

Business Partnership for Early Learning

Closing the School Preparedness Gap



Goal: Close the school preparedness gap among two- to three-year olds so all children enter elementary school equipped to succeed.

The Business Partnership for Early Learning is a coalition of King County business leaders stepping forward to invest in early learning to ensure all children can reach their full potential in the classroom.

BUSINESS LEADERS ARE COMMITTED TO OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS

- School success requires a solid foundation built through early learning experiences for two- and three-year olds.
- Early learning is a solid investment with each dollar spent saving eight dollars in future benefits.
- Investing in early learning protects businesses' historic investments in K-12, because many children who enter school unprepared never catch up.
- Building academic success contributes to a competitive, diverse workforce, critical to our region where our economic growth requires highly skilled workers in areas such as aerospace, information technology, international healthcare and biotechnology.

Seattle is a place where we can change the odds, so that children do not fail because of the situation into which they were born.

- Craig Dawson
Retail Lock Box, Inc. and Tabor 100

LOWER ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS TIED TO LACK OF PREPAREDNESS

Many children in Washington enter kindergarten unprepared and already as much as two years behind in language and other necessary skills. Seventy-five percent of low-income children are not school-ready. Over time, the preparedness gap often results in an achievement gap.

BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE A STRATEGY TO GET KIDS READY FOR SCHOOL

- Fund, deploy and test a unique, multi-layered, research-based approach that helps families their children for school. Begin in Seattle to reach the most children with large preparedness most efficiently.
- Create a scaleable model that can be replicated in other urban areas.
- Educate and inform the general public about the importance of early learning.
- Use the success of the program and increased public awareness of the importance of early learning to make the case for more effective public investment.

We began with the premise that we must identify and reach the children most likely to enter school with a large preparedness gap. Many of those children are not attending formal childcare programs. Those children and their parents are often isolated and must be reached in their homes or through informal, non-threatening settings – as part of trusted relationships with people knowledgeable about their culture and language. Traditional settings and programs are not effectively reaching many of these children.

– Mike McGavick
Safeco

BUSINESS LEADERS HAVE A PROGRAM TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS GAP

- The Parent-Child Home Program is a home-based school readiness, early literacy and parenting program for 2- to 3-year olds and their families who are challenged by poverty, low levels of education, literacy and language barriers, and other obstacles.
- Informal Play & Learn Groups for children with their parents, family or caregivers reinforce the home-based program, reduce isolation, improve children's social and emotional skills, and provide the essential experience of learning through play.

HELP FOR CHILDREN WHO NEED IT MOST

Children shown by data from the Seattle Public Schools to have the highest likelihood of not being prepared for school will be served by this program, including those who:

- live in poverty, and
- do not speak English at home, or
- are African-American or Native American

\$4 MILLION IS NEEDED TO SERVE CHILDREN AND TEST THE APPROACH OVER FIVE YEARS

ACTIVITY	EST. COST
Parent-Child Home Program (4 programs with 40 families each for 5 years)	\$2,300,000
Play & Learn Groups (7 groups for 5 years; training and technical assistance)	500,000
Public education and media campaign (for 3 years)	320,000
Evaluation (for 5 years)	350,000
Staff support for Business Partnership (for 5 years)	300,000
Contingency fund	230,000
Total	\$4,000,000

THE RETURN ON THAT INVESTMENT WILL BE SIGNIFICANT

- 400 children will be ready to succeed in school, have higher IQs and a better chance of graduating from high school.
- Thousands of adults and parents will be better informed about early learning.
- A scalable model to close the preparedness gap will help earn public policy support for children's early learning and facilitate replication in other communities.

This is an investment package that I believe is powerful, research-based and innovative.

- Scott Armstrong
Group Health Cooperative



We can tackle this using business principles: start small, prove it, then expand.

- Kerry Killinger
Washington Mutual

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