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Early Childhood Education and Local Economic Development

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Main Points

- **High-quality** early childhood education programs (pre-K, child care, parenting), like business incentives, can provide large “local economic development benefits”: higher per capita local earnings

- Early childhood education affects local economy by increasing *quality of labor supply* of 2 groups: former child participants as adults; parents. *Labor supply drives job growth.*

- 60-70% of child participants spend career in same state; for metros, 40-50%

- Parents’ labor supply increased by free child care, and by parenting programs

- Per dollar invested, early childhood programs increase present value of state per capita earnings by $5 to $9
Costs at full-scale, as % of K-12 spending: 4% for Pre-K, 8% for Educare, 1% for NFP.
National ratios: Pre-K 12.79; Educare 6.88; NFP 5.60; Incentives 0.65.
Metro: Pre-K 6.02; Educare 4.96; NFP 3.82; Incentives 3.66.
Why should we believe these claims that early childhood programs work?

- Because of limited access to early childhood programs, comparison groups are better than in most program evaluations.

- Randomized control trials show effects for: Perry Preschool (19% earnings increase); Abecedarian/Educare Child Care (26%); Infant Health and Development Program (12%), & NFP. Abecedarian/NFP also show large benefits for parents.

- Head Start sibling comparison shows earnings effects of 11%, Chicago Child Parent Center preschool neighborhood comparison shows effects of 8%, North Carolina More at Four county comparison shows test score effects that predict earnings effects of 11%.

- Comparisons of pre-K entry/K entry test scores of children near age cutoff predict adult earnings effects in 6% to 15% range in studies from Boston, Tulsa, Kalamazoo, NJ, SC, GA, WV, MI, AK, OK, NM
Re-Emergence of Program Effects Suggests Importance of Soft Skills

Predicted Earnings Effects Based on Outcomes at Various Ages

- Abecedarian/Educare
- Perry Preschool
- Head Start
- Chicago CPC
Why invest in “other people’s children”: Spillover benefits of skills

- Effect on metro average wage due to effects on 1% of worker getting college degree: 0.8%
  
  \(0.8\% = 80\% \text{ gain per college-educated worker times } 1\%\)

- Effect on metro average wage due to effects on all other workers in metro area: 1.1%
Short-term benefits of early childhood programs

• Free child-care & parenting programs boost parent earnings immediately, and benefits last.
• High-quality pre-K can lower special ed costs (@$10K per child-year) by 20%-80%.
• If parents fully understood long-run benefits of pre-K, would expect property value boost from high-quality universal pre-K of around 5%.
Summary of Business Case for Early Childhood Programs

• High-quality early childhood education can pay off for entire state/local economy in stronger growth in per capita earnings

• Costs are modest: e.g., universal full-day pre-K for 4-year-olds costs about 4% of what we pay for K-12.

• Despite high benefit/cost ratios, only modest investment. Some states near universal (8 states over 50% in state pre-K), Indiana at 2% of all 4-year olds. U.S. average: 32%.

• Business community support key to greater political viability

• Why should business community support: skills are key in global competition, this is a proven way to increase skills that we know how to do at large scale.