

Why a Smart Beginning Matters

Over 85% of a child's brain development happens by age five.

- Early experiences have tremendous influence on the brain's neuron development.
- Birth to 5, are the critical years for developing a solid foundation in cognitive, language and social-emotional development.

In Virginia, 1 in 5 children arrive at kindergarten not ready.

- 19% of Charlottesville and 9% of Albemarle children enter kindergarten in need of additional help in language and literacy.
- Locally, 40% of low-income kindergarten children that did not attend preschool missed the academic benchmarks at the start of kindergarten.
- All too often, children that start behind, stay behind as indicated by third grade academic scores.

Quality early learning experiences close the school readiness gap.

- 93% of Charlottesville and Albemarle children who attended preschool began kindergarten with the necessary language and literacy skills.
- Children from quality early learning programs have higher high school graduation rates, higher college achievement and higher wages.

The economic costs of children who do not succeed in school are high.

- Each repeated grade costs Virginia taxpayers \$7,654.
- Last year, 58 local children were retained in kindergarten = \$443,932.
- Increased costs are due to more children repeating grades, increased special education, decreased graduation rates, increased incarceration rates, lower adult earnings, greater dependency on social services and more.

Child care issues have a significant impact on the workforce.

- 52% of local employees surveyed have missed work due to child care issues.
- Local employees identify cost, accessibility and quality as key challenges in securing child care.
- Quality child care is limited locally. Only 6%(4) local child care centers are nationally accredited; 29% (20) participate in the quality rating programs.

The economic benefits of school readiness are long-lasting.

- Early education is the most cost-effective way to create skilled workers in the future.
- Over 40 years of research shows that quality early childhood education has substantial, measurable economic benefits for families, schools and communities.

“The best investment in economic development that government and the private sector can make is in the healthy development of children.”

Arthur Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research
Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis



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