**WHY INVEST IN EARLY LEARNING?**

**Early Childhood: Building Blocks for Child Success**

Children experience rapid brain development from birth to age 5; the timing and quality of early experiences combine to lay the foundation for the learning and behavior that follows.

The achievement gap begins before children ever enter kindergarten:

- By age 3, children living in poverty are exposed to 30 million fewer words than their peers not living in poverty
- By kindergarten, economically disadvantaged children are typically 12-24 months below national norms in language and pre-reading skills

High-quality early childhood programs, especially for children most vulnerable, can ensure that children enter school ready to thrive:

- Intensive home visiting programs promote school readiness through secure attachment, promotion of health and safety, and improved home environments for learning
- Early learning programs help children develop social and emotional skills, build important pre-literacy and early math skills, and foster children’s love of learning

**THE ECONOMIC CASE FOR INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN**

- Early intervention can promote school achievement, reduce crime, foster workforce productivity and improve health
- High-quality early learning programs offer one of the highest returns of any public investment — **ranging from $3 to $9 for every dollar invested**

**RETURNS TO A UNIT DOLLAR INVESTED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs targeted towards the earliest years</th>
<th>Preschool programs</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
<th>Job training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Return to Investment in Human Capital</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>School</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Heckman and LaFontaine (2007).

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**ACHIEVEMENT GAP IN CMS**

- **3rd Grade Reading Proficiency**
  - Not Economically Disadvantaged: 87%
  - Economically Disadvantaged Students: 51%

- **8th Grade Reading Proficiency**
  - Not Economically Disadvantaged: 86%
  - Economically Disadvantaged Students: 54%

- **Cohort Graduation Rate**
  - Not Economically Disadvantaged: 83%
  - Economically Disadvantaged Students: 70%

Source: NC Department of Public Instruction, 2012.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Quality matters greatly. High-quality programs can produce substantive long-term gains, but underfunded programs with low standards produce few significant benefits.

Locally, there are promising indicators of quality:

- North Carolina is one of only 5 states to meet all 10 of 10 national quality standards for public Pre-Kindergarten.
- 90% of young children receiving assistance to attend child care centers in Mecklenburg County are served by 4- or 5-star programs, the highest quality ratings in the state.
- Investment in evaluation of publicly funded programs is needed to continually improve quality and maximize positive outcomes.

WHAT’S POSSIBLE IN MECKLENBURG COUNTY

All children have early learning experiences that support healthy development and prepare them for success in school.

Our Role: The Larry King Center will continue to guide implementation of the community’s Plan for School Readiness.

Recent community wins include:

- Grant awarded to implement Triple P, an evidence-based parent education and support program
- Early Literacy Coordinator hired at Library and community expansion of literacy initiatives Raising a Reader and “March Madness for Reading”
- Expansion of infant mental health services and increased support for young children who have experienced domestic violence

YOUR ROLE: ADVOCATE FOR FUNDING FOR EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS

- Expand local implementation of intensive home visitation programs
- Maintain local Pre-K funding through Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and increase state funding for NC Pre-K
- Increase public and private financial aid dollars for early care and education

NFP SCHOOL READINESS OUTCOMES

- >> 50% reduction in language delays at 21 months
- >> 67% reduction in behavioral problems at age 6

Source: Olds et al. (2004)

THE PERRY PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The Perry Preschool Program demonstrates that early education can be an important investment in the future.

PERRY PRESCHOOL PARTICIPANTS AT 27

- 54% No PP
- 71% PP Program
- 13% Graduated Highschool
- 38% Owned A Home


Children in the Chicago Child Parent Center Preschool were less likely to drop out of high school, be placed in special education and be held back a grade.

CPC CHILD OUTCOMES

- 25% No CPC
- 39% CPC Program
- 17% Juvenile Arrests
- 50% Highschool Completion

Source: Reynolds et al. (2002)