

The Dual-Generational Benefits of Early Education

An inequitable cycle of inter-generational poverty burdens too many Minnesota families and threatens our collective economic future. To break that cycle, early education offers a unique “two-fer” proposition.

TWO SETS OF BENEFITS FOR TWO GENERATIONS. Early education offers taxpayers two powerful sets of benefits for the price of one:

- **Children.** First and foremost, low-income children in early education programs benefit tremendously. Research shows that quality early education programs increase their likelihood of being prepared for kindergarten, which in turn makes them more likely to stay in school, get a good job, and lead a more productive, self-sufficient life. These benefits accrue over their entire lifetimes.
- **Parents.** Beyond the benefits going to children, the *parents* of those kids also reap important benefits. Having children in early education programs over multiple years frees low-income parents to further their training and education, secure employment wages and benefits, and build up vocational experience and skills that improve their future earning capacity. These are lifelong benefits.

Extensive economic research shows that there are large societal benefits from investing public dollars in early learning – as much as \$16 for every \$1 invested in helping low-income children access the kind of high-quality programs that prepare them for kindergarten.

Parents experiencing the Minnesota Model (Parent Aware Ratings plus Scholarships for low-income children) often report benefits not only to their children, but also for themselves. For example, the parents of impacted children are freed up to secure additional education, training, salary and benefits. Over the course of their lifetimes evidence suggests that these working parents would also be less likely to generate taxpayer costs related to social services, health care, unemployment and income supports.

SCHOLARSHIPS BEST TOOL TO TAP DUAL-GENERATIONAL BENEFITS. Early Learning Scholarships are an excellent tool to initiate these dual-generational benefits, because: 1) 100 percent of Minnesota Model Scholarship funding goes to low-income families, as opposed to programs that subsidize families who can already afford quality programs; 2) Scholarships require use of kindergarten-readiness best practices, which is necessary to maximize taxpayer return-on-investment; 3) Scholarships can be used over multiple years, which gives both children and parents multiple years of benefits; and 4) Scholarships offer full-day, full-year programs, which is a must for parents working full-time jobs and children striving to catch up.

Many other well-intentioned early education tools do not tap into these dual-generational benefits as effectively as Scholarships do. For instance, CCAP doesn't demand best practice use, and universal pre-k (UPK), called Voluntary Pre-K in Minnesota, isn't targeted, offered over multiple years or able to supply full-day, full-year services.