

To the Editor

As a resident of Wisconsin, I am writing urge Wisconsin legislative, business and community leaders to prioritize Wisconsin's youngest children as they consider future investments in the State of Wisconsin, local businesses and communities across the state. As a _____(business leader, community resident, local official), I understand the need for high quality early education as a need for my (employees, family, for securing and sustaining employment).

Business leaders and community leaders face difficult decisions every day about growing their bottom line and serving the multiple needs of customers and families. Clearly, difficult choices are also inevitable as debate continues on Wisconsin's 2007-2009 budget and subsequent state budgets for years to come, but without prudent investments that yield the greatest return for our state, we will not be able to grow Wisconsin's future and Wisconsin's economy. James Heckman, Ph.D., Economist and Nobel Laureate from the University of Chicago, has concluded that: "The real question is how to use available funds wisely. The best evidence supports the policy prescription: invest in the very young."

A growing body of evidence underscores his conclusion. Art Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research for the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis has found that for every dollar invested in high quality educational opportunities for young children, \$8 or more are returned. This rate of return is hard to duplicate in the private market. These returns are generated through reduced costs for special education programs; fighting delinquency and school failure; and other social programs. The greatest single component contributing to these stellar returns is the reduction in criminal activity and corrections costs of young adults. Most importantly - investing early means a greater likelihood of success in school and in life for children who receive these benefits early. We cannot afford to miss this critical opportunity.

We hope that Wisconsin leaders understand that investing early in our economic and social future through supporting high quality child early educational opportunities is a wise and lasting investment.