



# Early Learning Matters – CAN Community Council

City of Austin, Travis County and United Way Capital Area  
CAN Early Childhood Issue Area Group  
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bornlearning<sup>SM</sup>



# What Does Success Look Like In Austin, Texas?

- Today: measured in strength
  - Strong economy with high-skill, high-wage jobs
  - Strong schools
  - Strong workforce
  - Strong, safe community
  
- Tomorrow: measured in prosperity
  - Growing tax base
  - Job growth and retention
  - Economic development potential
  - Robust infrastructure (roads, schools, water & sewer etc.)



# Another View of Success





# New Math of Future Success 101

Strong families

Quality early learning opportunities

Good health

+ Supportive communities

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Foundation for learning and school success



# New Math of Future Success

## 102

Early learning

School success

High school graduation

+ College attendance

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Well-trained, well-educated workforce



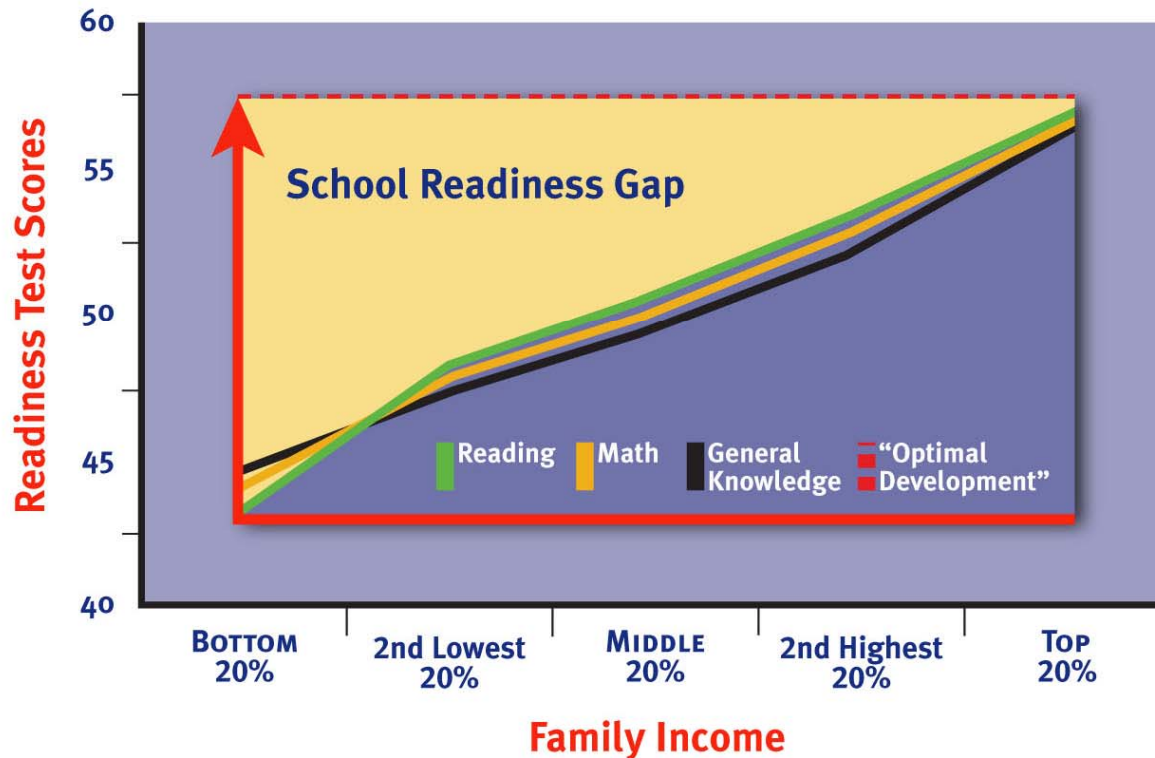
## But We're Failing

- 46% of America's kindergarteners are behind
- Children from low-wage families are 1-2 years more behind in language
  - Preschoolers in high-income brackets score 60% higher in cognitive scores than those in the lowest brackets

The achievement gap starts before school does.

## The Achievement Gap at Kindergarten

Family income has a great deal to do with how well a child does on readiness tests when entering kindergarten. The school readiness gap is steepest for children from families with the lowest incomes and continues through middle income families, gradually decreasing as income rises.



Source: Preschool Policy Matters, April 2004, National Institute for Early Education Research.



## The Achievement Gap Grows

Of 50 children who are having trouble learning to read in kindergarten, 44 of them will still have trouble in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

This gap only grows over time -- undermining school readiness and success in life.

-- *Dr. Craig Ramey, Center for Health & Education,  
Georgetown University*

Children without reading skills by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are unlikely to graduate.

## How Does Our Community Measure Up?

- *Over 60% of students in AISD come from low-income families (qualify for free or reduced lunch)*
- *Over half of AISD PreK students are low-income and English Language Learners (ELL)*
- *Some 50% of AISD PreK students score a minimum of 18-months behind developmentally at school entry*
- *Nearly 75% of AISD PreK students have had no formal early learning experiences*



Education =  
Economic  
Development



## Challenges Now: Supporting Work & Productivity

- Early childhood education supports the bottom line. Workers need peace of mind that their child is in a good, safe place
- Lack of child care leading to employee absences cost employers \$3 billion a year
- Early learning is part of our economic infrastructure
  - As critical to economic development as good schools, roads, water & sewer and other incentives



## Challenges Ahead: Developing the Workforce

- 20% of today's workforce is functionally illiterate
  - Emergence of new technology raises the stakes even more
- As Baby Boomers retire, fewer well-educated workers are stepping in to sustain competitiveness
  - Growing gap: US economy will add fewer educated workers in next 20 years, compared to last 20
- Meanwhile, 1 in 3 children are born in poverty
  - By the age of 5, many are already developmentally behind



## Early Education=Economic Investment

- Return on investment is greatest in the early years
  - Learning creates a skill multiplier effect
- Early learning programs can generate 12% public rate of return
  - Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis

*“Investment in human capital breeds not only economic success for those being educated, but also for the overall economy.”*

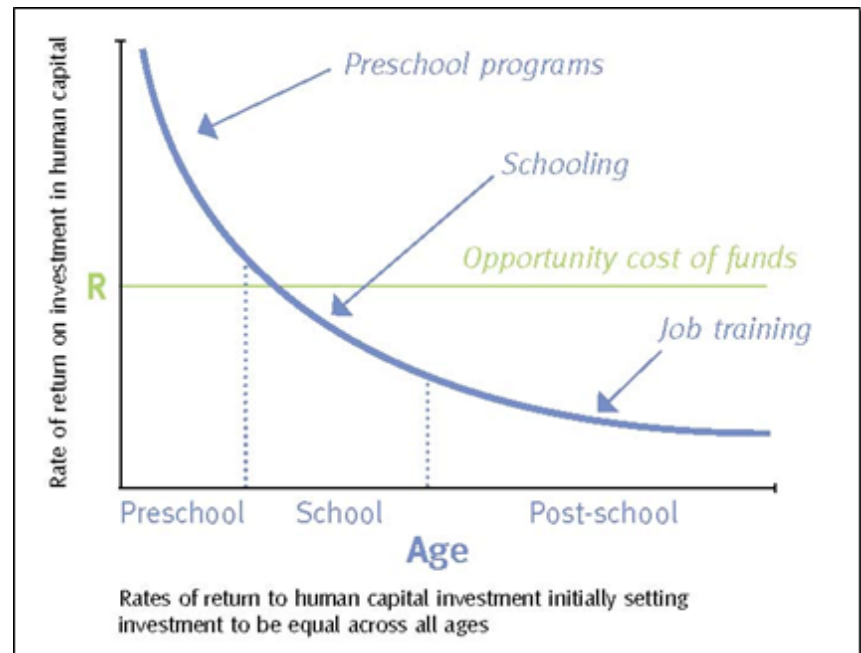
-- Arthur J. Rolnick, senior vice president  
and director of research,  
Federal Reserve Bank in Minneapolis



# Return On Investment (ROI) Is Strong in Early Learning

Policymakers should invest in young children, where the return on investment is stronger than in low-skill adults.

- Nobel Laureate  
James Heckman





# Personal ROI Is Strong

Early learning influences long-term success



# How Children Learn



# The First Few Years

- Early learning experiences hard-wire the brain for future learning, especially in the first few years
  - Infants' brains are twice as active as adults'
- Building brains is like building houses
  - “Architecture” matters
- Stress in early years weakens brain architecture





# Relationships Key To Learning

- Children are born learning
- Loving, nurturing relationships foster learning
- Everyday moments are learning moments
- Low income children experience greatest benefits from high-quality early childhood education

Einstein's parents didn't use flashcards (or Baby Einstein videos)

So what?



## The Challenge

*“The best way to develop a well-educated and well-trained workforce for the future is to start early – because even the best schools cannot produce the best workers if children are coming to school ready to fail.”*

-- Former N.C. Governor James B. Hunt Jr.



## What We're Asking You To Do In Our Community

### *Support Quality Early Childhood Education in Child Care Centers*

*Better qualified and compensated workforce*

*Funding for improvements to facilities*

*Support for Texas Rising Star and Accreditation*

*Inclusion of child care in city planning efforts – e.g. TODS, new developments, etc.*

# What we are asking you to do in our community

## *Support for families with young children*

- Family friendly child care subsidy policies
- More funding for home visiting and parent education with vulnerable families
- Include early learning activities in Community Centers (for example, Play and Learn Groups for 3 year olds who are not in child care programs)

Thank you