

Connection Station Topic #6

**What is the impact of investing in early childhood development on our economy,
how can I learn more about it, and how can I use it in my advocacy efforts?**

- **Research indicates that a child’s quality of life and the contributions he or she will make to society can be directly traced to the first few years of life, back to those first 2,000 days.** We know through research that high quality early education yields higher graduation rates, reduced crime, higher earnings, and better jobs. As a result, economists estimate that every dollar invested in early education produces a 10% return on investment through increased personal achievement and social productivity. Early childhood investments produced sustained results at the local, state, and national level and are critical to keeping the United States competitive in a global market.
<http://www.first2000days.org/good-investment>
- **Healthy social-emotional development is strongly linked to success in elementary school.** The emotional, social and behavioral competence of young children is a strong predictor of academic performance in elementary school. Social and emotional development is just as important as literacy, language, and number skills in helping young children prepare for school. Those children who are not secure in relating to others are not able to trust adults and, as a result, are not motivated to learn. Furthermore, school-age children who cannot calm themselves or be calmed enough to respond to teaching may not benefit from early educational experiences and will fall behind their peers. <http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/policy-toolkit/socialemotionalmarch5.pdf>
- **Investing in early learning and development is the best foundation for human capital.** The human brain is primed from birth to react to and learn from the environment and interactions with caregivers. But this process is cumulative, and so deprivations experienced prenatally and in the first three years of life shape brain architecture and can impede later language, and cognitive, social, and emotional capacity. While parents are the first and most important teachers in a child’s life, skilled providers of child care and early education can also nurture these qualities by building trust and responding appropriately to young children.

http://www.ced.org/images/content/issues/earlyeducation/UnfinishedBusiness_ExecSumLO.pdf

- **We have gone on to argue that investments in human capital prior to kindergarten provide a high public return.** Such investments—especially for at-risk children—can make a substantial impact on the success of children’s futures as students, workers and citizens in democratic society. That is, the most efficient means to boost the productivity of the workforce 15 to 20 years down the road is to invest in today’s youngest children. http://www.frbsf.org/publications/community/investments/0709/economics_early_childhood.pdf

Where can I get more information?

- <http://www.ncimha.org/resources/> Listed here are many excellent resources on the subject of Infant and Young Child Mental Health, ranging from websites to journal articles to videos, including several videos featuring Dr. James Heckman’s arguments for investing in early childhood.
- Invest in early childhood development: Reduce deficits, strengthen North Carolina’s economy. www.heckmanequation.org
- Heckman, J., and Masterov, D. (2004) The productivity argument for investing in young children. Working Paper #5. New York: Committee for Economic Development. Available at http://jenni.uchicago.edu/human-inequality/papers/Heckman_final_all_wp_2007-03-22c_jsb.pdf.
- **first2000days.org** provides information about why early care and learning is important and how North Carolinians can engage others on this issue. It was developed by The North Carolina Partnership for Children, Inc., with a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. <http://www.first2000days.org/>
- Supporting Infants, Toddlers, and Families Impacted by Caregiver Mental Health Problems, Substance Abuse, and Trauma: A Community Action Guide. PDF available at: <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA12-4726/SMA12-4726.pdf>
- http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/03/15/2752688_helping-children-is-the-best-investment.html
- <http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/03/17/2752580/nc-lawmakers-should-enlist-expert.html>

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