



## Key Messages

*Nobel Prize-winning University of Chicago Professor James J. Heckman and his colleagues at the Center for the Economics of Human Development evaluate early childhood and other programs that develop skills from birth to early adulthood.*

### Key Findings:

- Strong families, quality early education, health, and nutrition are the foundation for the success of America's children. When we invest in and provide access to the high-quality programs that provide children with early life skills, we produce a more capable, productive, and valuable workforce that pays dividends to our nation for generations to come.
- All children need quality early childhood development from birth to age five, but disadvantaged children are least likely to receive it and should be the first to receive subsidies from the government.
- Quality early childhood programs for children from low-income families have been proven to yield a significant return on investment. In fact, every dollar invested in quality early childhood development for disadvantaged children produces a 7-10% return, per child, per year through better education, health, social and economic outcomes and the reduced need for social spending.
- Non-cognitive abilities are important determinants of socioeconomic success, and foundational intelligence and social skills are developed at an early age before children even enter school.

---

### Return on Investment:

- Investing in quality early childhood development for disadvantaged children from birth through age 5 will:
  - Help prevent achievement deficits and produce better education, health, social, and economic outcomes
  - Reduce the need for costly remediation and social spending
  - Increase the productivity and earning potential of individuals.
- Early childhood education is the most efficient way to provide the tools for upward mobility and build a highly educated, skilled workforce.
- Those seeking to reduce deficits and strengthen the economy should make significant investments in early childhood education.
- Increase investments in early childhood programs that combine health, nutrition, and early learning – the outcomes are more likely to pay for the cost.
  - Current investments in early childhood programs, Head Start, Early Head Start, CHIP, Medicaid, and health care can be critical building blocks for disease prevention and economic advancement.

## **Skills Development:**

- To foster the skills of American children, we must help disadvantaged American families.
  - There is strong evidence that shows that early family conditions are powerful in shaping cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and early development shapes their later success.
- Taking a proactive approach to cognitive and social skill development through investments in quality early childhood programs is more effective and economically efficient than trying to close the gap later on.
- Social and emotional skills are as important, and in some areas more important, for success than just IQ.

## **Evaluating the Success of Early Childhood Programs:**

- The success of an early childhood program ultimately comes down to what is being evaluated, and too many evaluate the wrong things.
- Too often, program evaluations are based on standardized achievement tests and IQ measures that do not tell the whole story and poorly predict life outcomes.
- The decision to judge programs based on third-grade test scores can often lead to incorrect conclusions about their cognitive benefits fading out and ignores the full range of skills and capacities developed through early childhood education that strongly contribute to future achievement and life outcomes.
- Conscientiousness, self-control, motivation, persistence, and sociability have far greater influence on full-time employment, lifetime wages, health, family, and social outcomes than IQ and cognitive skills. In fact, these skills facilitate better performance on achievement tests despite treated children performing no better on IQ tests.

## **Early Childhood Education and Health:**

- Quality early childhood programs that incorporate health and nutrition help prevent the development of chronic disease.
- The great promise of combining early education and early health is that it provides cognitive development with the impulse control, persistence, and grit that help people avoid risky behaviors seek treatment, and follow doctors' orders later in life.
- Children who have good health are able to attend school and acquire the cognitive and social and emotional skills that will help them succeed in life.