High Quality Early Childhood Education as a Foundation for K-12

Any meaningful conversation about improvements in K-12 must take into account the little-discussed reality that most of a child’s social-emotional and academic capacities are formed in the first five years of life, before they ever get to kindergarten. Anyone who cares about innovative and effective education reform must understand the critical role of the first five years in learning. We must be willing to think outside of the traditional K-12 box to get the most momentum and value from these formative early years.

The importance of the early years is mentioned once in Superintendent Hite’s Action Plan, as an important ingredient in early literacy. High quality early childhood education not only improves early literacy, but plays a foundational role in other important student outcomes: cultivating academic tenacity, meeting the needs of students in special education, and meeting the needs of English Language Learners. Moreover, investing in early childhood education can also help capture K-12 cost savings and longer term benefits in areas such as high school graduation and crime reduction.

High Quality Early Education and Early Literacy

High Quality Early Education and Academic Tenacity


High Quality Early Education and Special Education Rates

High Quality Early Education and English Language Learners

Students of diverse races and ethnicities benefit from the Tulsa pre-K program.

Source: “The Effects of Oklahoma’s Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program on School Readiness,” William T. Gormley, Jr., Center for Research on Children in the U.S., Georgetown University

High Quality Early Education and Financial Savings

Source: Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children is an Economically Efficient Policy*, ”James J. Heckman
Long-Term Benefits of Investing in High Quality ECE

**Closes the Achievement Gap**
Measured in High School Matriculation Rates

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Those Who Attended ECE Program</th>
<th>Those Who Did Not Attend ECE Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matriculation Rate</td>
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Current Overall Unemployment Rate = 9.6%
Unemployment Rate: Non-High School Graduates > 15%
Unemployment Rate: College Graduates = 4.7%

**Reduces Crime**
Measured in Chronic Incarceration Rates (more than four arrests by age 27) Relative to Early Education

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<th>Those Who Attended ECE Program</th>
<th>Those Who Did Not Attend ECE Program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incarceration Rate</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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Cost of Incarceration in Pennsylvania = $35,000/year
Tuition at Penn State University = $23,000/year
Annual Per Child Public Spending on Early Education = $2,722/year

Additional resources
Harvard Center on the Developing Child, particularly their “In Brief” series on brain development.
www.developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/resources/briefs

Research by Stephen Bagnato from the University of Pittsburgh on the impact of Pennsylvania high quality pre-school experiences on school readiness.

Research and publications by Fight Crime; Invest in Kids on the cost savings of investing in early care and education.
www.fightcrime.org/?category_name=early-education+pennsylvania

The work of Nobel Prize winning University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman on the great gains to be had by investing in early and equal development of human potential.
www.heckmanequation.org/heckman-equation