

Ready, Set, Go!

Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education

Strategies for Media Attention

In September 2010, the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, released a report titled “[Ready, Set, Go! Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education](#)”; in October a summary of this report was released, entitled “[Starting Smart and Finishing Strong: Fixing the Cracks in America’s Workforce Pipeline Through Investments in Early Childhood Development](#).” (Both available at www.partnershipforsuccess.org/index.php?id=79&MenuSect=7.) These publications provide a strong business endorsement of public investments in young children and create an opportunity to communicate with policy makers and the media about the need for proven investments in young children.

Below are talking points to help leverage the report in written materials, including op-eds and letters to the editor. *We recommend adding to or adapting these general points to spotlight local data, industries and advocacy by business champions already involved in your efforts.* These details and personal stories will make your materials more relevant and attractive to media outlets.

For more inspiration, [check out this successful op-ed](#), which uses “Ready, Set, Go!” extensively to frame a call to protect early childhood funding in North Carolina (Available online at <http://www.newsobserver.com/2010/10/21/752025/the-payoff-from-early-education.html>.)

Tips and Ideas for Op-ed Submissions

Competition for space on a newspaper’s opinion page is fierce, especially at larger outlets. Many editors look first for commentary on news that is at most one or two days old or tied to something in the near future (e.g., a vote, a holiday). No matter how well-written, a submission that leads with week-old news is likely to be turned down. It pays to think about routine or recurring events that a newspaper reports on and then draft op-eds in anticipation of these events. This will ensure that you can submit an appropriate and timely piece during the few days that an editor is seeking commentary on a particular topic.

Here are a few events that can be forecast and used to make the opening lines of an op-ed stand out to an editor.

- **Election results:** In the days after an election, newspapers often look for advice to newly-elected policy makers from prominent voices in the community.
- **Holidays from Thanksgiving to New Year’s:** This season is a common time for media coverage of a community’s disadvantaged families and efforts to help improve their lives, which makes for a natural connection to your work.
- **New unemployment numbers, high school graduation statistics or other economic indicators:** Data of this sort are released on regular schedules and offer opportunities for business leaders to present early childhood investments as vital to economic and workforce development.

- **Graduation and college admission season:** You can play off these springtime events and assumptions about the business community's educational concerns to highlight the growing focus on the start of the workforce pipeline in early childhood.

Talking Points

- 1. Support continues to grow within the business community for greater public investments in early childhood education.**
 - a. This past September, the Institute for a Competitive Workforce, the education and workforce arm of The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, released a report called "Ready, Set, Go! Why Business Should Support Early Childhood Education."
 - b. The report was spurred by the concern that global competition for human talent and innovation, long-standing educational achievement gaps, low high-school graduation rates, and the pending retirement of 77 million baby boomers have placed tremendous workforce pressures on American business.
 - c. The publication focuses heavily on the scientific research in the area of early learning, and sheds light on the tremendous impact that early childhood education has to check these pressures.
- 2. Investing early in our workforce pipeline ensures the best outcomes and saves taxpayer dollars.**
 - a. The foundation for high achievement in school, work and life is built in the youngest years—birth to age five—when the most critical stages of brain development take place.
 - b. Effective early childhood investments like high-quality pre-kindergarten make the most of this window of opportunity and help close achievement gaps.
 - c. Quality early learning programs produce returns that far out-weigh their cost by reducing personal and societal costs later in life, breaking the cycle of poverty and enhancing economic growth.
 - d. The savings start immediately.
 - i. Giving young children a good start reduces health problems and grade retention and special education costs in the first few years of school.
 - ii. Because early childhood spending tends to be local, and child care and pre-kindergarten professionals generally spend rather than save most of their earnings, states generate roughly \$2 in new local spending for each federal child care dollar spent.
- 3. "Ready, Set, Go!" highlights key actions that the business community – as a whole and as individuals – can take to support and grow early learning programs as an important foundation for workforce development.**
 - a. Several states, including California, Minnesota, North Carolina, Washington, and Virginia, have collaborated with state and local chambers of commerce and businesses to address early childhood education.
 - b. Business leaders in our [community/state] are actively engaging policy makers [give local examples].