Social and emotional skills, sometimes called “soft skills” are as important as cognitive skills in determining success in school, work and life. These skills are developed during children’s earliest years. Learning to play with others develops language skills and improved teamwork; making up games and rules develops negotiation skills; learning to follow rules develops ethics; and early exploration develops creative thinking and problem solving skills.

Cognitive Skills Are Only Half of the Equation

Soft skills are in high demand.

Human Brain Development

Synapse formation is dependent on early experiences.

Sensory Pathways (sight & hearing) Language Higher Cognitive Functions

This graph illustrates when connections peak for different brain functions.

Lifelong Health

Early experiences are built into our bodies.

Health in the earliest years lays the groundwork for future well-being. High quality early childhood development programs with health and nutritional components help prevent adult chronic diseases and promote better health.

A study of children who participated in the Carolina Abecedarian early learning program showed significantly improved health as adults as compared to the group that did not participate. They experience fewer illnesses as adults, make healthier lifestyle choices, have lower rates of high blood pressure and have significantly lower risk of heart disease.

A survey of business leaders found that employers view “soft” skills as even more important to work-readiness than traditional skills, like reading, writing and math.

Child development is a dynamic, interactive process that is not predetermined. It occurs in the context of relationships, experiences and environments. With quality early childhood development experiences, children are school ready, graduate from high school and grow into productive citizens and valuable employees.

Building a Foundation for Success

The foundation for learning is built during a child’s first 2,000 days.

For children to have the opportunity to realize their potential, they need good health, strong families and high quality early learning and school experiences.

- Good Health: Early experiences are built into our bodies.
- Strong Families: Parents are a child’s first and best teacher.
- Quality Early Learning: Brains are built, not born.

Nobel prize winning economist James Heckman’s research found that dollars invested in early education have the greatest return on investment.

High quality early development and learning yields:

- Fewer special education placements
- Higher graduation rates
- Reduced crime
- Higher earnings
- Less reliance on social services

www.first2000days.org
When we invest in a child’s First 2,000 Days we create the best outcomes in education, health and economic well-being for everyone in North Carolina.

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- Sign the commitment to young children.
- Be a NC Voice for children.
- Become a Champion.

Health & Nutrition
Early education with health and nutritional components help improve adult health and prevent chronic disease.

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Essential to America’s Future

- 70% of Americans aged 17 to 24 cannot meet the military’s eligibility requirements.
- Business leaders are frustrated by an inability to hire workers with critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Law enforcement professionals struggle with growing prison populations.

For a list of citations visit

The First 2,000 Days website makes it easy to show your support for young children.

www.first2000days.org

Better third grade outcomes
The early years are so defining that by the time children turn eight, their third grade outcomes can predict future academic achievement and career success.

Higher salaries
At-risk children who participated in a high quality early childhood program were more likely to be employed and earned 33% higher average salaries.

Higher graduation rates
High quality early childhood programs increase graduation rates by as much as 44%.

Higher reading & math scores
A 2011 Duke University study found children had higher third grade reading and math scores in counties that received more funding for Smart Start and NC PreK when those children were younger.

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