



2010 Agenda

FAIR OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERY CHILD

FACT SHEET: Early Childhood

All families want their children to succeed in school, but many lack the necessary supports to provide a strong start. High-quality early childhood education programs, including state- and federally-funded preschool programs, build a solid foundation for young children, preparing them for future learning. Preschool programs also foster positive long-term academic and social gains for children at risk of starting primary school behind their peers.

FACTS:

High quality preschool programs provide benefits to children, families and beyond. Children who attend high quality preschool programs are better prepared for kindergarten. They are less likely to need special education services or to repeat a grade. They have a higher rate of graduation and are more likely to go on to post secondary education. They are less likely to be a victim of child abuse.

Investing in quality early care and education makes good economic sense. Research has found that each \$1 invested in strong preschool programs for at-risk Kentucky children yields returns of up to \$5 for the state. By investing in early childhood programs now the state will have reduced costs for welfare, criminal justice and education in the future. The state will also have a stronger workforce to help build a more stable economy.

Kentucky children with family incomes of more than 150% of the federal poverty level (approximately 33,000 for a family of four) do not qualify for the state preschool program. Kentucky's public preschool program currently serves 4 year old children from families making less than 150% of the federal poverty rate and 3- and 4- year old children with disabilities. Many families who make just over the eligibility level are unable to pay for high quality preschool programs for their children.

SOLUTIONS:

- Adopt a statewide definition of school readiness and a system of developmentally appropriate assessment so all stakeholders are working towards the same goals
- Make voluntary preschool available to all Kentucky children starting with 3- and 4- year old children with family incomes up to 200% of the federal poverty rate
- Encourage collaboration among current programs including schools, community-based programs and Head Start to provide high quality, flexible programs that best serve the children and families of each individual community
- Work to increase the quality of all early care and preschool programs