



Investments in early learning pay off

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I echo Sheriff Dan Kimball's response to the recent Olympian editorial calling for Gov. Chris Gregoire and the Legislature to make early learning an established part of our basic education system.

As a business executive, I want our elected representatives to devote tax dollars to programs that deliver the biggest punch for economic development. Investing in early learning creates new jobs immediately and grows the economy. For every additional dollar we invest in early childhood programs, more than \$2 will be generated through additional employment and spending on goods and services. Additionally, for every two early education jobs created, the spending from those two workers will support an additional job.

Providing early learning also will attract skilled workers and new business to Washington state, while reducing employee absenteeism by allowing working parents to focus on their work rather than their child care arrangements. Access to these services appeals to skilled individuals as well as employers who know these programs improve worker morale.

Rigorous research shows that early learning also yields a solid return on investment. Enrolling at-risk kids in high-quality early learning can save as much as \$10 for every \$1 spent by reducing crime, special education, and other costs.

When you add up these important benefits, early learning is essential to a well-managed education system. It's also good business for Washington state.

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