The Bridgespan Group

PRITZKER

CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE

Photos: Ounce of Prevention Fund

Achieving Kindergarten Readiness for All Our Children

A Funder's Guide to Early Childhood Development from Birth to Five

Together, philanthropy, business and government can now expand early childhood opportunities so that all our children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and achieve success throughout their lives.

Kindergarten readiness, a comprehensive measure of a child's development and readiness to learn, is a critical benchmark on the path to success for all children.

- Remarkably, **1 in 4 American children come from low-income families and enter kindergarten not ready to learn.**

  50% of all low-income children from birth to 5 are at risk of not being fully prepared for kindergarten

- Preparing a child for kindergarten requires a focus on five areas of development that begin at birth and are influenced by quality, early experiences:

  1. Physical well-being and motor development
  2. Social and emotional development
  3. Cognitive skills
  4. Language and developing literacy
  5. The ability to concentrate and follow directions

- Investments in early childhood development lay the foundation for school readiness by building these cognitive and character skills that children need to do well in school and in life, including attentiveness, persistence, impulse control and sociability.

- When a young child enters kindergarten ready for school, there is an

82% chance that child will master basic skills by age 11 compared with a **45%** chance for children who are not school ready.

Research shows the foundation for success in life begins during the critical period from pregnancy to age 5. Investing in early childhood development during this time makes a significant and lasting impact.

- From conception to the first day of kindergarten, **a child's brain develops more quickly and a greater amount** than at any other time.

- In the first three years of a child's life, **700 new connections between cells in the brain are formed each second,** so quality, responsive early experiences are incredibly important.

- Research from Nobel laureate economist James Heckman shows that investments in quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged children more than pay for themselves, with a

7-10% return on investment through better education, health, economic and social mobility outcomes.

- Programs for infants and toddlers from low-income families during **the first three years of life are most critical** in building a strong foundation for learning.

- Investments in the first three years of life are especially critical to prepare more children for kindergarten and lifelong success and provide the **greatest returns on investment**.

- When we choose not to invest in early childhood programs for low-income families, we eventually pay the price through larger taxpayer burdens in the education, health and criminal justice systems.

All data sources can be accessed at http://www.bridgespan.org/early-childhood-funder-guide-2015

We vastly underinvest in programs that work, and targeted public and private investments are needed to improve the patchwork delivery system of early childhood programs currently in place.

- Public education spending at the state and federal level for 6- to 18-year-olds is nearly

  4 times as high, per capita, as spending for children birth to 5.

- Effective parenting programs reached only 115,000 children in 2014, an estimated **2.5 percent of the need.**

- In 2013-14, only

  29% of 4-year-olds were enrolled in a state-funded pre-K program and only **5** states met all important quality benchmarks.

- Early Head Start reached only **4 percent** of eligible infants and toddlers as of 2012.

- Approximately **25 percent of low-income children** under 5 spend a significant portion of time in informal **family, friend and neighbor care**. These settings need support to improve quality.

- **Quality** at state-regulated **child-care**, **Head Start**, state-funded **pre-K** and other centers **varies widely**, and it falls short of its potential to prepare children for kindergarten. In most states, **basic training in child development is often not required**.

More investments in early childhood development are needed. This guide provides 13 specific, tested, early childhood investment opportunities donors can pursue immediately to make positive impacts.

Strengthen public systems of early care and education at state and local levels to ensure continuous quality improvements.

Option 1: Provide technical assistance for states to accelerate quality-improvement efforts.

Option 2: Fund training for providers pursuing quality improvements.

Scale health and developmental screenings to connect parents and families to resources to optimize their child's holistic development.

Option 3: Develop and share comprehensive screening and referral systems at the community level.

Option 4: Support pediatric practices to integrate screenings and referrals into well-child visits.

Option 5: Disseminate promising screening and assessment questionnaires and tools.

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Improve the training, continuing education, professional development and compensation of early childhood educators.

Option 6: Increase the availability of on-the-job coaching and development for early childhood educators.

Option 7: Fund research and technical assistance to promote fair compensation of early childhood educators.

Support greater access to high-quality, evidence-based programs that help parents and families to foster their children's development.

Option 8: Build the capacity of organizations implementing evidence-based programs to serve more children and families.

Option 9: Invest in innovative public-private financing mechanisms for evidence-based programs.

Option 10: Expand evidence-based programs for parents by advocating for increased state, local and federal funding.

Option 11: Simplify and disseminate information to assist parents in choosing high-quality care and education opportunities for their children.

Promote and share ongoing program innovation and improvement, especially for those programs supporting parents and informal caregivers.

Option 12: Promote quality-improvement efforts for family, friend and neighbor care.

Option 13: Foster innovation to achieve repeatable results.

To learn more, read The Bridgespan Group and the Pritzker Children's Initiative's "Achieving Kindergarten Readiness for All Our Children: A Funder's Guide to Early Childhood Development from Birth to Five."

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