

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Are there solutions to these problems? Absolutely. Many other states and communities are implementing positive change. You can help improve things in Virginia for our youngest children.

If you are a parent ...

- ... read to your preschooler every day
- ... talk with your child and provide lots of loving touch
- ... demand high quality child care and preschool programs
- ... tell policy makers how hard it is to find good child care and pay for it

If you are a business leader ...

- ... examine your firm's family-friendly policies and improve them if necessary
- ... advocate for public support of a strong early care industry
- ... volunteer to help implement excellent business practices and data systems for early education programs

If you are a policy maker ...

- ... support policy changes to ensure a system of high quality early care and education
- ... maximize funding for services to children

If you are a public official ...

- ... establish policies and regulations supporting effective services for children and families
- ... revise public expenditures to ensure a smart beginning for Virginia's children

If you are an early childhood educator ...

- ... seek the help you need to provide the best care for the children you serve
- ... explore ways to advance your education and take courses on early childhood development
- ... help business leaders and policy makers understand how important your work is in shaping young lives
- ... advocate for changes that will support your profession

If you belong to a community of faith ...

- ... make sure your child care and preschool programs are continuously improving
- ... guide and support parents as they nurture their children

If you have ideas on improving the quality of care for young children in South Hampton Roads, we'd like to hear from you.

Contact:

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

SMART BEGINNINGS SOUTH HAMPTON ROADS COALITION

Smart Beginnings South Hampton Roads Coalition is an alliance representing the five cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach. In 2005, the coalition commissioned two reports, one a study of the South Hampton Roads child care and early education workforce and the second a comprehensive analysis of the economic effects of the child care industry on the region. This brochure summarizes the results.

Coalition Members:

Chesapeake Health Department
Chesapeake Public Library
Chesapeake Public Schools
Child & Family Services of Eastern Virginia
Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters
City of Norfolk
City of Portsmouth
Eden Capital, LLC
Hampton Roads Partnership
Norfolk Department of Health
Norfolk Department of Human Services
The Norfolk Foundation
Norfolk Public Library
Norfolk Public Schools
Norfolk State University
Old Dominion University

Places and Programs for Children, Inc.
The Planning Council
Portsmouth Department of Behavioral Healthcare Services
Portsmouth Department of Social Services
Professional Family Child-Care & Early Education Assn.
South Hampton Roads Early Childhood Initiative
Square One
Success by Six
Suffolk Department of Social Services
Suffolk Health Department
Tidewater Community College
United Way of South Hampton Roads
Virginia Beach Department of Human Services
Virginia Beach Library
Virginia Cooperative Extension
WHRO
Wilcox and Savage

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SMART BEGINNINGS

South Hampton Roads

Ready for School — Ready for Life

Early Childhood Care and Education:

A Key to Economic Vitality and Educational Success in South Hampton Roads



SMART BEGINNINGS

South Hampton Roads

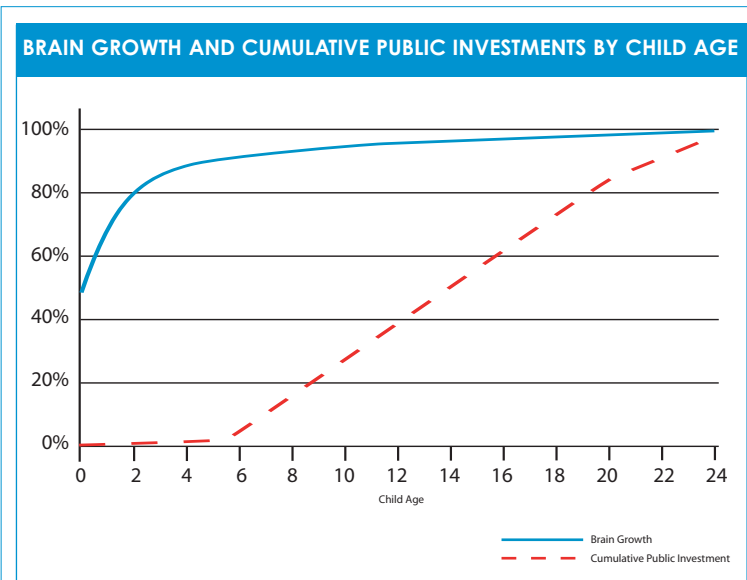
Ready for School — Ready for Life

National trend: Kindergartners Are Not Ready to Succeed in School.

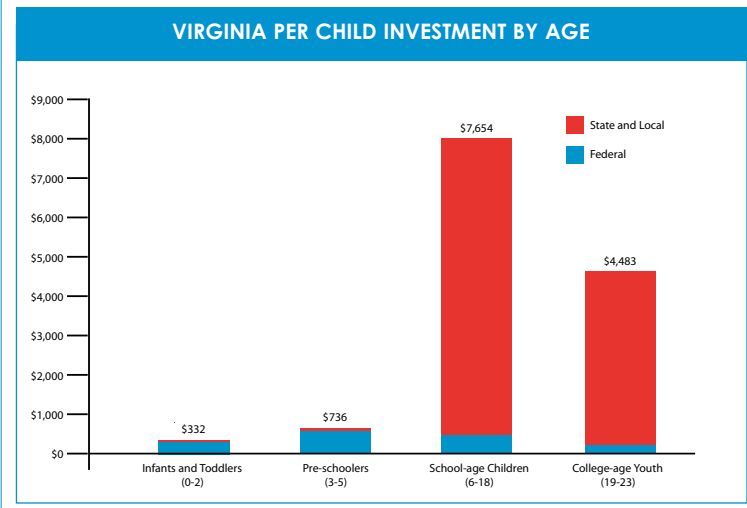
By age 5, 90% of a child's brain structure and function is complete. This means the early years are critical! National studies show that as many as 33% of children entering kindergarten are not ready for school regardless of the family's financial situation. In fact, 49% of children who do not know their alphabet at the start of kindergarten come from middle- or upper-income families.

A wise investment in education for ALL children.

Children who do not know the ABC's when entering kindergarten typically remain behind in reading at the end of fourth grade. Children who do not know numbers when they enter kindergarten remain behind in math at the end of first grade.



Virginia is not yet investing sufficiently in a child's most formative years. For every dollar Virginia spends on a college student, only 5 cents is spent on a child during the preschool years.



Source: Voices for Virginia's Children

Children who start school behind tend to stay behind. Retaining a child in elementary school in Virginia adds \$7,654 to the public cost of that child's education.

Ready for School - Ready for Life.

High quality early care and education is key to a child's success in school. Just think about these statistics:

- Children without sufficient touch and stimulation have brains as much as 30% smaller than normal.
- Studies have found a 95% correlation between children's language interaction with adults in the first two to three years of life and their reading level in fourth grade.
- Children who participate in early learning experiences have fewer special education needs in later years and are more likely to graduate from high school.

Investing in our youngest citizens' early care and education makes good economic sense for our region.

In South Hampton Roads, one in eight workers has a child under age 6. Collectively, these working parents earn more than \$1.8 billion annually and fill vital jobs across our region. They are our pharmacists, accountants and other workers we rely on daily. Without quality care for their children, many of these parents would not be able to work. In fact, a system of early care and education is an essential part of the region's economic infrastructure – just as important as roads – in allowing people to work!

Early Care and Education: A Major Economic Impact.

Our region's early care and education industry provides more than 5,400 jobs in South Hampton Roads – nearly as many as those employed by the region's motels and hotels! These jobs generate more than \$206.7 million in gross receipts.

Early care and education is much more than babysitting, finger paints and outdoor play. It is a vital \$206.70 million dollar industry that helps drive the region's economic vitality.

Consider the benefits of investment in the early care and education industry:

- Allows parents to be productive members of the region's labor force;
- Helps employers attract and retain top employees and reduce absenteeism;
- Provides direct employment to thousands;
- Prepares children for future educational and workforce success; and
- Delivers as much as a 16% rate of return on investment based on economic studies of long term gains – in employment and income and lower welfare dependency and crime rates.

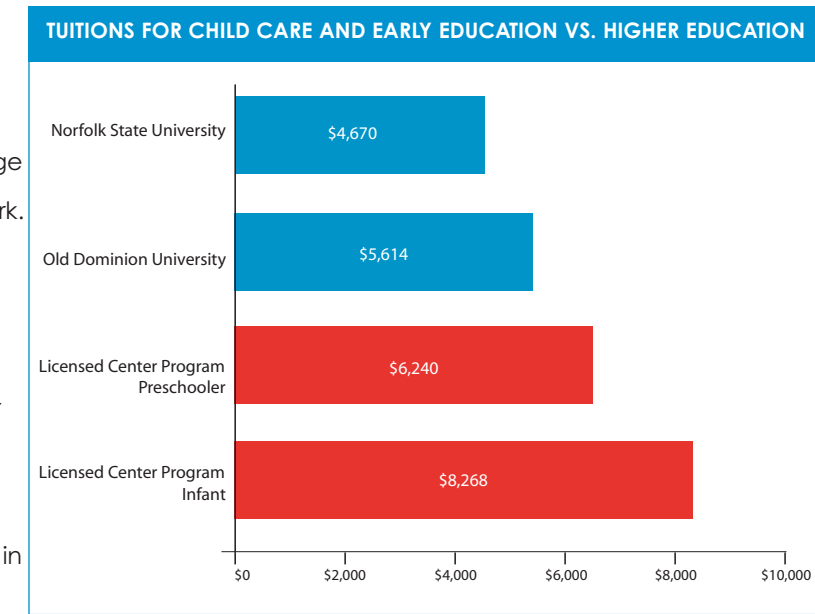
Quality early care and education develops tomorrow's workforce in areas that matter in the global economy: critical thinking skills, excellent language skills and the ability to work well with others.

Low public funding impacts the early care and education children receive.

South Hampton Roads is home to 76,700 children under age 6 - more than 52,000 live in families in which all parents work. Yet, our region's licensed child care and early education system can only serve approximately 42,000 children.

- 70% of centers offering full-time care have waiting lists.
- Only about 28% of center-based programs offer care for children ages zero to two years.

The average cost of care for a child under age 5 is \$6,240 in South Hampton Roads; the cost for a child under age 2 is \$8,200 per year. This rivals the cost of public college tuition in Virginia.



Source: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and Virginia Department of Social Services.

Research consistently shows that school achievement is better for children if their early teachers are well educated, and if teacher turnover is low, allowing for consistency of care. Yet, in South Hampton Roads...

- Only 36% of early childhood teachers and 21% of family care providers have at least a two-year degree -and only 22% of teachers and 9% of family care providers have a bachelors degree.
- 11% of preschool teachers and 29% of family care providers have a high school education or less, with no additional training or coursework.
- Annual turnover rate among full-time early childhood teachers and assistants is 27%.
- The median hourly wage is \$8 (\$16,000 annually) for teachers in child care centers and \$4.04 (\$8,080 a year) for family care providers.

South Hampton Roads child care and early education professionals are paid less, on average, than convenience store workers.

Public investment in early care and education is a powerful way to support strong families and ensure the development of our future workforce.

It all boils down to this:

- Early care and education is expensive.
- Where the investment counts most— during the early years—our public investment is lowest.
- Inadequate funding impacts the quality, affordability and accessibility of care children receive.
- Child care workers are often underpaid and are given little incentive to advance their education, which impacts the quality of care for children.

