Advocacy Toolkit: Promoting Quality Early Childhood Education

July 2011

birthtofive
POLICY ALLIANCE

First Five Years Fund

Spitfire Strategies

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Dear Advocates,

With limited funding, a conservative environment and state budget crises across the country, you're facing some significant challenges in ensuring your state's kids get the services they need. This toolkit is presented as a resource to help you overcome these challenges and increase investments in high-quality early learning programs.

Spitfire Strategies created this toolkit with support from the Birth to Five Policy Alliance and key materials provided by the First Five Years Fund. This compilation offers resources you need to effectively reach out to decision makers and potential champions in your state.

The toolkit includes three types of content:

Tip Sheets. Included is a collection of how-to's on coalition-building and multiple aspects of media outreach (developing a media opportunities calendar; giving successful interviews; pitching; and drafting a press release, op-ed and letter to the editor) that provide step-by-step guidance and serve as quick-reference cheat sheets.

Templates. Following many of the tip sheets are sample template materials, such as an introductory e-mail for business leaders, press release, op-ed and letter to the editor that can be tailored to specific issues, legislation and policymakers in your state. These template materials contain placeholders that will allow you to tailor the materials as appropriate for your state.

Leave-behinds/One-pagers. Finally, the toolkit includes materials you can leave behind at meetings, distribute at events or use internally to refine your messaging. These documents describe the characteristics of quality early learning environments and provide compelling statistics about what happens when states invest in early childhood education programs.

We hope you find this toolkit helpful in your work and encourage you to customize and tailor the materials as you see fit. An electronic version of this toolkit will be sent to those who participated in the Spitfire Strategies research effort and any other interested parties can receive a copy by emailing Ben Gass at ben@spitfirestrategies.com.

A wide range of additional tip sheets, leave-behinds and other resources are also available on the First Five Years Fund website at www.ffyf.org. Multimedia resources, at www.ffyf.org/content/videos-images, include compelling videos that can help make the case for quality early learning programs and demonstrate the positive impact through the voices of children themselves.

Sincerely,

- Spitfire Strategies
- Birth to Five Policy Alliance
- First Five Years Fund

Tip Sheets & Templates

The following section includes a collection of how-to's on coalition-building and multiple aspects of media outreach that provide step-by-step guidance and serve as quick-reference cheat sheets.

Following many of the tip sheets are sample template materials that can be tailored to specific issues, legislation and policymakers in your state.

Read Me – Write an effective press release

Reporters receive hundreds of e-mails each day. Your challenge is to make your press release stand out from the crowd so that it actually gets read. In a nutshell, a press release is a brief news story that gives reporters key details about a piece of news. These tips, along with the sample press release on the following page, will help you craft a press release that will capture a reporter's attention.

Make sure your release is newsworthy. Only send out a press release when you have actual news to report. For example, a press release is appropriate to announce a newly installed officer of your organization, the release of a new report, the results of a successful program or event, etc.

Grab their attention with a strong headline and/or e-mail subject line. The headline is what a reporter reads first and determines if they will keep reading. The headline should give the most newsworthy angle of your story in no more than 12 words, mostly strong nouns and active verbs. Avoid the overused "X organization announces" headline – it's nearly a guarantee that a reporter will ignore the rest of the release.

Don't forget the sub-headline. Because the headline is so short, the sub-headline allows you the opportunity to offer another piece of information that will sell the reporter on your story. This is valuable real estate, so avoid repeating words from the headline. The sub-headline takes the form of one full sentence – no more than 15 words – without any ending punctuation.

Tell the story in the lead. The lead, or first paragraph of the release, needs to answer the questions, "What happened?" and "Why should I care?" in one to two sentences. Stick to factual statements that are not loaded with fluffy adjectives. This is where you get the reporter to commit to reading the rest of your release.

Flesh out the body with key details. The remaining paragraphs of your release will add the important details of your story. This is where you should address or expand on the who, what, when, where and why of your story, with an emphasis on its impact on the community. Keep paragraphs relatively short - two to three sentences - and try to keep your overall release to one page in length.

Include quotes from key spokespeople. Within the body of your release, include one to three quotes. People quoted may include the leader of your organization, a member or an outside validator (a prominent member of the community or the leader of another organization, for example). Reporters at smaller newspapers may use these quotes directly in a story. Make sure every quote carries one or more of your core messages, and ensure that the quotes sound natural – as if they were actually spoken – by saying them aloud.

Use letterhead and boilerplate to identify your organization. Consistent use of letterhead and boilerplate (two to three sentences at the bottom of a release that explain what your organization does) will help journalists to know the source of the release. They'll also save you from using valuable space in the body of the release to share that information.

Always include contact information. Near the top of the release, include the name and phone number of a person a reporter can easily contact for additional information. Including a cell phone number and e-mail address ensures that a busy reporter on deadline can reach that person after hours.

Template: Press Release. See electronic Word version to make edits.

**** LETTERHEAD ****

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Today's Date

Contact:
Your Name, XXX-XXX-XXXX or XXX-XXX-XXXX
[Include both office and after-hours phone numbers.]

STRONG HEADLINES CAPTURE MEDIA ATTENTION

[The headline should be no more than 12 words. Use bold font, two to three points larger than body text.]

New research reveals reporters rely on deck for key information

[The sub-headline should be no more than 15 words. Use bold font, one point larger than body text.]

Your City – The **first paragraph** is the lead or main news. This is what is happening and why it is important, in one to two sentences.

The **second paragraph** is everything important you could not fit in the first paragraph. After reading the lead and the second paragraph, a reporter should know the who, what, where, and when of your news, as well as the why.

"The third paragraph is **a passionate quote** from your best messenger," said Jane Smith, [title] of [name of organization]. "It is usually two parts, and may state the problem and a solution or action."
[The first quote in a release is generally from the organization's lead spokesperson. Make sure it sounds natural, carries your core messages and adds value to the story.]

In the **next two paragraphs**, you'll want to share details that flesh out your story. You can provide the larger context to this issue, including any relevant history. You may want to debunk myths or correct misinformation at this point. It all depends on the nature of your issue.

The goal of these two paragraphs is to give the reporter everything he or she needs to write the story. This is a good place for important facts, a key statistic or even a brief anecdote.

"If space permits, you may use **another quote** here," the instructors said. "This will be important if you are working in a partnership or coalition."
[An additional quote in the release can come from allies, an event speaker, a member of your organization, etc. You can also include a second quote from your primary spokesperson.]

From here on out, you can expand your story by including information that was not essential to grab the reporter's attention, but is critical to understanding your story. Ideally a release is one page, though it may extend to two if necessary.

###
[These marks indicate that the press release has ended.]

[Organization] was founded in XXXX. Our mission is to XXX. Learn more at www.website.org.
[This is called the boilerplate, and it is where you include standard information about your organization.]

Make the News – Pitch a Story to a Reporter

Proactive media outreach is critically important to a successful media relations strategy, but it can be a challenge. Perhaps you have been in this situation: you have a great idea for a news story, but the prospect of getting a reporter to write about it is daunting. The following tips will help you to identify pitching opportunities, select your pitching target, develop and deliver your pitch and follow up successfully.

Make sure it's newsworthy. Reporters are busy, and nothing annoys them more than having their time wasted. Reporters do not want to cover the same old story that everyone else is covering or that they themselves have already covered. Track the work of the reporter you are targeting, gauge his or her interests and note the relevant stories he or she has done recently. Your story should either be something entirely new or introduce a fresh angle on an existing issue.

Know your audience. Your pitch will only be successful if you deliver it to the right person. This depends on the medium, as well as the kind of story you are pitching.

> **Television.** Television stations are interested in breaking news stories with a strong visual angle. Sometimes they will also do investigative features that expose an injustice. A breaking news story might be passage of a bill that cuts or increases funding to an early learning program in your state, while an investigative feature might share stories from adults who participated in Head Start programs and can talk about how their experiences in the program prepared them for school and career.
>
> If your story is breaking news, pitch the assignment editor. Providing the media with advance notice almost always increases your chance of getting coverage. Often, the assignment editor at a television station assigns the majority of news coverage to individual reporters.
>
> For a feature story that doesn't involve breaking news, you need to identify the right reporter or producer who will be interested in your pitch. The easiest way to do this is to watch the news. Pay attention to the beats that reporters cover. Then you can pitch a specific reporter, or his or her producer, directly. In addition, a quick review of the station's website will often tell you who is likely to be your best target. In a pinch, you can always call the station and ask the receptionist or member of the news desk who is best to speak with regarding your story.
>
> **Radio.** News coverage at NPR affiliates and local news/talk stations may be your first choice for groups that work on public interest issues. For a public radio station, you may want to target a specific reporter who covers education or youth issues. Some stations may have an assignment editor, and you can always go to the news editor. If there is a particular show that you want to target, direct your pitch to the show's producer. Again, it's useful to listen to the program that you are pitching so that you have a good sense of the kinds of stories they do and what they've already covered.
>
> News coverage during the day on radio stations that play music tends to be brief. If you

have a breaking story, you can pitch the news director to include the story in the station's regular news briefs. Keep in mind that many of those music stations have weekend or late evening public affairs shows that take a closer look at the week's news and community issues. These shows, generally produced and often hosted by the news or public affairs director, are good targets for a pitch involving a more in-depth treatment of early childhood education issues. For example, you could pitch a show segment in which an advocate and business leader talk about the need to invest in quality early learning programs and field questions from listeners.

Talk radio is also an option, but be sure to choose a show that provides the opportunity for a thoughtful discussion, not a screaming match. Consider whether the show reaches your target audience – many talk shows have deeply ideological listeners who are unlikely to be swayed by your most persuasive arguments.

Newspapers. Small newspapers tend to have small staffs. If the paper you are contacting is very small, the best person to receive your pitch may be the news editor or a general assignment reporter. At larger papers, you will want to find the reporter covering the appropriate beat for your story, and also consider columnists likely to be favorable to your point of view. Again, the easiest way to do this is to read the paper and track the coverage – after a few days or weeks, it will be easy to identify who covers what stories. Beyond a single pitch or story, it's a good idea to know the reporters who are likely to cover your issues so that you can build a relationship with them.

Online outlets. In today's media world, almost every "traditional" media outlet is actually a multi-channel media outlet, with an online site that includes video feeds, audio stories, photo essays, online commentaries and Q&As, among many other sections. Other news sites, like The Daily Beast or Huffington Post are online-only news sites that operate much like traditional media with paid reporters who specialize in certain subjects (though the writing tends to be more opinionated) and editors for various sections. Still other sites feature mostly opinion pieces, and most reporters who do straight reporting are also expected to blog either on their news sites or elsewhere and may also communicate through vehicles like Facebook and Twitter. Just like reading a newspaper, you will want to spend time on an online outlet's website to track coverage and identify the appropriate reporter to target. You may also want to pitch a reporter to blog or Tweet about your issue, especially if you do not have enough for a full story.

Craft a creative pitch. Reporters are constantly besieged by phone calls, e-mails and faxes from people trying to convince them to write stories. You need to stand out from the crowd. This means deciding on the best means of contact – almost always e-mail or phone – and developing a pitch that is attention-grabbing and brief.

Phone. If you're going to pitch by phone, plan what you will say in advance. Most reporters will give you 15 seconds – maybe 30 – to make your case. Make those seconds count. Avoid overwhelming them with jargon. Use a striking fact, or mention the name of a prominent person available for an interview. If they're interested, they'll keep listening. But if you can't capture their interest quickly, you'll lose them and the story.

E-mail. The same rules apply for an e-mail pitch – except that reporters can delete it without ever reading it. Create an interesting subject line and make sure the first few sentences of your e-mail are attention grabbing. And don't write a novel – one to three

brief paragraphs will do it. Let the reporter know that you will call to follow up – don't leave it up to a reporter to contact you.

Remember, unless you know the reporter and communicate with him/her regularly, do not send documents as attachments. Many e-mail addresses are set up to block e-mails with attachments. Even if they do get through, many journalists won't open attachments from unknown e-mail addresses. Try to include anything that you need to communicate in the body of an e-mail. If you are trying to share a lengthy document with a reporter, post the document online and provide the reporter with a Web address to view the piece. This is a good way to invite reporters to visit the media section of your website.

Strong delivery will make or break your pitch. Whether you're pitching the reporter by phone or following up on your e-mail pitch, consider your timing. Do not call a reporter in the late afternoon when he or she is likely to be on deadline. If you reach a reporter who sounds harried, ask when would be a better time for you to call back. Plan and practice your pitch and deliver it with confidence – but don't read it. Ask if the reporter is interested, and offer to share additional information. A reporter will rarely agree to do a story during your first call, so your goal should be to start the conversation. Be prepared to leave a brief, to-the-point voicemail (30 seconds or less) if you do not reach a live person. Always be polite.

Follow up... but don't pester. You've spoken to the reporter, shared additional resources and haven't heard anything. Place a call or send a follow-up e-mail. Ask if the reporter thinks he or she is going to do the story or if he or she needs anything else to make a decision. If the reporter says no, ask if you can stay in touch as things develop. Your efforts now may pay dividends later. If the reporter says yes, offer to help in any way that you can (identifying spokespeople, providing background information, etc.). After the story runs, send an e-mail or note thanking the reporter for his or her efforts.

A special note about exclusives and embargoes:
Reporters deal in information. They are under tremendous pressure from their editors to get the news before other outlets and to find angles and stories that no one else has reported.

When pitching them on a story, it may be helpful to offer an exclusive to your top target reporter. An exclusive arrangement is an agreement that only a single reporter gets the first chance to write about your story. Under an exclusive, you are agreeing not to share the information with other news outlets before the story is published in your chosen outlet. Be aware, though, that offering an exclusive to one reporter or outlet runs the risk of disappointing other reporters, so weigh the risks and rewards carefully.

If you don't want reporters to share your news with anyone before a certain time, make sure to tell them it is embargoed or barred from distribution. Under an embargo, reporters may still use the information (a copy of your new report, for example, or the details of a new project being announced the following day) to prepare their story in advance, but they agree not to publish it or tell others about it until your specified date and time.

Planning Ahead – Pitch Ideas for Early Learning Advocates

As explained previously, an effective recipe for securing media coverage combines newsworthiness, a creative pitch or fresh angle and a strong delivery. But for best results, long-term planning is also a key ingredient. When thinking about ways to expand the media conversation on the importance of prioritizing investments in early learning, it is helpful to divide outreach opportunities into two categories: proactive and reactive. Below we have outlined these categories and provided pitch ideas and timing considerations that will not only help solidify your organization's reputation as the go-to expert on early childhood education issues, but also help secure positive media coverage in outlets across your region and state.

Proactive outreach occurs when you contact a reporter about something that is planned in advance or under your organization's control, such as the release of a policy brief or report, an annual event or a new campaign.

- **Activities:** The best way to identify or plan proactive outreach is to create a "media opportunities calendar" that will highlight monthly opportunities for your organization to send a press release, backgrounder, op-ed or editorial pitch, public opinion research or other communication to key reporters and editors. Items for a media opportunities calendar include:
  - Upcoming legislative or political milestones, such as the start of the new legislative session, governor's annual State of the State Address or anniversary of the passage of a relevant bill.
  - Annual holidays or times of year including Child and Families Day/Take Your Child to Work Day, special events, standardized testing (especially for third-graders, as it highlights the relationship between quality early learning and higher test scores), American Education Week in November and annual Week of the Young Child in April.
  - Policy briefs you release are key opportunities to raise visibility about the importance of investing in early learning, particularly with new polling, research or hard data that demonstrates the local impact.
  - Planned or predictable events, such as a new Educare center opening, campaign or program announcements, a roundtable or forum with business leaders and child advocates or special events such as the Children's Movement of Florida's "Milk Party" rally at the state capitol earlier this year.

- **Timing:** As you create and maintain your media opportunities calendar, it will be important to execute your media outreach plans in advance, which will include: developing supplementary materials, updating your reporter research to include the most recent articles written by your targets and drafting emails. The timing of sending outreach emails and making follow-up calls may depend on the specific event, but, if possible, outreach should occur about a week in advance of the specific opportunity/event, with up to two rounds of follow-up calls/emails as the event gets closer. It's important to note that follow-up communications should only be sent if you do not reach or hear back from the reporter you are trying to contact.

Reactive outreach is timely and occurs when unexpected events or breaking news occur outside of your organization that provide an opportunity to ensure your perspective is included in the media conversation. In these cases, you should be poised to take advantage of unexpected

or timely events and quickly pitch reporters to include your organization or coalition in their coverage. Examples of these opportunities include legislative updates, budget decisions or announcements from influential policymakers.

- **Activities:** For these events, it is best to draft a concise statement – typically a few paragraphs – emphasizing your core messages that you can send to reporters immediately. One recent example is a statement released by the Colorado Children's Campaign CEO lauding Governor John Hickenlooper for vetoing a bill that would have imposed monthly premiums for some children enrolled in the state's children's health insurance program. Other opportunities for reactive outreach include:
    - Start of the budget debate/release of budget proposals
    - Vote or action on a key piece of legislation
    - Administrative announcement, such as Michigan Governor Rick Snyder's executive order to create an Office of Great Start to coordinate the state's early childhood efforts
    - Program milestone, such as progress in New York to fully implement the statewide quality rating system, QUALITYStarsNY
    - Release of updated high school graduation rates in your state (this provides a timely hook to submit a letter to the editor or pitch an op-ed about the correlation between quality early learning and increased graduation rates)

  There are also opportunities to localize national stories about changes in Head Start/Early Head Start funding or relevant announcements/speeches by Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. For these pitches, it is key to emphasize the local impact of a funding cut or speech.

- **Timing:** Reactive coverage is all about recognizing when the media is likely to be writing stories related to early childhood education issues and figuring out how to insert yourself into the coverage. By keeping track of the news on your issue and communicating frequently with allies, coalitions and other contacts (which you may already do), you should be able to flag when something significant is about to break. To ensure that you are included in the cycle of news coverage, you should prepare talking points or a statement in advance and start your outreach the minute news breaks – it's even useful to contact reporters before to let them know you are ready to serve as a resource as they are writing about the issue.

  It's critical to move as fast as possible for reactive outreach, particularly with legislative events – waiting even three or four hours can put you behind the news cycle. As you monitor coverage daily, pay attention to whether your unique perspective has been included in stories that directly affect those you represent. Do you have different or newer data or facts that are absent from coverage? Are there examples or real-life stories that you can offer to show an unrepresented side or angle to the story? If there is ongoing news coverage on this issue that's missing important information or a fresh perspective that you can add, move quickly and reach out to the reporter or consider developing an op-ed or letter to the editor in response.

Staying on Message – Ace an Interview

It happens time and again: intelligent, informed, qualified spokespeople speak to a member of the press and suddenly find themselves talking "off message." The reporter is in control of the conversation, rather than the spokesperson.

Media interviews are an important part of an overall communications outreach campaign. As a key spokesperson on this issue, you have the power to shape the public conversation that takes place. There is really only one overall tip for acing an interview: **PREPARE**.

Get what you want from the interview. It's not true that all press is good press. Evaluate every opportunity carefully:

- Will the interview get you in front of your target audience?
- Is it likely that the angle of the story will give you an opportunity to get your key messages to this target audience?
- Will you have an opportunity to respond to the opposition and are you prepared to do so?

If your answer to these questions is yes, then do the interview. If you answer no to any of these questions, decline the interview and refer the reporter to another source that is good on your issues but more appropriate for the topic.

Journalists prepare and you must, too. A journalist spends substantial time considering what type of story they are looking to write before ever speaking to anyone. When a journalist comes to you, be prepared. CEOs, politicians, celebrities – people with large communications staffs who constantly interact with the press – <u>still</u> end up going off message and saying things that are unclear, or worse, regrettable. Don't ever think you can "wing" it. Even as an expert, your preparation should include:

- **Familiarizing yourself with the journalist/media outlet before your interview.** Have they covered this story in the past? Do they tend to cover stories from a particular point of view? ***The checklist at the end of this tipsheet will help you to know the right questions to ask to make sure you are fully prepared for any interview.***

- **Knowing what <u>you</u> want to say in advance.** Your expertise might enable you to discuss endless aspects of your issue but only one, *maybe two*, points will make it into a story and even then a consumer of the story may only remember bits and pieces. Don't let an audience member or a journalist decide what the most important point is on this issue. Review your messages in advance and evaluate the topic on which you're speaking. Select one or two key points to make and make them well.

- **Practicing saying your messages.** Role play with a colleague to be sure you are ready for tough questions and are prepared without sounding like you are simply reading a script.

- **Check the news.** Make sure you know about late-breaking events that could affect your remarks.

- **Anticipate the questions you might be asked and prepare *brief* responses that deliver your message.** There is a difference between answering a question and responding to one. You can respond to nearly any question in a way that incorporates your key messages.

Prepare for an Interview: Anticipate Questions
Use this space to brainstorm questions that you might be asked (especially difficult or inappropriate ones). Then practice responding by staying calm and on message.

_____

_____

_____

During the interview. You may be nervous, but the most important thing is to be calm and confident. Feel free to keep notes in front of you during a phone or radio interview. The following tips will help you deliver your messages effectively:

- **Collect your thoughts**. If a journalist calls and wants to conduct an on-the-spot interview, ask if you can call him/her back in five minutes. Use that time to gather your thoughts and review your key points.

- **Keep it simple!** Use clear language and avoid jargon. You don't want to bore your audience or make them feel stupid.

- **Use numbers, but sparingly.** Memorize one or two precise statistics that will give weight to your messages and bring your information to life.

- **Be honest!** Don't stretch the truth. If you don't know the answer, say so and suggest an alternative source. Anything less than factual and honest answers can seriously damage your credibility as well as the credibility of your cause.

- **Be focused.** Give your undivided attention and eye contact to the interviewer. Look directly at the person asking the question. Listen carefully to the questions asked, and don't be afraid to pause slightly before answering or to ask them to repeat the question.

- **Be brief**. Using short responses and messages will help keep you focused and allow more time for repetition.

- **Stay on message.** Don't stray from your main points. Always bring your answers back to your key messages. Here are some common ways to "bridge" to your message:
    - "That is a good question; however, what people should know is…"

- "I don't know the answer to that question, but what I do know is…"
- "(short answer to question) which means…"
- "(short answer to question), and in addition…"

- **Flag key points.** Help the reporter and the audience know what you're saying is important.
  - "The most important thing for people to know is…"
  - "The main point is…"
  - "What I really want to make clear is…"

- **Provide other sources that will back you up.** Independent experts can help to provide support for your position.

- **Everything is on the record.** Don't give in to the temptation to tell the reporter something "off the record." If you say it aloud, or put it in an e-mail, assume that it will appear in the reporter's story.

- **Stay calm.** Getting flustered can convey a host of things – none positive! Prepare in advance and stick to your messages and you'll ace any interview.

- **Set up the follow-up question.** Stay in control by giving a concise answer, and you'll ensure that you're having the conversation you want to have. For example: "The report illustrates that children are more likely to do well in school if they get an hour of play a day. There are three simple ways kids can get this." Stop here. The reporter will naturally ask you what the three ways are.

- **Give *your* answer**. You don't have to answer the interviewer's exact question. You rarely see the question in TV or print interviews, only the response. So feel free to pick out one word or phrase in the question and respond to that. For example, if they ask, "What do you think when people say that K-12 funding should be prioritized during tough economic times?" Give your sound-bites: "Children who attend high quality early learning programs perform better when they enter the K-12 system, are less likely to need remediation, and are more likely to meet state academic proficiency goals."

- **Correct mistakes.** If a reporter makes a misstatement or has a fact wrong, correct it. Be polite but correct it. Never lose your temper with a reporter.

- **Don't repeat negative or inflammatory language.** For example, if a reporter says, "Isn't it true that we should be investing money in creating jobs at a time when people are out of work and need to feed their families?" Don't reinforce that opinion by saying, "No, jobs are not the priority, kids are the priority." Instead, turn it around to something positive: "In fact, investing in quality early learning programs allows parents to go to work in the first place…"

- **Know when to stop**. Reporters often leave a space of silence to try and draw unintended remarks out of guests. Don't continue talking after you make your point.

- **Don't be trapped**. Never say something you don't want to appear in print or be aired. Don't answer hypothetical questions. If asked rapid-fire questions – pick one to answer. Some reporters try to influence interviews by asking leading questions, like "Would you

say…" or "Isn't it true…" Avoid following into the trap of agreeing with them. If you don't agree, or if it's not true, be sure to say, "No. Actually, the truth is . . ."

- **Don't paint yourself into a corner.** Do not answer the, "When did you stop kicking your dog?" questions. When the question is a set-up or will produce an answer that can be taken out of context, rephrase the question. Say, "I think you mean to ask…" Then briefly answer your question.

Your body does some talking, too. Sometimes, how you say something can be as important as what you have to say.

- Keep your eye contact steady. Don't shift your eyes or "look" for answers when asked a question.

- Keep your tone firm but not defensive, even if you are discussing a controversial topic.

- For television interviews, stay animated. If smiling is inappropriate because of the topic, you should still avoid looking deadpan or lifeless.

- If you are standing for a television interview, stand in a "T" formation to avoid swaying. When sitting for television interview, cross your ankles (causing you to naturally lean forward), and keep your hands in your lap.

- When you are being interviewed, look at the person interviewing you not the camera. If you are being interviewed at a remote location and the interviewer is in the studio or somewhere else, DO look straight into the camera.

Dress for success. Make sure you are completely prepared for the interview – this includes dressing for the part.

- If you are on camera or getting a photo taken, your outfit should be appropriate for the story. In some cases, this means formal business attire. However, in other cases, different attire will help add credibility to the piece. For example, if you are giving a story about building playgrounds, work clothes are more appropriate.

- For women, formal clothes should be jeweled tones – not all black or all white – complimented by small earrings (so they don't cast a shadow), minimal additional jewelry and normal make up.

- For men, blue shirts are best, as are ties that have a simple pattern (complex ones can be animated on television).

After the interview. Your job isn't finished when the reporter calls it a wrap. Here are a few recommended follow-up steps.

- Send a note to the reporter thanking him/her for taking the time to learn more about your issue. Don't thank them specifically for the coverage (if you like the story); they aren't doing you a favor. But if you do like a specific point or angle, highlight that in your thank you letter. To increase your chances of additional coverage in the future,

offer some additional story angles. Then add this reporter to your Rolodex and be sure to send periodic updates.

- If you feel you were misquoted or some facts were wrong, first go back to the person who interviewed you and try to get a correction. If the reporter refuses to issue a correction, then you can go to his/her editor. Remember, if you just don't like your quote, that is not a reason for a correction. That is a reason for you to practice delivering your points better.

- Review your performance. If you had a tough time answering a question or bridging to one of your main points, practice doing it better for the next time.

Interview Checklist

Use this form to log interview requests and ensure that your spokesperson is well-prepared for the interview!

Date of interview request _____ Deadline _____

Name _____ Outlet _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Spokesperson requested _____

What is the interview about? _____

How long will it last? _____

What's your organization's role in the piece? _____

Are you the focus, or are you being interviewed to provide support? _____

_____

Who else are they interviewing? _____

Information about the interview format:

- Phone or in person? _____
- Live or taped? _____
- If taped, will it be edited? _____
- One-on-one or are you part of a panel? _____
- Will listeners or viewers call-in with questions? _____

Information about the outlet:

- What kind of outlet – print, radio or television? _____
- Do they typically have an angle? (e.g., conservative talk radio show, women's issues columnist for a daily newspaper, etc.) _____
- If print, do they need a photo? _____
- If broadcast, do they want to pre-interview the spokesperson? _____

Editorial Board Outreach

Community members, policymakers, donors, volunteers and many others are often influenced by editorials. A favorable editorial on your issue can help you advance your goals, while one that supports your opposition's viewpoint can impede your progress.

It's important to note that an editorial is different from an op-ed. Editorials are written by staff at the newspaper and express the paper's opinion on an issue. Op-eds may be written by staff or outside contributors and express solely the author's opinion.

The following offers tips on how to reach out to editorial boards as well as basic information about how a newspaper's editorial page generally operates.

What is an editorial board?
The editorial board is the group of individuals at a newspaper that determines what the paper's position will be on an issue and pens editorials expressing those views. In a nutshell, the editorial board is the team of writers and editors of the editorial page.

From one newspaper to another, editorial pages vary greatly in their number of staff. A large paper such as the *Los Angeles Times* has several editorial writers with specific beats, similar to news reporters, along with an editorial page editor, that make up the board. Smaller papers may have only one editorial writer and an editorial page editor that comprise the board.

When should you consider editorial board outreach?
Contacting the editorial board of a local or regional newspaper provides you with the opportunity to get across your point of view to the people that determine what the newspaper's opinion will be on a particular issue. There are several instances when it may be useful to contact an editorial board. Examples include:

- When you are launching a campaign or new program and are able to use high-profile leaders as spokespeople who are likely to be influential to the editorial board.
- When you release a report or have other new information that is generating significant news coverage.
- When there is upcoming government action around your issue that offers an editorial board the opportunity to try to influence policymakers.

In general, this type of opinion outreach gives you a chance to influence the board's opinions in your favor or, if the paper seems likely to oppose your viewpoint, gives you the opportunity to try to move the coverage of your issue in a more favorable direction.

Before you contact an editorial board, research the newspaper's editorial coverage to see if they have editorialized on your issue in the past. If they have editorialized recently, and are on your side, it would be more appropriate to send a letter to the editor expressing your support for the

coverage. If the newspaper has written a negative editorial about your issue recently, determine whether or not you have a realistic chance of changing their point of view so you avoid encouraging another negative editorial.

What's the best way to reach out to an editorial board?
When you are trying to get an editorial board to write about your issue, there are two ways to contact the board: an in-person meeting or e-mail memo.

During an editorial board meeting, one or more spokespeople for an organization or members of a coalition meet face-to-face with some or all of the editorial board members at a newspaper. During that meeting they have an opportunity to brief the editorial board on an issue and field questions.

When asking for a meeting, send an e-mail or fax to briefly outline your position, the people that will attend, and suggest a time frame for the meeting, such as a few days of a particular week. Be sure to include any information about why the meeting is timely, such as an upcoming event, anniversary, vote on a piece of legislation, etc.

Typically, in-person editorial board meetings can be difficult to secure, particularly with larger publications. In many cases, sending an e-mail or memo to the editorial board editor (or specific editorial writer who covers your issue or similar ones) can be just as effective. The memo should cover three points in this order:

- Identify who you are and the issue you are concerned with.
- Name the problem and the desired solution. Make the case for your solution in two to three sentences. First, describe the harm to the community that the problem is causing. Then, explain what benefits the solution will bring.
- Include your ask to editorialize on your issue and reiterate why the board should write about it now.

Whether you send an e-mail memo or request an in-person meeting, try to find out the name of the person that writes on your issue, and address your note to him or her. If you're unable to do this, address the memo to the editorial page editor.

It is also important to be politely persistent, recognizing that editorial writers often are swamped with requests. If the editorial page editor doesn't call you back right away, give her or him a day or two. At some papers, there is only one person writing editorials who faces extreme time constraints.

If you secure an in-person editorial board meeting, how should you prepare and what should you expect?
Once the meeting is secured, identify the one to four people (depending on the issue) who should serve as the spokespeople at the meeting. These may be staff from your organization, members of a coalition, etc. It's a good idea to assemble a team that will all have the same message but can offer slightly different perspectives. For example, an editorial board meeting about an early childhood education issue might include the president of an advocacy group, a supportive business leader and a teacher or administrator.

Also ask if you should send materials in advance of the meeting or bring them with you. A background packet should include appropriate press releases, fact sheets, and op-eds that

have been written in support of your issue. You may also include past editorials on the issue by the editorial board you will be meeting.

It's a wise idea for the meeting participants to talk in advance of the meeting about how it will go, who will speak and what will be said. It's best if everyone is in agreement on key messages to use and what they are asking for.

When you meet with the editorial page staff, one participant should act as the moderator. The moderator will outline the reason for the meeting, introduce himself/herself and ask other participants to briefly introduce themselves. Each participant will then speak for three to five minutes on his or her perspective on the issue at hand. The moderator will then ask for questions and direct them to the appropriate member of the team.

Finally, close the meeting by asking the editorial board to do something. This ask will depend on the situation. If the newspaper has not editorialized on the issue, you may ask them to editorialize in support of your viewpoint. If they've written editorials in the past that oppose your position, you might ask them to consider the new information that you have provided when writing future editorials on the issue. Make sure to follow up after the meeting with a letter thanking the editorial board members that you met with for their time and restating your position. Include any materials that you promised to send.

Opinions Count – Write and submit an op-ed

Op-ed is an abbreviation for "opposite the editorial page" and refers to the opinion pieces that a newspaper publishes on the page facing the editorial page as well as online in the opinion section. Newspapers generally have a stable of op-ed columnists and regular contributors but most will also print op-eds written by outside authors.

Editors may choose to publish op-eds that express different opinions than those expressed in their editorials to balance the outlet's coverage of an issue. Sometimes op-eds are selected for their unique response or fresh perspective on a recent event or news story.

Simply put, op-eds express the opinion of the author on a particular issue, and can offer an excellent opportunity for you to advance your messages. The following are some tips for writing and submitting an op-ed that will increase your chances of getting published.

Getting noticed. Before sitting down to write your op-ed, think about what your goals are for the piece. Who are you trying to influence and what action do you want them to take? These decisions will impact not only the content of your op-ed but whom you have sign it and where you place it.

> ***The right signer.*** In many instances, you will be the one to write, sign and submit your op-ed to the paper. On some occasions however, you will want to think about whether there is another influential person that you might ask to work with you on the op-ed and be either the signer or co-signer. If your organization has access to well-known figures who are influential on the issue you are trying to promote, it can be advantageous to make them the public representative for your position on the op-ed page. Having your op-ed signed by a well-known name or respected figure in your community can increase its appeal to the paper and your odds of placement. Keep your target audience in mind when determining who should sign your op-ed to ensure you pick someone whose opinion they are likely to listen to and respect.
>
> ***Picking your paper.*** Make sure to keep your target audience in mind when selecting the paper to which you will submit your op-ed. Think about where your audience lives and what papers you think they are most likely to read. Note that papers are more likely to publish op-eds from writers that live within the coverage area of the paper.

Follow the rules. All newspapers have guidelines for op-ed submissions that generally include a maximum word count, exclusivity rules and instructions on how to submit the piece. Exclusivity rules are particularly important to follow. If it is not clear on the newspaper's website, contact the editor directly to determine the rules established by the particular outlet that you are targeting.

It's important to adhere to an outlet's guidelines because failing to do so will likely cause your submission to be rejected, no matter how well-written it is. We recommend finding out the guidelines before you even begin to write. Always be sure to check the newspaper's website first; most major papers will have this information available. If not, call the op-ed editor and ask about the guidelines. While you have him or her on the phone, you can also take the opportunity to introduce yourself and your organization, share your idea for an op-ed and ask if it would be a good fit for the paper.

The write stuff. *New York Times* op-ed editor David Shipley wrote an article about how the paper selects op-eds. He looks for "timeliness, ingenuity, strength of argument, freshness of opinion, clear writing and newsworthiness." When writing your op-ed, keep the following in mind:

> ***Focus***. Don't try to do too much. It's better to develop and support one argument thoroughly, with plenty of detail, than to try to cover several more generally. By trying to say everything, you may end up saying nothing.
>
> ***Support***. Your opinion needs to be supported by hard facts and, if possible, powerful statistics. This will give your op-ed weight and enable it to stand up to criticism. Be careful, though, that you do not overload your op-ed with numbers. Three to four key facts or statistics are ideal; more would be overkill.
>
> ***Illustrate***. A well-chosen personal story or real life example will give life to your argument, and demonstrate the human impact of your issue.
>
> ***Speak plainly***. Avoid using insider jargon in your op-ed. Resist the temptation! Write as if you were talking to your neighbor, your mom or your dentist. For a clear argument, use everyday language.

Edit, edit, edit. Make sure that your final op-ed does not contain grammar or spelling errors. Ask someone else to read it for clarity.

Submit and follow up. Submit your op-ed, following the newspaper's instructions for doing so. If it is accepted, congratulate yourself and work with the newspaper to edit the piece if needed.

If you haven't heard anything after several days, follow up with the op-ed editor to see if the piece that you submitted is still under consideration and ask if there are any revisions that you could make to increase its chances of being published.

If the piece is rejected, ask the op-ed editor how you could improve a future op-ed. Newspapers sometimes commission op-eds, so even if this op-ed wasn't published, developing a relationship with the editor can increase your future chances of being published.

If your op-ed is rejected by the first paper you submit to, determine the next best placement and resubmit. It is helpful to brainstorm multiple options when initially writing so you can quickly make any needed adjustments and move on to the next paper. Be sure to understand your

paper's exclusivity rules as most op-ed editors require that you only submit to one paper at a time.

Share your success. Make sure to save an electronic copy of your op-ed once it is printed. You should distribute copies of the op-ed to any interested individuals – allied organizations working with you, those organizations with which you would like to work, colleagues in other states, funders, policymakers, etc. The life of an op-ed is not over once it appears in a newspaper; in fact, you often get the most impact out of placement by directly sending it around to key audiences following publication. Post a link to the published piece on your organization's website, and consider using social networks like Facebook and Twitter to magnify your audience.

Op-ed Check List
Before you submit an op-ed, check to make sure:

- ☐ You're under the newspaper's word limit (usually 500-750 words).
- ☐ You have one main argument, not multiple arguments.
- ☐ A reader will understand your main point after reading the first paragraph.
- ☐ You have included a few carefully chosen facts, statistics and stories.
- ☐ You have not used any jargon or acronyms.
- ☐ Your op-ed can be understood by an average adult, like your neighbor or your dentist.
- ☐ Your op-ed contains no spelling or grammatical errors.
- ☐ At the end of your op-ed, you have included one to two sentences describing who the author is and highlighting what makes him/her a credible writer on this particular issue.

How to Craft an Op-ed

An op-ed expresses the opinion of the author on a particular issue and is a chance to advance your message. It can respond to a recent, specific news item or offer a unique response or fresh perspective on a current event or issue. Remember to use clear language; make one solid point; and use three or four facts, stories or statistics to support your argument.

The following worksheet will help you develop an outline that you can use to guide you as you write your op-ed.

Identify the (one) **key point** your op-ed will make: _____

_____

Identify the **audience** you are trying to reach with your op-ed: _____

_____

Identify the **signer** for your op-ed: _____

Intro Paragraph:
Draft the first two to three sentences of your op-ed.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Intro Paragraph

- *Start with a clear, compelling hook.*
- *State the main argument of your op-ed.*

Supporting Points:
Identify two to three facts or statistics or a personal story that supports your key point.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Supporting Points

- *Use key facts and powerful statistics to support your argument.*
- *Illustrate your argument with a compelling personal story or real-life example.*
- *Focus on supporting your main point thoroughly.*

Final Paragraph:
Draft two to three closing sentences that reaffirm your argument.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Final Paragraph

- *Recap your main point.*
- *Include a call to action.*

Template: Op-ed. See electronic Word version to make edits.

Op-ed Template

AUTHOR NAME
DATE
Word Count:

TITLE

[Start with a compelling and pithy news hook that addresses U.S. economic woes and the need to make smart investments in your state]. These investments should start with our youngest residents.

Research shows that more than 80 percent of brain development occurs before the age of three, making it clear that children who participate in quality early learning programs like [state program or Head Start] have stronger social, emotional and cognitive skills when they enter school.

Investing in early childhood education is a fiscally responsible way to reduce deficits and produce big gains for children and taxpayers. That's why we must protect our current investments in early childhood education and increase them in the years to come so more of our young children have access.

In the near-term, investing in early learning can increase academic achievement and reduce costs associated with grade retention and special education services. On a national level, we're spending more than $10,000 per pupil on special education programs—that's roughly $50 billion per year. (Note: State advocates have the option to add or customize here. Suggestion: "In [state] we're spending…" States can input state spending for special education programs.)

Over a lifetime, investments in early childhood education generate big returns for all of us. According to research by Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman, it's one of the most cost-efficient approaches to increasing education, health and economic outcomes and lowering the costs of special education and social programs. During the course of their lives, children who experience quality early learning programs will be healthier, more self-sufficient and less likely to enter the criminal justice system. Those real cost savings add up to as much as a 10 percent annual economic return—that is an investment not only in our kids but also in our state economy.

[Insert a paragraph here discussing a state-specific bill, measure or initiative, and describe the benefits of taking immediate action on it.]

In tough economic times, families set priorities and focus on what matters most. Our elected officials should do the same. We can't slash our way out of a deficit any more than we can spend our way out of it. We climb out of deficits by investing in cost-efficient and effective solutions that build self-sufficiency, productivity and upward mobility. Prioritizing investments in early childhood education is just that kind of solution.

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Talk Back – Write and submit a letter to the editor

Writing a letter to the editor is one of the best ways to respond to articles, editorials or op-eds published in your local paper. You can submit a letter to amplify a positive editorial, mitigate the damage caused by a harmful op-ed or highlight key information left out of an article.

The letters section is popular, and policy makers in particular pay close attention to letters that express the views of their constituents. The following are some tips for writing a successful letter to the editor.

Swift response. Timeliness is key. After you identify a story or editorial that merits a response, draft and submit your letter as soon as possible.

Read the letters section. Read letters to the editor published recently by the newspaper, and mirror their format.

Follow the rules. Look for guidelines about format, length and other requirements on the paper's website or printed in the paper near the letters section. If you can't find them, call the newspaper and ask. You don't want your letter to be rejected because you didn't follow the rules.

Brief is best. Keep your letter brief and to the point – focus on making one key point in two or three paragraphs, and use just a couple of key facts or statistics, or a very brief story, to support your argument.

Edit. Proofread carefully to eliminate typos and grammatical errors.

Letter to the Editor Checklist
Before you submit a letter to the editor, check to make sure:

- ☐ You're under the newspaper's word limit (usually 200-300 words).
- ☐ Your letter responds to and directly mentions an article, editorial or op-ed that *recently* ran in the paper.
- ☐ You make one key point, rather than packing multiple points into your letter.
- ☐ You have included one or two carefully chosen facts, statistics or stories.
- ☐ You have not used any jargon or acronyms.
- ☐ Your letter contains no spelling or grammatical errors.
- ☐ You have included the author's name, title, organization and contact information (telephone and email).
- ☐ You're comfortable with the tone of your letter. (Many people fire off an angry letter to the editor only to regret it after it is published.)

Template: Letter to the Editor. See electronic Word version to make edits.

Letter to the Editor Template

DATE

Dear Editor,

The [DATE] story [“Name of Article”] highlighted [MAIN PREMISE OF STORY]. Over a lifetime, investments in early childhood education generate big returns for all of us. With more than 80 percent of brain development occurring before age five, quality early childhood education develops cognitive and social skills that help children succeed in school and as adults.

Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman has shown that every dollar invested in quality early childhood education for at-risk children delivers economic gains of 10 percent per year. Investing in these programs also saves states money due to fewer referrals for special education and lower incarceration rates.

However, in order for [STATE] to see these benefits, [SPECIFIC STATE POLICYMAKERS] must prioritize funding for [SPECIFIC PROGRAM] and invest in our state’s greatest resource. Now is the time to put our precious tax dollars where they will do the most good.

[NAME OF AUTHOR]
[CONTACT INFORMATION]

Building Your Coalition

In order to influence policy decisions, early childhood education advocates need to have a broad coalition of unlikely spokespeople that are trusted by key target audiences. Policymakers will expect an early childhood education advocate to talk with them about the importance of investing in early learning and your voice is important. But your case will be made more effectively if you also have other trusted sources like business, law enforcement and faith leaders joining your efforts.

Depending on the circumstances in your state, you may want to build a formal coalition, or you may prefer a loose network of unaffiliated individuals and organizations who you know you can call on in your time of need. Either way, this tip sheet is intended to give you a few ideas about how to reach out to potential partners and bring allies into your fold.

Think about your target audiences. Your target audiences are the people who have the power to help make your goal a reality. If you are trying to pass a piece of legislation increasing funding for early learning, the target audience on this issue is state legislators. If, on the other hand, your goal is to work at the school level to improve the quality of early learning programs, your target audience may be school administrators, or school board members. The more narrowly you define your audience(s), the more strategic you can be about reaching that audience with the right messengers from your coalition of network of allies.

Decide what kinds of allies would be most helpful in reaching your target audiences.

Making the business case. To make the case that investments in early childhood education have a high return, think about what kinds of local business leaders would have a stake in this issue and who you can recruit to do outreach on your behalf.

Making the moral case. To make the case that investing in early childhood education is the right thing to do, consider which faith leaders in your community have credibility with your target audience(s) and whether or not they can be persuaded to join your coalition as a strong moral voice calling for greater access to early learning programs.

Making the science-based case. To make the case that early childhood education makes sense developmentally, you might track down brain scientists at a local university or well-respected pediatricians practicing in your community who can speak authoritatively to your target audience(s) about the importance of the first five years of life to brain development.

Making the K-12 case. To make the case that early childhood education works for those who receive it, track down older graduates of Early Head Start programs who have excelled academically, K-12 teachers who can talk about the difference in working with students who

have received an early education versus those who haven't, or law enforcement officers who can make the point that children who participated in early learning programs are less likely to become entangled with the criminal justice system.

Reach out and make contact. Once you have a list of people and organizations you'd like to make contact with, begin by sending a brief introductory email. (See *Sample Introductory Emails for Business Leaders, Faith Leaders, Medical Community, and K-12 Community* following this tip sheet.) Your approach and ask will likely differ depending on who you're contacting. The key will be to make the case for early childhood education, and let them know how they can help. (See the *Template Coalition One-Pager* following the introductory email templates.) Once you've established a relationship with someone, it will be important to keep them engaged in your coalition. Start with an easy ask, like signing on to a petition, letter or op-ed. Later, you can move on to asking them to join a meeting with the legislature or speak at a rally.

Sample Asks

1. **Join us.** To begin building your coalition or loosely-affiliated network of allies, you want to offer potential partners the opportunity to join you in your effort to improve the quality of and access to early learning programs. Offer your vision for the state and for the future you want to see – a future in which all children receive the quality early education they need to succeed in school and in life. You can then ask potential allies to sign a pledge to support early childhood education in your state, join your coalition of diverse partners working on this cause or attend a coalition meeting.

2. **Sign a petition or letter.** In order to sway a policymaker or other audience target, it can sometimes be useful to develop a petition or letter. For example, you may want to convince a state representative to co-sponsor a bill that would institute a quality rating and improvement system for your state. One strategy would be to write a letter to this representative requesting that s/he co-sponsor the bill and then reach out to influential constituents in your coalition who can sign the letter. Delivering a petition or letter to a congressperson or your local school board also presents an opportunity to write an op-ed or press release.

3. **Draft an op-ed or sign a letter to the editor.** If there is little news or commentary on the issue of early childhood education or an important piece of legislation is being debated, it is a chance to stir public debate by drafting an op-ed (See the *Opinions Count - Write and Submit an Op-ed* and *How to Craft an Op-ed* tip sheets and the *Template Op-ed*). Alternatively, when an article or opinion piece runs in your local paper on the issue of early childhood education, it is a perfect opportunity to respond by drafting a short letter to the editor (See the *Talk Back – Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor* tip sheet and the *Template Letter to the Editor*). In both cases, think about who in your coalition has a respected voice, or who would be influential with your target audience(s). Also, we recommend writing a draft of the op-ed or letter to the editor rather than asking an ally to write it on their own since it will make them more likely to sign on.

4. **Make a call to an audience target or introduce you to another contact or audience target.** This ask requires that they use a bit of their own political capital, so make it easy

for them to say yes by drawing a clear connection between what you're trying to accomplish and how their involvement will help you get there. For example, one of your audience targets may be the chair of the Senate Education Committee, and while you've had trouble gaining an audience with him/her, the retired state director of education in your coalition has a personal relationship. Through a connection with the Senator, you will be able to make your pitch to help move an important piece of early learning legislation.

5. **Mention your work in a newsletter, a website, speech or a press release.** By having your work mentioned by another organization, you gain credibility with their audiences. This presents an opportunity for you to bring new people into your coalition or gather more signatures on a letter to Congress.

6. **Join a meeting with the editorial staff of the local paper, legislators or other audience target.** Nothing is more powerful and persuasive than face-to-face contact. If you have the opportunity to meet with legislators or your local editorial staff, make sure to include spokespeople that will be influential to them. (See the *Editorial Board Outreach* tip sheet.)

7. **Speak at public event or media conference in support of early childhood education.** If your work calls for you to hold a public event or media conference, this will be the opportune time to reach out to members of your coalition whose faces you want on camera advocating for early childhood programs. You can lighten the presenter's load by preparing talking points for them and making sure they stay on message.

8. **Sponsor a briefing, host a conference or convene stakeholders.** Certain members of your coalition, such as corporate and business partners or perhaps faith leaders, may be in a position to offer up their own resources or network in support of your goals. Sponsoring a briefing or conference or convening stakeholders to discuss an important issue is a great way to further expand your reach, surface new ideas and build support for early childhood education in your state.

Template: E-mail to Business Leaders. See electronic Word version to make edits.

Sample Introductory E-mail to Business Leaders

Dear [NAME],

As a business leader in [LOCATION], you know how important it is to invest our tax dollars in ways that save the state money and that produce high returns for the local economy.

Protecting and increasing [STATE'S] spending on quality early childhood education is just such an investment. Providing early learning experiences to children during their first five years of life leads them to achieve higher success in school, makes them less likely to become involved in the criminal justice system and more likely to become productive, well-trained workers.

I am writing to you as an advocate of quality early childhood in [STATE]. During times of economic difficulty and budget slashing, we need more business leaders to stand up in support of these important investments in our children and in our community. Studies and statistics show that investing in quality early childhood education has a high return because it can save states money in the form of spending on remedial education and criminal justice.

We're reaching out to businesses in our community like [BUSINESS NAME] that know the value of investing in young children. [OTHER SPECIFIC BUSINESSES IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT ARE ALREADY IN YOUR COALITION] are currently working with us in our efforts to improve the quality early learning in [LOCATION]. We'd like to count [BUSINESS NAME] as a supporter.

Would you be available to meet in the next couple of weeks? The purpose of the meeting would be to gather your thoughts on this issue and look for ways we might collaborate in the future.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Warm regards,

[NAME]
[TITLE]
[CONTACT INFO]

Template: E-mail to Faith Leaders. See electronic Word version to make edits.

Sample Introductory E-mail to Faith Leaders

Dear [NAME],

As a faith leader in [LOCATION], you know that investing in our youngest residents is one of the best ways to strengthen our community, now and in the future.

Protecting and increasing [STATE'S] spending on quality early learning programs for our kids can help us make such an investment. Providing early learning experiences to children, particularly those who are at risk, during their first five years of life helps them develop the cognitive and character skills they need to succeed in school, college, work and life.

I am writing to you as an advocate of quality early childhood in [STATE]. During times of economic difficulty and budget slashing, we need more faith leaders to stand up in support of these important investments in our children and in our community. Research shows that families with children ages birth to three have the most difficulty finding affordable, safe and developmentally-appropriate care and remain the most underserved by federal and state programs.

We're reaching out to leaders in our community like [CONGREGATION NAME] that know the value of investing in young children. [OTHER FAITH LEADERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT ARE ALREADY IN YOUR COALITION] are currently working with us in our efforts to improve the quality early learning in [LOCATION]. We'd like to count [CONGREGATION NAME] as a supporter.

Would you be available to meet in the next couple of weeks? The purpose of the meeting would be to gather your thoughts on this issue and look for ways we might collaborate in the future.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Warm regards,

[NAME]
[TITLE]
[CONTACT INFO]

Template: E-mail to Scientists/Doctors. See electronic Word version to make edits.

Sample Introductory E-mail to Scientists/Doctors

Dear [NAME],

As a [scientist/pediatrician] in [LOCATION], you know that the first five years of life represent a critical stage for brain development. Around 700 new neural connections are formed every second, connections that build the brain architecture upon which all later learning, behavior and health depend.

Protecting and increasing [STATE'S] spending on quality early learning programs for our kids can help us make sure this critical window is not missed. Providing early learning experiences to children during their first five years of life helps them develop the cognitive and character skills they need to succeed in school, college, work and life.

I am writing to you as an advocate of quality early childhood in [STATE]. During times of economic difficulty and budget slashing, we need those who understand the importance of early learning to stand up in support of these important investments in our children.

We're reaching out to leading [scientists/doctors/research institutions] in our community like [NAME] that understand the importance of investing in young children. [OTHER SCIENTISTS/DOCTORS/RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT ARE ALREADY IN YOUR COALITION] are currently working with us in our efforts to make the science-based case for investing in quality early learning in [LOCATION]. We'd like to count you as a supporter.

Would you be available to meet in the next couple of weeks? The purpose of the meeting would be to gather your thoughts on this issue and look for ways we might collaborate in the future.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Warm regards,

[NAME]
[TITLE]
[CONTACT INFO]

Template: E-mail to K-12 Community. See electronic Word version to make edits.

Sample Introductory E-mail to K-12 Community

Dear [NAME],

As a [principal, teacher, administrator, etc.] in [LOCATION], you know that providing a quality education to all of our youngest residents is one of the best ways to strengthen our community now and in the future.

Protecting and increasing [STATE'S] spending on quality early childhood education programs for our kids, starting at birth, can help us ensure that students enter the K-12 system ready to learn and succeed. These opportunities help build the foundation for children, particularly those who are at-risk, to perform as well as their peers when they enter kindergarten.

I am writing to you as an advocate of quality early childhood in [STATE]. During difficult economic times, we need more leaders in our school system to stand up in support of these important investments in our children and in our community. Research shows that children's access to high quality early learning programs can help improve their long-term proficiency in reading and math. Participants in these programs are also significantly more likely to complete high school and attend college.

We're reaching out to education leaders in our community like you that understand the value of investing in young children. [OTHER K-12 EDUCATORS IN YOUR COMMUNITY THAT ARE ALREADY IN YOUR COALITION] are currently working with us in our efforts to improve the quality early learning in [LOCATION]. We'd like to count you as a supporter.

Would you be available to meet in the next couple of weeks? The purpose of the meeting would be to gather your thoughts on this issue and look for ways we might collaborate in the future.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Warm regards,

[NAME]
[TITLE]
[CONTACT INFO]

ORGANIZATIONAL LOGO

Template: Coalition One-Pager. See electronic Word version to make edits.

Early Childhood Education in [STATE]

[STATE] Must Make Early Childhood Learning a Top Priority

In [STATE], only [X PERCENTAGE] of children have access to high quality early childhood services – programs such as [name of successful program in your state], which have been shown to put children on the trajectory for success in school and life and reduce the need for costly educational and social interventions later. By cutting or freezing investments in early learning, we risk putting [STATE's] young learners at a social and academic disadvantage and placing a burden on taxpayers.

Investing in Early Learning Helps Kids Succeed

In [STATE], parents, teachers, school administrators, business and faith leaders and scientists agree that providing quality learning experiences during the first five years of life helps kids succeed. Quality early learning programs:

- Increase school readiness by kindergarten, increase high school graduation rates and increase college attendance.
- Reduce special education costs and provide a return on investment of up to $10 for every $1 spent.
- Reduce crime, delinquency and teen pregnancy.
- Result in greater adult employment and higher wages.

Photo Credit: D Sharon Pruitt

Sign our Pledge [Provide link to online pledge or petition]

[ORGANIZATION NAME] is working with a coalition of partners to [describe particular policy objective your organization is working toward, e.g. "improve access to quality early learning programs by passing SBXXX, which will increase funding for early learning programs across the state]. By signing our pledge and joining our coalition, your voice will join others in the state, including [list businesses, faith leaders, K-12 teachers/administrators, law enforcement and others currently working in your coalition], who understand the importance of investing in early childhood education for our children, our economy and our future.

About [ORGANIZATION NAME]

[Insert brief description of your organization here] To learn more about our work, please visit our website at: [insert link to organization's website here]

Tip Sheet: Additional Resources

Demographics

NCCP: Demographics Wizard can create custom tables of national- and state-level statistics about low-income or poor children under the age of six. Choose areas of interest, such as parental education, parental employment, marital status and race/ethnicity—among many other variables. Once the table is created, select the option to view data for children under age six.
http://www.nccp.org/tools/demographics

Children in Newcomer and Native Families presents a large number of indicators reflecting the characteristics of children from birth through age 17 in immigrant families by country or region of origin and in native-born families by race-ethnicity. Estimates are for the U.S. as a whole and localities including states, metropolitan areas, New York City, California counties and the Great Valley, and the Texas-Mexican border region. Selected results also are presented for specific age groups, and by immigrant generation.
http://mumford.albany.edu/children/data_list_open.htm

MPI Data Hub includes 2009 American Community Survey and Census Data on the Foreign Born by State. State profiles include demographic and social data, language and workforce data, and income and poverty data.
http://www.migrationinformation.org/DataHub/acscensus.cfm

FRAC's Federal Food Programs State Profiles include information on state demographics, poverty, food insecurity, participation in federal nutrition programs, and state economic security policies.
http://www.frac.org/html/federal_food_programs/federal_index.html

Demographic Profiles
The National Center for Children in Poverty provides state-specific data on the characteristics of young children (under the age of six) and their parents in poor and low-income families. Children living in families with incomes below the federal poverty level – $22,050 for a family of four in 2009 – are referred to as poor. Children living in families with incomes below twice this level are referred to as low income.
http://www.nccp.org/profiles/demographics.html

America's Future: Latino Child Well-Being in Numbers and Trends
The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) offer a comprehensive overview of the state of Latino children in the areas of demography, citizenship, family structure, poverty, health, education and juvenile justice. This data book provides an overview of current national and state-level trends for Latino children under age 18 relative to non-Hispanic White and Black children, documenting both regional variations and changing trends since the year 2000.
http://www.nclr.org/index.php/publications/americas_future_latino_child_well-being_in_numbers_and_trends

Child Care Costs, Supply and Demand
The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies profiles the average costs of child care in each state, alongside other data on the demand for care and the supply of care providers in the state.
http://www.naccrra.org/randd/state_by_state_facts.php

Infant & Toddler Child Care Profiles
The National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative profiles state information about children from birth to age three, their families, and the early care and education programs that serve them. http://nitcci.nccic.acf.hhs.gov/states

Legislation, Policy and Budget

CLASP's **State-by-State Child Care and Early Education Data** includes analysis of child care spending from Child Care Development Block Grant and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funds, Head Start Program Information Report data, states' use of community-based child care to provide pre-kindergarten, state infant and toddler initiatives, and state-funded Early Head Start initiatives.
http://clasp.org/publications/childcareearlyedmap.htm

NCSL Early Care and Education State Budget Actions project is a 50 state survey of state appropriations to child care, prekindergarten, home visiting and other early learning related funding information. Emphasis on general fund appropriations. To view report and chart information visit: http://www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/budget_report.pdf or for specific charts http://www.ncsl.org/print/cyf/t1_childcare.pdf

NCCP: Improving the Odds for Young Children provides state-specific, regional, and National profiles that integrate data about an array of policies that affect early childhood development. Policy categories include: health and nutrition, early care and learning, and parenting and economic supports. View state profiles online, or download the 4-page PDF profile for each state.
http://www.nccp.org/profiles/early_childhood.html

The User Guide to the State Early Childhood Profiles provides descriptions of the policies in the state profiles, and the research base for their effectiveness.
http://www.nccp.org/profiles/pdf/EC_user_guide.pdf

NCCP Income Converter allows users to enter one of the following values – annual income (in dollars), percent of the federal poverty level (% FPL), or percent of state median income (% SMI) – and converts this figure into the other two values. Users may also find information specific to the family size, year, and state.
http://www.nccp.org/tools/converter

NCSL State Early Care and Education Legislative Database provides information on all proposed and enacted legislation covering early care and education including child care, prekindergarten, family support. Searchable by topic, state and keyword.
http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/ECELD.cfm

Early Care and Education State Budget Actions FY 2010

The National Conference of State Legislature's Early Care and Education State Budget Actions report is an annual survey of state fiscal decisions in early care and education policy and programs, including child care, prekindergarten, home visiting and other related early childhood programs.
http://www.ncsl.org/portals/1/documents/cyf/stateprofiles2010.pdf

Child Care Assistance Spending Profile
The Center for Law and Social Policy presents state reported information on child care spending through the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds used for child care, and information on children and families participating in CCDBG. [Choose your state, filtered by Child Care & Early Education, for your state's Child Care Assistance State Profile 2008.]
http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states

State Pre-K
The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) publishes an annual report about funding, enrollment and quality in state-funded pre-kindergarten programs.
http://nieer.org/yearbook/states

Home Visiting
The Pew Center on the States surveyed state agency leaders and inventoried their state home visiting programs, models, funding and polices for fiscal year 2009-2010.
http://www.pewcenteronthestates.org/initiatives_detail.aspx?initiativeID=61051

Early Childhood Policy Choices
The National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health profiles states' policy choices that promote health, education and strong families alongside other contextual data related to the well-being of young children.
http://www.nccp.org/profiles/early_childhood.html

Child Care Assistance Eligibility Information
The National Women's Law Center compares state child care assistance policies from year to year in four policy areas: income eligibility, waiting lists for assistance, copayment requirements and reimbursement rates for providers.
http://www.nwlc.org/our-resources/reports_toolkits/state-child-care-assistance-policies-report

The Early Childhood Workforce
The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) developed *A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems.* The searchable database links to current state laws and regulations, organized by the blueprint's six essential policy areas of: professional standards, career pathways, articulation, advisory structure, data and financing.
http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi/database

Infant & Toddler State Policies and Initiatives
ZERO TO THREE's *Baby Matters: A Gateway to State Policies and Initiatives* is a web-based searchable database of more than 550 state policies and initiatives that impact infants, toddlers, and their families. It can be searched by state, category or keyword.
http://policy.db.zerotothree.org/policyp/home.aspx

The Center for Law and Social Policy's *Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care* project links research to policy ideas and state examples that support the healthy growth and development of infants and toddlers in child care settings. The project provides resources to help states make the best decisions for infants and toddlers in child care. The foundation of the project is a policy framework comprised of four key principles describing what babies and toddlers in child care need and 15 recommendations for states to move forward.
http://www.clasp.org/babiesinchildcare

State Program Profiles

Head Start Profiles
The Center for Law and Social Policy present data on all Head Start programs in the state – including preschool programs, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, and American Indian/Alaskan Native Head Start. [Choose your state, filtered by Child Care & Early Education, for your state's Head Start by the Numbers 2009.]
http://www.clasp.org/in_the_states

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http://nieer.org/yearbook/states

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http://nitcci.nccic.acf.hhs.gov/states

Leave-behinds/One-pagers

The following section includes materials you can leave behind at meetings, distribute at events or use internally to refine your messaging.

Actions the Business Community Can Take

1. Support a mixed provider delivery system. Whether early childhood programs are delivered by public, private, or nonprofit providers, communities should ensure that quality programs are available and convenient for the families who need them.

2. Encourage early learning system and K–12 alignment. Too often, children are in programs that do not adequately prepare them for success in kindergarten. Encouraging better alignment between early learning programs and kindergarten will help children learn to the best of their ability.

3. Promote early learning policies as part of the economic development agenda. Several studies have shown the return on investment that early learning programs can bring to communities. From the number of people employed to the supports provided to working parents to the long-term benefits for children who attend high-quality programs, early learning policies should be considered with the economic development plans.

4. Encourage the inclusion of early childhood data in the statewide longitudinal data system. As a nation, we need more information about which programs work, who benefits, and where we need new and better solutions. Tying early childhood data to statewide longitudinal data systems will help provide the information that policymakers and parents need.

5. Encourage your state to adopt a Quality Rating Information System *(if it does not have one).* Many states have worked to implement QRIS to distinguish between high-quality programs and programs that need improvement. Rating systems are one way to achieve transparency and accountability so that parents and policymakers know which programs meet quality standards.

6. Encourage business organizations and networks to adopt a policy position in support of public investments for effective, high quality early education programs. Many chambers have included such a statement in their public policy agenda. Ensure that your chamber, as well as other business networks such as Rotary, Kiwanis, and others, adopts this priority and follow up with policymakers.

Content from U.S. Chamber/ICW 2010 report "Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education"

Messaging Early Learning in a Conservative Environment

- Investing in early childhood education is a fiscally responsible way to reduce deficits and create surpluses in the short- and long-term.
- Quality early childhood development is essential for reducing social costs. Gaping holes in early childhood development among disadvantaged children create the achievement gap in our schools, the growing population of unskilled workers, the increasing demand for public support, and increased government costs due to poor outcomes in education, health and personal productivity.
- Early childhood education reduces deficits and creates surpluses. Birth-to-five early childhood education for disadvantaged children more than pays for itself by preventing the achievement gap and producing better outcomes in education, health, personal productivity and economic vitality.
- Early childhood education is efficient and effective. It sets the foundation for school readiness by shaping the package of cognitive and character skills children need to persist in school and to be successful in college career and life.
- Early childhood education produces big gains for children and taxpayers. Prioritizing funding to early childhood education will provide taxpayers with returns of 7-10% per year for every dollar invested, based on reduced costs in remedial education, health, justice system expenditures and the tax revenues generated by increase earnings.
- Short-term costs are more than offset by immediate and long-term benefits. If pre-K programs for the most at-risk children were implemented this year, state government budget gains would surpass costs in over 80% of states in 10 years or less-and the vast majority would reach surplus by 2020. (Economic Policy Institute)
- We can't slash our way out of a deficit any more than we can spend our way out of it. We climb out of deficits by investing in cost efficient and effective solutions that build self-sufficiency, productivity and upward mobility. Investing in early childhood education is one such solution. It's where we start to build a better US.

Results: What Happens When Children Receive Quality Early Learning?

School readiness by kindergarten

Children who participated in Early Head Start performed better than non-participants on measures of cognition, language, and social and emotional behaviors.

Increased high school graduation rates

Children who attended quality preschool were 29 percent more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who did not attend.

Increased college attendance

Students who attended quality early education programs, including Perry Preschool, the Abecedarian Project, and Chicago Child Parent Centers, were more likely to attend college than their peers.

Reduced special education costs

Children who received early education through the Carolina Abecedarian program were half as likely as their peers to require special education.

Reduced crime and delinquency

Chicago children who did not attend preschool were 70 percent more likely than peers who did attend to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

Fewer teen pregnancies

North Carolina children who attended the Abecedarian program were almost half as likely to become teen parents as peers who did not attend.

Greater adult employment and higher wages

Adults who attended Perry Preschool as children were more likely to be employed and had a 33 percent higher average income than their peers who did not attend.

Return on investment of up to $10 for every $1 spent

Cost-benefit analysis by economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis shows that the benefit returned to society comes in the form of reduced crime rates, grade retention, and special education placements, and increased high school graduation rates and adult earnings.

First Five Years Fund

Increased Early Childhood Education Investments Can Boost the Economy Today and Produce Long-Term Returns for the Future

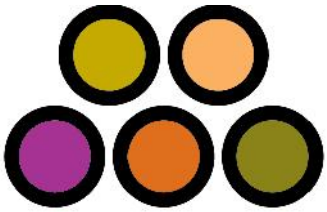
High-quality early childhood services, including Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care, put children on the trajectory for success in school and life and reduce the need for costly educational and social interventions later.

Research is clear: investing in high-quality education for at-risk children from birth to age five results in improved academic achievement, fewer referrals for special education, and increased and improved job opportunities later in life. Children who attend these programs are less likely to be involved in the criminal justice system or depend on public assistance. Nobel Prize winning University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman has determined that investing in early childhood development for disadvantaged children and their families provides an annualized 10 percent return on investment through increased personal achievement and social productivity.[i]

Investing in early learning stimulates local economies

Ongoing research from Cornell University shows that public funding of early childhood programs has a multiplying effect on state and local economies.[ii] These programs stimulate the economy outside of the early childhood sector by purchasing goods and services from other sectors. In total, "the early care and education industry is often one of the [nation's] largest employers and producers of revenues."[iii] Government investment in early care and education provides a direct stimulus to the economy.

- In Pennsylvania, every dollar invested in early childhood programs yields an average of $2.14 circulated in the state's economy.[iv] Nationally, investments in K-12 programs circulate $1.91 in regional economies.
- In Illinois, early childhood education produces $2.12 billion in total revenue, more than spectator sports, wireless telecommunications, and medical equipment manufacturing.
- In New York, an estimated 4,000 child care providers earn a total of $4.7 billion and serve 750,000 parents, who themselves earn over $30 billion annually. This industry is bigger than hotels and lodging, air transportation, and public transportation, and is almost as big as the banking industry.[v]
- In Michigan, researchers have estimated that participation in early education programs yielded an increase of $1.3 billion to $1.6 billion in economic activity in the state, thanks to direct infusions from the early childhood sector paired with the increased earning potential of graduates of early learning programs.[vi]



First Five Years Fund

Early learning opportunities increase employee productivity and stability

Early childhood education solutions meet the learning needs of families and support business productivity and profitability. According to the National Study of the Changing Workforce, businesses that provide high-quality early care and education options to their employees benefit in many ways, including:

- Increased employee retention and reduced absenteeism
- Enhanced recruitment of skilled workers
- Increased on-the-job productivity[vii]

Early education is a half-trillion dollar industry that employs 15 million people

Some state-specific illustrations:

- In North Carolina, the sector employs more people than public elementary school teaching, computer and electronic manufacturing, hotel accommodations, and telecommunications. North Carolina's early childhood industry is similar in scope to all building construction in the state.
- In Washington, more than 9,000 licensed early education and child care businesses provide 30,600 jobs—more than retail apparel, and more than the hotel industry.
- In Massachusetts, more than 12,000 licensed child care or early education businesses employ 30,000 teachers and providers.[viii]

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[i] For more on Professor Heckman's work, go to *http://www.heckmanequation.org/*

[ii] For more on Cornell University's Linking Economic Development and Child Care Research Project, go to: *http://economicdevelopmentandchildcare.org/*

[iii] For more information on the LMFI/MIT report "Early Childhood Education for All A Wise Investment," go to: *http://web.mit.edu/workplacecenter/docs/Full%20Report.pdf*

[iv] For more on economic multipliers in Pennsylvania, visit *http://www.pakeys.org/docs/ECE_Multipliers_final_2_19.pdf*

[v] For more information on the LMFI/MIT report "Early Childhood Education for All A Wise Investment," go to: *http://web.mit.edu/workplacecenter/docs/Full%20Report.pdf*

[vi] For more information on the Wilder Research study, "Cost Savings Analysis of School Readiness in MI" go to: *http://greatstartforkids.org/content/wilder-research*

[vii] For more information on the National Study of the Changing Workforce, go to: *http://familiesandwork.org/site/work/workforce/main.html*

[viii] For more information on the LMFI/MIT report "Early Childhood Education for All A Wise Investment," go to: *http://web.mit.edu/workplacecenter/docs/Full%20Report.pdf*

Five Numbers to Know about Early Learning

18 months

Differences in the size of children's vocabulary first appear at 18 months of age, based on whether they were born into a family with high education and income or low education and income. By age 3, children with college-educated parents or primary caregivers have, on average, vocabularies two to three times larger than those whose parents have not completed high school. Intervening early—with quality early learning starting at birth—can prevent that achievement gap before it starts.

10 percent return on investment

Nobel Prize Laureate economist James Heckman has shown that every dollar invested in quality early childhood education for at-risk children delivers economic gains of 10 percent per year. When at-risk children experience high quality early learning, they attain better school, employment, and life outcomes. Those outcomes fuel a healthier, more vibrant economy—for all of US.

1:10 teacher-to-child ratio

The quality of a child's future depends on the quality of caregiving in the first five years. Factors like teacher-to-child ratios, which should be 1:10 for preschoolers and 1:3 for infants, are indicators of quality. Benefits that accrue from first-rate early learning experiences come only if the setting is safe, healthy, stimulating, thoughtful, organized, and—most important—led by well-trained, attentive teachers. Investing in quality is essential to achieving the educational and life outcomes we seek.

5 points above the national average

Examples of quality early education programs with proven track records can be found across the country. One example is Educare, a network of schools offering center-based care for at-risk children birth to five, where children score five points the national average on school readiness tests. Effectiveness isn't hypothetical; it can be seen all across the country, in programs ranging from Head Start to home visiting, and from center-based care to pre-K classrooms inside elementary schools.

3 percent of eligible children served

A handful of existing federal programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Child Care and Development Block Grant, provide essential support for early childhood education across the country. Unfortunately, these programs don't have the funding necessary to reach the at-risk children who need them most. For example, only 3 percent of infants and toddlers eligible for Early Head Start currently receive services. Additional federal investment is critical to help families work and children learn.

Investments in Early Childhood Education Help Meet the Nation's K-12 Goals

The federal government and states have committed to improving student achievement in K-12 schools. High quality, comprehensive early learning and care for at-risk children, starting at birth, can play a prominent role in helping to improve student success and closing the achievement gap. If all students are prepared to learn when they enter kindergarten, schools can immediately begin to teach the appropriate grade-level standards-based curriculum, rather than helping children play catch-up.

Early Childhood Education Prepares Children for Academic Success

- 85 percent of the brain's core structure is developed before the age of three. Research shows that children who participate in high quality, birth to five early education programs, such as Early Head Start and Head Start, have improved cognitive development and academic success.

- By the spring of their kindergarten year, Head Start graduates – all of whom come from the lowest-income families -- approach national norms in early reading and early writing, and are close to the national norms in early math and vocabulary knowledge.

- The Abecedarian program shows that as they progress through school, children who are enrolled in early childhood programs demonstrate improved math and language scores, enhanced cognitive and social skills, and decreased grade retention by age 15 (31.2 percent of treatment students held-back compared to 54.5 percent of control group students).

- Early childhood education participants are also significantly more likely to complete high school and enroll in higher education programs (35 percent enrollment) than their control group peers (14 percent enrollment).

Investing in Early Childhood Education is a Cost-Effective Way to Improve Outcomes

High quality early childhood education helps to ensure that disadvantaged children are more prepared for school. Participants perform better in school, are less likely to need remediation, and are more likely to meet state academic proficiency goals. Effective interventions that begin at birth help states, school districts and schools satisfy the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by helping to reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates. Furthermore, investments in early childhood programs demonstrate high returns which help lessen the strain on the education system in later years.

Early Experiences Shape the Brain

Science can inform how we build a strong foundation for a prosperous society. The following set of core developmental concepts emerged from decades of rigorous research in neuroscience, developmental psychology, and the economics of human capital formation.

Four Numbers to Remember about Early Childhood

700

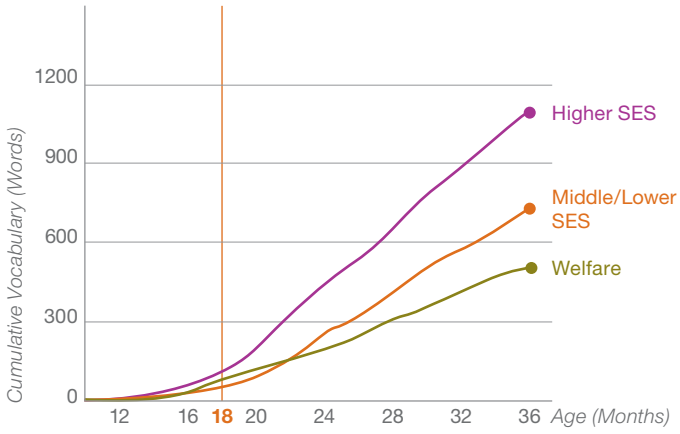
new neural connections are formed every second

In the first few years of life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second. Neural connections are formed through the interaction of genes and a baby's environment and experiences, especially "serve and return" interaction with adults, or what developmental researchers call contingent reciprocity. For better or worse, these are the connections that build brain architecture— the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depend.

Source: National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2009.

Disparities in Early Vocabulary Growth

Differences in vocabulary growth between children in low and high socio-economic households begin to appear as early as 18 months. And, as children grow toward school age, and enter school, the differences only get larger in the absence of intervention.



18 Months:

age at which vocabulary disparities begin to appear

Differences in the size of children's vocabulary first appear at 18 months of age, based on whether they were born into a family with high education and income or low education and income. By age 3, children with college-educated parents or primary caregivers had vocabularies two to three times larger than those whose parents had not completed high school.

Source: Hart, B., & Risley, T. (1995). Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children. *Baltimore, MD: Brookes.*

90–100%

chance of developmental delays when children experience 6 or 7 risk factors

Significant adversity impairs development in the first three years of life—and the more adversity a child faces, the greater the odds of a developmental delay. In fact, risk factors such as poverty, caregiver mental illness, child maltreatment, single parenthood, and low maternal education have a cumulative impact: children exposed to six or seven of these risks face a 90–100 percent likelihood of having one or more delays in their cognitive, language, or emotional development.

Source: Barth, et al. (2007). Developmental Status and Early Intervention Service Needs of Maltreated Children. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

3:1

odds of adult heart disease after 7 or 8 adverse childhood experiences

Early experiences carry lifelong effects—not just on cognitive and emotional development, but on long-term physical health as well. A growing body of evidence now links significant adversity in childhood to increased risk of a range of adult health problems, including diabetes, hypertension, stroke, obesity, and some forms of cancer. Adults who recall having seven or eight serious adverse experiences in childhood are three times more likely to have cardiovascular disease as an adult.

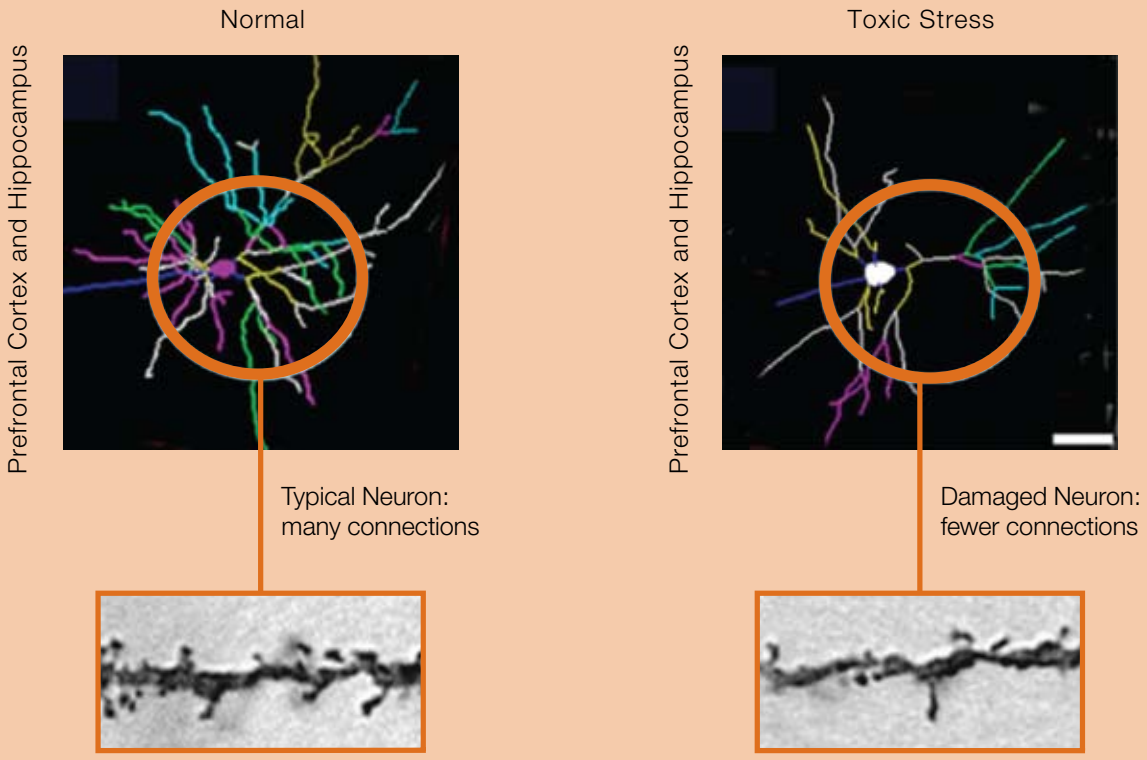
Source: Edwards, et al. (2005). "The wide-ranging health consequences of adverse childhood experiences." In Kathleen Kendall-Tackett and Sarah Giacomoni (eds.) Victimization of Children and Youth: Patterns of Abuse, Response Strategies, *Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute.*

What these four numbers tell us:

- Getting things right the first time is easier and more effective than trying to fix them later.
- Early childhood matters because experiences early in life can have a lasting impact on later learning, behavior, and health.
- Highly specialized interventions are needed as early as possible for children experiencing toxic stress, which occurs when prolonged exposure to adverse experiences triggers abnormal levels of stress hormones that can disrupt developing brain circuits.
- All of society benefits from investments in early childhood programs.

Early Experiences Shape the Brain

Persistent Stress Changes Brain Architecture



Source: Radley et al. (2004) and Bock et al. (2005)

Brain architecture is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. The early years are the most active period for establishing the neural connections that comprise our brain architecture. As it emerges, the quality of that architecture establishes either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all the capabilities and behavior that follow.

Skill begets skill as brains are built from the bottom up. Increasingly complex circuits and skills build on simpler circuits and skills over time.

The interaction of genes and experience shapes the circuitry of the developing brain. Young children serve up frequent invitations to engage with adults, who are either responsive or unresponsive to their needs. This "serve and return" process is fundamental to the wiring of the brain, especially in the early years. Children develop in an environment of relationships that begin in the home but also includes adults and peers in the extended family, providers of early care, education, and other services for families, and members of the community.

Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are inextricably intertwined. Learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health are highly interrelated. One domain cannot be targeted without affecting the others.

Although manageable levels of stress are normative and growth-promoting, **toxic stress in the early years can damage developing brain architecture** and lead to problems in learning and behavior, as well as increased susceptibility to physical and mental illness. Toxic stress refers to the damaging, sustained activation of the body's stress response system, which can occur when a child is exposed to such experiences as severe poverty, violence, maltreatment, neglect, or parental mental health impairments in the absence of stable, nurturing relationships with adults.

Brain plasticity and the ability to change behavior decrease over time. The brain is remarkably adaptable throughout life, but getting it right early is more effective and less costly—to society and to individuals—than trying to fix it later.

Source: Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Quality: What It Looks Like

The quality of a child's future depends on the quality of caregiving in the first five years. This is particularly true of our most at-risk children. Benefits that can accrue from a first-rate early learning experience come only if the setting is safe, healthy, stimulating, thoughtful, organized and—perhaps most important—led by well-trained, attentive teachers. Here's what to look for in a successful early learning program.

What you want to see:

Educated, attentive, and engaged teachers and staff

- Teachers with four-year degrees and specific training in early childhood education.
- No more than eight infants and toddlers and no more than 20 preschoolers in a classroom.
- Teacher-to-child ratios of 1:3 for infants and 1:10 for preschoolers.
- Teachers who crouch to eye level to speak to children.
- Teachers who hold, cuddle, show affection, and speak directly to infants and toddlers.
- Families and teachers exchanging information about the child's development and learning progress.

A safe, healthy, and child-friendly environment

- A room well-equipped with sufficient and appropriate materials and toys.
- Classrooms in which materials and activities are organized logically and placed at eye level for the children.
- Materials and toys accessible to children in an orderly display.
- Centers that encourage safe, outdoor playtime.
- Frequent hand-washing by children and adults.
- Children offered breakfast, lunch, and a time to nap.
- Visitors welcomed with appropriate parental consent.

Stimulating activities and appropriately structured routines

- Children receiving a variety of stimuli in their daily routine using indoor and outdoor spaces and age-appropriate language, literacy, math, science, art, music, movement, and dramatic play experiences.
- Children participating with teachers and each other in individual, small-group, and large-group activities.
- Children who are engaged in their activities.
- Preschoolers who are allowed to play independently.

What you don't want to see:

Inattentive, overwhelmed, or unengaged staff

- Unengaged teachers sitting on the side of the classroom not participating with children.
- Shouting, swearing, or other displays of hostile discipline.
- Infants and toddlers crying without being soothed and supported.
- Teachers speaking to children only to control or direct behavior.
- Teachers who are unresponsive to children's needs or attempts to communicate.
- Children being asked closed-ended ("Yes or No") questions instead of "how" and "why" questions.

An unsafe, unhealthy, or uninspiring environment

- Small, cramped centers or homes without designated appropriate spaces for different ages.
- A center or home that smells or looks unclean, or has visible safety risks.
- Use of television or video to occupy children.
- Children easily distracted or frightened by visiting strangers.
- Disorganized or inaccessible play centers.
- Insufficient, damaged, or inappropriate materials or toys.

Activities and routines that are too chaotic or inflexible

- Children wandering aimlessly, left unsupervised, or displaying unchecked aggression.
- Children restrained in car seats or in high chairs at times other than meal time.
- Children spending a lot of time waiting for turns or standing in lines.
- Children expected to sit at desks or perform highly structured tasks (worksheets), or other forms of age-inappropriate expectations.
- Lack of children's self-directed creative/imaginative play.

Quality: What It Looks Like

Identifying Quality Programs

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)

Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, a QRIS awards quality ratings to early learning programs that meet a set of defined program standards.

A QRIS should have five elements:

1. Standards ranging from basic licensing to higher quality standards.
2. Accountability measures and monitoring processes used to determine how well programs meet standards and to assign ratings.
3. Program and practitioner outreach and support, such as training, mentoring, and technical assistance.
4. Funding incentives awarded to programs when quality levels are achieved.
5. Parent education efforts. Most QRIS award easily recognizable symbols, such as stars, to programs to indicate the levels of quality and to inform and educate parents.

Currently, 19 States (CO, DE, DC, IN, IA, KY, LA, ME, MD, MS, MT, NH, NM, NC, OH, OK, PA, TN, and VT) have a statewide QRIS with all five elements.

Source: National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center

Program Accreditation

Accreditation is a voluntary process designed to improve the quality of early learning programs. Accreditation systems require programs to meet defined standards and engage in extensive self-study and validation by outside professionals to verify that quality standards are met. Research has demonstrated that accreditation positively affects program quality, including benefits to children, families, and staff. Several organizations accredit early learning programs; the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is an example of one that is highly regarded as an indicator of quality programs.

Program Quality Assessments

A range of assessment tools can evaluate an early learning program using observations of practice and the environment, and surveys or interviews of teachers or parents. Some commonly used assessments include:

- The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS), an observational tool that measures the quality of teacher–child interactions in pre-kindergarten classrooms.
- The *Environmental Rating Scales*, which are available for infant and toddler settings (ITERS), pre-school settings (ECERS), family child care settings (FCCERS), and school-age programs (SACERS). They evaluate physical environment, basic care, curriculum, interaction, schedule and program structure, and parent and staff education.

Child Assessments

Parents, providers, and policymakers struggle to balance the need for measures of children's development and learning with concerns about the proper role of assessment when dealing with very young children. When chosen appropriately, child assessments can provide information that helps programs continuously improve. Common tools include:

- *Bayley Scales of Infant and Toddler Development*, which measures physical, motor, sensory, and cognitive development in babies and young children.
- *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment* (DECA), a tool to measure social-emotional strengths and behavioral concerns.
- *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test* (PPVT), which measures comprehension of English vocabulary.
- *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS), measures used to regularly monitor the development of pre-reading and early reading skills.
- *Woodcock-Johnson*, an assessment of cognitive and language abilities.
- *Bracken Basic Concept Scale*, which determines a child's school readiness and knowledge of English-language verbal concepts.
- *Work Sampling System*, an assessment that uses ongoing teacher observations to document children's skills, knowledge, behavior, and accomplishments.

Smart Investment, Big Returns

When at-risk children experience high-quality early learning programs, they have better school, employment, and life outcomes. These results demonstrate the significant economic gains generated by investing in quality early childhood development.

The Results

School readiness by kindergarten
Children who participated in Early Head Start performed better than non-participants on measures of cognition, language, and social and emotional behaviors.

Meeting standards in elementary school
Low-income students in Louisiana who did not receive state preschool were 37 percent more likely to fail to meet basic third grade statewide standards.

Reduced special education costs
Children who received early education through the North Carolina Abecedarian Project were half as likely as their peers to require special education.

Reduced crime and delinquency
Chicago children who did not attend preschool were 70 percent more likely than peers who did attend to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

Fewer teen pregnancies
North Carolina children who attended the Abecedarian Project were almost half as likely to become teen parents than peers who did not attend.

Increased high school graduation rates
Children who attended quality preschool were 29 percent more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who did not attend, and were less likely to repeat grades.

Increased college attendance
Students who attended quality early education programs, including Perry Preschool, the Abecedarian Project, and Chicago Child Parent Centers, were more likely to attend college than their peers.

Greater adult employment and higher wages
Adults who attended Perry Preschool as children were more likely to be employed and had a 33 percent higher average income than their peers who did not attend.

For more information on the evaluations of Early Head Start, Chicago Child Parent Centers, Perry Preschool, and The Abecedarian Project, see www.ffyf.org

Smart Investment, Big Returns

The Heckman Equation: The Economics of Human Potential

Professor James Heckman

Dr. James J. Heckman is a Nobel Memorial Prize winner in Economics at The University of Chicago. His groundbreaking work with economists, developmental psychologists, sociologists, statisticians, and neuroscientists has proven that early childhood development determines potential health, economic, and social outcomes not just for individuals, but for society at large. His decades of research found that investing in early childhood development for disadvantaged children and their families provides **an annualized 10 percent return on investment** through increased personal achievement and social productivity.

The Heckman Principles:

1. Intelligence and social skills are set at an early age—and both are essential for success. Many major economic and social problems in America—crime, teenage pregnancy, high school drop-out rates, adverse health conditions—can be traced to low levels of skill and social ability such as attentiveness, persistence, and impulse control. When social skills are combined at an early age with cognitive skills, they help create more capable and productive citizens. Heckman says that we must invest in the early development of the cognitive and social skills package in order to create better success for individuals and society.

2. Early investment produces the greatest returns in human capital. Heckman found that early nurturing, learning experiences, and physical health from birth to age 5 greatly affect success or failure in society. The most economically efficient time to develop these skills and abilities is in the very early years when developmental education is most effective. Heckman's work proves that quality early childhood development is more cost-effective than remediation.

3. America's advantage will come from helping the disadvantaged. Disadvantaged families are least likely to have the economic and social resources to provide the early developmental experience every child needs. Providing developmental resources pays dividends for the disadvantaged child and society as a whole by providing better future outcomes in social and economic productivity.

4. Quality economic returns come from quality investments in early childhood development. Investing in the highest-quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children provides a high return on investment to society.

5. We already have successful programs that can and should be implemented in local communities across America. Heckman's analysis of economic return is based on two long-running pilot programs in the United States, Perry Preschool and Abecedarian. Similar programs, such as Early Head Start and Educare, are built on many of the principles Heckman has identified as necessary for an effective investment in locally run and controlled early childhood education.

For more information, visit www.heckmanequation.org

The Research behind the Results

The Abecedarian Project demonstrated that young children who receive high-quality early education from infancy to age 5 do better in reading and math. Also, they are more likely to stay in school longer, graduate from high school, and attend a four-year college. Children who participated in the early intervention program posted higher cognitive test scores beginning from the toddler years to age 21. As adults, graduates of this high-quality early education program tended to wait longer to have their first child. This was the first study to track participants in an early learning program from infancy to age 21. Based in North Carolina, this study tracked 111 low-income African-American families until participating children were age 21.

To read the executive summary online, go to http://fpg.unc.edu~abc/

High/Scope Perry Preschool participants were, at age 40, more likely to have graduated from high school, make higher earnings, hold a job, and commit fewer crimes than those who didn't attend this high-quality preschool program. In 1962, researchers began following 123 high-risk three- and four-year-olds and their families in Ypsilanti, Michigan.

For more information on High/Scope Perry, go to http://highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=219

Chicago Parent-Child Centers, a high-quality early learning program that served children beginning at age 3, demonstrated that participants did better in school and were less likely to drop out of high school, be arrested, repeat grades, or be placed in special education services. The study followed 989 students enrolled in 20 Chicago Parent-Child Centers.

For a cost-benefit analysis of the program, go to http://waisman.wisc.edu/cls/cbaexecsum4.htm

Virtual Visits to Example Programs

Effectiveness isn't just a hypothetical concept in early learning. Quality can be seen every day across this country, in programs ranging from Head Start to home visiting, and from center-based care to pre-K classrooms inside elementary schools. Among the myriad programs available for children from birth to five, here are four examples that have proven track records for the most at-risk children.

Center-Based Care

Educare

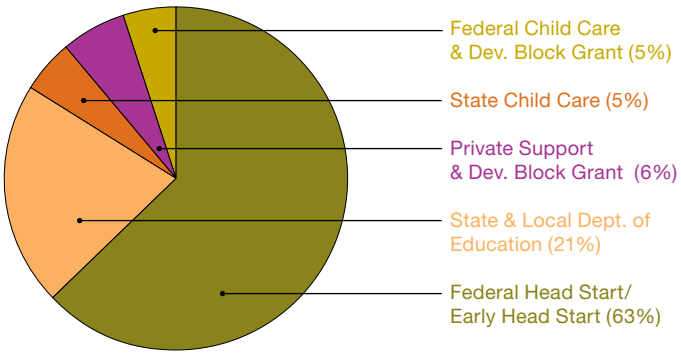
This is an example of high-quality, center-based care for at-risk children. There are eight Educares in operation nationwide, and another 12 in development. Educare serves children ages birth to 5.

Key components:

- Full-day, full-year.
- Infants stay with the same teacher for their first three years, to minimize difficult transitions.
- Small class sizes, low student-to-teacher ratios.
- High staff qualifications. Lead classroom teachers have bachelor's degrees. On-site, ongoing professional development by a master's-level early childhood specialist.
- Intensive parent engagement.

Cost:

- $18,000 (Average per child, per year)



Results:

- Children who spend from three to five years in Educare perform higher than the national average on the Bracken Basic Concept Scale, a common school readiness measure (105.1 compared to the national average for children of all income groups of 100).
- Evaluation data show that more years of Educare attendance are associated with better vocabulary skills.

www.educarecenters.org

Home Visiting

Nurse-Family Partnership

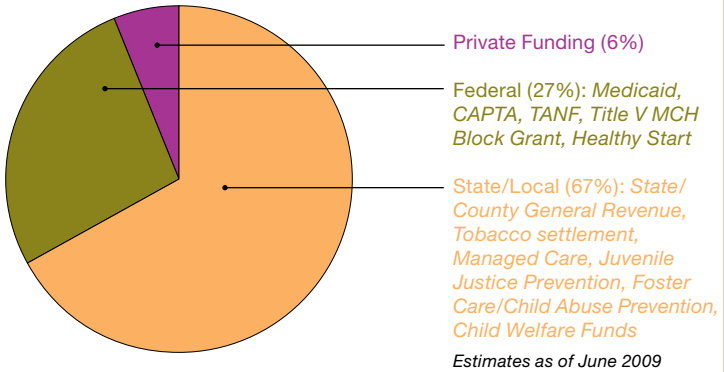
Nurse-Family Partnership is one of several evidence-based, high-quality home visiting programs. Since replication began in 1996, NFP has served more than 100,000 families—primarily first-time, at-risk mothers—in 28 states. NFP serves mothers and children from prenatal to age 2.

Key components:

- Registered nurses lead program.
- Pregnant mothers are engaged around preventative health and developing healthier habits.
- Nurses model how to properly and responsibly care for a new child.
- Home visits engage parents around long-term economic self-sufficiency, education, and family planning.

Cost:

- $4,500 (Average per family, per year)



Estimates as of June 2009

Results:

Outcomes below have been observed in at least one of the three randomized, controlled trials of NFP:

- 48% reduction in child abuse and neglect.
- 56% reduction in emergency room visits for accidents.
- 59% reduction in arrests at child age 15.
- 67% reduction in behavioral and intellectual problems at child age 6.

www.nursefamilypartnership.org

Virtual Visits to Example Programs

School-Based Pre-Kindergarten

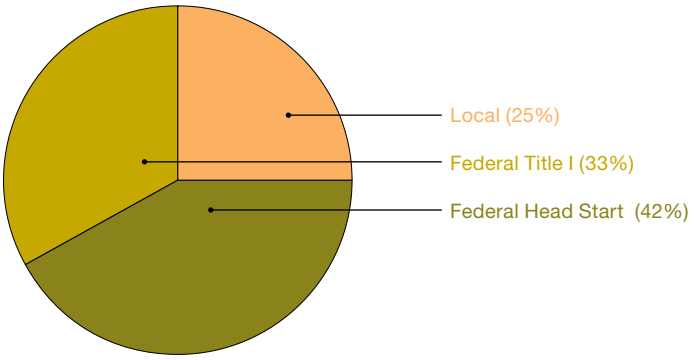
Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools
This is an example of an effective pre-K program within a public school system. Pre-K serves children ages 3 to 5.

Key components:

- Curriculum emphasizes mastery of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Research-based assessments and instruction align with kindergarten, early grades, and beyond.
- Free transportation, lunch, health screening, parent involvement and education activities, and social services are provided.
- Half- and full-day programs available.

Cost:

- $10,685 (Average per child, per year)



Results:

- Almost 91 percent of kindergarteners end the year reading basic text at or above the expected benchmark level, with only marginal differences among race and income groups.
- 73 percent of all Montgomery County children entering kindergarten were deemed "fully ready" according to the 2009 Maryland Model for School Readiness Assessment.
- 80 percent of Montgomery Co. Pre-K students met or exceeded expectations of full readiness according to the Early Childhood Observation Record.

www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org

Early Head Start

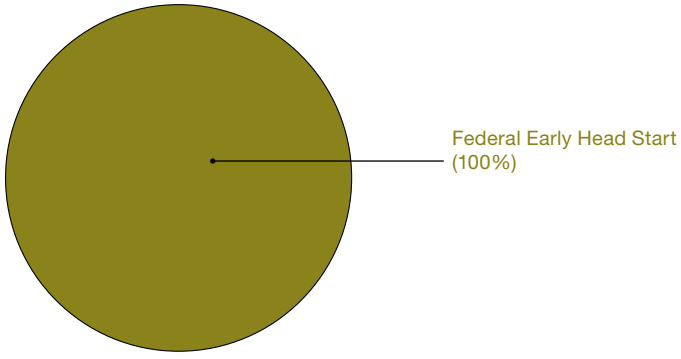
Southwest Human Development, Arizona
Early Head Start (EHS) provides comprehensive child and family support services to enhance children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; and to support parents' efforts to better care for their children. EHS serves children from birth to age 3.

Key components:

- Full-day, full-year, with consistent teachers for infants and toddlers.
- Small class sizes; low student-to-teacher ratios.
- Strong parent engagement.
- Comprehensive care, including infant mental health and nutrition.
- National performance standards.
- Competitively bid local programs.

Cost:

- $12,500 (Average per child, per year for SHD)
- $9,000 (Average per child, per year for Early Head Start)



Results:

- Children who spend two to three years in Early Head Start demonstrate higher vocabulary scores and better social-emotional development.
- EHS participant parents demonstrate better teaching, play more with their children, and have higher quality skills in dealing with their children. EHS parents are more likely to read daily to their children. Parents spend more time on their education and in the workforce as a result of EHS participation.

www.ehsnrc.org