

# The value of early education

Early education and care are essential resources, enabling parents with young children to work or engage in activities that will support their efforts to join the work force. In addition, MassBudget reports that a growing body of research finds that high quality early education plays a critical role in preparing young children for success in school and in life.

“High quality early education supports school readiness so children can start kindergarten ready to learn. Being ready to learn in turn prepares children to read by the third grade, a critical benchmark for determining later success in school and beyond,” Jeff Bernstein wrote for MassBudget.

In FY 2006, Massachusetts became the first state in the nation to unite early education and care services under one agency — the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). Prior to this, programming was administered in two different agencies.

Unfortunately, funding for these programs has dropped overall, although an increase is proposed in the coming Fiscal Year.

In FY 2001 Massachusetts allocated about \$700 million for early education and care after adjusting for inflation.

In FY 2013 current state spending on early education and care is just shy of \$500 million, a 28 percent decrease.

For FY 2014, the Governor's proposal for early education and care totals \$630.9 million including substantial new investment for access and quality. The proposal increases early education spending by 26 percent com-



pared to FY 2013 spending. The House and Senate have yet to release their budget proposals.

Continuing to nurture very young children appears to be a key to success in overall education in our state. Turning our back on them would be a serious mistake.