

Investing in Maryland's Young Children Make it Your Business

Preparing our youngest Marylanders for success in school is one of the most powerful ways to diminish the achievement gap and nurture children who will flourish and contribute meaning to society. They are our future. Their future depends on you.

— Meredith Callanan

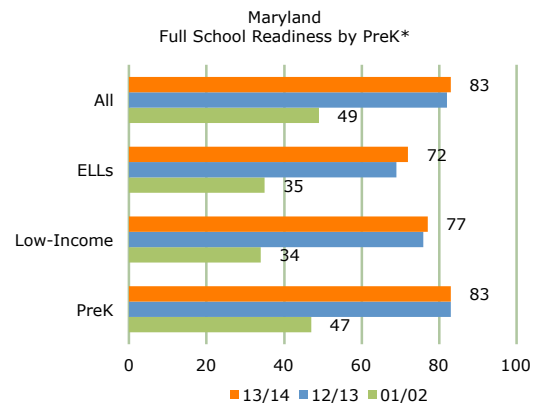
Chair, Ready At Five and Vice President, Corporate Marketing and Communications, T. Rowe Price Group

Investments Make Sense

Research shows that investments in the early years are critical:

- It Matters.** Nearly 90% of a child's brain development takes place by the age of five. A wealth of brain research concludes that early experiences have a profound impact on cognitive, social, and emotional development and can help counteract disadvantaged environments.¹ That is why school readiness – a child's ability to successfully carry out kindergarten work – depends heavily on a child's birth-to-five learning. It is also why children's early learning affects their school success and is key to later employment and life success.
- It Supports Schools.** The vast majority of children are entering school fully ready to succeed and, as a result, meeting Maryland's rigorous state standards. School readiness, especially in the area of Language & Literacy, is highly correlated and closely linked to reading proficiency by Grade 3. We are creating positive outcomes for schools and communities.
- It Counts.** Children who enter kindergarten with high levels of school readiness are more likely to succeed academically, right up into high school. In fact, children who are documented as "fully" school-ready in kindergarten are eight times more likely to be proficient in reading and mathematics than those who start kindergarten with significant skill deficiencies ("developing" readiness). By age 21, children who have received high quality child care had significantly better math and reading skills and were more than twice as likely to attend a four-year college.²
- It Pays Rich Dividends.** A longitudinal study³ of Chicago-based programs reported a \$7.14 to \$1 benefit-cost ratio. National research also shows that investments in early childhood education earn a 16% rate of return.⁴ Few public or private enterprises boast that productivity.
- It Works.** Children enrolled in early learning environments – regardless of setting – outperform their peers who were at home or in informal care (71% fully ready) the year prior to kindergarten.⁵

- It Addresses Achievement Gaps.** A disproportionate number of the kindergarteners who are not school-ready are children from low-income families, English Language Learners (children with a first language other than English), and children with disabilities. According to a recent longitudinal research study, English language learners (ELLs) who enter school approximately two years below their English proficient peers, are not able to "catch-up" by eighth grade – even though they were schooled predominantly in English and developed vocabulary at faster rates than their English proficient peers.⁶ Children enrolled in PreK programs the year before kindergarten are on par with Maryland's readiness average. This is especially significant because these programs serve predominately children with academic risk factors, including children from low-income families.



- It's Good Business.** An average employee misses eight days of work each year due to breakdowns in child care arrangements.⁷ These absences cost employers an average of \$610 per employee per year.⁸ And, 70% of employees at companies with progressive work-family policies are committed to their employers, compared to 23% of employees at companies with fewer work-family supports.⁹

Early care and education investments make good sense.

¹ U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education."

² Fairfax Futures.

³ Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2002.

⁴ Rob Grunewald and Arthur J. Rolnick, "Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return," FedGazette (March 2003).

⁵ The Maryland State Department of Education's Maryland Model for School Readiness 2012/2013 Report (MMSR 2013-2014).

⁶ Mancilla-Martinez, J., & Lesaux, N. K. (2010). Predictors of reading comprehension for struggling readers: The case of Spanish-speaking language minority learners. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(3), 701-711.

⁷ *Survey of Portland-area companies and their employees.*

⁸ CCH Unscheduled Absences Survey, 2004

⁹ Families and Work Institute National Study of the Changing Workforce, 2002.



Take Action Now.

If we are to succeed in strengthening Maryland's early childhood education system, we need to be setting goals, looking at potential resources, and developing a strategy for ensuring that all children enter kindergarten fully ready to start school on their way to becoming successful graduates and future employees. In short, we need you.

Here is what you can do:

Learn.

- Learn more about the research on brain development, academic achievement, and the workforce and economic development benefits of early childhood education.
- Tour high-quality, accredited programs to understand, the value and positive impact of quality settings on young children's development and readiness for school.

Do.

- Embrace the business case for school readiness and take action to ensure the success of Maryland's children – and the strong future of your business.
- Adopt business practices and policies that support parents of young children.
- Play with or read to a young child. Just a few minutes a day makes all the difference.
- Volunteer in an early childhood program.
- Encourage employee volunteerism that supports early care and education programming.

Communicate.

- Share the lessons learned. Use your existing networking opportunities to help spread the word and build the business case for early care, education and school readiness.
- Distribute school readiness materials to employees, colleagues and clients – educating about the

importance of early childhood education. See Ready At Five's *ParentsMatter* materials at www.readyatfive.org.

Invest.

- Make early education a key part of your company's and foundation's philanthropy and corporate social responsibility efforts, as well as personal giving

Lead.

- Join the Maryland Business Leaders Network—a leadership council charged with planning on-going programs, actions and legislative efforts.
- Host breakfast meetings or forums with colleagues, affinity groups, other local business leaders, or elected officials to share information on the benefits of early childhood investments.
- Invite other business leaders to get involved in early childhood education initiatives.
- Help statewide and local leaders develop investment strategies that will support and sustain the future of our early childhood system in Maryland.

Advocate.

- Share the message of early childhood's return on investment. Encourage your elected officials to adopt policies that make early childhood education part of Maryland's economic development agenda.
- Meet with, call or write your elected official to let them know you consider quality early childhood education to be an investment with a high rate of return for your company, and for the communities where your employees live and work.
- Advocate for specific legislation and funding for early care and education.

Maryland has inspiring successes behind us, and huge opportunities before us. There has never been a better time to act.

About Issue Insights

Ready At Five's *Issue Insights* series educates and informs the business community and provides a context and framework for business leadership, act, and investment.

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