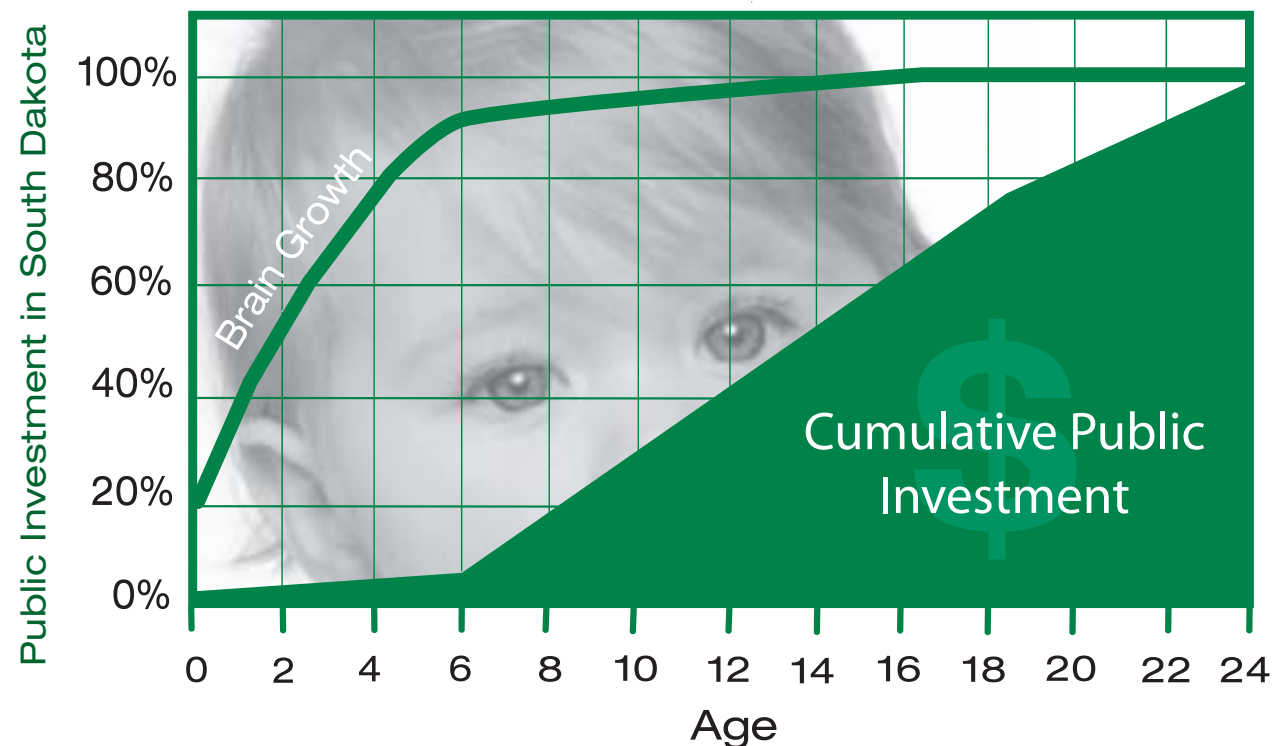


South Dakota

Brain Growth and Public Investments by Child Age



The Full Report

is available at the South Dakota Coalition for Children website: www.sdcchildren.org.

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untapped POTENTIAL

Early Learning Investments In South Dakota

In South Dakota, public investments in education and development in the early learning years constitute less than one percent of overall public expenditures.





Investments in the early years are essential for South Dakota children to start school ready to learn.

Brain

and child development research have focused increasing attention upon the importance of the earliest years of life (birth to five) to lifelong growth and development. It is during these years that brain growth and development is most rapid and a child's orientation to the world is formed. Most of the actual physical growth of the brain itself occurs in these earliest years. The foundation for learning, including social and emotional disposition, develops very early.

analyses of state, federal, and school district spending in twelve states across the country, including South Dakota, conducted by organizations in those states with strong understanding of early childhood services and state budgeting. It is designed to give policy makers and the public a better understanding of overall public investments in the education and development of children, in the context of the research on brain growth and child development and the research on potential returns on investment from early learning programs.

What the Research Shows

Several studies show the long term benefits of quality early learning opportunities include:

- Helping children have greater school readiness;
- Improving scores on primary grade testing;
- Reducing grade retention and special education;
- Increasing high school graduation rates;
- Increasing likelihood of college education;
- Having very positive employment impacts;
- Reduced crime;
- Enhanced quality of life.

Although the evidence that learning begins at birth is compelling, as a society we continue to under-invest in children's earliest and most formative years.

A new study, *Early Learning Left Out*, presents the most comprehensive picture to date of public investments in the education and development of children by three age groupings – the early learning years (roughly 0-5), the school-aged years (roughly 6-18), and the college-aged years (roughly 19-23). It is based upon detailed

Early Learning Investment Gap

The key findings from the South Dakota analyses are:

- While more than 85% of a child's core brain structure is formed by age 5, only 4% of local, state and federal investments in education and development have occurred by that time.
- On a per-child basis, local, state and federal investments in education and development are more than seven times greater during the school-aged years (\$4,328 per child) than during the early learning years (\$571 per child).
- On a per-child basis, local, state and federal investments in education and development are more than five times greater during the college-aged years (\$3,193 per youth/young adult) than during the early learning years.
- Put another way, this means that for every local, state and federal dollar invested in the education and development of a school-aged child in South Dakota, only 13 cents is invested in that child during the earliest learning years – a major investment gap.
- The largest share of the funding for education and development during the earliest years comes from federal programs (particularly federal funding for child care and Head Start), although for school-aged children, the largest share comes from state and local funds.
- South Dakota's investments in education and development in the earliest learning years constitute a very small percentage of overall public expenditures — 0.23% of state general funds.

In addition to the analyses of state spending, the report also synthesizes existing research on early learning needs and potential returns on investments, providing evidence that:

- Families with young children are those who are most likely to struggle economically and are least likely to be able to privately pay for additional educational and developmental services and supports.
- Comprehensive, high quality investments in education and development in the early years have demonstrated high monetary returns-on-investment – both to government and society in reduced social costs and increased economic activity and to the individuals served in improved economic status.
- Investments in the early years are essential for South Dakota children to start school ready to learn.
- There is strong public support and advocacy for expanding investments in early learning and closing the investment gap, because of the evidence of need and the potential for societal gains from investments.



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