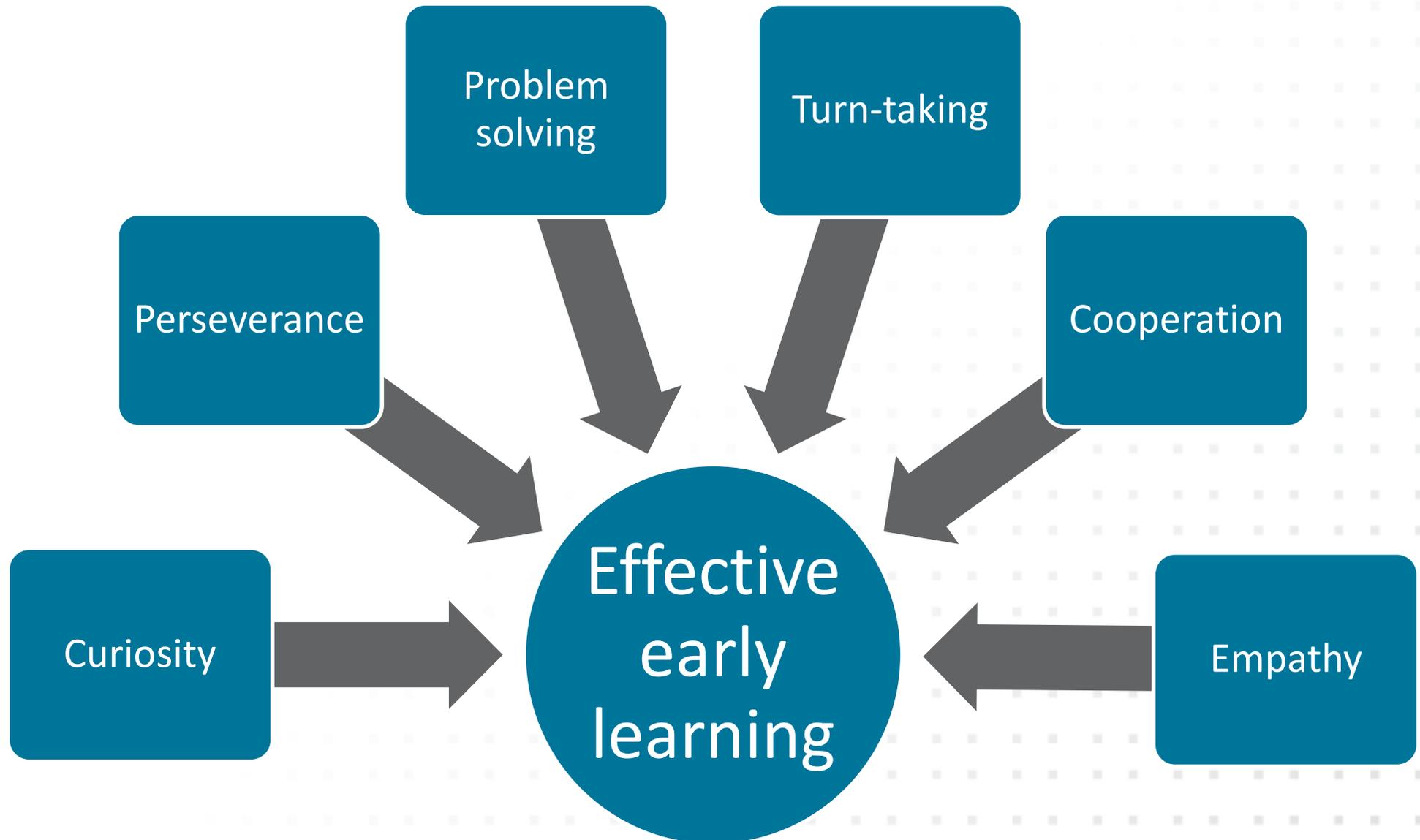
Parent engagement with children's learning

Social interaction with peers

Skills & knowledge young children need

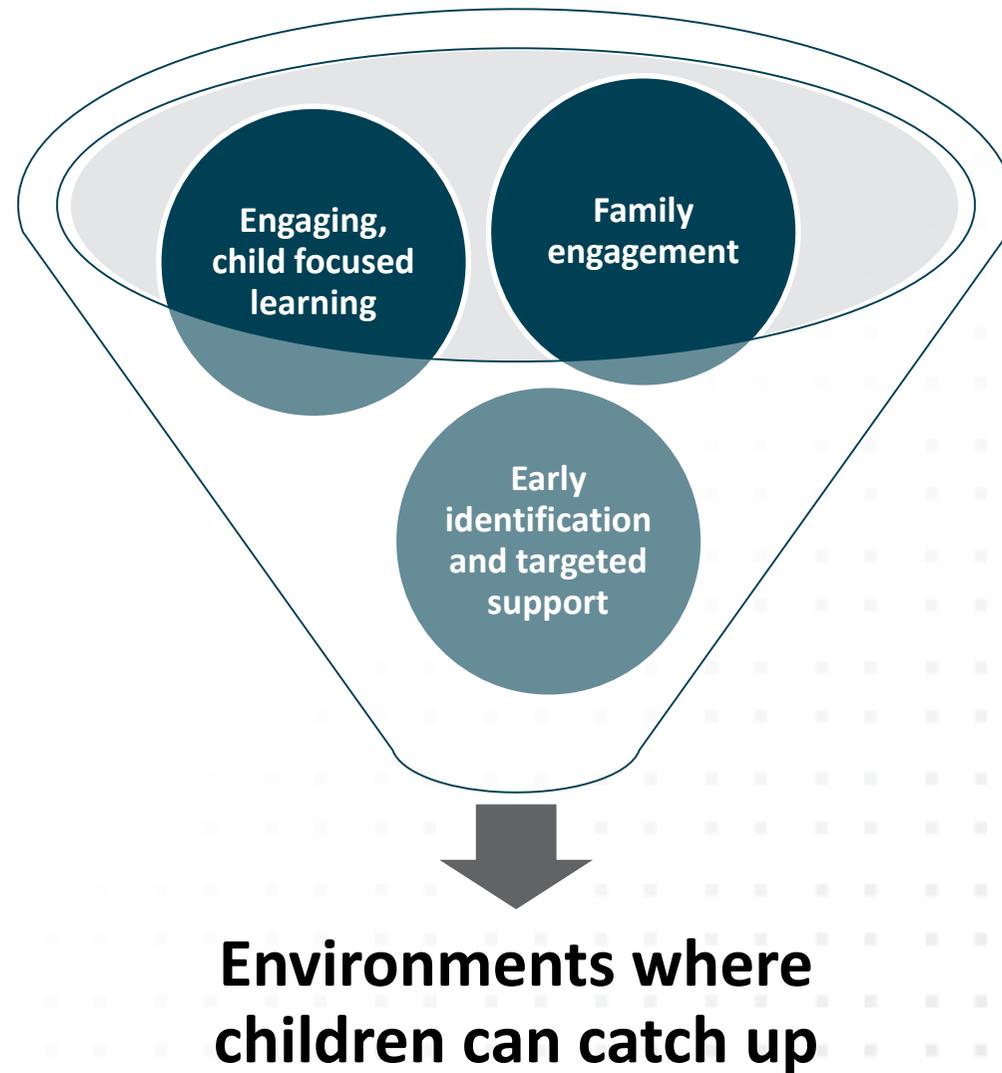


How children gain skills and capabilities



Foundations for capabilities in the early years	General capabilities in the Australian Curriculum	Soft skills for business success (Deloitte Access Economics, 2017)
Language acquisition and pre-literacy Counting, numeric awareness, shapes, patterns	Literacy	
	Numeracy	
	Information and communication technology	Digital literacy
Executive function skills – focus, impulse control, completing tasks, solving problems, organising information	Critical and creative thinking	Critical thinking Innovation Problem solving Enterprise skills
Regulation – self, emotional, behavioural, attentional	Personal and social capability	Teamwork Communication Emotional judgement Self management
Empathy, social skill development	Ethical understanding Intercultural understanding	Professional ethics

What if children start school behind?





Thank you

- Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out

<http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/educational-opportunity-in-australia-2015-who-succeeds-and-who-misses-out/>

- How Australia can regain centre stage on education

<http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/opinion/australia-can-regain-centre-stage-education/>

- Quality Early Education for All

www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/quality-early-education-for-all

Charlene.Smith@vu.edu.au

@charleesarah