

Looking At The ISSUES

Stark
Education
Partnership
inc.

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The "P" in P-16: From Governor Strickland's State of the State Address on March 14, 2007

Let's talk about one of the best investments we can make – early childhood education. If your interest is the economy, if your interest is our social health, if your interest is our physical health, if your interest is education – at any level, for any age – then you must care about early childhood education.

Those early years affect everything. Research shows a better start for our children ultimately means that there will be less crime and more college, less teen pregnancy and more home ownership, less welfare and more health. A modest investment during a brief period of childhood leads to a lifetime of positive outcomes.

But while every child deserves a fair start on their way to school, too many of our children begin the race not only well behind the starting line, but facing in the wrong direction. We cannot afford to abandon those children who face a poverty of resources and a poverty of experiences. We must recognize the facts: we have a readiness gap that leads to an achievement gap that results in an outcome gap.

So let's fix it by increasing access to early childhood education. Today we have a hodgepodge of confusing rules which makes it difficult for parents to take advantage of existing programs. For example, a child may be eligible for our Early Learning Initiative, but ineligible for subsidized child care.

We need one easily understood standard. In my budget, if a child's family is under 200 percent of the poverty level, that child will be eligible for any early care and learning program we have.

We also need to expand our public pre-school offerings. My budget provides a \$10 million expansion of public pre-school, expanding the number of 3 and 4 year olds taught by 66 percent. This is the *first* expansion of the program since 1989.

For Your Information

You may read highlights from Governor Strickland's State of the State Address by going to <http://www.governor.ohio.gov/News/March2007/News31407/tabid/217/Default.aspx>

...or visit <http://governor.ohio.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=216> for the full text.



As we expand access, we must increase the quality of a child's educational experience as well.

My budget increases child care provider rates which will help attract and retain experienced and well-trained staff. And we will make funds available for professional development and training, the hiring of specialists in early childhood development, and interventions to promote school readiness.

And we will expand efforts to provide information and support to Moms and Dads. Our *Help Me Grow* program serves families with children from newborn to 3 years old. As early as just a few weeks into their lives we offer an in-home visit from a nurse to help new parents in the crucial first days of a newborn's life. The program provides vital information and resources on health, safety, and development. In my budget, we will expand the program to reach thousands of additional children.

Even as we include our youngest children in our early childhood education system, we must work harder to see that our young adults don't find the door to higher education slammed in their faces by out of control tuition costs.

Looking At The **Week**

Dual Enrollment Meetings

Dr. Joseph Rochford attended the Stark County Dual Credit meeting on Monday, March 12th and a meeting of the dual enrollment subcommittee of the Ohio Partnership for Continued Learning (statewide P-16) on Thursday, March 15th in Columbus.

Early Childhood Panel

On March 15th, Judge Michael L. Howard – Secretary, Stark Education Partnership Board of Directors – and Dr. Adrienne O'Neill were part of the Early Childhood Resource Center's *Ambassadors in Action* panel discussion forum.

Report on the Massillon City Schools

Dr. Adrienne O'Neill presented an extensive report, *Toward 2025 in the Massillon City Schools*, to the Massillon administrative team on Wednesday, March 15th.

