



# Investing in Early Education is Essential

**The research is in! Investing in early education is essential because:**

## **The early years are learning years.**

- The human brain develops more rapidly between birth and age five than during any other subsequent period.<sup>1</sup>
- The first five years of life are a time of enormous social-emotional, physical and cognitive growth. These early years provide a window of opportunity to “set either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows.”<sup>2</sup>
- A child’s ability to be attentive, focused and follow directions emerges in the early years. Structured early learning fosters these abilities for later success in school and life.<sup>3</sup>

## **Early education prepares children for success in school.**

- Children who participate in high-quality early childhood education develop better language skills, score higher in school-readiness tests and have better social skills and fewer behavioral problems once they enter school.<sup>4</sup>
- Children with high-quality early learning experiences are 30% more likely to graduate from high school, and more than twice as likely to go to college.<sup>5 6</sup> They are also 40% less likely to need special education or be held back a grade.<sup>7</sup>
- Children from low-income families who participate in high-quality early childhood education programs show the greatest magnitude of benefits – they repeat fewer grades and learn at higher levels.<sup>8</sup>
- A child who enters school reading below grade level has only a one in eight chance of catching up.<sup>9</sup>
- Kindergarten teachers in Georgia, the first state with voluntary, universal pre-k for four-year-olds, report that children who participated in pre-k were better prepared for kindergarten, especially in the areas of pre-reading, pre-math and social skills.<sup>10</sup>

## **Early education is an investment that pays off.**

- Nobel Laureate and University of Chicago Economics Professor James J. Heckman found, through a broad evaluation of job training programs, tax policies, school reform, and financial interventions, that high-quality early education gives children “the advantage of an early start to their skill development improving their chances of participating in the job market in later years.” Heckman recommends focusing policy-related investments on children because they are likely to result in a higher level of skill development and yield a greater rate of return, concluding that, “the best evidence supports the policy prescription: Invest in the very young.”<sup>11</sup>
- A 2003 report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, “Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return,” found that investments in early childhood education yield an estimated 16% for every dollar invested.<sup>12</sup>
- Adults who participated in high-quality early childhood education programs during their preschool years are more likely to be literate. In addition, they are less likely to be dependent on welfare or arrested for criminal activity.<sup>13</sup>

## **Early education promotes worker productivity.**

- When workers have reliable, quality early education and care arrangements for their young children, employers report reduced employee turnover, lowered absenteeism and increased productivity.<sup>14</sup>
- Employee absenteeism as a result of poor quality early education and care arrangements costs American businesses an estimated \$3 billion per year.<sup>15</sup>

## Not enough children are entering school with the benefits of high-quality early education to promote their school readiness.

- Almost half of kindergarten teachers (46%) across the country report that at least half of their students have problems such as difficulty following directions and working independently, and a lack of academic skills, when they enter kindergarten.<sup>16</sup>
- Almost 6,000 preschool-aged children in Massachusetts are currently on waiting lists to receive financial assistance to enroll in an early education and care program.<sup>17</sup>
- With more than 60% of young children in Massachusetts living in families where both parents work,<sup>18</sup> 92% of young children spend time in non-parental care.<sup>19</sup>
- Recent studies have found that Massachusetts preschool classrooms vary considerably in the quality of education and care they provide.<sup>20</sup>
- Consistent, well-educated and adequately compensated teachers are integral to positive outcomes for children.<sup>21</sup> Yet low wages, inadequate educational opportunities and poor working conditions for early educators have led to high annual turnover rates (estimated at nearly 30% in Massachusetts) and difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Shonkoff, Jack P. & Philips, Deborah A. (Eds). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development*. National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, Washington: National Academy Press, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Bowman, B., Donovan, M.S. & Burns, M.S. *Eager to Learn*. National Research Council, Washington: National Academy Press, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School*. NICHD, June 1999, p. 2 and Karoly, Lynn, et al, *Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*. RAND, 1998, xv.

<sup>5</sup> Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Robertson, D.L., & Mann, E.A. "Long-term Effects of an Early Childhood Intervention on Educational Achievement and Juvenile Arrest." *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 285, No. 18. 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Reynolds, et. al. Effects of a School-Based, Early Childhood Intervention on Adult Health and Well-being. A 19-Year Follow-up of Low-Income Families. *Archives of the Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 2007;161:730-739. Available at: <http://archpedi.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/161/8/730>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> *The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go To School*. NICHD, June 1999, p. 2 and Karoly, Lynn, et al, *Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*. RAND, 1998, xv.

<sup>9</sup> Juel, Connie. *Learning to Read and Write: A Longitudinal Study of 54 Children from First through Fourth Grades*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, v. 80, n. 4, 1988, pp. 437-447.

<sup>10</sup> Vecchiotti, Sara. *Kindergarten: The Overlooked School Year*. The Foundation for Child Development, October, 2001, p. 24

<sup>11</sup> J. Heckman, "Policies to Foster Human Capital," *Research in Economics* 54 (2000): 3-56.; abstract in J. Heckman, "Policies to Foster Human Capital," Joint Center for Poverty Research, Policy Brief, Vol. 2, No.1 (2000).

<sup>12</sup> Rob Grunewald and Arthur Rolnick, "Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return," *The Region* 17:4 Supplement (December 2003), 9. Based on the longitudinal analysis of the High/Scope study of the Perry Preschool in Ypsilanti, MI. See Lawrence J. Schweinhart, *Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27* (Ypsilanti, Michigan:High/Scope Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Connelly, Rachel & Kimmel, Jean. *Marital Status and Full-time/Part-time Work Status in Child Care Choices*. Kalamazoo, Michigan: unpublished revision of W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research working paper no. 99-058, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> *Resources & Links, Facts and Figures: Key Facts on Child Care and Early Education*. Child Care Action Campaign, 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Rimm-Kaufman, S.E, Pianta, R.C., & Cox, M.J. *Teachers' Judgments of Problems in the Transition to Kindergarten*. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services, September 2007 data. "Preschool-aged" includes children 2.9-5 years of age. The total number of children on the waitlist includes children from birth through age 12 (or up to age 16 if the child has a documented special need.)

<sup>18</sup> For children under age 6. Children's Defense Fund calculation based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, *Key Facts: Essential Information about Child Care, Early Education and School-Age Care*, 2003 Edition.

<sup>19</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, Early Learning Services, *Securing Our Future*. Future Trends, Vol. VI, 2001.

<sup>20</sup> Opinion Dynamics, *Early Education Survey of Massachusetts Households*, (Boston, MA: Strategies for Children, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> *NCELD Spotlight*, National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, Early Learning Services, *Securing Our Future*. Future Trends, Vol. VI, 2001.