



## **Educate our kids, and the jobs will be there**

By **JOHN C. CAVALIER AND F. MICHAEL TUCKER**

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Let's face it. These are hard economic times in New York, with some experts predicting that our economic woes could drag on for another two years.

In Albany, we are fortunate to have a growing technology sector that will create hundreds of jobs. But these companies still have an urgent need to attract skilled workers and be assured they have the 21st-century skills required.

Business leaders and legislators alike are looking for effective ways to attract new skilled workers and develop a strong work force while creating new jobs and providing immediate relief to

struggling businesses. What type of investment can do this?

The answer may surprise you.

A new report by the national business group, America's Edge, concludes that support for quality early care and education is one of the best investments we can make to jump-start our state economy while laying the foundation for a stronger work force and economic security in the future. The new research shows that early learning investments are highly effective in generating local sales for Main Street-type businesses.

Here is what the report found:

First, for every \$1 invested in early care and education in New York, \$1.86 is generated in additional sales of local goods and services within the state. That's impressive -- the same amount generated by an investment in construction and higher than investments in transportation, manufacturing or utilities. These differences can be significant, injecting millions of additional dollars into our communities, providing more buying power for consumers, helping businesses stay afloat and creating thousands of new jobs. And the report found that nearly all of these dollars generated in New York would stay in New York -- maximizing the benefits

for local businesses and communities. Second, expanding early care and education can help businesses' bottom line. Expanding these programs would reduce employee absenteeism and turnover, saving businesses money, while increasing productivity because parents could focus more on their jobs and not on child care arrangements. Expanding these programs also would attract new skilled workers and businesses to our state.

Third, support for quality early learning can ensure long-term economic stability and a skilled work force. Children in quality early learning

programs do better in school, have higher graduation rates and increased earnings as adults -- all of which better ensures a strong and stable future economy and a work force with the skills businesses need to compete.

We recognize that New York legislators face very tough choices. The report does not call for specific increases in early learning funding but urges legislators to consider these highly effective investments in their deliberations on how best to help businesses and communities cope with the economic downturn.

Given the great uncertainty about our

economy, business executives are reluctant to hire more workers until the business climate improves. Increased support for early care and education offers legislators an effective way to help support local businesses and improve today's business climate while building a stronger work force and economic security for the future.

And that's a positive bottom line for all of us.

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