



Giving our children the best possible start in life

All young children need a healthy start in life to grow into strong, productive adults.

Supporting high-quality early childhood care and education is one of the most pivotal and lasting investments that our communities, state, and nation can make.

More than building a brighter future for individual children and families, research has pointed out the incredible economic payoff—as much as 16:1—that we as a society may realize by ensuring that every young child has the best possible start to a life of learning, achieving and succeeding.

Building nurturing communities and driving change

The primary goal of the Early Childhood Initiative is to ensure more young children are ready for lifelong success. Each of the six Minnesota Initiative Foundations is working with counties and communities throughout Greater Minnesota to develop coalitions, as well as build connections with funders, researchers, practitioners, child care providers, educators and other advocates on the regional and statewide levels to help achieve this goal.

To date, the Initiative has developed 90 early childhood coalitions encompassing more than 300 communities within 65 of the 80 Greater Minnesota counties. These teams of local

That's why the six Minnesota Initiative Foundations (MIFs) launched the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative in 2003: to strengthen early care and education for young children and their families, especially in rural Minnesota communities.

The McKnight Foundation has played a critical role by providing initial and ongoing funding of this effort, which in turn has helped leverage support from other foundations, businesses and community organizations.

In collaboration with funding and community partners, we are strengthening the networks that nurture children and families.

citizens and organizations have more than 4,000 members representing diverse sectors, from early care and education providers and K-12 educators to business and civic leaders.

A coordinator for each coalition guides the process of identifying, planning and implementing strategies to help communities to better meet the needs of young children and their families.

Not only have these coalitions facilitated change in their own communities, but they have also formed vibrant regional and statewide networks to share new ideas, learn about emerging research and best practices, and advocate to policy makers on behalf of our youngest citizens.

Hundreds of early childhood projects and programs

More than 900 projects, programs and activities have been implemented by early childhood coalitions since 2003 to strengthen local early care and education, including:

- *PreK to Grade 3 initiatives providing training and support to ensure greater continuity of services from birth to age 8, through partnerships with key school district and community stakeholders.*
- *Quality Early Care and Education efforts that offer outreach, training, technical assistance, and other tools to enhance quality and increase participation of child care providers in the Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System.*
- *Community literacy programs to increase reading in the homes of families with young children, regardless of income.*
- *Infant and early childhood mental health programs, such as home visiting and reflective practice, to strengthen supports and services for young children and families.*
- *An Early Childhood Dental Network to promote dental care education and increase access to care for children of low-income families.*