



KJ Opinion

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Head Start sound investment for Maine

As a banker, I often find myself advising individuals and businesses about their finances.

I encourage them to look for smart investment decisions that pay off over the long term. Anyone lucky enough to find an investment that pays twice -- in the short term and again in the long term -- should seize that opportunity. A dual payoff is just what we get with high-quality early education programs. Investments in early learning programs significantly increase sales of local goods and services today.

According to the national business leaders organization, America's Edge, investments in quality early learning will generate as much or more in new sales as investments in construction, manufacturing, transportation or utilities, while creating much-needed jobs.

In fact, every \$1 invested in early learning will generate almost \$2 in total sales for other Maine businesses.

Quality early learning also will help us ensure we have a work force with the 21st century skills businesses need.

Children who participate in high-quality early learning programs are significantly more likely to enter school with the underlying skills needed to succeed in school and later in the work force. These programs can increase language skills, lower the need for special education and increase graduation rates -- by as much as 44 percent.

Given the high rate of return on high-quality early education programs, it is my hope that Maine's congressional delegation will work to protect and strengthen our federal investments in early care and education programs like Head Start. It is a sound investment for today and tomorrow.

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