

## Benefits of Early Childhood Education

The Abecedarian Project was a carefully controlled scientific study of the potential benefits of early childhood education for poor children. Children from low-income families received full-time, high-quality educational intervention in a childcare setting from infancy through age 5 and their progress was monitored over time with follow-up studies conducted at ages 12, 15, and 21.

### The researchers' benefit-cost analysis found:

- Children in high-quality programs are projected to make roughly \$143,000 more over their lifetimes than those who didn't take part in the program.
- Mothers of children who were enrolled can also expect greater earnings - about \$133,000 more over their lifetimes.
- School districts can expect to save more than \$11,000 per child because participants are less likely to require special or remedial education.

### Other Major Findings

- Children who participated in the early intervention program had higher cognitive test scores from the toddler years to age 21.
- Academic achievement in both reading and math was higher from the primary grades through young adulthood.
- Intervention children completed more years of education and were more likely to attend a four-year college.
- Intervention children were older, on average, when their first child was born.
- The cognitive and academic benefits from this program are stronger than for most other early childhood programs.
- Enhanced language development appears to have been instrumental in raising cognitive test scores.
- Mothers whose children participated in the program achieved higher educational and employment status than mothers whose children were not in the program. These results were especially pronounced for teen mothers.

*Source: Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return (March 2003) - By Arthur J. Rolnick and Rob Grunewald.*