

Early Learning Advocacy Day
May 6, 2015
Talking Points for Meetings with Legislators

1. Introduce yourself – let your legislator know:

- You are a constituent
- You are visiting to talk about early learning and development and why it is so important to you and our state
- Your role – as an early learning program owner or teacher, business leader, parent or grandparent of a young child, etc.

2. Make a connection

- If possible, connect early learning and development to your legislator's key interests or background

For example, if your legislator is a former teacher or school administrator, connect high-quality early learning and development to school success...

If your legislator has business background, talk about supporting the current workforce with affordable, reliable high quality child care and developing the future workforce – or talk about the high return on investment....

3. Tell your story

- If you are a parent, family member, early learning provider, or work directly with children:
 - What was the problem or need you experienced?
 - How did the state's investment help address your need
 - How did it benefit your child or the children you work with?
 - What more is needed?
- If you are a business or community leader or advocate:
 - Why is early learning and development important to you?
 - What compels you to devote your time, talent and influence to support early learning?

Use data to support your story when possible. For example, if you own and early learning center, talk about how many children and family it serves, and how many children are receiving Purchase of Care subsidies...

If you are a business leader, talk about how many employees you have, or talk about an early learning data point that really strikes you about need or successes – see Core Messages...

4. Offer thanks and ask for continued commitment to Delaware's youngest citizens

- Let your legislator know you appreciate his or her commitment to high quality early learning and development in Delaware.
- Ask if you can count on their continued support for so that each young child in Delaware can realize his or her full potential and succeed in school and life.

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Core Messages

- The birth-to-five years are the most important of a child's development. Early experiences literally shape the brain's architecture and set the foundation for a child's lifelong health and success in school, career and life.
- Economists, business leaders, and researchers agree that high-quality early learning and development services are among the smartest public investments we can make.
- Early childhood programs provide the best and most cost-effective way to give at-risk children the chance to succeed in school and become more productive adults.
- Investments in the state's early learning work over the past several years have been spent well – some examples of successes include:
 - Nearly 30,000 developmental screenings have been conducted – which are critical for identifying and addressing any developmental problems as early as possible. The state used to be last in the nation for developmental screenings and has made great progress.
 - More than 58 percent of children with high needs in child care are enrolled in highly rated Stars programs, up from just 5 percent in 2011. Delaware Stars is the state's voluntary quality rating system that drives early learning program quality improvement and parent demand for high-quality early learning programs.