

THE  
**PEW**  
CENTER ON THE STATES



# Mobilizing Business Champions for Children

■ A Guide for Advocates

MARCH 2011

The Partnership for America's Economic Success, a project of the Pew Center on the States, amplifies the voice of business leaders in support of early childhood policies that strengthen our economy and workforce. The Partnership is managed by The Pew Charitable Trusts and is funded by the George Gund Foundation, Ohio Children's Foundation, Paul Tudor Jones, Robert Dugger, Society for Human Resource Management and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

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#### PEW CENTER ON THE STATES

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was written by Sara Watson, a senior officer with the Pew Center on the States and director of the Partnership for America's Economic Success. Jeff Woolston provided substantial research assistance. Jennifer V. Doctors and Matthew Mulkey edited this document. Invaluable input was provided by Pew staff members Libby Doggett, Rob Krupicka and Elaine Weiss; Partnership advisory board chair Robert Dugger; consultant Stacie Goffin; and Diane Halstead of the Early Learning Investment Commission.

Special thanks to the Partnership Advisory Board as well as the many advocates around the country who are mobilizing the business community to support smart investments in children. This guide reflects their wisdom and experiences. The author is grateful for their collaboration with the Partnership for America's Economic Success.

For additional information, visit [www.PartnershipforSuccess.org](http://www.PartnershipforSuccess.org).

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# Introduction

To compete in today's marketplace, business leaders need productive employees who can solve complex problems, persevere and work well with others. The pipeline to produce these workers is failing. Of 100 children in ninth grade, only 18 will complete their associate's college degree within three years after high school graduation or bachelor's degree within six years.<sup>1</sup> This pipeline begins in the earliest days, months and years of life when children establish the building blocks of their academic and social skills. Business leaders are recognizing that turning current workforce trends around and creating a vibrant economy depend on investments in proven strategies that set young children on a path to success. Advocates need to tap this wellspring of interest and mobilize employers to carry this vital message to policy makers.

Effectively engaging the business community requires an understanding of its priorities, perspectives and needs and a familiarity with the vocabulary of workforce and economic development. It also requires sensitivity to the demands on executives' time and awareness of the extent to which they, their companies, their industries and their business organizations already participate in advocacy. Making the most of a short meeting means being informed

about what they already know, sharing new data and messages and offering an array of opportunities to influence policy. Two critical concepts reiterated by many business leaders are: "What's in it for me?" and "Meet me where I am." While advocating for children is emotionally appealing, advocates should also be prepared to discuss how involvement can benefit companies and to offer a variety of next steps that fit different executives' readiness to get involved.

This guide is intended to:

- help advocates better understand the business community and its role in public policy;
- provide guidance on communicating the economic importance of investments in young children; and
- outline specific strategies for engaging corporate leaders in advancing evidence-based policies.

While this work might be unfamiliar to some advocates, it is well worth the time and effort. Families, businesses, states and the nation all benefit when children's advocates and business leaders collaborate on behalf of proven programs that support healthy development, provide strong returns on investment and help build the workforce of the future.

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# The State of Business Leader Advocacy

CEOs know that nothing gets made or sold without capable people and that a company's employees are its most important assets. They think in terms of beginning-to-end processing: If you don't start right, you can't end right. For example, a defective wind turbine cannot be fixed in the paint shop. Defects in the earliest production stages affect everything that comes after and are the most costly to repair. The same is true of people. Healthy, nourished, educated children grow up to be more productive employees and better customers. For these reasons, business leaders have been a driving force behind efforts to provide a quality education for the nation's children—as philanthropists, state and local school board members and leaders of national initiatives, such as the effort to create common education standards.<sup>2</sup>

More recently, the mounting proof that workforce quality is significantly affected by people's experiences before kindergarten has galvanized executives. Concerned about the future of their companies, their states and the nation, employers want to see resources committed to evidence-based interventions that will set young

children on the right course to become productive, healthy adults. And they are making a difference:

- Executives in Denver were key to winning passage of the city's 2006 pre-k ballot initiative.
- George Kaiser, chairman of BOK Financial Corporation, has financed (through his foundation) and advocated for significant expansion of early childhood services in Oklahoma.
- Financial investor J.B. Pritzker, together with other advocates from across the state, lobbied successfully for expansion of the Illinois Early Childhood Block Grant, including funding for infant-toddler services, and for a commitment to provide pre-k for all three and four year olds, which became law in 2006.<sup>3</sup>
- Business leader and longtime champion for children Richard C. Alexander helped persuade the Oregon Legislature to nearly double the state's investment in pre-k in 2007 and to make a first-time investment of \$1 million in a comprehensive infant-toddler program in 2010.<sup>4</sup>

- Despite the dire economic climate, in 2010 business leaders successfully fought off attempts to eliminate the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and to cut pre-k funding.
- Business members of the Early Learning Investment Commission in Pennsylvania mobilized to educate all candidates in the 2010 governor's race about the economic value of evidence-based early education and to ensure that this policy was not seen as the purview of one official or party.

In 2006, The Pew Charitable Trusts and Robert Dugger of Hanover Investment Group, along with other funders,<sup>5</sup> created the Partnership for America's Economic

Success. The purpose was to document the economic impact of research-based investments in young children, and, where the evidence was compelling, engage business leaders to advocate for smart policy change. The Partnership's body of research showed profound effects associated with many detrimental early childhood conditions, such as poor nutrition, inadequate housing, low parent income and a lack of access to early education and health services—as well as the benefits of high-quality interventions.<sup>6</sup> Today, the Partnership supports a network of executives and business organizations around the country. It amplifies the voice of business leaders in support of early childhood policies that strengthen our economy and workforce.



# The Rationale for Business Leadership

Appeals to civic leaders to invest public dollars in children have long asserted, “It’s the right thing to do.” A wide array of evidence shows such investments to be the fiscally prudent path as well.<sup>7</sup> Being able to lead the debate with data that demonstrate broad economic and societal benefits has greatly expanded the range of messengers fighting for children. It has helped these unlikely advocates work effectively with policy makers to enact new policies and boost investments across the country. Three main factors are driving business leader interest:

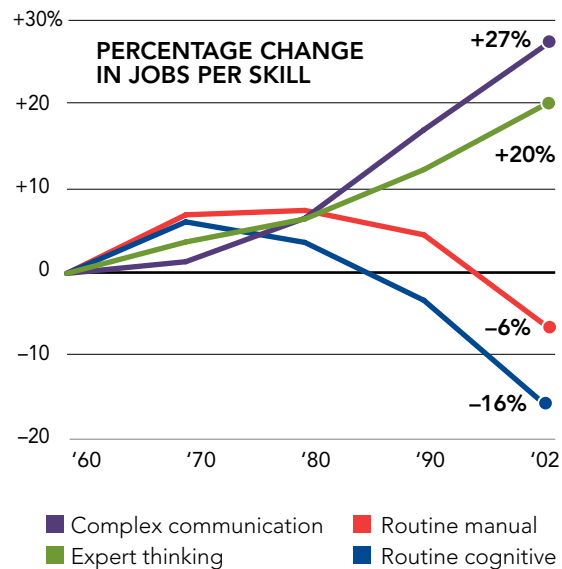
## Workforce

The U.S. is falling behind its competitor nations in producing workforce-ready, team-capable employees. Not a single state can claim that even half of its school children are proficient in both reading and math (as measured in fourth and eighth grades)—essential building blocks for a well-prepared workforce.<sup>8</sup> As Exhibit 1 shows, an increasing percentage of jobs require people who can solve problems and communicate well, instead of simply performing a rote task.

An expanding body of neuroscience research has shown that the earliest years of life are the beginning of the labor-force pipeline as the dramatic physical development of the infant brain can influence much of a child’s lifelong cognitive, social and emotional capabilities. Babies’ brains form neural connections—the linkages that build

Exhibit 1

## Economy Generates Demand for Higher-Order Skills

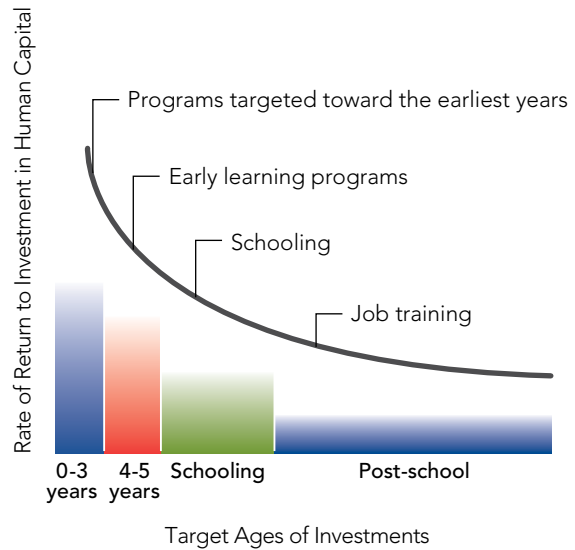


SOURCE: David Autor, Frank Levy and Richard J. Murnane, “The Skill Content of Recent Technical Change: An Empirical Investigation.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118, 4 (November 2003) pp. 1279-1334. Data updated to 2002 by David Autor.

their mental and social capacities—at a rate of 700 per second. Traumatic experiences or severe neglect—what Dr. Jack Shonkoff has termed “toxic stress”—can damage those connections, with possible lifetime consequences.<sup>9</sup> By the same token, evidence clearly shows that when babies are well nourished, stimulated and have warm, supportive interactions with adults, they develop healthier brains, better learning abilities and more successful interpersonal relationships throughout their lives. Nobel Laureate James Heckman, an economist from the University of Chicago, has popularized the concept that “skills beget skills”—that early advantages give children a solid foundation on which to build greater aptitude and outpace their less-advantaged peers.<sup>10</sup> (See Exhibit 2.)

Exhibit 2

### Rates of Return to Human Capital Investment at Different Ages



SOURCE: J.J. Heckman, “Skill Formation and the Economics of Investing Disadvantaged Children.” *Science*, 312 (5782):1900-2, (June 2006).

## STATE LEADERS IDENTIFY EARLY CHILDHOOD AS KEY TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In their 2010 State of the State addresses, at least six governors—from Illinois, Kentucky, Maine, Nebraska, Virginia and West Virginia<sup>a</sup>—called for investments in early childhood specifically because of the impact on economic growth or workforce development. For example, in his speech, Governor Bob McDonnell (R-VA) said, “To compete in this global economy, every young Virginian must have the opportunity of a world-class education from pre-school to college.”<sup>b</sup>

a. Research by Jeff Woolston and Brian Doyle, Pew Center on the States. [http://www.preknow.org/resource/sos\\_2010.cfm](http://www.preknow.org/resource/sos_2010.cfm).

b. [www.governor.virginia.gov/MediaLibrary/Speeches/2010/inaugural.cfm](http://www.governor.virginia.gov/MediaLibrary/Speeches/2010/inaugural.cfm).

## Cost of remediation

At any time, but especially in times of economic distress, taxpayers cannot afford growing expenditures associated with negative outcomes, such as dropping out of high school, substance abuse and crime. Tax money spent addressing these problems drains resources from both businesses and customers. This is especially critical when the federal debt is already so large—currently, more than \$44,000 per person<sup>11</sup>—and growing. Early childhood programs can influence a variety of long-term outcomes that have a substantial impact on public expenditures: academic achievement, healthy behaviors and even involvement in crime. What's less well known is that these programs produce immediate savings as well. High-quality, voluntary pre-k and home visiting programs, especially for disadvantaged children, show reductions in costly special education placements, grade repetition and child abuse and neglect rates within the first few years of life and formal schooling. Investments in early learning also produce local jobs, and since these workers tend to spend their salaries close to home, the economic benefits multiply across their community.<sup>12</sup>

## Desire for smarter government

Policy makers are increasingly seeking to understand the return on public investments and whether they can make

## MILITARY ALSO FACING WORKFORCE EMERGENCY

A recent report by Mission: Readiness showed that only 25 percent of young people ages 17-24 would qualify to serve in the U.S. military.<sup>a</sup> The other 75 percent could not meet the physical, behavioral or educational standards for service—standards that are similar to those many industries use in hiring. Such a grave lack of military readiness represents a serious failure of the public policies meant to help ensure that children grow to be successful adults, including the ability to lead a strong national defense. If 75 percent of the transportation sector or the agricultural sector worked poorly, there would be overwhelming public pressure to take action. We need that same sense of urgency for our children.

a. "Ready, Willing and Unable to Serve," Mission: Readiness: Military Leaders for Kids, 2009. <http://cdn.missionreadiness.org/NATEE1109.pdf>.

better, more evidence-based decisions. This is a familiar concept to business leaders, and they support this trend because it helps ensure that their tax dollars are used wisely. In 2003, Art Rolnick and Rob Grunewald of the

Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank ushered in a new model of economic evidence when they turned data behind the well-known High/Scope Perry Preschool Program into a rate of return, comparable to a stock portfolio. (See Exhibit 3.) They found that pre-k for at-risk children generated a 16 percent annual, inflation-adjusted return. Equally important, they also pointed out that this rate was greater than

many other government expenditures claiming to generate economic benefits, such as tax incentives for businesses to relocate or sports stadiums. They called for decisions about public spending, not just on children’s programs but also on all economic development strategies, to be based on solid evidence of impacts.<sup>13</sup>

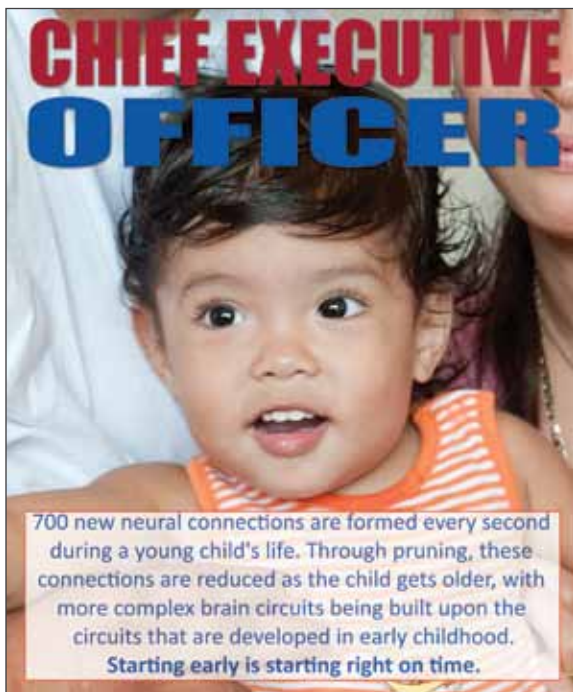
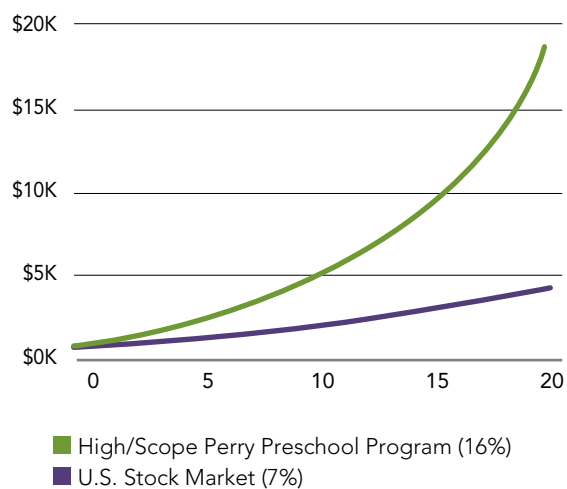


Exhibit 3

### Returns on Investments: Quality Pre-K vs. Stock Market

Returns on an investment of \$1,000 over a 20-year period:



SOURCE: Rolnick, A., and R. Grunewald. 2003. "Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return." *fedgazette*.

# Recruiting Business Leaders

Two of the most pressing questions that advocates ask are: “How do we make the case to business leaders?” and “How do we find potential champions?” When reaching out to prospects, it is important to understand what motivates them so that the request to take action can be framed as consistent with their professional or personal priorities. The first part of this section describes in more detail how to use different rationales to engage individual business leaders; the second explores working with organizations to reach their members.

Individuals and companies advocate for early childhood policy change for many different reasons:

- Securing a well-prepared future workforce;
- Building a customer base with the means to buy their products and services;
- Helping current employees be more productive;
- Creating a better economic climate;
- Generating revenue, for companies that provide goods and services that support children’s development;
- Ensuring efficient use of public funds to address expensive community problems that contribute to higher taxes;
- Demonstrating their company’s interest in improving the community;
- Building leadership skills and networking opportunities; and
- Meeting a personal desire to help children.

One way to find business leaders who are most likely to become advocates is to look for individual companies that fit one or more of these concerns. When a company’s interest in early childhood issues is driven by a combination of business concerns, it can be an especially strong source for leaders.

For example, utility companies have multiple reasons to act: They generally draw from a local workforce; their growth depends on economic prosperity in their service area; and they are publicly regulated, creating a strong rationale to care about their image with citizens and policy officials. In 2002, Entergy, a regional public utility company with more than 15,000 employees and 2.7 million

customers,<sup>14</sup> released a report entitled, “The Economics of Education: Public Benefits of High-Quality Preschool Education for Low-Income Children.” It called for increasing public funding for pre-k, saying “[P]roviding a high-quality preschool education for low-income children is an economic imperative. The benefits to doing so are enormous; the costs of not doing so are equally great.”<sup>15</sup> The CEO of Entergy Arkansas, Hugh McDonald, has championed expansion of the program in the state and observes: “It’s a matter of economics for us as a business. While it’s certainly the right thing to do, it’s also an opportunity to improve the economic environment where we operate and to reduce the burden on our customers.”<sup>16</sup>



Cover of the Society for Human Resource Management’s workforce development brochure, available at [www.PartnershipforSuccess.org](http://www.PartnershipforSuccess.org).

Other similarly positioned industries include hospitals and insurance companies.

*Below is more detail on how to use the rationales for business interest listed above:*

## Future workforce and customer base

Visionary leaders of companies that are bound to their communities or particularly dependent on a local workforce will look for ways to ensure they have the employees they need, both today and 20 years from now. Closely related to this issue is the need for a customer base that can purchase the company’s products or services. The more a company depends on local clients, the more likely it is to care about their future earning potential.

### Strategy

Highlight the educational gains associated with early childhood investments and how they help to build skills essential in future workers and boost lifetime earning potential.

### Success Stories

Tyler Nottberg, CEO of a family-owned engineering company, explained in a 2009 op-ed in the *Kansas City Business Journal* that he looks far into the future to plan his company’s needs: “The Nottberg family has operated U.S. Engineering Co. in Kansas City for 116 years. That’s why when its executives see 3 or 4 year olds, it’s easy to imagine them as future employees.”<sup>17</sup>

**Business is a primary beneficiary of competence and quality in a qualified workforce, and as such, should be a primary advocate of, and investor in, building that workforce. Early learning investments present the most sound business arguments for accomplishing this goal.**

—Philip Peterson, senior vice president, Aon Hewitt; co-chair, Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission; member, Advisory Board, Partnership for America’s Economic Success

Tom Chewning, former CFO of Dominion utility company notes: “Forty percent of our employees will be eligible to retire in the next five years. It’s easier to find a good workforce living nearby than trying to attract them from outside. And over time even the manual labor jobs have moved into critical-thinking jobs. So early childhood investments help us build the workforce we need.”

## Current productivity

Virtually all companies are affected by employees’ child care responsibilities. These needs have an impact on recruiting, retention and worker productivity.

### Strategy

Explain how investments in high-quality, accessible programs for young children provide vital services that can help attract and retain skilled workers and increase productivity today.

### Success Stories

Matt Regan at the [San Francisco] Bay Area Council, a membership organization

of high technology firms, points out: “We have been able to secure many CEOs of small and medium-sized companies as spokespeople for early childhood because they are so close to their employees and they know the challenges of juggling work and family life.”

Diane Halstead, director of business partnerships for Pennsylvania’s Early Learning Investment Commission, observes that one source of potential leaders is companies that invest in programs to improve employee productivity, such as “emergency” child care to care for mildly ill youngsters: “These types of companies, whose culture is often shaped by the CEO and upper management, may be receptive to engaging in the work of shaping policy in their state.”

## Local economic climate

Better outcomes for kids can create a healthier business climate and stronger economy that can have powerful influences on a company’s bottom line. One reason for utility and financial services companies to become involved is that their industry

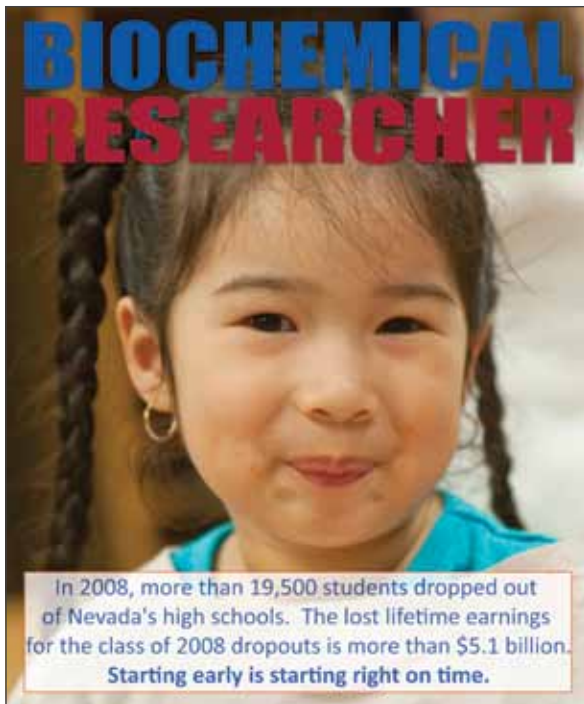
depends on local residents creating jobs and pursuing activities that use energy. Early childhood programs help children grow up to be people who get and create jobs, and contribute to their communities.

**Strategy**

Show the relationship between a healthy economic climate and policies that help children grow to be productive adults.

**Success Stories**

Tom Chewning says, “All regulated utilities have a designated geographic area and can’t expand without merging. The only way to increase our business is more people moving in, new companies starting up or existing companies expanding. Quality early childhood contributes to all of these—it attracts existing workers, and it helps create adults who create jobs.”



**Kids’ business**

The economic sector focused on children is huge, and those businesses have a vital interest in the welfare of their target customers. Research by University of Washington Professor Richard Brandon and Elaine Weiss of the Partnership shows that expenditures on goods and services for children ages birth to five make up almost 3 percent of GDP—bigger than agriculture or utilities and on par with the transportation sector.<sup>18</sup>

A separate analysis by Robert Dugger finds that the economic sector devoted to children up to age 18 is approximately 10 percent of GDP.<sup>19</sup>

**Strategies**

Demonstrate the relationship between these leaders’ industrial interest and policies that help children.

If a company is active in volunteer efforts or funding direct services, build on that foundation by asking its leadership to step forward to ensure that more children have the opportunities provided by the programs they support.

**Success Stories**

Executives at Crayola and Playworld Systems are members of the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission.

Hal Kaplan, CEO of Kaplan Early Learning Company, and his employees have been advocates for early childhood



policy change at the federal level and in many states, including California, Florida, Illinois and North Carolina. Says Kaplan, “If it’s important to children and families, it’s important for us to be involved.”

### Fixing public problems

Some champions come to early childhood after working on issues such as education, crime or poverty and realizing that solving those problems requires intervening earlier. Similarly, many business leaders want to ensure public funds are deployed in the most effective way. One source of champions may be “good government” advisory groups that work to shift taxpayer investments to proven solutions that reduce the costs of bad outcomes.

#### Strategies

Ensure that members of public groups examining issues affected by early childhood development understand those linkages.

Emphasize the strong returns on public investments associated with early childhood programs as well as evaluation data demonstrating effectiveness.

#### Success Stories

Viking Industries founder Richard Alexander of Oregon was motivated to work on early childhood after serving on a commission to reduce crime in his state.

Lisa Ventriss, president of the Vermont Business Roundtable; Richard Stoff, CEO of the Ohio Business Roundtable; and JD Chesloff of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable are all building on their organizations’ history of involvement in other issues, such as education, to increase interest in early learning.

### Community interest

Many executives like their organizations to be involved in community activities that are known to help strengthen civic life in their city or state. While this is true for many industries, companies that are publicly regulated, such as banks, insurance companies and utilities, often must pay particular attention to their community image and will want to be viewed as good corporate citizens.

#### Strategies

Highlight the positive community relations opportunities that early childhood advocacy presents.

Tap into these companies’ experience with the public policy process by asking for their executives’ expert advice on shaping and moving an agenda.

#### Success Stories

Lloyd Lamm, an executive with First National Bank in Pennsylvania, says: “Our company was very pleased that I became part of the Early Learning Investment Commission because it

was a tangible demonstration of our commitment to giving back to the communities that we serve while also advancing the cause of children. It was one endeavor that I could work on today that will have lasting, long-term impact on our communities.”

## Leadership and networking

Providing opportunities for executives to network with public and private leaders whom they want to meet is essential to attracting their interest and keeping them engaged.

### Strategies

Build a group that is composed of executives’ peers rather than one that includes many early childhood experts or others a step removed from the executive role. (But do engage this latter group in other ways. For example, an executive’s spouse can often be the driver of a couple’s participation and can make the team even more effective.)

Provide opportunities to demonstrate leadership, through facilitating meetings, public speaking or other avenues.

### Success Stories

Colorado Concern (CC) has helped spearhead the creation of a new business group, called Executives Partnering to Invest in Children. CC’s Executive Director Janice Sinden notes: “We have found that community

networking and business relationship building is one of the draws of our business leader events. People come to learn about and support early education policies, but they also come to see other business people, network and strengthen ties to their community.”

Philip Peterson, senior vice president of Aon Hewitt, says: “I joined the Early Learning Investment Commission because I believe every child has the right to have an opportunity to succeed and because improving the lives of young children will benefit our business and our nation. An added bonus has been the ability to work alongside some of the top business leaders in our state. That singular passion we all have for kids makes us effective advocates and helps us attract new colleagues who want to build stronger relationships with their peers.”

## Personal experiences

Many leaders are simply motivated by personal experiences or relationships that pointed to the importance of a good beginning.

### Strategy

Communicate to people who might be active in direct community services for personal reasons the value of building on their experience to become policy champions.

### Success Stories

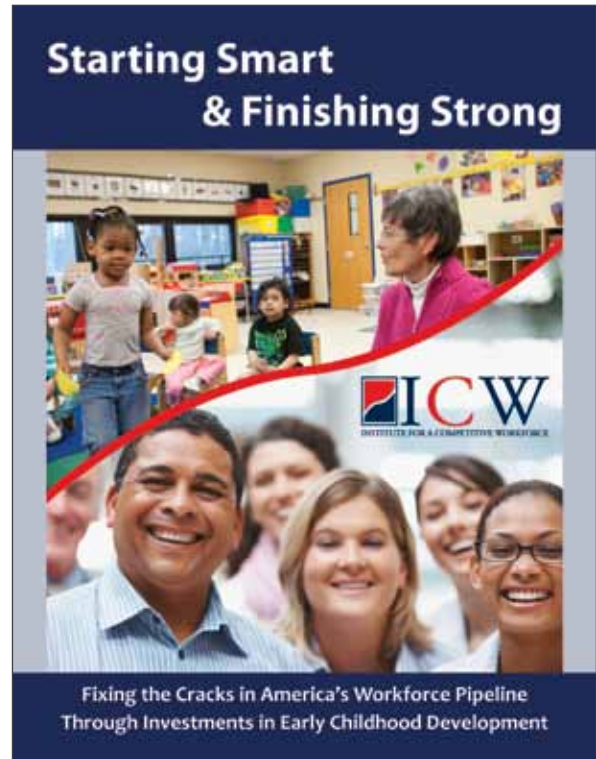
Barry Downing, president of Northrock, points to his own upbringing in a family of modest means as compelling him to ensure that other children had more advantages.<sup>20</sup>

Former Raven Industries CEO Ron Moquist of South Dakota is married to a Head Start teacher, who encouraged him to become active on a public level. He later led the effort in the state to create innovative, state-funded pre-k and home visiting programs.

### Business organizations

In addition to targeting individual companies or business leaders, another route to finding potential business champions is working through membership organizations. Early childhood development can be an attractive issue for them for a variety of reasons. It creates local jobs with employees who tend to spend their money in the community. One study showed multiplier effects of early educator wages of at least 2:1 in many states, such as California and Pennsylvania.<sup>21</sup>

The Partnership has worked with several organizations to create briefs for their members, including the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, a non-profit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturing Institute,



The cover of the Institute for a Competitive Workforce's brochure on the value of early childhood investments, available at [www.PartnershipforSuccess.org](http://www.PartnershipforSuccess.org).

Society for Human Resource Management and Center for Energy Workforce Development (utility companies). The briefs are available from the Partnership for advocates to use in reaching out to those constituencies.<sup>22</sup>

**Chambers of Commerce** operate at the state level and in thousands of communities nationwide. Chamber membership is open to all businesses with an interest in public policy and in improving economic prosperity in their community or state.

**Business Roundtables** (BRTs) are membership organizations of CEOs—

currently found in 22 states—that are active on state policy and focus on a targeted agenda to promote economic vitality.<sup>23</sup>

**Economic and workforce development authorities and agencies** exist in all states and many major cities and counties. These agencies are created to attract and retain jobs in the region. Workforce Investment Boards are similar entities, usually structured as public-private partnerships, that aim to improve the quality and size of a region’s workforce.<sup>24</sup>

**Manufacturing affiliates** include a variety of organizations operating at the national, state and local levels. Almost every state has a manufacturing association. Intra-state regional associations, called employer association groups, engage businesses in more hands-on projects. The Manufacturing Extension Partnership network works to improve local companies’ competitiveness.<sup>25</sup>

**Civic groups**, such as United Way, Kiwanis and Rotary Clubs, have business members with broad connections in their communities. Kiwanis’s early childhood initiative is called Young Children: Priority One.<sup>26</sup> United Way’s Born Learning campaign offers a variety of communication tools that convey the importance of investing in early childhood.<sup>27</sup>

**Strategies**

Approach these groups to help introduce an entire business community to early childhood issues and to help enlist others.

To engage state and local Chambers of Commerce, Karen Elzey, vice president of the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, has this advice: “It is essential that children’s advocacy groups frame their message in terms that matter to Chambers and their business members. Advocates must demonstrate how support for and investments in early learning can lead to a better-prepared workforce, which allows for businesses to be more competitive.”

Deputy director of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable JD Chesloff advises that the best way to engage his peers is, “Get the members interested. The BRT agenda is entirely driven by its CEO members, not the staff. So companies need to say this is an important issue to them.”



The cover of the Manufacturing Institute’s brochure on early childhood investments and workforce development, available at: [www.PartnershipforSuccess.org](http://www.PartnershipforSuccess.org).

## L.A. CHAMBER SUPPORTS TAX INCREASE TO FUND PRE-K

In 2005, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce made history when, under the leadership of then-CEO Rusty Hammer and Board Chair Maureen Kindel, it endorsed a tax increase for the first time. The revenue-generating measure was part of a ballot initiative—Proposition 82—to require the state to provide pre-k to all four year olds. While the measure didn't pass, the chamber's action was a watershed moment, signaling an understanding among members that early education is critical to their interests. As Ms. Kindel puts it: "When we voted to endorse the ballot initiative, the members of my board looked at me and said, 'you are asking us to vote for a tax increase on us in order to pay for pre-k?' I said 'absolutely,' and they did it."<sup>a</sup>

a. Personal communication with Maureen Kindel, March 2010.

According to Jennifer McNelly, senior vice president of the Manufacturing Institute/ National Association of Manufacturers, the best way to approach these organizations is to "find a local manufacturer who is willing to introduce you to these groups. Emphasize that your interest is in promoting the state's economic competitiveness and the quality of its workforce, and ask them if they could help you spread the message to other members."

Dr. Wil Blechman, past president of Kiwanis International, advises: "Advocates can increase knowledge of early childhood issues and urge the organization's membership both to continue the services it already provides and to add an aggressive advocacy component. This advocacy can be on a club level but will more likely be by individual members once they recognize the rationale. Clarify

the difference between encouraging policy improvements and the partisan politics of individual political races. Lastly, urge participants to sign up with advocacy groups for follow-up materials and requests to take action."

### Success Stories

Leaders from Chambers at the city (Chicago, Memphis, Nashville, Richmond and Seattle) and state (Alabama, Maine and Tennessee) levels have been spokespeople for early childhood investments. The Institute for a Competitive Workforce released a white paper, "Ready, Set, Go: Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education," that conveys to members the relationship between pre-k and a competitive workforce.<sup>28</sup>

BRTs in at least six states—Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Ohio

## THE FEDERAL RESERVE WEIGHS IN

In 2003, Art Rolnick, then-senior vice president and director of research, and Rob Grunewald, associate economist, at the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank, published “Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return,” which, for the first time, framed early childhood as an economic development strategy. But Rolnick and Grunewald’s influence didn’t stop there. Thanks to their research and ongoing efforts to communicate their message, other Federal Reserve leaders have added their voices.

Dennis Lockhart, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, had a prominent role as co-chair of the city’s Early Education Commission,<sup>a</sup> and Jeffrey Lacker, CEO of the Richmond Fed,<sup>b</sup> has written an op-ed in support of early learning. The Cleveland Federal Reserve published an article about early education in its journal, *Forefront*, called “Stop Investing in Stadiums...Start Investing in Kids,”<sup>c</sup> and the San Francisco Federal Reserve published a compilation of articles about early childhood in its journal, *Community Investments*.<sup>d</sup>

Federal Reserve Chairman Benjamin Bernanke provided perhaps the ultimate endorsement, saying in a 2010 speech to the Southern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments: “No economy can succeed without a high-quality workforce, particularly in an age of globalization and technical change...[F]ormal K-12 and post-secondary education, as important as they are, do not alone build better workforces. Research increasingly has shown the importance for both individuals and the economy as a whole of both early childhood education as well as efforts to promote the lifelong acquisition of skills. The payoffs of early childhood programs can be especially high. For instance, investment in preschool programs for disadvantaged children has been shown to increase high school graduation rates. Because high school graduates have higher earnings, pay more taxes, and are less likely to need to use public health programs, such investments can pay off even from the narrow perspective of state budgets; of course, the returns to the overall economy and to the individuals themselves are much greater.”<sup>e</sup>

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a. <http://www.unitedwayatlanta.org/OurWork/Education/Pages/EARLYEDUCATION.aspx>.

b. Jeffrey Lacker, “Children’s Education is a Smart Investment,” *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2007. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/26/AR2007082601079.html>.

c. Mark Sniderman, “Stop Investing in Stadiums...Start Investing in Kids: An Interview with Art Rolnick,” *Forefront*, October 6, 2010, [http://www.clevelandfed.org/forefront/2010/09/ff\\_2010\\_fall\\_05.cfm](http://www.clevelandfed.org/forefront/2010/09/ff_2010_fall_05.cfm).

d. <http://www.frbsf.org/publications/community/investments/0709/>.

e. <http://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/speech/bernanke20100802a.htm>.

and Vermont—have taken up early childhood policy. In 2009, the National Business Roundtable and Corporate Voices for Working Families issued a joint position statement, “Why America Needs High-Quality Early Care and Education.”<sup>29</sup> The Ohio Business Roundtable’s draft objective for its Early Learning Initiative reads, “Since the road to college—and to healthy and productive lives—begins at birth, Ohio will invest in its youngest children to succeed as learners before it invests in anything else.”

In 2008, a consortium of industry, civic and foundation leaders in southeastern Indiana created the Economic Opportunities through Education by 2015 (EcO15) initiative with strong participation from the manufacturing sector, including Cummins Inc. The consortium originally focused on secondary and post-secondary education, but stakeholders have now developed an early learning strategy with the goal that “All children enter into kindergarten socially, emotionally, and cognitively prepared for a lifetime of successful learning.” As a major first step, the Columbus community raised local and state funding for a public pre-k pilot serving 60 students in 2010 and expanding to 150 in 2011.<sup>30</sup>

Organizations whose mission is encouraging smart economic growth are realizing that investments in early



The back cover of the Ohio Business Roundtable’s recent publication—“The Talent Challenge<sup>2</sup>”—called attention to the fact that the nation’s leading business groups each embrace early learning as a core strategy. To access a copy of the report go to: [www.brtearlylearning.com](http://www.brtearlylearning.com).

childhood can provide immediate jobs, short-term savings from decreases in some negative outcomes and long-term growth. Julie Meier Wright, CEO of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Authority, explains her motivation: “Every company is interested in a location’s human and physical capital. Places that have good early childhood services should be pitching businesses to come to their location because of the direct impact on improving human capital—both immediately and over the long term.”

Kiwanis International has started to work with the Partnership for America's Economic Success to convey the importance of early childhood advocacy to its members, including adding workshops on this topic at their regional and national convenings.



# Leveraging Business Interest

Because of this burgeoning interest, advocates across the country are strategizing about how to find, support and engage business leaders to convey to policy makers the importance of effective investments in young children. This section provides some lessons learned that can help make such partnerships successful.

**It takes time and resources.** Supporting business leaders to be spokespeople for public policy change is very labor intensive. Advocates need adequate staff to find appropriate businesspeople, educate them on the issues and prepare them to take actions such as signing op-eds or letters to the editor, recruiting

their peers, talking to policy makers or giving press interviews. It is important to avoid launching a highly public effort to generate business interest until and unless a concrete plan is in place to channel commitments into useful action.

**Connect the dots.** Statistics are powerful, but by themselves they do not fully convey how children's early brain development happens. Advocates must explain to business leaders the various ways in which programs benefit young children and produce outcomes that bolster their bottom lines and build human capital. A graphic developed by the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce effectively illustrates this point:



If families and caregivers can provide quality early childhood development, then children will start school ready to learn.

If children start school ready to learn, they are more likely to read at grade level by third grade.

If children read at grade level by third grade, they are more likely to graduate from high school.

If children graduate from high school, they are more likely to go on to higher education and/or enter the job market as a tax-paying citizen.

Employable, tax-paying citizens are critical to a vital economy.

**Know your goals.** Developing a public policy agenda often requires complex, protracted negotiations among a variety of interested groups. Don't drag business leaders through the entire process. They want to see a focused, specific agenda that has been carefully developed, is backed by research, has been appropriately vetted and has a good chance of success. They understand strategic plans with milestones that mark progress toward a big victory.

While most business leaders don't want to participate in every detail of the agenda-setting process, they often want to weigh in on goals they are asked to support. One of the immense contributions that business activists can make to early childhood advocacy is to help groups shape and focus their broad wish list to a winnable agenda.

Occasionally, businesspeople who believe in the value of early childhood do not necessarily agree completely with the policy goal or strategy favored by children's advocates. As with any coalition of groups with overlapping but also differing interests, it is important to learn from one another and sort out where you can agree, or not, before going public.

Tim Smith of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta observes that the business members of their Early Education Commission “brought rigor to our thought process. They didn't want motherhood-and-apple-pie

recommendations—they wanted ones that were specific, research-based and do-able.”

**Timing is critical.** Making your ask at the right time can increase the odds that an executive will accept. Consider these factors: Is the person preparing to retire, or are older children about to leave home, possibly creating more free time? Is this a good moment for the business, such as a period when positive publicity in the community would be welcome? Are there pressing business concerns (e.g., a merger or major board meeting)? Is the company taking on a leadership role in a local business network and perhaps searching for a theme?

**Use a variety of approaches.** The section above offers an array of reasons for business leaders to become involved, so consider which ones work best in a given context and for a particular audience.

Matt Regan of the Bay Area Council recommends emphasizing the economic data while not losing sight of the emotional appeal of investments in children: “Business leaders want to know that they are doing something good for kids that will appeal to their community and their employees.” An effective communications approach for the council has been to pair a video showing the personal impact on children of high-quality services with one conveying the economic data.<sup>31</sup>

When I worked with business leaders, they regularly shared their frustrations with working on early childhood issues. They got the importance of the investment but said that advocates typically gave them the ‘*War and Peace Version of Everything They Never Wanted to Know*’ about the issue—rather than giving them the information they needed to make a difference. They really had only three questions: ‘What do you want?’ ‘How much will it cost?’ ‘What impact will it have?’ With these answers—and strategic guidance on how and when their voice and influence would have the greatest impact—they were hands-down the most effective advocates.

—Abby Thorman, president, Thorman Strategy Group

**Emphasize both short- and long-term benefits.** While some companies can afford to look 20 years into the future, not all can. Talk about the immediate benefits of early childhood investments and how they set the stage for future effects that provide larger economic returns. The Partnership’s brief, “The Costs of Disinvestment,” details benefits that show up in the first two years of a child’s participation in a program and explains how these initial outcomes pave the way for the future workforce and economic growth our society needs.<sup>32</sup>

**Know what you want them to do.** Before you try to generate interest in the business community, know what you would want someone to do. The actions should be: appropriate to the person’s interest; part of a clear, well-thought-out strategy; limited in terms of the time commitment required;

and well supported. Prepare a diverse array of activities, beginning with ones suitable for leaders who are just starting to consider a role in advocacy—visiting an early learning center, distributing information to their employees—and graduating to those for the more experienced activist—signing op-eds, talking directly to policy makers.

**Play to their strengths.** Business leaders are naturals at conveying to policy makers the need for a highly qualified workforce or their desire to see crime and related public costs reduced. However, they are generally not expert in, and shouldn’t be expected to talk about, the details of the early childhood system, such as teacher qualifications or curriculum development. Think carefully about the specific message they should deliver and what should be handed over to early childhood experts.

Mara Aspinall, CEO of biotech firm On-Q-ity, expresses a viewpoint many of her peers share: “Match the ask with the business leader’s core strength, not to your needs.”

**Offer a variety of roles.** Some executives thrive in the spotlight and are glad to be the public face of a campaign, appearing at press conferences, making speeches or putting their name on high-profile materials. Others are better suited to less public but equally important roles, such as advising on the development of an agenda that appeals to a wide range of policy makers, funding an advocacy campaign or convening colleagues to share information and encourage them to become supporters.

Paul Major, CEO of the Telluride Foundation in Colorado, is an example of a behind-the-scenes leader, putting others in the spotlight while also tapping into his network to bring different groups together to form an effective coalition in that state.

**Provide structured site visits to early education programs.** To help business leaders better understand the investments for which they are advocating, ensure that they have an opportunity to visit and observe high-quality programs. It helps them develop their own anecdotes, which they will share with other business leaders and legislators.

In Pennsylvania, business leaders have invited legislators to join them in touring high-quality programs to better understand how early childhood interventions work and to see the children and families that benefit from their services.

**Build contacts in key districts.** Advocates need to be strategic about using their time and resources when seeking out and supporting business leaders. Many advocacy groups might have business contacts in one city but need to broaden their reach. Rather than casting a wide net, it’s important

I—along with my fellow business leaders—am a powerful ally in the effort to invest scarce public dollars in high-quality home visiting programs. We have seen compelling evidence that home visitation provides dramatic and cost-effective improvements in helping children enter kindergarten ready to learn. There is no better investment for our future than this.

—John Pepper, former CEO, Procter & Gamble

to prioritize building contacts in the districts whose policy makers are the key decision makers on children's policies and budgets. However, in many states leadership may change quickly due to elections, term limits or leadership rules, so securing representation from companies whose service footprint is statewide provides the added flexibility needed for effective legislative advocacy.

**Don't mix fundraising with advocacy.**

Businesspeople are inundated with requests for funding and might dismiss an approach from a group that seems to want money rather than their time, contacts and expertise.

Linda Galliher, vice president of the Bay Area Council, recommends inviting business leaders to a session designed strictly to help them become familiar with the issue: "People are honored when you say you don't want money, you want their opinion or input. Tell them you are trying to put together the path forward and want their ideas."

**Prepare them for questions.** In the policy arena, no one likes surprises. Any substantial policy campaign will have opponents. Know the opposition arguments, prepare your champions for push back and arm them with strong responses.

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# Effective Organizing Models

A common problem in building business leader engagement on early childhood policy is sustaining the effort over the many years that significant victories require. Often, people are called together and become enthusiastic but then lack clarity and directed action, or a group is convened to fight one particular battle but then fades away. Hal Kaplan uses a firefighting analogy: Advocates are able to energize the business community when faced with a fire to put out but then neglect those relationships in quieter times and must start again when the next crisis pops up.

Another challenge occurs when one or two champions carry most of the load, raising the risk that business community involvement will collapse if these core leaders retire or otherwise move away from the issue. These scenarios are not unique to mobilizing the business community, and strategies exist to combat them:

**As mentioned above, recognize that any effort needs staff to survive.** It's difficult for an organization to provide the level of support that busy executives expect with donated time from staff who have other full-time jobs.

**Diversify participation as much as possible.** Pennsylvania's Early Learning Investment Commission, with 47 member executives,<sup>33</sup> is also working with a second circle of business owners who will carry the message into every corner of the state. Oregon's Children's Institute has benefitted from the leadership of Richard Alexander, who is building a broader cadre of prominent business and community leaders to work with him.

**If possible, base any business coalition at an organization that can incorporate it into its ongoing scope of work.** While most efforts to date have been hosted by children's groups, another approach is to house the coalition with a business group that has a broad economic development agenda. The group should be willing to include early childhood as one of its main public policy issues, including financially supporting the work the same way that it funds the rest of its core operations. This model has several advantages: ensuring that the issue is seen as a genuine business concern, providing access to the organization's member network, using

the organization's credibility and strategic knowledge to inform the early childhood agenda and tapping into funding sources that may not have previously supported early childhood.

## Common organizational structures

*Below are some examples of organizing approaches pursued in different states:*

**Single-purpose, limited-time entity:** Some groups form to accomplish a single goal, with the expectation that they will dissolve after the goal is achieved.

In South Dakota, Ron Moquist pulled together a group of business leaders expressly to launch a pilot early learning program, using state economic development funds.

**Public-private commission:** Long-term partnerships that bring public officials together with leaders from business, philanthropy and advocacy can have a lasting impact on an array of programs and are frequently built to advance a broad early childhood agenda.

One major challenge for this structure is the chance that a single elected official or party—typically, the initiator of the partnership—will exert a controlling influence over the organization's work. Advocates and other leaders can mitigate this risk by appointing bipartisan members, ensuring that messages and policy

recommendations rely on objective data and proactively educating political leaders across the spectrum.

As governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell created the Early Learning Investment Commission with a membership of corporate leaders and an agenda that covered the early learning spectrum. This group has had a powerful influence in the state but faces the challenge of securing support from other administrations.

Atlanta's Early Education Commission was organized by the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. The original version of the group included many leading early childhood experts but few public figures from outside the field. In a more recent incarnation, the commission has had as co-chairs the CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and the president of Spelman College. Also, the membership was broadened to involve prominent local business executives, public officials and leaders from the state judiciary and the philanthropy and faith communities.<sup>34</sup> As a result, the commission had a much stronger profile and issued recommendations to improve access to and the quality of early education.

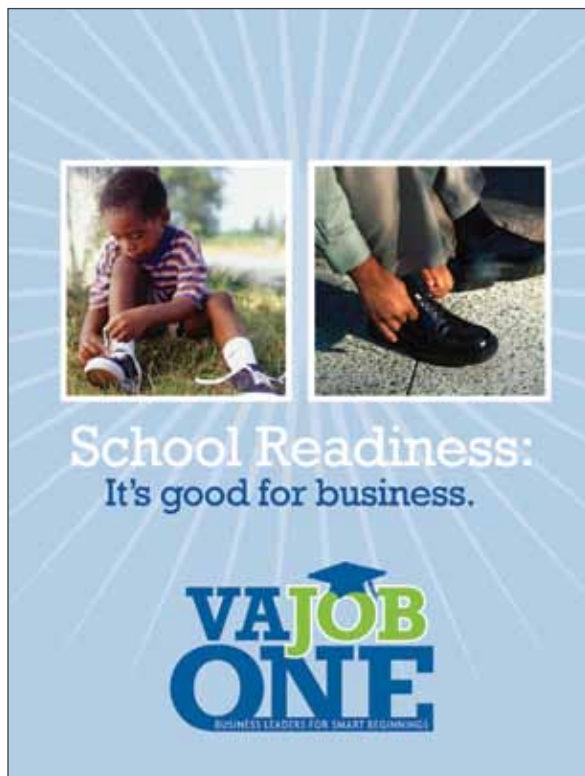
**Part of a business group:** When a business organization such as those discussed above chooses to work on early childhood issues, advocates can help solidify that commitment by encouraging the group to create a formal committee or subcommittee devoted to the effort.



The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Bay Area Council, Vermont Business Roundtable, Colorado Concern and Business Council of Alabama are all well-connected business membership organizations dedicated to improving their state or local economic climates. All are now deeply devoted to improving early childhood development, and their imprimatur is instrumental in ensuring that their local communities view early learning as a true business issue.

**Committee of early childhood groups:**

In some circumstances, the most logical convener of business leaders is an early childhood organization.



The cover of Virginia Job One's informational flyer on school readiness.

The major business organizations in Oregon—the Oregon Business Association, Associated Oregon Industries and the Oregon Business Council—support the Ready for School campaign, which is staffed by the Children's Institute. Critical to its success, the institute is seen as a research-based, politically neutral organization. It was created by some of the state's leading private sector champions and is identified with and respected by high-caliber leaders. The institute holds the middle ground for the state's ideologically diverse business community.

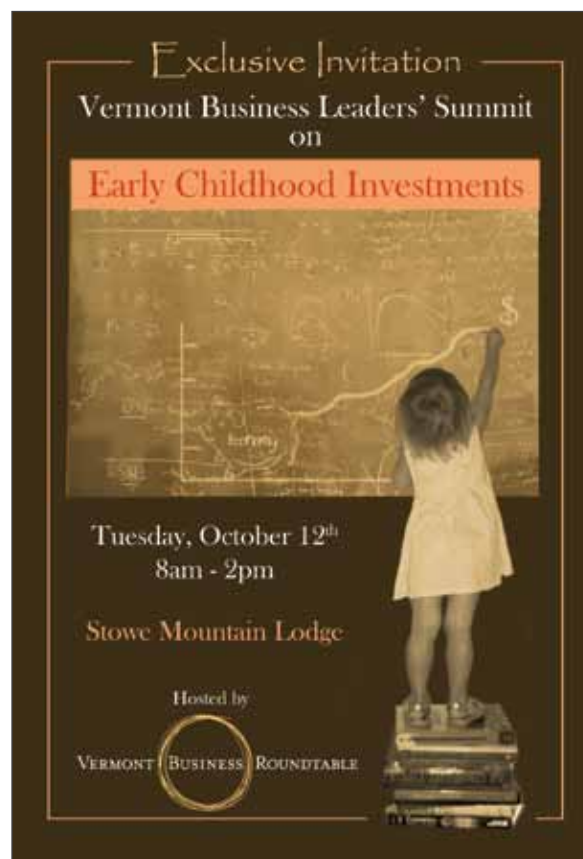
Similarly, the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation created a subcommittee of business leaders, led by Tom Chewning, called "Virginia Job One: Business Leaders for Early Childhood Education."<sup>35</sup>

### The learning process

Regardless of the organizational structure, virtually every group goes through a process of learning about early childhood, deciding on an action plan and carrying it out. In some cases, the business coalition commits to a series of meetings that builds its group cohesion and leads to action. This is the case with the United Way Early Education Commission in Atlanta and Pennsylvania's Early Learning Investment Commission.<sup>36</sup> Other groups are more fluid, and organizers have only limited opportunities to interact with executives to orient them to the issue and build their support. Some important lessons learned for this process are:

- Provide information through a process that is both substantive and time-efficient; don't get bogged down with every detail, but do ask and answer tough questions.
- Bring in outside experts who can explain what leaders in other states are doing, verify the research and share success stories.
- Use a strategic-planning process that shows business leaders how they can make decisions and move to action on early childhood policy, what their short- and long-term goals should be and how they will measure success.
- The basics of good meetings are especially important with this audience. Hold a meeting only when you need one, provide materials in advance, start and end precisely on time, facilitate the proceedings, move efficiently through the agenda and ensure that discussions ultimately end with decisions.
- Make the discussion a safe space where leaders can express skepticism and ask hard questions.
- Use meetings for work that must be done as a group—wrestling with difficult questions, making decisions. Reserve specifics for individual conversations and e-mail exchanges.
- Spotlight specific accomplishments during each meeting, so participants can see progress.

Hosting a high-profile public meeting or business leader summit is a common strategy to kick-off or expand a coalition. It can raise the visibility of the issue and encourage people to self-identify as interested in the topic. The appendix, beginning on page 37, describes a number of lessons learned through hosting eight national conferences and helping half the states with business leader summits.



Cover of invitation booklet for the Vermont Business Roundtable's 2010 Summit on Early Childhood Investment, available at [www.vtroundtable.org](http://www.vtroundtable.org).

# Mobilizing New Messengers

Once a cadre of business leaders is identified, it's important to have an array of specific, follow-up actions they can take to move along the spectrum toward policy advocacy.

## Continue their own education

Many business leaders say they conducted a thorough investigation of the issue before they committed their time and reputation—just as they would for any business venture. So one important step for advocates is to provide specific opportunities to understand the issue better, such as visiting an early learning center or hearing from additional experts (e.g. kindergarten teachers, who can explain how apparent children's preparation is when they enter their classrooms). Once they become more comfortable, executives can encourage peers and policy makers to join them on these tours.

## Spread the word

Those ready to take the next step can help convey the economic value of investments in children to other executives.

**Arrange presentations to business organizations.** Paul O'Brien, president of the O'Brien Group and former CEO of New England Telephone, and Mara Aspinall have traversed the state of Massachusetts, speaking with local Chambers of Commerce and civic associations to educate them about the value and importance of pre-k. They have offered concrete ways for audience members to actively support policies that will improve the learning and development of young children.

**Provide information on the importance of early childhood to employees and customers.** PNC Financial Services Group has made information on what parents can do to help young children learn available in a variety of venues.

**Participate in public events** sponsored by early childhood advocates.

**Donate goods or services** to support speaking engagements (i.e. design or communications expertise, event venues, etc.), especially if business leaders prefer a behind-the-scenes role.

**Invite companies** that provide early childhood products or services to join business organizations.

**Fund children’s advocacy organizations** as part of their charitable giving or allow service organizations that they fund to use some of their resources to advocate for policy change.

**Sponsor research** that answers key questions policy makers need to have addressed before they can feel confident investing in policies and programs.

**Get to know local and state leaders** and understand their legislative responsibilities on early childhood issues. When executives meet with public officials in their communities and outside of the legislative process, it provides even more opportunities to build relationships that will facilitate an honest exchange of information and discussion of policy goals.

## Make business-leader voices heard

Those who are ready to become public champions can make their voices heard in many ways, with the most critical being direct communications with policy makers to share the evidence. Larry Kellner has been a prominent business champion for young children in Texas: “When I was CEO of Continental Airlines, I didn’t hesitate to use some of my time with policy makers to discuss not only aviation issues but also the

importance of early childhood to the future of our industry and our state. I still follow that same course as head of the Emerald Creek Group.”

### **Form coalitions of business executives.**

Barry Downing, Ron Moquist and Tom Chewning all created semi-formal coalitions of colleagues to make their collective voices for early childhood investment heard in their states.

**Talk to the media** through writing opinion pieces, participating in editorial board meetings, making presentations at press conferences, calling into talk radio shows, posting on blogs and communicating via other new media outlets. One creative way to get media attention is to ask business journals to profile a particularly prominent executive and his or her advocacy activities.

### **Appear in videos and publications.**

Members of the Business Council of Alabama appeared in the video, “What Does High Quality Look Like?” created by the Alabama School Readiness Alliance.<sup>37</sup> The Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce developed an effective publication called “Early Childhood Development Directly Affects Economic Vitality,” which featured photographs and quotes from diverse messengers such as Jon C. King of Exclusive Staffing and Katherine Busser, executive vice president of Capital One Financial Corporation.<sup>38</sup>

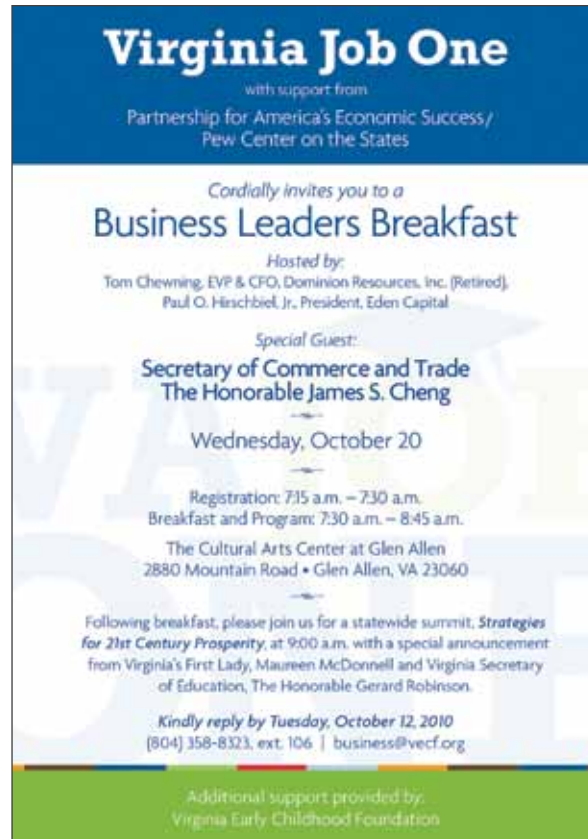
**Release their own statements on the importance of early learning**, such as Entergy’s 2002 report, “The Economics of Education: Public Benefits of High-Quality Early Education for Low-Income Children.”

**Ask business organizations to formally endorse early childhood policy goals.**

If an industry group has an agenda that relates to children—for example, K-12 education—ask that it be expanded to include early childhood policy. Stacy Sells, senior vice president for strategic planning at Cranford, Johnson, Robinson, Woods used her tenure as president of the Arkansas Chamber of Commerce in the early 2000s to advocate for inclusion of pre-k in the Chamber’s policy agenda during a time of significant school reform. Thanks in part to the efforts of Ron Moquist, in 2009, the National Association of Manufacturers added a public policy position stating: “Access to high quality early education and learning opportunities is integral to helping today’s children prepare for the highly competitive, fast-paced global economy.”<sup>39</sup>

**Join early childhood policy entities to provide the business voice.**

JD Chesloff of the Massachusetts Business Roundtable also serves as chairman of the board of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. John Rathgeber, president and CEO of the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, is chairperson of Connecticut’s Early Childhood Education Cabinet. In



Invitation to Virginia Job One’s Business Leaders Breakfast.

Colorado, businesswoman and CPA Gloria Higgins is a member of the board overseeing implementation of the Denver Preschool Program. The president of the Vermont Business Roundtable, and several other business people, sit on the state’s Building Bright Futures Council, which sets comprehensive policy for children from birth to age five.

**Ask the governor to create a business commission specifically on early childhood.** Pennsylvania and Virginia have governor-appointed advisory groups of business leaders charged with advising on early childhood policy.

Pennsylvania's Early Learning Investment Commission, created by then-Governor Rendell, is co-chaired by Peter Danchak of PNC Financial Services Group and Philip Peterson. Former Governor Mark Warner created the Virginia Early Learning Council, which includes investment fund executives Paul Hirschbiel and Robert Dugger. This group has now thrived through two gubernatorial transitions and under both parties, a key test of sustainability.

**Join advisory bodies or public events on related topics**, such as K-12 education, crime reduction, economic growth or workforce development to show how strategic early childhood investments can be part of the solution. The Tennessee Business Roundtable, with Executive Director Ellen Thornton at the helm, held education summits in six cities as part of its effort to move school reform. "In every city, in every discussion," Thornton explained, "pre-k was a topic of conversation." In 2006, a group of business people formed Blueprint Louisiana to determine the state's top economic priorities in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Pre-k was on that list, alongside health care, transportation and ethics reform.<sup>40</sup>

**Communicate early childhood policy requests directly with policy makers** either by e-mail, telephone or in person. Try to meet them in their district at a variety of venues, such as public meetings or informal constituent gatherings. Pennsylvania's Early Learning Investment Commission links business leaders with specific members whom they know, ensuring that each policy maker hears from a trusted local voice.

The executive director of the Iowa Business Council, Elliott Smith, testified before the Iowa Senate Education Committee in January 2011, saying, "I am here to explain the fairly straight-forward and simple business case for supporting universal access to certified pre-kindergarten programs in the state of Iowa."

**Engage lobbyists** who advocate for their company or organization's business interests to include early childhood on the agenda.

While all of these steps take staff time to support, they can make a tremendous difference in how policy makers view early childhood—making it a core strategy to improve the economic wellbeing of communities, states and the nation. More actions and supporting materials can be found at [www.PartnershipforSuccess.org](http://www.PartnershipforSuccess.org).

# Conclusion

Business leaders know that their employees are critical to success, and they are beginning to realize that early child development and education are the long-term keys to building a well-prepared, highly skilled 21st-century workforce. As Robert Dugger, the Partnership's advisory board chair, points out, "Without a healthy, trusting, teamwork-capable, educated future workforce, we cannot achieve our goals for environmental safety, energy independence, scientific innovation, global competitiveness, national security, fiscal sustainability or any other national priority. If we do not achieve these goals, U.S. business will not be able to compete globally."

Research from 2007 shows that about 70 million Americans will leave the workforce by 2017, and it's not clear that there will be enough qualified workers to replace them.<sup>41</sup> A failure to meet this challenge will leave our nation with a growing human capital deficit and more young adults who are unable to get and keep jobs. As former House Budget Committee Chairman John Spratt (D-SC) said at the Partnership's

March 2010 National Economic Forum on Early Childhood Investment, "If we don't get human capital right, it doesn't matter much what else we do."<sup>42</sup>

It's time to dramatically expand this movement from a few superstars to a wide-ranging chorus of people from every state, legislative district and community. Mobilizing business champions means helping them make the case for the meaningful investments in early care and education that are in the best interest of their companies and the country. Advocates need to remember that these leaders think in terms of evidence of effectiveness, beginning-to-end processes and competitiveness. Virginia's early childhood business coalition is named "Virginia Job One" because executives' primary responsibility is managing human capital. If more leaders like them understand the evidence and what it means for getting the employees they need, they will help drive the nation to make the healthy development of children a top economic priority.

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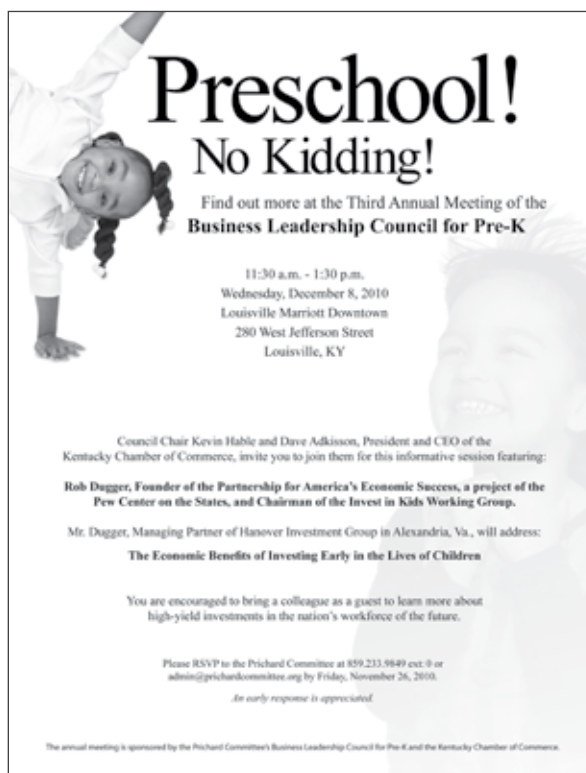
# Appendix: Keys to a Successful Business Leader Event

The Partnership for America's Economic Success has organized eight national conferences and helped half the states organize business-engagement events, with some key lessons learned:

## Consider the invitation structure.

Some states start this process by hosting an open event, welcoming all participants. This has the advantage of

making it easier to attract a large crowd and reach a diverse audience. However, it is likely to result in an audience that is overwhelmingly composed of advocates, not business leaders. To reach primarily this latter group, the event must be by invitation only and exclusively for business people and policy makers. Business leaders want to come to an event with their peers, where they feel



Invitation to Prichard Committee and Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's Third Annual Meeting of the Business Leadership Council for Pre-K.

free to ask tough questions and express skepticism. Restricting attendance will not be popular, but it is essential to reach new constituencies. One compromise may be to allow advocates to attend only if they bring a senior business leader who would not participate without their presence.

To help advocates learn from the speakers, record the presentations for outside viewing. Also, consider asking key speakers to participate in a separate meeting with advocates (perhaps dinner the night before the event).

Another crucial decision is whether you want to reach as many new executives as possible or you want (or expect) to have mostly people who are already supporters. For the first group, you'll need to cover the basics and ensure that skeptics get their questions answered. For the latter, you'll want to highlight what will be new to them and move quickly to action steps.

### **Tailor the event to fit your strategy and the norms of your business community.**

Should your event be 90 minutes or four hours? Breakfast, lunch or dinner? At the capitol or the Economic Club? Invite policy makers and media or not? High-profile event for hundreds or intimate luncheon for a few senior executives? Held during the legislative session, election season or budget development period? Include legislator visits for those who are ready to take that step?

According to staff at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, many local chambers typically prefer breakfast events—the key is to ask what works for your business community.

**Colorado** held a 90-minute luncheon—not a minute longer—because new leaders would be attracted to a minimal time commitment.

**Hawaii** held a longer event because business leaders would not fly to Oahu for a shorter one.

**Missouri's** summit was highly visible, held at the St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank, included policy makers and was accompanied by an op-ed in the *Kansas City Business Journal*.

The **Ohio** Business Roundtable pulled together a small meeting of its top CEOs in order to have a tightly focused discussion of its early childhood agenda.

### **Reach as much of the state as you can.**

In addition to a central event, consider webcasting it to other locations in the state, especially if distances are a challenge.

**Oklahoma** and **Maine** hosted a series of smaller events in different parts of the state, to reach as broad an audience as possible. In **Alaska**, organizers followed up with a trip to a small, remote but important community to convey the summit's main findings and messages.

Move from “What is this?” to “What do we do?” Any event is likely to attract people at different stages of readiness for action—from those who need to move slowly to those who are ready to call their legislators. The agenda should cover a number of bases quickly with opportunities for those who want more information to get it without holding up the group. Generally, first-time summits cover the following topics, usually in roughly this order:

1. The case for investments in children—both the neuroscience and the short- and long-term economic benefits
2. The state landscape—current early childhood outcomes, projected workforce needs
3. Examples of business leadership in the state and nationwide
4. Policy agenda, political environment and the prospects for change
5. Follow-up—Provide a strong and clear call to action outlining what business leaders can do and how you would support them. Distribute a card on which attendees can indicate how they would like to be involved. Make sure to follow up and record activity to share successes with the group so they can see progress and action.

### **Acknowledge the hard questions.**

It’s natural for newcomers to the early childhood issue to have questions and concerns, so tackle them head-on. While

the research base is substantial, some of the core studies are small or apply to very specific populations, and it’s important to be clear and not oversell. States that are having severe economic problems may not be able to consider major new investments; consider presenting initial policy changes that are inexpensive or have a faster payback.

Any significant change will be opposed by someone. It’s even hard to unify early childhood groups on any single proposal. While you don’t want to scare people away with the difficult details, acknowledging the challenges will illustrate that advocates are aware of obstacles, are open about them and have—or want to work with business leaders to develop—a plan for addressing them.

### **Use state speakers when talking about evidence.**

Local economists and researchers who can talk about state-specific data bring a high level of credibility. Instead of being about kids in general, the conversation becomes about “our kids” and “our economy.”

### **Use outside speakers for multiple purposes.**

Speakers from outside the state can bring a national imprimatur to the business leader movement and convey what is happening across the country. Make the most of their visit by not only asking them to speak but also having them meet with policy makers,

the media or senior executives who might not come to a big event. Engage them in placing op-eds, co-signed with a local leader, to coincide with the event. Make a video of them with messages specific to your campaign for future use. If you want to keep the summit relatively short for the audience as a whole, consider offering a pre-conference dinner or post-conference lunch so that those who want to devote more time can speak to the national experts in a smaller setting.

**Make the follow-up fast and specific.**

Be prepared to get what you wish for. If business leaders want to take action, be ready to support them. Ask them to do something (see list above). At the very least, you can ask them to write letters to the editor, provide information from the conference to their employees or arrange

a speaking engagement for a local expert with their business organization.

**Plan follow-up events.**

Plan another event six months later or sooner so people can hear more, learn about progress, take next steps, bring a friend, etc. A series of smaller, targeted events after a conference can help you maintain momentum, add supporters and strengthen participation.

Every executive and state is different, so it's important to adapt the outreach and support to the individual situation. For example, some will want to be more involved in creating the policy agenda, some not at all. But paying attention to these general guidelines will help advocates build a cadre of people who are ready and willing to act.

# Endnotes

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