

# Quality Preschool Produces Short and Long-Term Returns for New Jerseyans of All Ages

## New Jersey Seniors4Kids Recommends:

- 1. MAINTAIN** funding to support New Jersey's state preschool programs as proposed in the budget for FY 2011
- 2. SECURE** additional funding to expand preschool as envisioned in the 2008 School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) in order to increase access to early education for 30,000 at-risk children across New Jersey
- 3. ALIGN** curriculum and standards for PreK-3rd grade to ensure a seamless, quality early education experience



Photo: Vincent O'Hara

## Introduction

Decades of rigorous research proves that investing in high-quality, voluntary preschool programs nets short- and long-term returns for taxpayers.<sup>1</sup> All New Jerseyans reap rewards when children enter school ready to learn. Older adults care about Pre-K and are raising their voices in support of policies that promote educational and lifelong success.

## Pre-K Expansion and New Jersey's Families

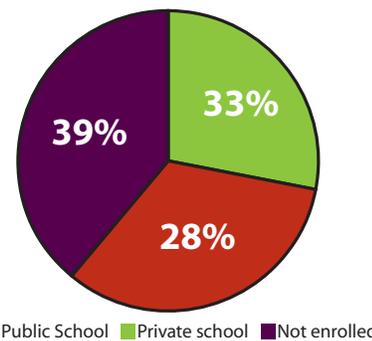
Just over a decade ago, New Jersey emerged as nationally recognized leader for providing high-quality preschool using a diverse delivery model that includes public schools, community-based child care centers, and Head Start programs. Currently, the state pays for universal preschool in 31 Abbott districts and provides targeted funds to low-income children in another 116 districts. Under the School Funding Reform Act approved in 2008, the state legislature approved plans to increase preschool services to 84 expansion districts and all at-risk children by 2013.

While New Jersey has made great strides in providing early education to its children, there is more work to do. Nearly 40 percent of New Jersey's three- and four-year-olds do not attend either private or publicly funded preschool programs. Last year, the state legislature provided no funding for Pre-K expansion. Unless state legislators keep the momentum moving forward, New Jersey will lose the gains for children that school districts and children's advocates have worked so hard to achieve.

As New Jersey faces the worst economy in a generation, even many middle class New Jersey families find themselves struggling

**School Enrollment of Children Ages 3 and 4  
New Jersey, 2007**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2007 American Community Survey microdata tabulation using DataFerrett



Source: Tabulated from U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample*, (September 2008)

to afford quality Pre-K and early care. By providing more three- and four-year old children access to high-quality, voluntary preschool programs, New Jersey's legislators can address the immediate needs of families and produce short and long-term gains for the public.

## Intergenerational Benefits: Successful Students, Responsible Adults, Strong Communities

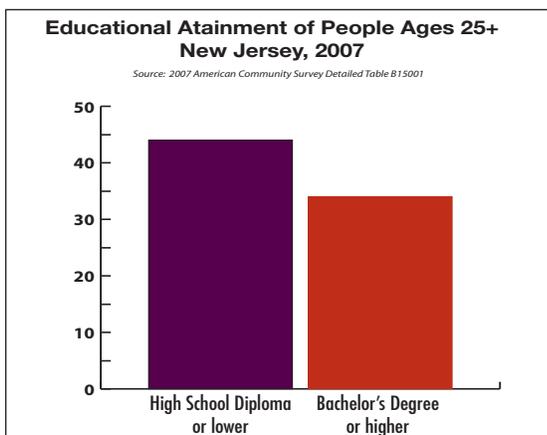
In tough budget times, New Jersey should invest in programs that increase productivity, attract business, and help families. Few public policy options offer a guaranteed return as tangible as that of high-quality, voluntary Pre-K. Research confirms that Abbott preschool programs are producing significant learning gains for New Jersey's children in language, literacy, and math. Moreover, Abbott districts achieved up to 50 percent less grade

repetition for first graders who attended pre-k at ages 3 and 4 saving an estimated \$16,000 per student.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the long-term intergenerational benefits of early childhood education include:

- Greater academic motivation, on-task behavior, capacity for independent work, and time spent on homework
- Fewer referrals for remedial classes or special education
- Lower rates of teen pregnancy
- Higher high-school graduation rates, GED completion, and post-secondary enrollment
- Better earnings and employment rates contributing to fiscal balance<sup>3</sup>

Strong results like these can help ensure New Jersey's future economic competitiveness. Many of the less-skilled jobs that went away in the recession are unlikely to return. High-quality Pre-K can position New Jersey to build the workforce it needs to put the state back on the path for growth.



Source: Tabulated from U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample*, (September 2008)

## Older Adults Care About Pre-K

*"Pre-K is absolutely vital... New Jersey has fallen behind the rest of the country in a number of areas educating kids. This is one area where we've kept up, and it should not be abandoned."*

-Former Governor Tom Kean, Star Ledger (July 20, 2009)

The number of adults age 50+ in New Jersey is on the rise. They represent a growing and diverse voter constituency across the state. While recognizing the complexity of choosing between priorities when balancing budgets, seniors understand and embrace the value of quality early learning for all children.

Older adults are adding their voices to ensure a sound start to an education that will benefit all generations as part of Generations United's Seniors4Kids initiative. New Jersey's Captains4Kids volunteers recognize the importance of Pre-K as

a strong foundation to future academic success. "A lot of politicians give lip service to building a future for our children but now is the time to act for early education. Increasing access to quality preschool builds a foundation for lifetime success, improving our communities for people of all ages," says Roberta Eisner, Matawan. With their support for expanding access to early education programs, they hope to position children-and New Jersey- for greater success.

## Our Mission

Generations United's Seniors4Kids highlights the role older adults play in support of issues that directly benefit children and youth. Currently, the program helps adults age 50+ in New Jersey to create statewide networks of community leaders and grassroots volunteers that work to increase access to, and improve the quality of, Pre-K programs.

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united**

Because we're stronger together®

Generations United (GU) is the national membership organization focused solely on improving the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies. GU represents more than 100 national, state, and local organizations and individuals representing more than 70 million Americans. Since 1986, GU has served as a resource for educating policymakers and the public about the economic, social, and personal imperatives of intergenerational cooperation. GU acts as a catalyst for stimulating collaboration between aging, children, and youth organizations providing a forum to explore areas of common ground while celebrating the richness of each generation.

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For further information on intergenerational programs and policies please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Gregory Camilli et al. "Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Early Education Interventions on Cognitive and Social Development." New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen Frede et al. "The Apples Blossom: Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES) Preliminary Results Through 2nd Grade Interim Report." New Brunswick: National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Pre-K Now, "The Benefits of High-Quality Pre-K", <http://www.preknow.org/policy/factsheets/benefits.cfm> (Accessed April 19, 2010.)