

Using Coordinated Data Systems to Guide Early Childhood Education Policies

Today's investment – tomorrow's rewards

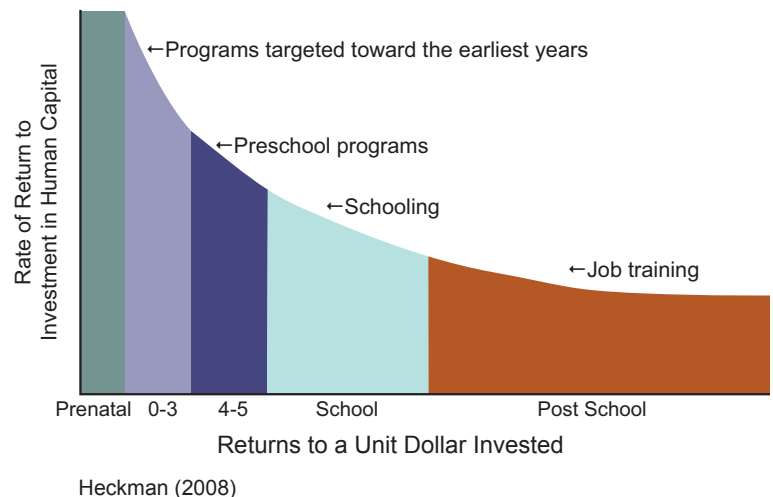
Why are early childhood investments a critical issue for policymakers?

- Investments made during the first five years of life are critical to children's development and yield greater educational and economic returns.

How can policymakers maximize early childhood investments?

- As federal and state funding for early care and education increases, policymakers need reliable information to guide policy and maximize the return on investment.
- Policymakers are starting to develop actionable, useable information on early care and education programs through coordinated data systems that link information among state programs.

Early investments in early childhood education produce greater returns.



In order to maximize our investments, policymakers need effective coordination and integration of information across early care and education programs.

Securely Linking Data Across Programs: Providing access to consistent child, family, program and workforce information.



What is a state coordinated data system?

- It is a data system that securely links child-level information across early care and education programs. It ensures consistency in the type of information that is recorded across programs and provides access to the information by the audiences that need it.
- Agencies and early care and education programs already allocate resources to gather, maintain and analyze information on their programs, but it is generally not accessible to other programs or to policymakers.



Want priority placed on
“making sure children get a
strong start in life so they
perform better in school and
succeed in their careers.”

Source: 2015 First Five Years Fund's
Annual Bipartisan Poll

How can coordinated data systems support policymakers?

Coordinating early care and education data systems can:

- **Allow policymakers to know what populations are being served and ensure that children who are in multiple programs are only counted once**—providing more accurate information about the number of high-risk/high-need children served.
- **Provide information related to the quality of these programs**—how well the programs are working and what is being achieved.
- **Facilitate an understanding of workforce preparedness** and identify state needs for professional training.

How can coordinated early childhood data systems increase efficiency, coordination, and access to needed services across education, health, and social service programs?

- **Facilitates collaboration among different programs:** Access to data and information among programs makes it easier for one program to coordinate services a child may need from another program. A child with special needs, for example, may need services from several programs.
- **Potentially serving more children and providing more comprehensive services:** An up-to-date data system can help identify areas where there are greater needs in order to allocate funding accordingly.

Next Steps for Policymakers

- ✓ Improve access to accurate and comprehensive early care and education information.
- ✓ Identify critical questions policymakers need answered to inform early care and education investments and policies.
- ✓ Strengthen data infrastructures and governance across agencies and programs that gather information needed to maximize investments in early care and education.
- ✓ Support the staffing and resources needed to translate this information into actionable reports.
- ✓ Engage the early care and education community in this process.