

Minnesota's Future: An Early Childhood Agenda for 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.

Early experiences literally shape how the brain gets built; a strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes. A weak foundation increases the odds of later difficulties. 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.

Advances in neuroscience, combined with years of research on evidence-based interventions, have helped us design effective policies for children in the first five years of life.

Policies that support the ability of parents, providers of early care and education, and other community members to interact positively with children in stable and stimulating environments help create a sturdy foundation for later school achievement, economic productivity, and responsible citizenship.

What Minnesota Can Do

Minnesota's next governor should provide leadership on early childhood by adopting these proven investments:

- ✓ Offer home visits and parent education to every first-time parent to help get their children off to a great start.
- ✓ Double the number of at-risk children who participate in high quality early learning opportunities.
- ✓ Implement a statewide quality rating and improvement system for early learning programs.
- ✓ Create community partnerships to coordinate and leverage investments in children's and families' success.
- ✓ Appoint a cabinet-level position to lead a statewide system of child development and early learning services.

Our Vision:

Minnesota children are nurtured, healthy, eager to learn and prepared to succeed in school AND in life

- Children have access to high quality early childhood experiences
- Parents are supported in their responsibility as their children's most important teachers and caregivers
- Families and other adults in a child's life are supported in helping children succeed
- Communities embrace a collective responsibility for children's success

For more information, visit www.minnesotasfuture.net

Principles and Values to Guide Policy Decisions

Opportunity

Children and families from all backgrounds and all economic circumstances have equal access to high quality early childhood services.

Quality

Early learning programs and services meet high quality standards that address the developmental needs of children birth to school age.

Choice

Parents have meaningful choices among a variety of quality early childhood services.

Coordinated

Building on a diverse delivery system, structures are in place to ensure coordination and integration at the federal, state, and local levels.

Comprehensive & Holistic

Early childhood programs meet the developmental needs of the whole child within the context of their family and their community.

Accountable

Early childhood services are driven by defined outcomes to which programs, providers and the system as a whole are held accountable.

Sustainable

There is sufficient and sustainable investment from both the public and private sectors to ensure continuous access to high quality early childhood services.

Valuing Parents & Families

Parents are recognized as playing the most significant role in their children's healthy development; policies acknowledge that children learn and grow most successfully in strong families.

Valuing Professionals

Early childhood programs and services are staffed with high quality professionals who are supported, both educationally and financially, to meet the developmental needs of children birth through school age.

Valuing Diversity

Early childhood policies and services acknowledge and respond to differences in terms of race, culture, language, geography and a child's particular needs and strengths.

This platform was developed by an alliance of early childhood organizations that includes: Child Care WORKS, Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children/ Minnesota School Age Care Alliance, Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education, Minnesota Child Care Association, Minnesota Child Care Resource & Referral Network, Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting, Minnesota Community Education Association, Minnesota Head Start Association, and Ready 4 K.