

## Seven Things Idaho Needs to Know About Early Learning

### 1. The earliest years count.

- Most of the brain's growth occurs in the first few years of life.

### 2. Parents and families matter.

- Children learn from birth. They need constant care and stimulation as they explore the world.

### 3. School readiness is more than words and numbers.

- Knowing the ABCs is not enough. To be prepared for school, children must also be excited and curious about learning and confident that they can succeed.
- Indeed, kindergarten teachers rate skills such as understanding others' feelings, controlling one's own feelings and getting along with peers as more important to school success than being able to hold a pencil or read.

### 4. School unreadiness costs.

- The cost of schooling goes up when children enter school developmentally behind.
- The costs to society include health, special education, retention, delinquency, and incarceration.

### 5. With so many parents working, we need to get this right.

- Changing economic times have doubled the percentage of mothers working when children are very young. Across Idaho, 60.6% of children under the age of six live in families where the sole or both parents work.
- About 63,000 Idaho children under the age of five are cared for by someone other than their parents while their parents work or attend school.

### 6. Quality matters.

- The quality of early childhood programs is what makes a difference. Quality improves development and poor programs can cause harm.
- Quality services to support parents and families improve school readiness.

### 7. Investments pay off.

- National economists have estimated a 16% annualized rate of return for our investments in high quality early learning programs.
- Benefits to society include more college graduates, better jobs, more durable family lives, greater engagement in civic life and better health and well being.

