

Quality Early Learning

QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The foundation for communication, critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork - skills that employers cite as critical to workplace success - is largely developed by age five. High quality early learning opportunities, as well as early detection and treatment of childhood developmental and behavioral challenges, are essential for children’s development and later success in school and in life. Every \$1 invested in programs for low-income children can yield a \$4 - \$9 return to society. (Heckman 2009)

Children who receive high-quality early education are²:

53% less likely to have an arrest	18% more likely to be employed
24% more likely to own a home	more likely to have higher earnings

Source: Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R., & Nores, M. (2005) Lifetime Effects: the HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 40. (Monographs of the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 14). Ypsilanti, MI:HighScope Press.

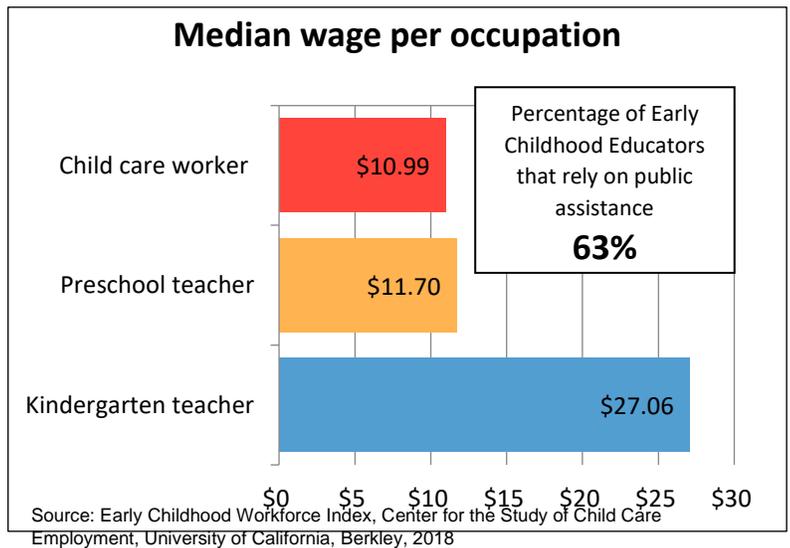
School Readiness (SR) - Florida’s SR program provides financial assistance to low income families for early child education and care so children are prepared to succeed in school. The 2018 Florida Legislature began the development of a system of child and program assessments and tiered provider reimbursement based on quality.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) - Florida’s VPK is a free educational program that prepares 4-year-olds for kindergarten and beyond. Improving accountability by utilizing coordinated and developmentally appropriate

assessments through kindergarten will improve quality, and reduce the readiness gap.

Professional Development - Low compensation results in high teacher turnover at school readiness programs, negatively impacting child development. Incentive programs for early learning educators including Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten instructors and School Readiness teachers and providers improve teacher skills and increase retention in the early education field.

Family Support - Early childhood is the optimal time to detect and treat developmental or behavioral concerns. Help Me Grow links families to local resources and programs that can address parents’ concerns about their young children’s healthy development.



PROPOSED CHANGES

Florida’s United Ways urge the 2021 Florida Legislature to:

- **IMPROVE** transparency, accountability, and performance of the state’s early learning programs (School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten), thus benefiting those who fall within the ALICE population, with a focus on equitable outcomes for children
- **INCREASE** professional development opportunities and incentives for early learning educators including Pre-Kindergarten instructors and School Readiness teachers and providers
- **EXPAND** access to family support services that link families to local resources