

# Policy Options to Improve Early Education

## Quick Facts:

- Children ages birth to age five comprise 8.3% of total Hoosier population and one-third of the population of Hoosier children under age 18.<sup>1</sup>
- The most critical development of a child's brain occurs between birth and five years old. Early experiences determine whether a child's brain architecture will provide a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior and health.<sup>2</sup>
- On average, children of working mothers spend 35 hours a week in child care.<sup>3</sup>
- Almost half (46%) of children come to school without the basic social/emotional and cognitive skills for success.<sup>4</sup>
- Of 50 kindergartners struggling to learn to read, 44 will still be struggling in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.<sup>5</sup>

## Research shows that strong policies and investment in high quality early education result in later academic success.

- Children who receive high quality child care in the first few years scored higher in academic and cognitive achievement when they were 15 years old and were less likely to misbehave than children in lower quality care.<sup>6</sup>
- Children from low-income families make even greater gains in academic and social development than non-poor children in community care and pre-kindergartens. The study found that for low-income children, there were no gains when placed in programs below a quality threshold.<sup>7</sup>
- Longitudinal studies showed strongest outcomes with high quality care and interventions. For example, low-income children ages 3 and 4 who attended pre-school and had home visits to parents by teachers showed lasting effects through age 27 compared to a control group.<sup>8</sup>
- Early learning programs can generate 12% public rate of return on investment.<sup>9</sup> The return on investment for education of young children is higher than for low-skill adults.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The State of the Young Hoosier Child Birth to Age Five, 2011 Report*, [http://www.in.gov/isdh/reports/SYHC/FINAL\\_SYHC\\_Sunny\\_Start\\_2011\\_Report.pdf](http://www.in.gov/isdh/reports/SYHC/FINAL_SYHC_Sunny_Start_2011_Report.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Shonkoff, Jack P. and Phillips, Deborah, editors, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington, D.C. National Academy Press.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, August 2010. *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 2005/Summer 2006*.

<sup>4</sup> Zill, Nicholas and West, Jerry, for the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2001). *Entering Kindergarten: A Portrait of American Children When They Begin School: Findings from The Condition of Education 2000*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>5</sup> Ramey, Craig T. & Sharon L. (January 1999) *Right From Birth: Building Your Child's Foundation For Life*. Goddard Press, Inc.

<sup>6</sup> Vandell, D.L., Belsky, J., Burchinal, M., Steinberg, L., Vandergrift, N., & NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. (2010, May-June). Do effects of early child care extend to age 15 years? Results from the NICHD study of early child care and youth development. *Child Development*, 81(3), 737-756.

<sup>7</sup> Burchinal, M, Peisner-Feinberg, E., Bryant, D.M. & Clifford, R. (2000). Children's social and cognitive development and child care quality: Testing for differential associations related to poverty, gender, or ethnicity. *Applied Developmental Science*, 4, 149-165. Burchinal, M., Vandergrift, N. Pianta, R. & Mashburn, A. (2010). Threshold analysis of association between child care quality and child outcomes for low-income children in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Research Quarterly*, 25, 166-176.

<sup>8</sup> Schweinhart, L.J., Barnes, H.V., & Weikart, D.P. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press; Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J, Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R., & Nores, M. (2005). *Lifetime Effects: High Scope/Perry Preschool Study through age 40*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

<sup>9</sup> Grunewald, Rob and Rolnick, Art. (Dec. 2004) *A Proposal for Achieving High Returns on Early Childhood Development*. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

<sup>10</sup> Heckman, James. (2008). *Schools, skills, and synapses. Discussion paper no. 3515*. Bonn, Germany: Institute for the Study of Labor.



Indiana Association  
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# Policy Options to Improve Early Education

The State of Indiana could implement a range of administrative and legislative policy options to improve educational outcomes. Below is a sample of policies that will improve school readiness and success.

## Policies that could be implemented now, as they require minimal or no fiscal impact to the State of Indiana:

- Improve **quality of child care**, which may include:
  - Standardizing health and safety requirements across all types of care.
  - Strengthening Provider Eligibility Standards (PES) for child care providers that accept the taxpayer-funded Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) to align with developmental focus or educational curriculum.
  - Incentivizing highest level of quality through reimbursement policies.
- Collect **kindergarten readiness data** in aggregate through the use of a developmentally appropriate assessment tool aligned with Indiana's K-12 academic standards.
- Establish a **state early learning advisory council** to coordinate early childhood work.
- **Maximize available federal dollars** to support early education and the safety net for vulnerable families.
  - Hoosier families are eligible for but do not claim an estimated \$500 to \$900 million in the form of Earned Income Tax Credit, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Children's Health Insurance Program. The State could partner with and/or provide modest support for community organizations on outreach campaigns to maximize these resources.
  - The State has not pursued federal funds available for early learning--i.e. the Early Learning Challenge Grant, CHIPRA outreach, putting it at a competitive disadvantage to other states.

## Policies that would require new public investments and/or re-prioritization of existing public funds:

- Implement voluntary **state-funded preschool** program for at-risk children.
- Require and fully fund **full-day kindergarten** statewide.
- Help parents be successful by expanding programs that provide **in-home visits for new and at-risk parents**.
- Provide **developmental screenings** from birth to age five educating parents on developmental milestones and increasing early interventions to reduce future costs.
- Incentivize **quality child care** by offering **tax credits** for parents who choose highest quality care, for qualified child care providers who work in highest quality care and for child care providers that offer highest quality care, especially if accepting at-risk children.