



SMART BEGINNINGS

Ready for School – Ready for Life

WHY IT'S SMART

- Investment in early childhood learning and school readiness is directly related to creating a vital economy and prepared workforce for the future.

If a child does not enter school with the basic skills needed to learn, it is much more difficult for him or her to succeed in school and later in life.

- The basic skills needed to learn include the ability to identify shapes, letters and numbers; speak understandably in sentences of three to five words; hold a crayon; follow directions; and separate from parents without being upset. These simple skills represent the foundation for learning and are the seeds of future language skills, relationships, and critical thinking. (Barnett, W. (1995) *Long-Term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs. The Future of Children Vol. 5(3)*. www.futureofchildren.org)
- Eighty-five percent of the core structure of the brain develops in the first three years of life. This “wiring” impacts the capacity to learn and develop social, emotional and cognitive skills. (Shore, R. (1997) *Rethinking the Brain. Families and Work Institute.*)
- Children who participate in appropriate early learning experiences have fewer special education needs in later years and are more likely to graduate from high school. (Barnett, W. (1995) *Long-Term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs. The Future of Children Vol. 5(3)*. www.futureofchildren.org)
- Identifying and helping children who have special needs at least 2 years before they enter kindergarten can produce savings of \$30,000-\$100,000 per child. (Barrett, S.W. (2000). *Economics of early childhood intervention. In Shonkoff, J.P. & Meisels, S.J., Editors, Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention, Second Edition, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press*)

Virginia needs to invest in early childhood learning both in the home and in child care settings to help ensure a successful future for all its citizens.

- Too many of Virginia's children enter kindergarten without the pre-reading skills needed. (2002-03 Pals-K scores, University of Virginia)
- It's not just disadvantaged children that are unprepared; it's also children from middle- and high-income families.
- In Virginia, 85% of men and 68% of women with children 0-5 are employed, creating a workforce need for affordable, high quality child care. (Economic Impact of the Child Care Industry in Virginia (2004) Voices for Virginia's Children)
- While Virginia has a number of good programs, it has not had – until now - a comprehensive initiative that seeks to provide all children from birth to five years old access to early childhood programs. Our closest business competitors, such as North Carolina, have strong statewide initiatives in place utilizing public and private resources and strong local networks.
- Though programs like Head Start and school-based programs for some four year olds are designed to provide early childhood education, they can't meet all of the needs in Virginia.

Investments in early childhood learning programs benefit businesses today and in the future.

- More educated workers provide employers with a more skilled work pool.
- Children who participate in appropriate early childhood learning programs are more likely to graduate from high school and get a job. (The Carolina Abecedarian Project www.fpg.unc.edu)
- Children acquire the foundation for desirable business skills such as communications, teamwork and critical thinking, before age 5. (Barnett, W. (1995) Long-Term Outcomes of Early Childhood Programs. The Future of Children Vol. 5(3). www.futureofchildren.org)
- Twenty-two percent of unscheduled employee absences are due to family issues, including child care problems. (2003 CCH Unscheduled Absence Survey)

Investing in early childhood learning programs is a sound and effective economic development strategy.

- Every \$1 invested in a high quality early childhood program may yield \$7-\$9 in future savings stemming from the savings to taxpayers, victims of crime and a stronger workforce for businesses. (National Institute for Early Education Research <http://nieer.org/resources>)
- Children with good early learning opportunities have fewer special education needs in later years and are more likely to graduate from high school. They are more likely to earn more money, pay more federal and state taxes and need less help from income assistance programs. (High Scope Educational Research Foundation www.highscope.org and Advocacy Vol 4 (1) www.aecf.org)
- Cost-benefit studies show a 16% public return on early childhood education investment (4% goes to the child directly served and 12% goes to the public). (Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis (2003) The ABCs of ECD: A Discussion on the Economics of Early Childhood Development <http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us/pubs/region/03-12/ecd.cfm?js=0>)