Smart Investment, Big Returns

When at-risk children experience high-quality early learning programs, they have better school, employment, and life outcomes. These results demonstrate the significant economic gains generated by investing in quality early childhood development in North Carolina.

The Results in North Carolina

School readiness by kindergarten

A Smart Start evaluation by the University of North Carolina showed that children birth to five who attended child care centers that were very involved in Smart Start activities were more prepared for kindergarten.

Meeting standards in elementary school

Economically disadvantaged third graders who attended More at Four narrowed the achievement gap with their non-economically disadvantaged peers by up to 40 percent.

Reduced special education costs

Children who received early education through the North Carolina Abecedarian Project were half as likely as their peers to require special education.

Fewer teen pregnancies

North Carolina children who attended the Abecedarian Project were almost half as likely to become teen parents than peers who did not attend.

The Results nationwide

Reduced crime and delinquency

Chicago children who did not attend preschool were 70 percent more likely than peers who did attend to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18.

Increased high school graduation rates

Children who attended quality preschool were 29 percent more likely to graduate from high school than their peers who did not attend, and were less likely to repeat grades.

Increased college attendance

Students who attended quality early education programs, including Perry Preschool, the Abecedarian Project, and Chicago Child Parent Centers, were more likely to attend college than their peers.

Greater adult employment and higher wages

Adults who attended Perry Preschool as children were more likely to be employed and had a 33 percent higher average income than their peers who did not attend.

For more information on the evaluations of the UNC FPG Child Development InstituteSmart Start, More at Four, Perry Preschool and the Abecedarian Project, visit www.smartstart.org