



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.¹
- 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.”²
- 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.³

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.⁴
- Children with high-quality early learning experiences are 40% less likely to need special education or be held back a grade.⁵
- 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.⁶
- A child who enters school reading below grade level has only a one in eight chance of catching up.⁷
- 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.⁸

Early education is an investment that pays off.

- The Chicago Child-Parent Center’s evaluation of 989 children from low-income Chicago families found that for every dollar invested in high-quality preschool programs, \$7.14 (in 1998 dollars) was returned to society in increased earnings for participants and reduced costs to society for remedial education and crime.⁹
- A study reviewed early childhood research from around the nation and estimated the impact of investing in early education in Massachusetts. It found that making high-quality early education programs available to all children in Massachusetts would pay back \$1.18 to the state for every \$1.00 invested.¹⁰
- Adults who participated in high-quality early childhood education programs during their preschool years are more likely to be literate and enrolled in post-secondary education and are less likely to be school dropouts, dependent on welfare or arrested for criminal activity.¹¹

Early education helps families work.

- When workers have reliable, quality early education and care arrangements for their young children, employers report reduced employee turnover, lowered absenteeism and increased productivity.¹²
- Employee absenteeism as a result of poor quality early education and care arrangements costs American businesses an estimated \$3 billion per year.¹³

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.¹⁴
- 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.¹⁵
- With more than 60% of young children in Massachusetts living in families where both parents work,¹⁶ 82% of young children spend time in non-parental care.¹⁷
- Recent studies have found that Massachusetts preschool classrooms vary considerably in the quality of education and care they provide.¹⁸
- Consistent, well-educated and adequately compensated teachers are integral to positive outcomes for children.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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

² Shonkoff, Jack P. & Phillips, Deborah A. (Eds). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Child Development*. National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, Washington: National Academy Press, 2000.

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

⁴ *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.

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

⁶ *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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ Vecchiotti, Sara. *Kindergarten: The Overlooked School Year*. The Foundation for Child Development, October, 2001, p. 24

⁹ Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Robertson, D.L., & Mann, E.A. *Long-term Effects of Early Childhood Intervention on Education Achievement and Juvenile Arrest* Journal of the American Medical Association, vol. 285, No. 18. 2001.

¹⁰ Belfield, CR with PJ McEwan. *An Economic Analysis of Investments in Early Childhood Education in Massachusetts*. Research paper commissioned by Strategies for Children, Inc. January 2005

¹¹ Reynolds, A.J., Temple, J.A., Robertson, D.L., & Mann, E.A. *Long-term Effects of Early Childhood Intervention on Education Achievement and Juvenile Arrest*. Journal of the American Medical Association, vol. 285, No. 18. 2001.

¹² 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.

¹³ *Resources & Links, Facts and Figures: Key Facts on Child Care and Early Education*. Child Care Action Campaign, 2001.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services, November 2002 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 disability.)

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ Massachusetts Department of Education, Early Learning Services, *Securing Our Future*. Future Trends, Vol. VI, 2001.

¹⁸ *The Cost and Quality of Full Day, Year-round Early Care and Education in Massachusetts: Preschool Classrooms (2001) and Early Care and Education in Massachusetts Public School Preschool Classrooms (2002)*, Wellesley College Centers for Women.

¹⁹ *NCEDL Spotlight*, National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2000.

²⁰ Massachusetts Department of Education, Early Learning Services, *Securing Our Future*. Future Trends, Vol. VI, 2001.