

# Family Involvement:

## Proven Strategy for Promoting Student Success

Students **learn better and achieve more** when their education is supported by **dynamic, on-going partnerships** between schools and families.



### What the research shows about strong family involvement in children's education . . .

- Higher grades and test scores, and enrollment in higher-level programs
- Reduced incidence of truancy
- Better social, adaptation and problem-resolution skills
- Increased rates of graduation and higher educational attainment
- Lower rates of drug and alcohol abuse

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002

**How educators and afterschool programs can help families build the foundations for childrens' lifelong engagement with learning**

#### Parenting

Families benefit from assistance with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level. Schools also need assistance in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.

#### Communicating

Effective, two-way communication between home and school is crucial. Families and educators should employ multiple methods to share information about school programs and activities, student progress, concerns and questions.

#### Volunteering

Educators should strive to improve recruitment, training, activities, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and as audiences at the school, in afterschool programs or other locations and events.

#### Learning at Home

Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities that enable students to share and discuss interesting tasks.

#### Decision Making

Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations.

#### Collaborating with the Community

Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups, including businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, and colleges or universities.

Studies indicate that meaningful family involvement in children's schools and education produces positive results in terms of children's academic achievement and commitment to learning – **regardless of racial/ethnic background, socio-economic category, or parents' own level of educational attainment.**

In fact, some research suggests that family participation in education can be as much as **twice as predictive of students' academic success as socio-economic status.**

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002  
Michigan Department of Education, 2002

A long-term study of the Chicago Parent Centers (serving families with children from ages three to nine) found that parent participation in the program had a major impact on their children's social and academic outcomes. **Over 80 percent of students whose parents were involved for the whole six years of the program graduated from high school,** compared to the 38 percent of students whose parents were not involved at all.

(A. Henderson, K. Mapp, et. al., 2007)

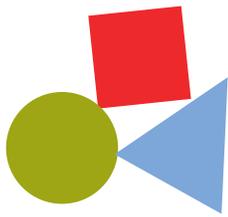


## About Nebraska PIRC

The Nebraska Parent Information and Resource Center project is a five-year, federally-funded program intended to build dynamic partnerships between schools, communities and families that will enhance the educational experiences of at-risk children throughout the state. The project focuses on four major goals:

1. Develop and disseminate parent involvement policy to Nebraska schools through a collaborative effort of the Nebraska Department of Education, the staff at NDE associated with 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Positive Behavior Supports, the family involvement planning team, community partners, project staff, and the project advisory board.
2. Establish 72 School-Based PIRCs in Title I school buildings with 21st Century Community Learning Center programs across Nebraska. Each School-Based PIRC will provide ongoing training and support to parents and educators on partnering together to enhance student achievement.
3. Implement Model Early Childhood Parent Education Programs in six communities serving parents of very young children. These Early Childhood PIRCs utilize curriculum and complementary learning strategies to link families, early childhood educators, schools and community partners.
4. Launch a public awareness campaign to educate Nebraskans about the importance of parent involvement in supporting students' learning, as well as various information resources (e.g. state and school report cards) that can strengthen family engagement with children's education.

The efficacy of the project will be determined by a comprehensive evaluation. Nebraska PIRC is administered through a partnership of the Munroe-Meyer Institute, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, and the Nebraska Department of Education.



# Investing in Nebraska's Youngest, At-Risk Children

## Investing in Nebraska's Future

Studies of high quality early childhood programs agree that positive early experiences for the very young yield enormous economic and social benefits. This is especially apparent in children who are economically disadvantaged or otherwise at-risk.

When given access to high quality early experiences during the first three years of life, at-risk children are significantly more likely to grow up to be healthy, skilled and productive citizens.

Investment in quality early childhood education can . . .

- Reduce long-term economic stressors on our education system
- Reduce the number of children and adults entering our healthcare system
- Reduce the number of people entering our criminal justice system

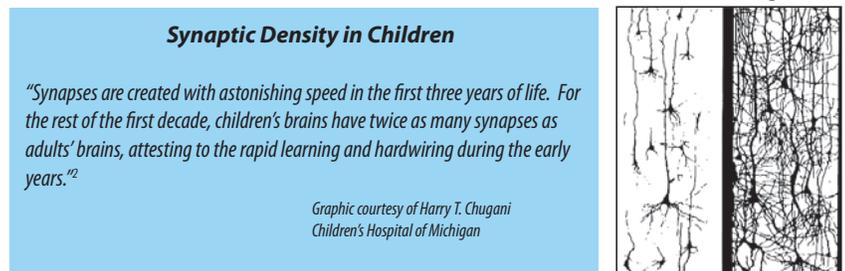
**“Some of the areas of most rapid growth in state budgets – corrections and prison costs, special education expenditures, and Medicaid expenditures (particularly behavioral health services for children) – are connected to failures in meeting children’s needs in the earliest years.”<sup>11</sup>**

Charles Bruner  
Executive Director,  
Child and Family Policy Center

## ■ We can't afford to wait to intervene

Scientific evidence is focusing more than ever on the years from **birth to three as a critical time for learning** in a child's life. During these years, much of the neural groundwork for a child's future cognitive, emotional and social development will be laid.

- Researchers estimate that about 85% of a child's brain core structure is formed by age 3.<sup>1</sup>



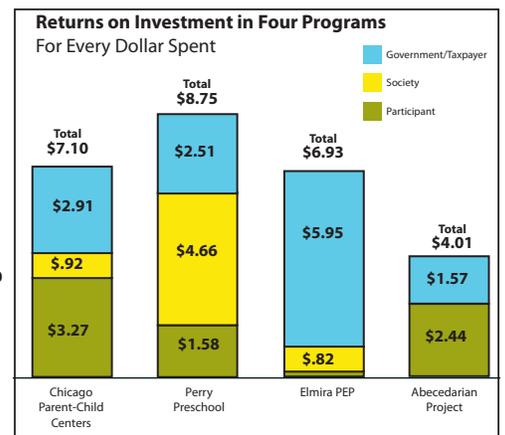
- **35% of all Nebraska children** under the age of three **live in low-income conditions** and do not have the financial capability to pursue high quality early childhood experiences for themselves. Of these approximately **40% live in rural areas.**<sup>3</sup>

## ■ Return on Investment: An economic necessity

- **Education Expenses:** Participants in model early childhood programs demonstrated as much as a **29% increase in high school graduation rates** and a **40% decrease in grade retention and special education placement.**<sup>4</sup> During FY 2005, Nebraska's special education appropriations alone amounted to nearly \$170 M.<sup>5</sup>

- **Healthcare Expenses:** State financial analysts predict that by **FY 2010 Nebraska General Fund expenditures for Medicaid will exceed the available Medicaid appropriation by \$115 M. By 2025, that variance is expected to grow to \$907 M.**<sup>6</sup> In FY 2005, children accounted for 25.8% of all Medicaid vendor expenditures – nearly \$361 M.<sup>7</sup> Investing in quality early childhood programs that help monitor the nutrition, health and physiological development of very young children could reduce the likelihood of chronic health problems, and help offset the enormous, long-term pressure on our healthcare system.

- **Crime-Related Expenses:** Very young children who have positive experiences that inform cognitive, emotional and social development are less likely to engage in delinquency or criminal behavior later in life. Studies of model programs showed as much as a **33% lower rate of juvenile arrest** and a **42% lower rate of arrest for violent offences** among participants vs. non-participants.<sup>8</sup> Given that **Nebraska expended over \$234 M on criminal justice and law enforcement in FY 2005 alone**, the potential savings are enormous.<sup>9</sup>



*An analysis of four high-quality early childhood programs. Returns include savings from criminal justice costs, special and remedial education costs, reduced welfare payments, reduced healthcare costs and increased net earnings per participant.<sup>10</sup>*

## References

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