



Letter to the editor: Early learning investments pay off

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Dear Editor: I agree with Optimax Systems Inc. president Michael Mandina that ensuring that New York has a work force with the 21st-century skills businesses require is vital to our economic recovery ("Congress should pass bill to counteract skill gaps," RBJ, 12/3/10). Our state's primary asset is its human talent. But to ensure that New York has a pipeline of skilled workers, we must not only train our current work force, we must include in our infrastructure high-quality early learning programs. Studies show children who attended one high-quality infant and early learning program were 74 percent more likely to hold a skilled job by age 21 than children left out. These programs also result in higher graduation rates and increased earnings as adults.

And we can help boost our economy today, as well as tomorrow, through early learning investments. A report from America's Edge, the national business leader organization, shows that investments in these programs generate at least as much in new sales of local goods as investments in construction, manufacturing, transportation or utilities-\$1.86 for every \$1 invested. And the long-term return on investment of as much as \$16 for every \$1 invested is almost unbeatable. Local organizations like the Children's Agenda and Rochester's Child confirm and promote the positive impact of early learning and are partners in our work to strengthen our businesses and community.

Rochester business leaders are committed to ensuring a work force that will protect New York's competitive edge in a global marketplace. I hope that commitment is expanded to include support for our state's early care and education programs, and federal programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start and the Child Care and Development Block Grant.

It's just good for business.

James Brush, *President and CEO*, Sentry Group