

Why is high quality early education important?

Just the Facts:

- ✧ A child's experiences in the first three years greatly affect the rest of his or her life.
- ✧ The human brain develops more rapidly between birth and age five than during any other later period. This is a time of enormous social-emotional, physical, and cognitive growth.
- ✧ School readiness is a critical indicator of later school success. Children who receive quality early childhood education enter school ready to learn, have better social skills, fewer grade retentions, and higher high school graduation rates
- ✧ Evidence suggests that early childhood interventions are much more effective than remedies that attempt to compensate later in life for early neglect. These early years provide a window of opportunity to "set either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows."
- ✧ Nearly half of the kindergarten children in the U.S. face risk factors that could limit their development including: Living in poverty; having a single parent; having a parent with less than a high school education; living in a family that does not speak English.
- ✧ Today's children are tomorrow's workers. Their ability to learn and develop future skills is being shaped by their early experiences.
- ✧ Over 20% of the U.S. workers are functionally illiterate and cannot add and subtract; a much higher percentage than in leading European countries.
- ✧ When workers have reliable, quality early education and care arrangements for their young children, employers report reduced employee turnover, lowered absenteeism, and increased productivity. Employee absenteeism as a result of poor quality early education and care arrangements costs American businesses an estimated \$3 billion per year.
- ✧ According to Child Care Information Services, 639 children in Butler County benefit from Pennsylvania child care subsidies. An additional 43 children are currently on the waiting list, with an average wait time of two to three months. The impact: unemployed parents cannot take offered jobs; increased incident of job loss due to absenteeism (no one to care for children); increased school drop-out rate of parenting teens. Families who need care for their children during the summer are unlikely to ever receive help because they cannot apply until thirty days before care is needed and are likely to be on the waiting list until August.
- ✧ Local zoning laws in some communities prohibit the establishment of new family & group day care homes, limiting opportunities for care and increasing the risk for unregistered or unregulated care.
- ✧ 31% of Butler County child care providers currently participate in Pennsylvania's quality improvement program, Keystone STARS. For more information on STARS and enrolled providers: www.pakeys.org