



Talking Points

*For use by school leaders in presentations
about important issues related to public education*

Early Investments Bring Great Returns

by Shari Prest, Ark Associates

Key Message: Children are our greatest resource. Parents, communities and schools are responsible for working together to ensure that all children realize their full potential, have the opportunity for fulfilling lives, and become contributing members of society. This awesome responsibility begins in early childhood.

Minnesotans have always known how important teaching and learning is in and for the lives of our children. We have known that our economic and social success rely on a sound, comprehensive system of public education. Now, with the accelerating speed of change in our world, it is clearer than ever that our responsibility is not limited by calendars or clocks. Research confirms that it is important to the future of kids and our society that we support high-quality educational opportunities in early childhood.

Invest early...

- ◆ “High-quality early childhood education is more than an admirable goal; it is fundamental to making sure all children have the opportunity to succeed.”¹
- ◆ “Every child needs a good early childhood education. That’s an ethical principle that transcends what the data says.”²
- ◆ A child’s first few years are a sensitive period for brain development and set a trajectory for his or her success in school and later in life.³
- ◆ Well-focused and -funded investments in early childhood development programs produce substantial returns for disadvantaged children and, for the public.”³
- ◆ A child who receives support from birth to age five for development in cognition, language, motor skills, adaptive skills, and social/emotional function, is more likely to succeed in school and in the workplace.”⁴
- ◆ Three significant studies on the economic impact of high quality preschool programs (High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, Abecedarian Project, and Chicago Child-Parent Centers) reveal a high personal and public return on each dollar spent. The personal and public benefits range was from \$3.78 to \$10.15 for each dollar invested in 2002 dollars.
- ◆ “What happens in the earliest years not only matters to children and their families, but to the neighborhoods they live in, the schools they will attend, and the communities they will contribute to.”⁶

Cost/Benefit factors of high-quality early childhood education⁵	<i>Targeted program serving 3- and 4-year-olds from families in the lowest quarter of the income distribution; costs & benefits in Minnesota⁵</i>	<i>Projected costs and benefits for a universal voluntary high-quality pre-K program serving all 3- and 4-year old children:⁵</i>
When the program would start paying for itself	3 years	9 years
Annual cost if the program had been fully phased in 2008	\$32 million	\$567 million
Total benefits in 2050	\$4 billion	\$16.8 billion
Costs in 2050	\$146 million	\$1.7 billion
Ratio of total benefits to costs in 2050	\$27 to 1	\$10.2 to 1

1. Dr. Vincent Ferrandino, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals
2. Larry Schweinhardt, head researcher, *High/Scope Perry Preschool Study*
3. Arthur Rolnick, Ph. D. and Rob Grunewald, *Achieving a High Return on Early Childhood Investment*
4. C.T. Ramey, F.A. Campbell, M. Burchinal, M. L. Skinner, D.M. Gardner, S. L. Ramey, *Persistent Effects of Early Childhood Education on High-Risk Children and Their Mothers*, “Applied Developmental Science”
5. *Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation*, Robert Lynch, professor of economics, Washington College
6. *Ready 4 K Early childhood care and education in Minnesota, A status report*, Wilder Research Center, March 2003