

Investing in children during their early years is the best economic investment a community can make.



Arthur Rolnick, Retired Senior Vice-President and Director of Research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, has studied the issue and concluded that any community economic development plan should have early childhood development at the top of the list.

- “The return on investment for high-quality, well-funded early childhood development programs is extraordinary, resulting in better working public schools, more educated workers and less crime. It far exceeds the return on most projects that are currently funded as economic development.”
- “Quality early childhood programs offer at least a 12% annual return – better than the stock market.”
- “The general public receives 80% of the benefits and 20% go to the program’s participants.”

University of Chicago’s Nobel Prize winning economist **James Heckman** has said that “job training programs result in few benefits to participants and the program’s costs are greater than their benefits to society.” He recommends spending money sooner rather than later, concluding that “there is a high rate of return on investment at an early age.”



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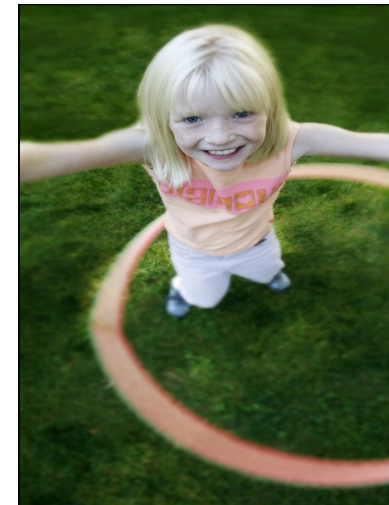
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United Way
SUCCESS BY 6™



**Making a
Difference for
Children,
Families and
Communities**

Success By 6

The early childhood years are the most important years of our lives.

The beliefs and patterns of behavior we make in our early years carry forward throughout our lifetime.

By the time we begin school, we've determined:

- whether we are capable, valued, accepted – or not;
- whether we trust ourselves, others, the world – or not.

Communities can have the most positive impact on their future by investing in the early childhood years.

A child's first years are a critical time for brain development.

Foundations for later learning are laid down in the first few weeks and months of life.

- Children experience their most rapid physical, emotional, social, and cognitive growth.
- A child's brain grows to 80% of adult size by age two.



Every child has a window of time when the most intense brain growth occurs. A child is most vulnerable to an absence of stimulation or to negative environmental influences at that time.

- Connections between neurons are tentative until hard-wired with use so a child's early experiences have a profound impact.
- Enriching, and nurturing experiences and access to developmentally appropriate services promote a child's optimal development.
- Warm, loving relationships with caring adults have a tangible and long-term influence on children's lives, contributing to optimal social, emotional and cognitive development for infants and toddlers.
- The single best predictor of healthy development throughout childhood is secure attachment to a trusted parent or caregiver.

Our Vision

All children in western Wisconsin, with the strong support of family and community, will by age six have the necessary physical, mental, emotional and social development to successfully grow and learn.

Our Priorities

Communities will understand the importance of the early childhood years and work to strengthen programs and services.

Parents and caregivers will have the knowledge and training to provide children with safe, stable and supportive environments.

Our Goals

- Encourage face-to-face contact between parents and a parent educator at prenatal classes and at the hospital following birth.
- Schedule parent-child play groups and parent education classes in many communities.
- Sponsor home visits by a parent educator for "at-risk" families.
- Encourage early developmental screenings for all children.
- Maintain and distribute a listing of local parenting resources and services through hospitals, clinics, service providers and online.