

Report: Early child care vital for economic success [US-WV] ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Putting more resources into early child care and in-home family education will produce a healthier and smarter population in the Mountain State, a Morgantown-based policy institute has concluded.

The eight-page report by Imagine West Virginia found that more investment in a child's first three years of life ultimately will make West Virginia more competitive in the global marketplace since those first years are crucial for cognitive development.

"When we think about early childhood education, early child care, what we say to ourselves is 'that's great for the kids, it's great for the parents,'" said Marshall University economist Cal Kent. "What we have to recognize is there are phenomenal, phenomenal benefits to the state as a whole."

Kent, one of the report's principle advisers, and several members of Imagine West Virginia's board of governors gathered Jan. 26 at the state Capitol to release the group's findings.

The report cited a 2005 Massachusetts Institute of Technology study that found that every \$1 spent on quality early child development saves as much as \$13 in education, criminal justice and welfare. West Virginia could expect \$5.20 in savings for every \$1 spent, according to the authors.

That is because good early childhood programs lead to increases in cognitive and social development, educational performance and parental involvement while reducing crime, welfare dependency and abuse and neglect, the authors reported.

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Imagine West Virginia recommended that state policy makers advance a system of early child care that is available, affordable and adheres to a quality rating and improvement system.

At the same time, policy makers should create a comprehensive system of in-home education across the entire state.

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"During these difficult economic times, we must not forget the children," said Rick Remish, executive director of Imagine West Virginia.

- reprinted from The State Journal

Region: United States ^[2]

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