

Rochester Area Foundation - News & Publications**Quote of the Moment...**

Many people are capable of doing a wise thing, more a cunning thing, but very few a generous thing.

~Alexander Pope ~

School readiness is good business

By Patrick Gannon

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Why would preparing our children for success in school be held up as a value our entire community would take on? Because School Readiness is good economic development.

I recently heard a Nobel Prize winning economist say that, in the long run, the investment in the social-emotional stability of young children pays a higher economic/financial dividend to society than any other single investment. That is a striking statement.

Family child care providers and teachers in child care centers have observed for years that providing high quality stimulating environments for young children in their care helps prepare those children for success in school.

Research about the brain fully substantiates those observations. We now know that 75 percent of the development of a child's brain occurs in the first five years of life. That development includes learning how to get along well with other children, which leads to getting along well with other students in school, which leads to getting along well with co-workers on the job.

Quality early childhood experiences -- provided by parents (the child's primary teachers) and by child care providers -- set the foundations for the child to grow into a healthy, stable, more fully participating member of our community.

I applaud the Rochester Area Foundation for developing the First Steps School Readiness Initiative for our community. The leadership of the foundation is calling on each of us to participate in seeing that every child is at their fullest potential when they enter kindergarten/elementary school. The First Steps Initiative builds on the good work that Public Health, Community Education, Social Services and child care providers have been doing for years in Rochester. It is an investment in strengthening the economic and social fabric of our community.

I am excited to see that forward thinking leaders of the businesses in our community are rallying to support the First Steps Initiative. That is a good beginning. Now the rest of us -- each person in the community -- needs to step up and support every child's success.

Help make Rochester a magnet community. I want our community to be known as the place to live and work in Minnesota because we value young children and we ensure that young children have the opportunity to reach their potential.

I urge you to attend the upcoming presentation by David Lawrence, former editor of the Miami Herald, as he speaks to the importance of school readiness. He will both challenge and energize you.

Patrick Gannon is executive director of Child Care Resource & Referral, Inc.

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