Delaware Early Childhood Council

DELAWARE OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING
Great Tomorrows Begin Today

Strengthening Delaware's Quality Early Childhood System

Quality Early Learning is Important

- **The most rapid period of development in human life happens in first five years.** What happens in children's early years sets the foundation for all the years that follow.
- **Early experiences shape our brain wiring and impact how our biological systems develop.**

  The early years predict later school and career success and impact life-long health.
- Over **40% of Delaware children**, birth to five years old, **are from low-income families** and are **at risk to the achievement gap** appearing as early as nine months old.
- **Adverse experiences during the early years of life, such as chronic poverty or abuse, can disrupt normal developmental processes**, setting the stage for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and other chronic illnesses later in life.
- High quality early learning yields *substantial benefits* for low-income children
  - Improving early literacy, language and math skills to **close the achievement gap**
  - **Increasing high school graduation** by 30%
  - **Increasing college attendance** by 50%
- Economists estimate a **10% return on investments** in high quality early education – in reduced health care, special education, incarceration costs, and increased productivity and tax revenues

Reaching Delaware's At-Risk Children as Early as Possible

- **Reaching children with high needs:** 58% (8,730) of Delaware children with high needs are enrolled in highly rated Stars programs, up from 5% in 2011
- **Improving quality:** Over 75% of center-based early learning programs and over 22% of family-based early learning programs are voluntarily participating in Delaware Stars
- **Identifying needs early:** Nearly 28,000 Delaware children have received screenings to identify developmental challenges and hundreds of families have been linked to needed services
- **Supporting the workforce:** More than 1,600 low-paid early childhood professionals working in Stars programs have earned salary supplements to support their continued education and retain them in their classrooms so that young children have stable, highly-qualified teachers

More is Needed

- **Only 38% of Delaware's children are reading proficient at the end of fourth grade*.** We must:
  - **Continue to invest in**, implement, and evaluate **research-based strategies** to improve early learning experiences that **raise outcomes for young children**
  - **Build strong connections** and transitions between **early childhood and K-3**
  - **Align early childhood programs**, policies, and funding for more responsive, effective, and efficient services for children and families

**2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) score – the nation's report card*

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Three Ways to Support Quality Early Learning in Delaware

1. *Learn More*

- Review Delaware's **Early Childhood Strategic Plan:** www.greatstartsdelaware.com/resources/EarlyChildhoodStratPlan.pdf
- Know Delaware's Early Childhood Strategic **Plan Goals and Progress:** www.greatstartsdelaware.com/resources/OEL_Progress_Report.pdf
- Participate in Delaware's **Early Childhood Council:** www.decc.delaware.gov
- **Discover Stars-rated programs** in your community and share with parents of young children: www.greatstartsdelaware.com
- Sign up for **Early Learning E-news**: www.greatstartsdelaware.com

2. *Engage with Young Children*

- Find fun, age-appropriate activities to **support children's mental and physical development**: www.QT30DE.com
- Access **early reading resources** and ideas for activities:
  - www.nemours.org/service/health/brightstart/parent.html
  - www.greatstartsdelaware.com

3. *Raise Your Voice*

- **Talk with one person this week about the importance of the early years** for children and state
- **Join a focus group on the future of early learning in Delaware March 30-April 2, 2015:** Details available at www.greatstartsdelaware.com
- **Host a presentation** at your workplace, civic organization or congregation
- **Contact your elected leaders** and let them know that you support quality early childhood development; tell them how early learning has helped your family or community: http://legis.delaware.gov/legislature.nsf/Lookup/Know_Your_Legislators
- **Join a Readiness Team** to support Kindergarten readiness in your community: http://www.greatstartsdelaware.com/readiness.html
- **Attend a meeting** of the Delaware Early Childhood Council: www.decc.delaware.gov/meetings
- **Volunteer** to read with young children or support a program of your choice:
  - www.volunteerdelaware.org
  - www.volunteermatch.com
  - www.donorschoose.org
  - www.readalouddelaware.org