

Preschool backers say they mean business [US] ^[1]

Author: Wen, Patricia

Source: Boston Globe

Format: Article

Publication Date: 9 Oct 2003

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Some of the state's top business and education leaders launched a lobbying effort yesterday to build support for free preschool programs for every child, saying that the future of the Massachusetts work force depends on early education. The legislative proposal, to be touted in a novel campaign employing the language of economics and expensive television ads, is ambitious. It would have the state spend about \$1 billion a year for voluntary half-day programs for all children ages 3 and 4 and for full-day kindergarten for 5-year-olds, regardless of their family's income. Given budget cutbacks on Beacon Hill, supporters say they will try to appeal to the public's intellect, rather than pull heartstrings, by emphasizing that the vitality of the state's economy depends on reaching children as early as possible.

The initiative, launched by the nonprofit group Early Education for All, has already received \$2 million in private donations to begin its lobbying strategy, including a \$300,000 media campaign of television commercials scheduled to start yesterday and ads in newspapers around the state. The Boston advertising firm Hill, Holliday, Connors, Cosmopolos Inc. produced for free a 30-second TV spot showing a preschool boy talking to classmates about changing the world. The ad highlights recent research showing that the bulk of a child's intellect and personality are developed by age 5.

The early childhood education bill, which the Legislature's education committee is slated to consider later this month, would be implemented over the next decade.

State figures show that roughly three in every four of the state's 240,000 children ages 3 to 5 attend some kind of early education program, but that the quality varies widely. Unless they choose to bypass early education and keep their 3- and 4-year-olds at home, parents typically pay for pre-school themselves.

Currently, Massachusetts requires communities to provide only half-day kindergarten, and roughly half of the state's cities and towns go beyond that by providing full-day programs.

In keeping with the day's analytical focus, Rolnick, of the Federal Reserve Bank, cited a study of low-income black families from Ypsilanti, Mich., which started a preschool program in 1962. In tracking the children for more than two decades, researchers found that those who received a half-day of early childhood education, as well as home visits, had far higher high school graduation rates, achievement test scores, and future earnings than those in a control group who did not receive such early intervention.

Rolnick said his cost-benefit analysis shows that for every \$1 spent on children in the study, the government saved \$8 in unneeded future services, such as special education classes and other programs.

Several speakers noted that this campaign will probably be far harder to sell to the public than the Education Reform Act of 1993, which came at a time of state fiscal prosperity and focused on the core years of public education, from elementary school through high school.

Political leaders said many statistics from yesterday's forum were compelling, but the critical ones involve tangible political support. Travaglini said he cares most about one number: 21, the simple majority in his 40-member Senate body.

- reprinted from the Boston Globe

Region: United States ^[2]

Tags: advocacy ^[3]

economics ^[4]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/10/preschool-backers-say-they-mean-business-us>
Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/03/10/preschool-backers-say-they-mean-business-us> [2]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/advocacy> [4]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/economics>