

Early Childhood Education

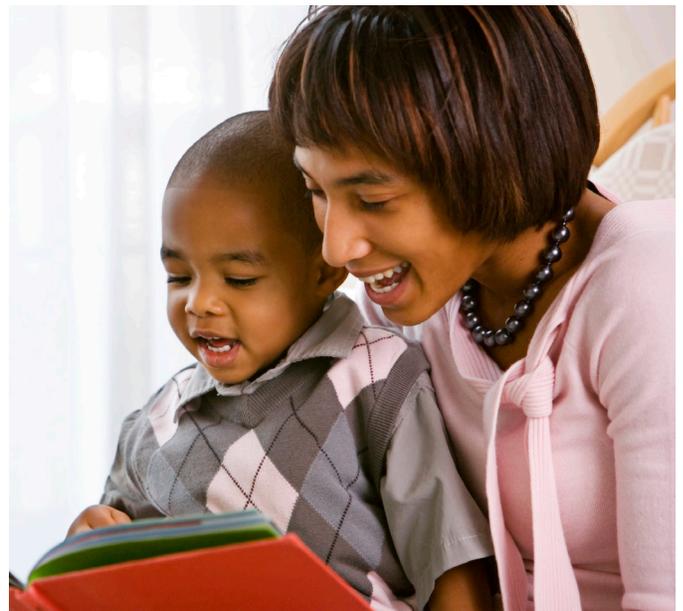
Invest in high-quality early childhood education.

A recent report from Groundwork Ohio warns that if we don't invest in children when they are young they almost certainly will have difficulties the rest of their lives. Children who start behind usually do not catch up and those most often left behind are children of color, Appalachian children and children who live in poverty.

The most critical time to maximize the outcome of investments is between birth and age five, in which 90 percent of brain development occurs. During those years, the brain builds the foundation of skills needed for success in school, health, career and life. Investments in early childhood development – particularly for disadvantaged children – have clear and tangible benefits, including preventing achievement gaps; reducing the need for special education; increasing the likelihood of healthier lifestyles; lowering crime rates; and reducing overall societal costs.

Children who start kindergarten behind are too often poor readers in third grade. Poor readers tend to struggle with 8th grade math and success in middle school math is a strong predictor of whether a student will go on to graduate from high school. If a young person doesn't graduate, he or she is not going to college and probably will have a hard time doing the

reading or math required to earn a job credential. The issue of early childhood is not a simple matter. Ohio's complex statewide "system" of early childhood services includes both the public and private sectors, which can present policy and investment challenges. Making deeper investments in early childhood education can ensure we meet the needs of our youngest and most vulnerable learners.



26

Percent of Ohio children ages 0-5 living in poverty

30

Percent of Appalachian children ages 0-5 are living in poverty

53

Percent of Black children living in poverty

40

Percent of kindergartners who come to the classroom ready to learn

BY THE NUMBERS

P-20 VISION

Each and every Ohio student is actively engaged in their learning, has access to high-quality education opportunities in early childhood, K-12 and post-secondary education and is prepared to enter the workforce and succeed in life.

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Recommendations

Expand Investment

- The Governor and General Assembly should support and expand investments in and access to high-quality preschool, particularly for the state's most at-risk children, including additional new funding not re-appropriated from other state education funding.

Track Data

- The Ohio Department of Higher Education and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services need to better coordinate their early learning data systems to enable accurate program tracking and assessment.

Expand and Align Expectations

- The Ohio Department of Education in partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services should expand and align birth to Grade 3 developmental and learning expectations.
- The Ohio Department of Education should maintain a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.

Increase Health Services

- The Governor and General Assembly should increase support for mental health services for young children and their families to address the impact of adverse childhood experiences.
- The General Assembly, Governor and administrative departments should work together to ensure access to essential healthcare services that are vital to successful development for all Ohio kids.



Empowering Change

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