



The future prosperity of our state lies in the youngest Minnesotans.

The path to Minnesota's future prosperity begins with the well-being of all our children. That's why it's important to make smart investments in early childhood development and lay the foundation for future success in school, career and life. When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship.

The basic architecture of the human brain is constructed in an ongoing process that begins at birth and continues into adulthood. Early experiences literally shape how the brain gets built. Chronic stressful conditions in the early years such as extreme poverty, abuse and maternal depression — known as “toxic stress” — can harm a child's developing brain. A strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes, while a weak foundation increases the odds of later difficulties.

90% of brain development happens before the age of 5

The quality of life an adult enjoys and the contributions they are able to make to society can be directly linked back to the quality of his or her first few years of life. By investing in high quality opportunities for disadvantaged children there is a direct reduction of costs in K-12, criminal justice and welfare programs and an increase in future contributions to society.

16:1 Return on Investment when focused on meeting the needs of high risk children

While the state faces tough economic times, we must remember that the early care and education sector provides direct support to not only today's workforce, but the workforce of tomorrow. True investment in high quality early care and education will help break the cycle of poverty and close both the achievement and opportunity gaps that many young Minnesotans face. The current economic times are the worst time to stop investing in the one area that can guarantee the future prosperity of the state. We can either lay the foundations now or pay the price later.

1% of the state budget is currently spent on early care and education

Minnesotans agree that it is time to invest in early care and education. In a 2010 poll done by the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF), voters overwhelmingly supported this area as a priority for the state:

“It is important for legislators to find ways to improve MN children's Kindergarten readiness even if additional funding is not available.” (82% agree)

“Improving MN's ability to prepare kids for school should be one of the top priorities of the Minnesota Legislature.” (76% agree)

“K readiness is an issue where (all parties) should cooperate; it should not become a partisan battleground.” (88% agree)