It’s been an exciting 12 months here at Strategies for Children (SFC). We have seen a tremendous level of leadership and support for high-quality early education from policymakers, opinion leaders, and the media at the national, state, and local levels. We have helped thousands of early educators to advocate and demonstrate the importance of what they do every day to support young children. It made a difference: for the first time since the Great Recession, we have seen an increase in early education funding in Massachusetts. We are moving in the right direction.

Over the next year, SFC will build upon this momentum. Among other priorities, we will work to position early education at the forefront of the 2014 elections and to prioritize investments in the fiscal year 2015 state budget. We invite you to join us as we “tip” early education and ensure that all of our children have the foundation they need to be successful in school and in life.

Across the nation and here in Massachusetts, our achievement gaps are persistent and costly. Nearly 40% percent of the commonwealth’s children are not able to read proficiently by third grade—a critical predictor of their future success. These children continue to struggle, and are four times less likely to finish high school on time. This impacts us all: each high school dropout costs Massachusetts taxpayers, on average, $349,000. Multiply that by the more than 7,000 students who dropped out last year and the cost of NOT investing early becomes staggering.

During this 20th anniversary of education reform in Massachusetts, there is much to celebrate. We lead the nation on many critical education benchmarks. Yet we also have wide and persistent achievement gaps. The time has come to act upon the irrefutable evidence that to close these gaps, we must invest in high-quality early education.

Legislature passes and Governor Patrick signs An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency into law. (SEPTEMBER 2012)

Governor Patrick proposes significant new investments in high-quality early education in his FY14 state budget proposal. (JANUARY 2013)

Legislature includes $26.5 million in funding for new early education and care line items in FY14 state budget. (JULY 2013)

**local innovation**

SFC creates and convenes the Massachusetts Reading Proficiency Learning Network, composed of five communities focused on early education and early literacy. (JUNE 2012)

Representing more than 100,000 children, the Learning Network meets quarterly and receives customized technical assistance from SFC. In year one, communities engage in an innovative improvement process, developed by SFC and Dr. Nonie Lesaux, where communities map, assess, and determine how to best allocate resources to impact children’s literacy outcomes. (JULY 2012–JULY 2013)

Early educators, parents and children send 16,000 stars, letters and postcards to Governor Patrick and the Legislature through SFC’s Rising Stars campaign. (JANUARY–JUNE 2013)

With partners, SFC engages business leaders and law enforcement officials to support proposed state investments. (APRIL 2013)

SFC forms coalition of early education leaders to support President Obama’s proposed investments in early education. (JUNE 2013)

Eye on Early Education blog grows to 700 subscribers and exceeds 236,000 page views.

SFC event series on literacy best practices draws more than 400 educators across the state. (NOVEMBER 2012, FEBRUARY 2013)

More than 150 policymakers learn how New Jersey’s early education investments narrowed the achievement gap at SFC State House event. (MARCH 2013)

Four hundred attend Early Childhood Summit 2013 co-hosted by SFC, the Boston Children’s Museum, The Center on the Developing Child and the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. (APRIL 2013)

Early education highlighted as critical reform priority at event co-hosted by SFC, the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, and the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education. (JUNE 2013)

Massachusetts awarded third grade reading “Pacesetter Award” from national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. (OCTOBER 2012)

SFC’s work showcased at national conferences hosted by The Alliance for Early Success and The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. (OCTOBER 2012 AND APRIL 2013)
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