BUILD ARIZONA

Building a Quality Workforce for Arizona Starts Early

Investing in young children today will yield the highest returns – building a workforce that will keep Arizona competitive in the years ahead.

By 2020, analysts predict that the majority of available jobs will require skilled labor, even as fewer and fewer skilled workers enter the job market. Research indicates that a child’s quality of life and the contributions he or she will make to society can be directly traced to the earliest years of life—and investing early has been shown to have a high rate of financial return. Arizona needs to cultivate its next generation of skilled workers early in order to create a competitive labor force for the future.

**Economic and Workforce Benefits Enhanced Workforce Development.** A competitive workforce grows out of a population that begins life with the cognitive, social and emotional skills they need to succeed. High quality early learning experiences are known to contribute to higher employment rates, increased placement in skilled positions and greater median earnings.

**Attracting Business and Industry.** Attracting and retaining new business and industry is central to building the state economy. Some of the most critical factors that influence the decision to locate business or industry in one area over another include: availability of a competent workforce; a successful school system; and safe, stable communities. High quality early learning experiences have been directly linked to all of these factors.

**Reduction in special education and remediation costs.** Children who receive quality early education are less likely to require expensive special education and remediation. The average cost of providing special education services is twice the cost of a typical education.

**Tax savings.** Every $1 invested in quality early education saves $7 in special education, public assistance, corrections and lost taxes. The rate of return for quality early childhood education is 10% per year. An $8,000 investment at birth brings nearly an $800,000 return over the child’s life.

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**The Opportunity to Ensure Future Success Starts Now**

The most important predictor of high school graduation is grade-level reading by the end of the third grade. One in six children who are not reading proficiently in 3rd grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times that of proficient readers. (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

Currently, 75% of Arizona’s third graders read at or near grade level. Arizona’s 2020 goal is that 94% of students will read proficiently in third grade. The children who are tasked with meeting this goal are being born TODAY. The opportunity to ensure their success starts NOW.

**Did You Know?**

Children who attend high quality early learning programs (preschool) have been shown to have improved cognitive, reading and math scores, and were more likely to attend college. (Abecedarian/Perry Preschool Project)

Arizona ranks 49th in the percentage of children ages 3-5 that attend preschool/early education. (Annie E. Casey Data Center, 2011)
Arizona’s Aspiration: A qualified, prepared workforce to meet the needs of the 21st century marketplace.
For a long time, business leaders have been voicing concern about the growing need for well-educated and skilled workers to meet the demands of the 21st century workforce. Based on workforce competency research, we know that future workers need to have strong content knowledge and technological skills, problem solving, communication and leadership skills—skills which, as shown by brain development research, begin to develop in the earliest stages of life.

Arizona’s Method: Arizona State Common Core Standards
Arizona is currently implementing a new set of internationally benchmarked, more rigorous educational standards called the Arizona Common Core Standards. These standards are designed to raise the bar to ensure students in grades K-12 are prepared for college and careers of the 21st century.

Arizona’s Foundation: Strong Systems to Support Children from Birth to Age 8
With increasing rigor and expectations beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through K-12, it is critical that we prepare our youngest children to enter school with the cognitive and social skills they will need to succeed. Research shows that quality health services and high quality early learning experiences significantly impact a child’s school readiness and early success in school—as well as their ability to achieve grade level proficiency in reading and math, to graduate high school and to develop the high level thinking skills necessary to become successful adults.

Build AZ supports a range of strategies designed to ensure optimal development of children from birth to age 8. By becoming informed of these key strategies and taking action on behalf of children, you can make a significant impact on the future.

How You Can Help:
- **Stay Informed and Make Your Voice Heard** – Join BUILD AZ to stay informed about current issues impacting young children and stay current on legislative issues. Talk with, write to and share stories with our state legislators and other community leaders.
- **Educate Others** – Share information in the workplace about early childhood development and early grade success. Invite experts from BUILD AZ to inform your employees and make them aware of resources in the community.
- **Act Locally** – Get involved on a local level by learning about the needs of children in your community. Volunteer in an agency serving young children and families and consider strategic investment in research-based programs that support children’s optimal development.

BUILD Arizona is a coalition of children’s champions who are working together to enhance opportunities for all young children in Arizona so that they can meet our state’s increasingly rigorous educational standards and become productive members of the workforce. We are business leaders, nonprofit executives, public sector representatives, educators, health and other practitioners working toward the shared goal of making and keeping Arizona competitive in the years ahead.

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www.buildinitiative.org