

Peoria Journal-Star

Preschool education makes a difference that lasts a lifetime

Sunday, February 26, 2006

Re. Feb. 16 editorial, "Governor gives kids preschool and bills to pay later":

The Journal Star's editorial regarding the governor's budget proposal as it relates to preschool simply misses the point. By bolstering early learning now, we will make the dollars spent later work more effectively. Adequately funding early childhood education strengthens their experience in K-12.

In fact, early education has a high return on investment - 16 percent, according to Art Rolnick, senior vice president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. That's not all. Over the years, we will get a better prepared work force and reduced social costs, an estimated \$17 saved for every \$1 invested. The costs of not moving forward with this ambitious proposal are far greater than what we would pay for "Preschool for All."

Early education prepares children to succeed in school and is a sound investment in the future economy of Peoria and Illinois. The editorial correctly notes that we either pay now or pay later. But we'd rather the state pay for a lifetime of learning instead of remedial education and the debilitating effects of crime and unemployment.

Research shows that learning begins at birth. Each year we do not act, we relegate more young children to a game of catch up too few can win. Our kids should not be denied the chance to get the early start they need that will make a difference for a lifetime.

Maria Whelan President, Illinois Action for Children

Harriet Meyer President, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Jerry Stermer President, Voices for Illinois Children