

## Step Up To Early Learning QUALITY Programs

**FACT:** High quality early childhood experiences are directly related to children performing better in school.<sup>1</sup>

**Implications:** The quality of early childhood programs is the lead element to successful implementation as well as production of positive outcomes. *Cost, Quality and Outcomes* study<sup>2</sup> supports the positive benefits to children and demonstrates that low quality programs resulted in a lack of positive child outcomes. This is directly linked to children's performance on standardized tests, grades, and behavioral referrals.

**"Delaware Early Care and Education Baseline Quality Study"** assessed close to 600 classrooms in Head Start, Early Childhood Assistance Programs, Part-Day Preschool, Child Care Centers, Family Child Care and School-Age programs. The results are of great concern - the experiences of children in early childhood programs are poor (27%) to mediocre (43%), especially in the areas of personal care routines; curriculum planning in areas such as math, science, literacy and language activities; and space and furnishings. Results are worse in programs accepting child care subsidies (Purchase of Care) than in programs not accepting these funds.<sup>3</sup>

**"Investing in Better Outcomes, The Delaware Early Childhood Longitudinal Study"** shows that children who participated in Head Start, the Early Childhood Assistance Program, and/or Programs for Children with Disabilities performed higher on their DSTP standardized test, achieved higher grades, had lower absenteeism and less behavioral referrals than their peers. This study began in 1997 with 717 children who have been followed through their fifth grade school year. It compares children who received high quality early childhood experiences to their peers who had no such services.<sup>4</sup>

### What Are the Components of Quality?

- Low teacher:child ratios
- Safe and healthy environments
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum
- On-going assessment
- Developmentally appropriate supplies and equipment
- Staff educated in early childhood
- Director educated in early childhood and management
- Parent involvement

## Why is Quality Important to a Child?

- Direct relation to children performing better in school
- Higher scores on standardized tests
- Higher grades
- Higher attendance rates
- Increased graduation rates
- Increased rates of high school graduation and college attendance
- Increased income and home ownership
- Lower behavior referrals
- Lower retention rates
- Less special education intervention
- Decreased dependence upon welfare

## How Do Quality Programs Make a Difference?

- Promotes a child's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development
- Provides support to families
- Provides developmentally appropriate learning through play
- Increases early brain development and problem solving skills
- Provides opportunities for self-esteem and self-control
- Provides a solid foundation for learning and relating to others
- Provides a secure environment
- Provides links to early intervention services if needed
- Provides a culturally and linguistically diverse program

## Who is in the Workforce?

- 9,000 professionals
- Average age is 38 years
- Average pay of a lead teacher is \$8.90/hour
- 68% of lead teachers have less than an Associate Degrees

<sup>1</sup> Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., Burchinal, M.R., Clifford, R.M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S.L., Yazejian, N., Blyer, P., Rustici, J., & Zelazo, J. (1999). *The children of the cost, quality, and outcomes study go to school*. Gamel-McCormick, M. & Amsden, D. (2002). *Investing in Better Outcomes, The Delaware Longitudinal study*.

<sup>2</sup> Peisner-Feinberg, E.S., Burchinal, M.R., Clifford, R.M., Culkin, M.L., Howes, C., Kagan, S.L., Yazejian, N., Blyer, P., Rustici, J., & Zelazo, J. (1999). *The children of the cost, quality, and outcomes study go to school*.

<sup>3</sup> Gamel-McCormick, M., Buell, M.J., Amsden, D.J., & Fahey, M. (2003). *Delaware Early Care and Education Baseline Quality Study*

<sup>4</sup> Gamel-McCormick, M. & Amsden, D. (2002). *Investing in Better Outcomes, The Delaware Longitudinal study*.