

# Sound Anti-Poverty Investment: Early Care and Education

Dave Edie

Wisconsin Council on  
Children and Families

Poverty Matters

September 18, 2008

# Why Are These Folks Focusing on Early Childhood?

- Bill Gates & Warren Buffet Families
- James Heckman, Nobel Laureate
- Committee for Economic Development
- Ben Bernanke, Federal Reserve Chairman
- National Governor's Association

# Focus of Presentation

- Research: Importance of First 5 Years
- Challenge: Changes in Society
- Good News: Early Education Works
- Agenda for Wisconsin

# 1. Research on the First 5 Years

Brain development research shows:

- Foundation for all future learning & behavior
- 85% of the foundation of a child's intellect, personality and skills
- Educational gaps are more difficult and costly to correct later

# School Achievement Gap

- Disadvantaged children fall behind at an early age- way before they enter school
- Early gap difficult to fix– they never catch up

# Disparities in Early Vocabulary Growth



Source: Hart & Risley (1995)

## Language Development = Reading Challenge

***Parents*** in disadvantaged families have less cumulative monthly vocabularies on average than the ***children*** in high income families

(Hart and Risley, 1995)

## 2. Changes in Society

- 1970: 40% of mothers of young children were in the workforce
- Today: 71 % of Wisconsin children under age 6 have all parents in the workforce
- Parents are caught in a squeeze:
  - Making a living
  - Raising their kids to be ready for school and life

# Does Wisconsin Measure Up?

- Fairly strong on access: 4K, Wisconsin Share child care subsidies, Head Start, Services to Children with Disabilities
- Major Gaps:
  - Quality early learning for poor children in child care
  - Need early help to low-income parents– home visiting

### 3. Good News: Early Education Works

Extraordinary research: impacts of high quality early education targeted to disadvantaged

- **Abecedarian study:** academic achievement up, graduation rates up, college attendance up
- **Perry Preschool:** higher graduation rates, greater earnings, fewer crimes
- **Chicago Parent-Child Centers:** academic achievement up, graduation up, fewer crimes
- All of these had strong short- and long-term gains
- Cost-to benefit ratio 1 to 5.7- increases over time

## Ingredients to Good ECE Outcomes

- Well-trained and well-compensated staff
- Small class sizes and low child-teacher ratios
- Parent involvement
- Clear approach to learning and development  
–focus on rich interactions

# Home visiting

- Research-based, well-designed home visiting programs targeted to poor families have strong outcomes for kids:
  - Better health- children and parents
  - Higher language skills and achievement scores
  - Lower crime rates: children and parents

## 4. Agenda for Wisconsin: Invest Early

WCCF & Early Learning Coalition are launching a campaign:

### **Great Start: Early Learning Matters**

All families should have voluntary access to services to help their children thrive in the early years

## WCCF and the Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition Support

- Improved early learning in child care settings. Focus: children from low-income families
- Expansion of home visiting programs for parents of newborns where there are risk factors (Early Head Start, Parents as Teachers, etc.)
- Continuing expansion of 4-year-old Kindergarten, with emphasis on community-based models
- Expanded tax credits to help families afford quality child care

## For More Information

Wisconsin Council on Children and Families:  
[www.wccf.org](http://www.wccf.org)

Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition:  
[www.greatstartwi.org](http://www.greatstartwi.org)

To sign up for info:

[\*\*http://capwiz.com/wccf/mlm/signup/\*\*](http://capwiz.com/wccf/mlm/signup/)