



## **ISSUE BRIEF: Early Childhood Education**

By investing in early childhood education, Michigan invests in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy and a greater likelihood that thousands of jobs that go unfilled today will be filled by Michigan children who graduate from high school and post-secondary education. Evidence supporting the return on investment for preschool programs, for example, is powerful: Estimates are from three to seven dollars is saved for every dollar spent.<sup>1</sup> Education programs for children from birth to age three can deliver longer-term benefits including greater education attainment, higher labor-force participation and earnings, and reduced crime.

Research on preschool programs in Michigan indicates that children who have a high-quality preschool experience show significant, positive developmental differences compared to children who do not.<sup>2</sup>

“The years before a child reaches kindergarten are among the most critical in his or her life to influence learning,” according to the U.S. Department of Education. An important component in any high quality program is the availability of qualified teachers and aides who receive adequate compensation and professional development opportunities.

## **Challenge and Investment**

Michigan ranks 35<sup>th</sup> in college attainment, 32<sup>nd</sup> in 8<sup>th</sup>-grade reading proficiency and 42<sup>nd</sup> in 4<sup>th</sup>-grade math proficiency. An estimated 56 percent of Michigan children from birth to age three are at risk. “Investments ... increase the odds that these children are on track and ready to succeed when they arrive at kindergarten”.<sup>3</sup> Today in Michigan, about 49,000 jobs are unfilled due to an unqualified labor pool and Michigan’s high school drop-out rate.<sup>4</sup>

## **Community Action Agencies’ Role**

Working with state and local partners, Community Action Agencies in Michigan help educate thousands of children ages 0-5. Programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start and Great Start Readiness are proven to help children develop cognitive skills, social relationships and emotional resilience. Such child-focused programs increase school readiness of young children from low-income families.

Community Action Agencies take a holistic approach to early childhood education, which include health and nutrition, social integration and parental involvement. Examples:

- The Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency offers several free education programs to low-income families, including High/Scope Preschool Education -- a successful national model of preschool education for more than 30 years.
- Community Action of Battle Creek helps facilitate Head Start programs for 3-4-year-old children from low-income families. The programs also provide educational experiences to parents, helping them raise successful children.

## **Funding**

Funding for Head Start and other early childhood education programs comes from the state and federal governments, as well as private sources.

<sup>1</sup> Public Sector Consultants, “Policy Options to Support Children from Birth to Age Three,” 2014

<sup>2</sup> Michigan Department of Education

<sup>3</sup> Public Sector Consultants, “Policy Options to Support Children from Birth to Age Three,” 2014

<sup>4</sup> Michigan Manufacturers Association