

Why Invest in Early Childhood Education?

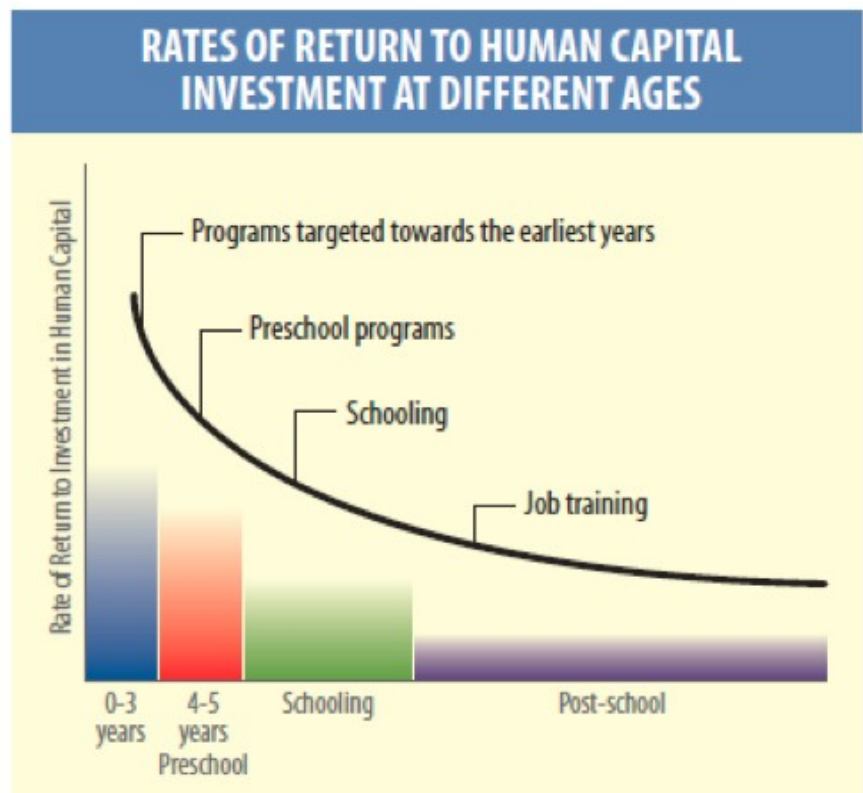
Brain development in the first five years of life provides the architecture upon which all later brain development and learning is founded.

When we are born, our brain is 25% developed, and yet 90% of the brain is developed before children enter the kindergarten door! This early brain development provides the architecture upon which all later brain development and learning is founded. Enriching experiences and nurturing relationships in the early childhood years change brains!

High quality early childhood education helps children and families build critical skills, habits and neuronal structures—all of which contribute to healthy lifestyles, which in turn contribute to improved academics, social development, physical health and earning potential. **Leaders from all sectors of society -- business, economic development, education, criminal justice, social services -- agree that a high quality early childhood system is critical for a thriving society.**

Research demonstrates that high quality early childhood education:

- reduces delinquency and crime
- reduces the likelihood of abuse and neglect
- increases high school graduation rates and college enrollment
- lowers rates of teen pregnancy
- improves standardized test scores
- reduces grade retention
- leads to greater employment, higher wages and increased life-long earnings
- reduces numbers of children in remedial/special education and social services
- cultivates an educated workforce and tax paying citizens
- raises income and consumer spending levels makes communities more competitive in the marketplace



SOURCE: J.J. Heckman, "Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children." *Science*, 312(5782):1900-2, (June 2006).