

Why Quality Early Childhood Programs Matter to Economic Developers

Promoting Quality Early Childhood Education across Minnesota




Goals for Today



- Explain value of quality early childhood programs to the strength of our communities' economies
- Understand the networks of support available to strengthen quality programs
- Consider how economic developers can advance this cause in their communities

Who Is Think Small?



- 43 year old non-profit
 - 90 employees
 - \$10 million budget in Twin Cities Area
- Helps parents find quality child care
- Trains thousands of child care professionals
- Redleaf Press publishes materials for early learning professionals
- Promotes good public policy



Early Childhood & Economic Development

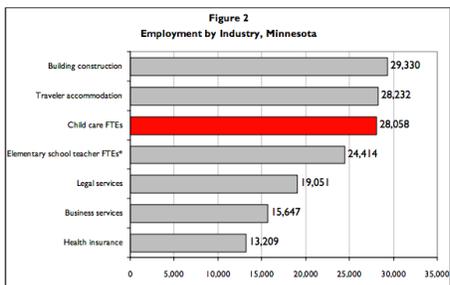


- Early learning is the foundation of all educational success
- Skilled workforce is the key for Minnesota's future prosperity
- Well-documented analysis of the return on investment



4

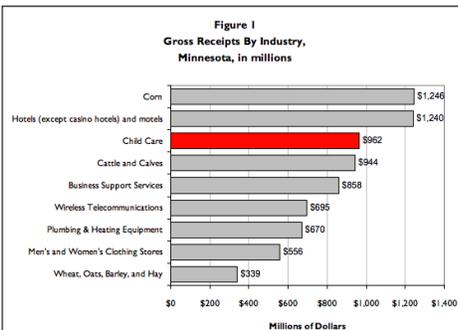
Figure 2
Employment by Industry, Minnesota



*Licensed teacher FTEs in elementary schools, 2002-03 school year, Minnesota Dept. of Education. All employment information for industries is from the ES-202 Covered Employees and Wages 2001 Survey, adjusted to 2003, except for elementary school teachers, which is taken from the Occupational Employment Statistics, fourth quarter 2002, and child care, which is taken from findings in this report.

5

Figure 1
Gross Receipts By Industry, Minnesota, in millions



Gross receipts for non-agricultural industries are from the 1997 Economic Census and for agricultural industries are from the Minnesota Trade and Economic Development's Compare Minnesota: Profiles of Minnesota's Economy and Population 2002-2003. All values have been adjusted to 2003. Child care gross receipts are calculated using methodology described in Appendix A.

6

Why Does School Readiness Matter?



- Provides the foundation of school success; 3rd grade reading, graduation, etc.
- Develops children's skills; not just academic but social-emotional, a.k.a. character
- 90 percent of a person's brain development occurs in the first five years
 - New research emphasizing importance of earliest years

Why Does School Readiness Matter?



- Public safety impacts when academic struggles lead to a life on the edge and prison
- High percentage of young adults cannot qualify for military service
- Human service costs when people require services throughout their lives

The Situation in Minnesota



- We are among the top 2 states with two parents working outside the home
- 50 percent of entering kindergartners are not fully prepared for school success
- There are 1,638 licensed centers serving 61,501 kids; 9,732 family centers serving 74,154. Family child care is particularly important in Greater Minnesota
 - Need high-quality care, especially for children facing the steepest obstacles

Hopeful Developments



- The public and policy-makers are increasingly aware and supportive
- New initiatives like Parent Aware and Early Learning Scholarships



What Child Care Providers are Saying



- <https://www.360communities.org/school-success/child-care-aware/parent-aware/>

Is There a Role for the Economic Developers to Help?



- Connect into Initiative Foundations and local networks
- Strengthen the businesses represented by early learning providers: First Children's Finance
 - Connect with <http://greaterthanmn.org/>
- Become an advocate and local voice for this critical economic development infrastructure

The Possible Pay-Off



- More kids are better prepared for school and success in life
- More people are productively engaged in work, family, and civic life
- More competitive businesses and a stronger economy

13

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14
