

# Build a better workforce <sup>[1]</sup>

Early learning investments lay a crucial foundation for skills development

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## AVAILABILITY

Access full PDF online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS from the summary

From the very earliest days of kindergarten, teachers can often tell which children will face the biggest challenges in school. A new Illinois assessment illustrates this point: In fall 2017, only one out of four kindergarteners demonstrated school readiness in all three observed areas: early math, literacy and language, and social-emotional development. Unfortunately, research also shows that many young children who fall behind early in school will struggle to catch up later—and the remediation measures they need can prove substantial and costly. Moreover, that frustrating reality doesn't necessarily end with school.

Fast forward a number of years: From the very earliest days of a new hire's employment, his or her supervisor can often spot significant deficiencies that lead to workplace challenges. Perhaps a new worker's math skills actually fall well shy of what's really needed for his engineering position or retail sales job. Maybe a new employee's inability to work collaboratively with her colleagues—or even to show up every day on time—presents obstacles to a work team's success.

These issues—both in early childhood and later employment—are not separate matters. On the contrary, they're closely intertwined. Studies show that many of the fundamental skills necessary for workforce success have their developmental roots during the earliest years of life for children, our future workforce. This is true of both technical and non-technical skills, a subject of increasing focus among both researchers and a growing number of business leaders who value wise, effective workforce- development approaches in an age of increasing global competition. Their conclusion: We should invest further in young children's access to high-quality early learning experiences if we're serious about elding a well-prepared workforce in the 21st Century.

**Related link:**

**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

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