

Workforce Development Policies' Effects on Children and Adolescents in Poverty

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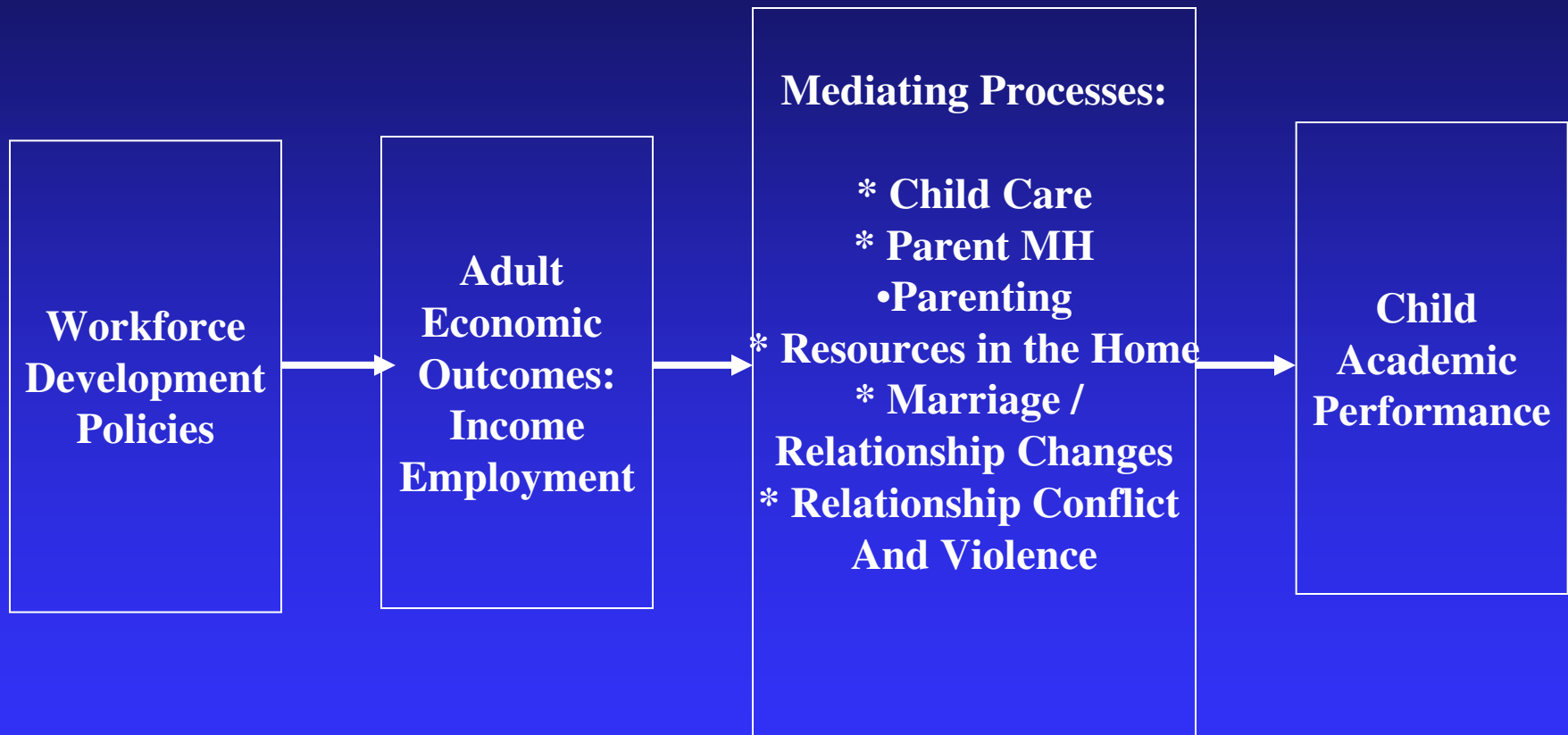
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Why might workforce development policies help address achievement among the poor?

- Policies that target changes in employment, income, adult basic education, and job skills
- Potential to directly reduce poverty
- Poverty is associated with lower academic performance
- Targeted as they generally are in the U.S. to low-income families, these policies might improve school achievement among children living in poverty

How might these programs affect the school performance of children and adolescents?



Our findings are based on:

- Longitudinal, random assignment studies of up to 16 programs
- Studies that began in the mid-1990's (and spanned up to the early 2000's) but include current state TANF policy elements:
 - ◆ Mandatory employment programs
 - ◆ Earnings supplement programs
 - ◆ Time limited programs
- ◆ Investigation of how effects differ by developmental period (middle childhood vs. adolescence), age of entry into program, and level of disadvantage

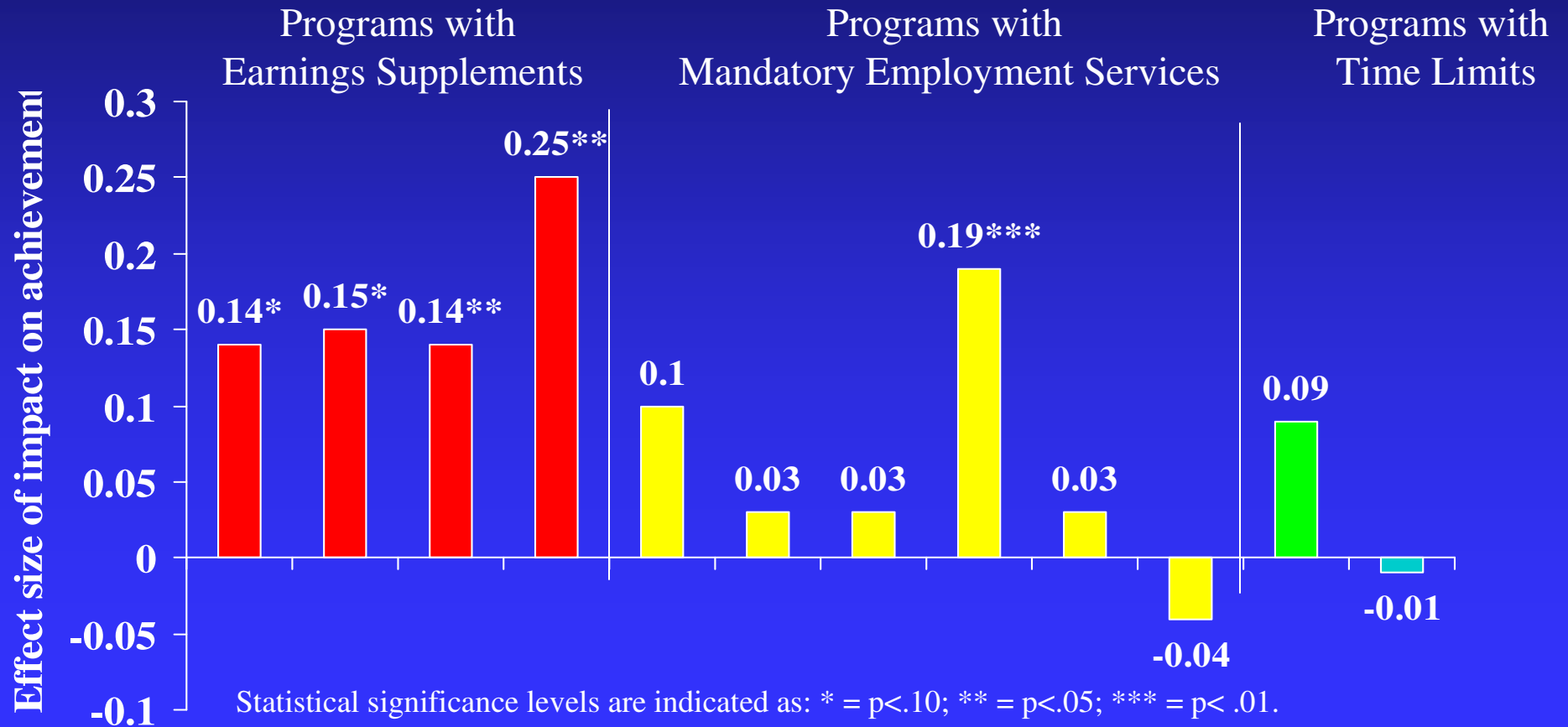
Overview

- School performance of elementary school-age children
 - ◆ Is raised by policies that increase both parents' employment and income—with some evidence that these effects hold up in the long term.
 - ◆ Is left unchanged by policies that increase parents' employment but not income—in both the short and long term.
- Adolescents
 - ◆ show negative effects on some aspects of school progress from welfare and work policies.

Elementary School-Age Children: Details of the synthesis

- Who?
 - ◆ Children aged 5 to 12 at follow-up
 - ◆ Single parent families
- What?
 - ◆ Maternal reports
 - ◆ Teacher reports and test scores
- How?
 - ◆ Compare effects across 12 programs

Elementary school-age children: Only programs with earnings supplements consistently benefit children



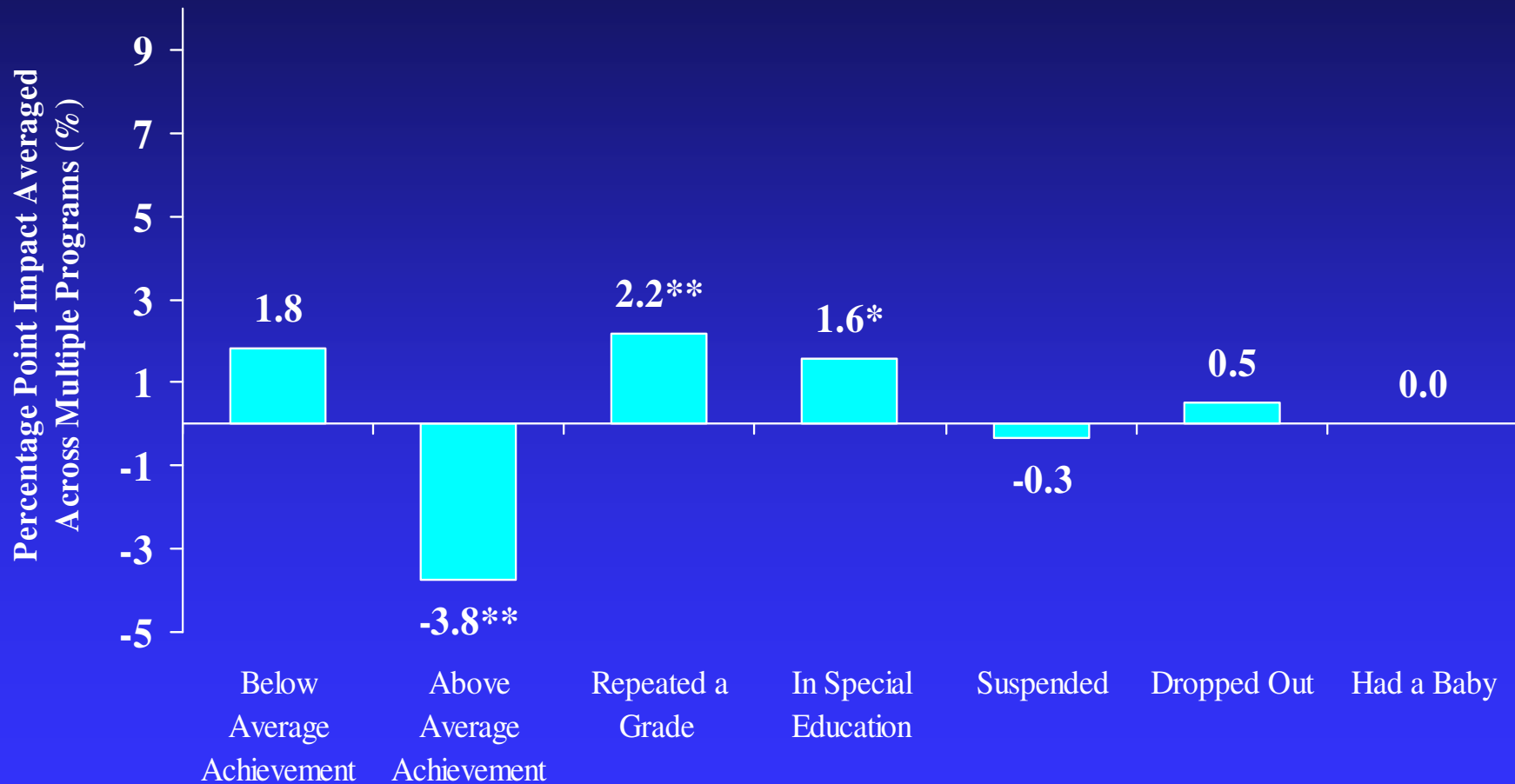
Elementary school-age children: Recent longer-term findings are in agreement with earlier impacts.

- In earnings supplement programs, benefits to children's school performance from programs that increased both employment and income persist through a 4.5 year follow-up (SSP) and an 8-year follow-up (New Hope).
- Mandatory programs that increase parents' employment but not income have few consistent effects on children through a 5 year follow-up.

Adolescents: Details of the synthesis

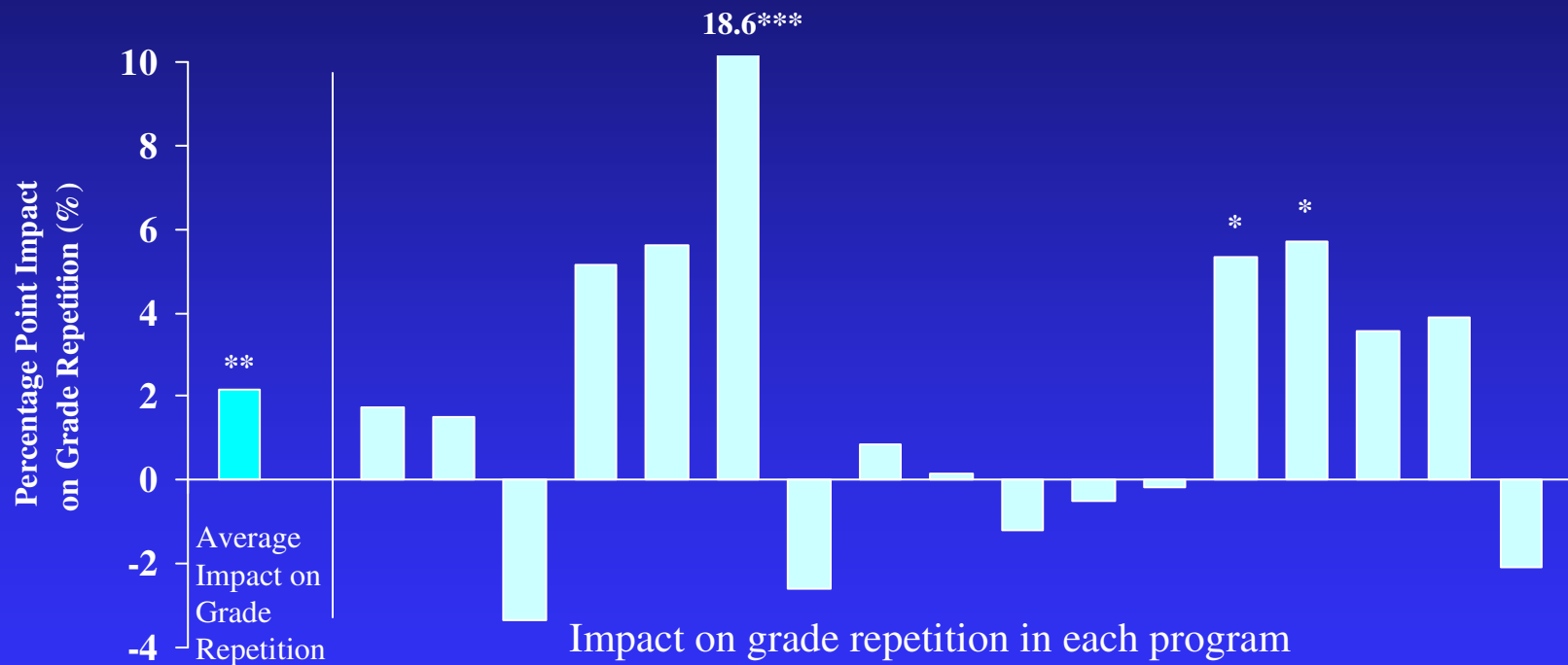
- Who?
 - ◆ Adolescents aged 12 to 18 at follow-up
 - ◆ Single parent families
- What?
 - ◆ Primarily maternal reports of schooling outcomes
 - ◆ Some maternal reports of behavior
 - ◆ (Caution – maternal report)
- How?
 - ◆ Calculate effects *within* and *across* 16 programs
 - ◆ In-depth interviews with families post-1996

Adolescents: On average, small negative effects on progress in school



Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = $p < .10$; ** = $p < .05$; *** = $p < .01$.

Adolescents: Example of program-specific impacts used in calculating average effect on grade repetition.



Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = $p < .10$; ** = $p < .05$; *** = $p < .01$.

What explains the effects on adolescents' school progress?

Analyses have ruled out as key explanations:

- ◆ *Program approach*
- ◆ *Income*

Employment likely playing a role:

- ◆ *Reduced supervision and monitoring* when maternal employment increases
- ◆ Adolescents' *taking on adult roles* such as caretaking of siblings or working more than 20 hours per week.

One adolescent's responsibilities at home bring problems at school ...

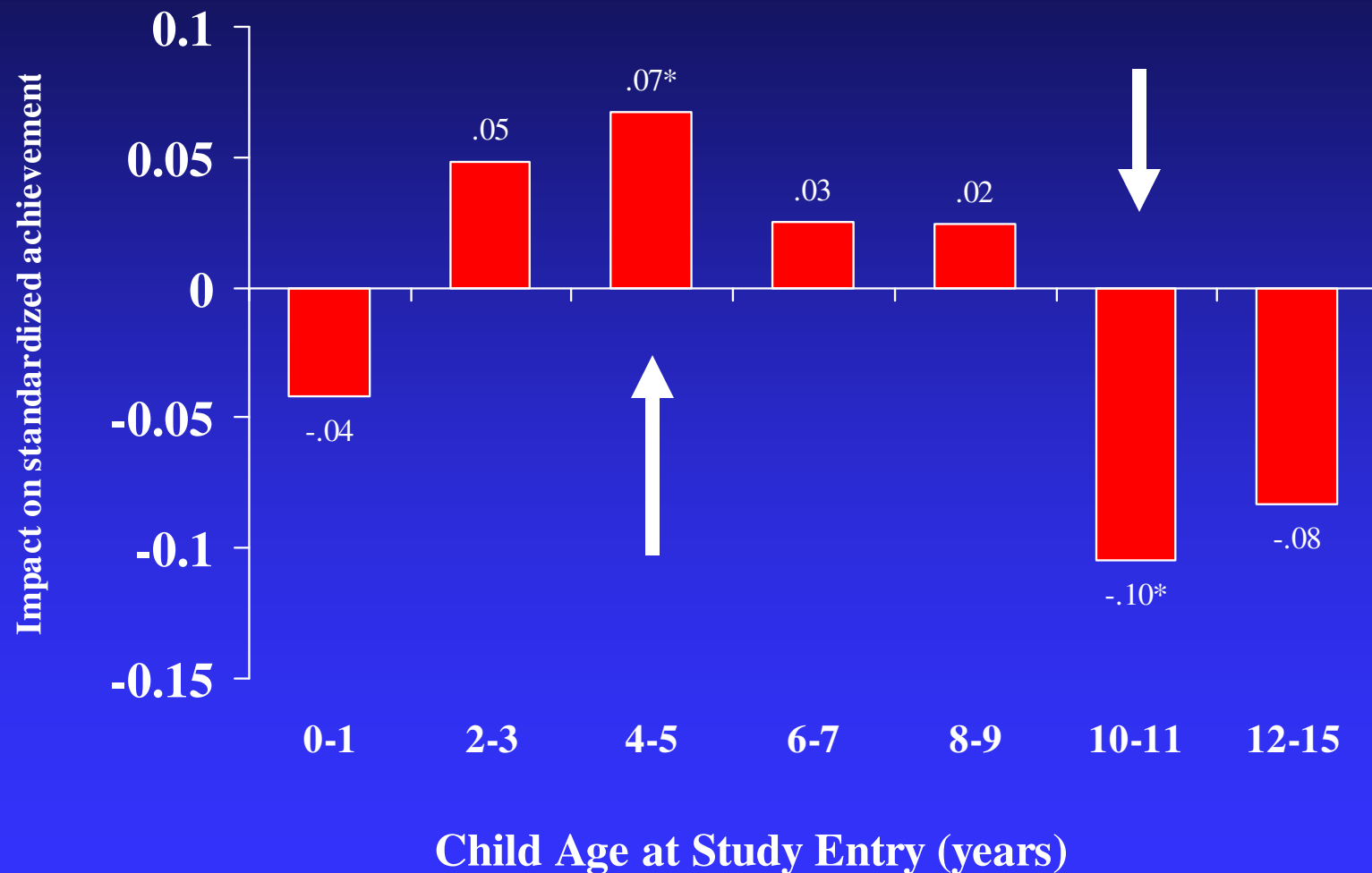
Tina, a single mother, describes what happens when her adolescent daughter Tamara takes her younger sister to day care each morning:

“... she's late every day for her school, every day. And what the school says to me is they're gonna, they gotta do what they, what's their policy. She's gotta stay after school, do her detention, um things like that because she didn't, or she'll lose her credit out of that morning class cause she didn't get there on time. So, she feels sad and I feel bad because I gotta be at work at 7. She can't be at school by 7, she can't. We all can't be at the same place at the same time..”

Thus far...

- Examined effects of workforce development policies across 2 broad age groups (elementary school age and adolescence)
- More fine-grained analyses by age?

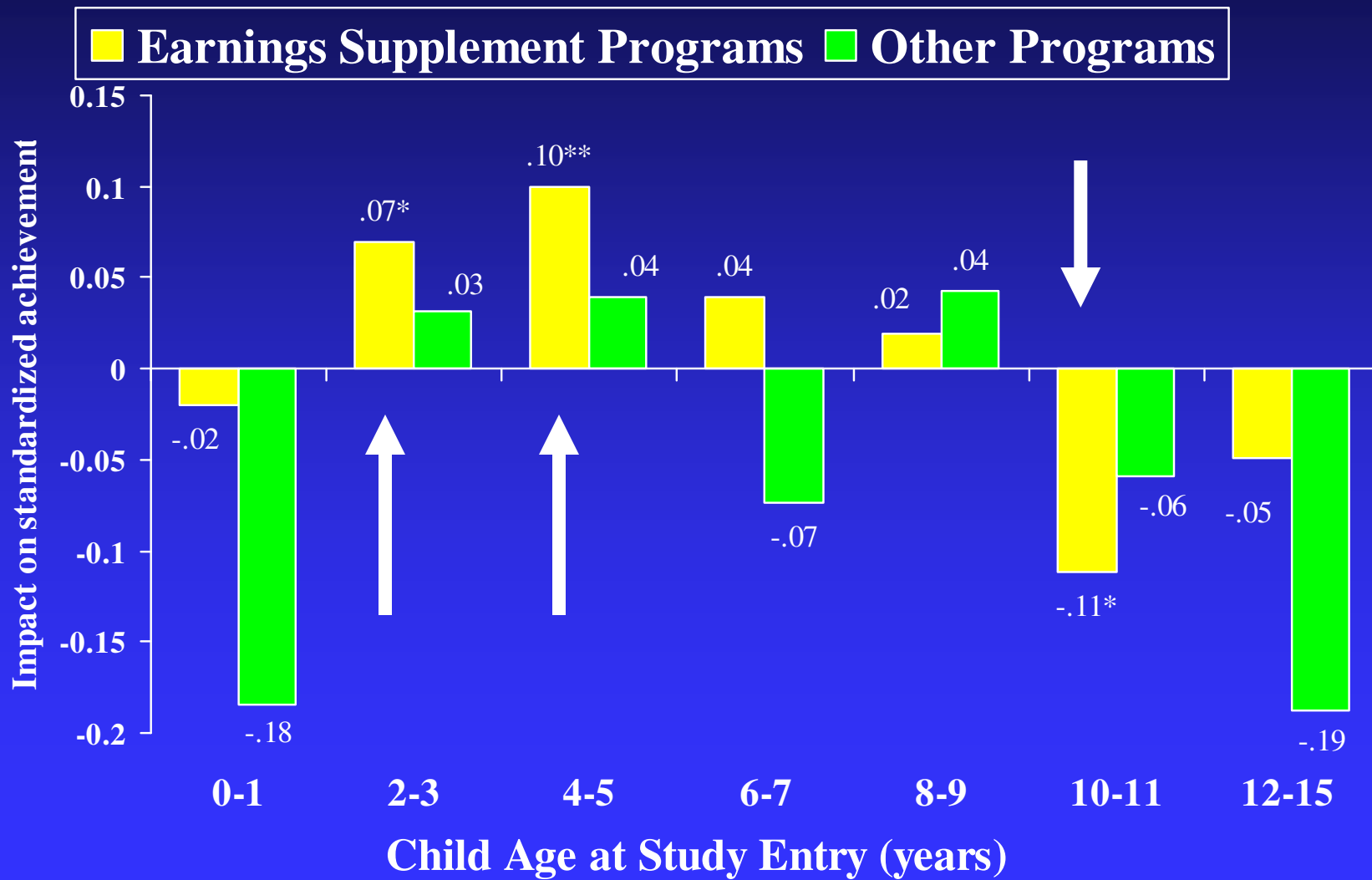
Welfare and Employment Policies: Effects on Child Achievement Across Developmental Periods (Morris, Duncan, & Clark-Kauffman, 2005)



Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Welfare and Employment Policies: Effects on Achievement by Policy Approach and Developmental Period

(Morris, Duncan, & Clark-Kauffman, 2005)



Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

More nuance on age differences

- Increases in school performance brought about by earnings supplement policies are strongest when experienced in early childhood (across transition to formal schooling)
- Decreases in school performance strongest when experienced around transition to junior high school

Policy implications

Workforce development policies can play a part in improving school performance among children in poverty.

- ◆ Parents' work and family income are important non-school factors that play a role in children's achievement.
- ◆ Although modest, the positive effects of earnings supplement programs on elementary school age children (equivalent to increasing children's school achievement from 25th to 30th percentile) are comparable in size to the effects of the Tennessee STAR experiment.

Policy implications

For workforce development and welfare policy:
Focus on “making work pay,” not just making
parents work

- ◆ Employment policies can improve school performance of young children if earnings supplements designed to make work pay (e.g., state Earned Income Tax Credits; wage supplements) are included

What kinds of work support?

- ◆ Earnings supplements show clearest evidence of positive impacts on children; they have shown success both implemented alone and with more comprehensive work support services (child care subsidies; case management with low caseloads)

Policy implications

For adolescents: Consider implementing proven after-school programs for teens in addition to employment and welfare policies

- ◆ Such programs can support working parents' efforts to keep their children focused on school achievement and positive behavior during the hours when children are out of school but parents are working.

In addition: For the most disadvantaged parents, even earnings-supplement programs show few benefits for children (Yoshikawa et al., 2003).

- ◆ These parents may benefit from more intensive programs focused on sources of toxic stress in their lives (National Forum on Early Childhood Program Evaluation, 2007).

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