



## **Early learning is key to success in life**

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Washington's businesses and our economic growth are the unexpected winners from the competitive Race to the Top Early Learning grant that Washington state was just awarded.

Research from the business leaders organization "America's Edge" shows that Washington is mired in a skills gap – an inability to find workers with the right tools and training to fill the positions available to them. In fact, at the height of the recession in 2009 and 2010, more than 10,000 jobs went unfilled in our state despite a high unemployment rate.

Early learning helps prepare a future skilled work force. Children who participate in quality early education programs are more likely to have higher graduation rates, earn more as adults, and enter the work force with the skills businesses seek, especially in our technology-driven world.

But because public funding should only be put toward programs that produce results, it is equally important that support should only be directed to high-quality programs. Research also shows that to reap the academic and economic benefits of early education, quality is key.

Quality components – skilled teachers, smaller class sizes and strong parental involvement – are significant drivers of the long-term outcomes from early learning investments that our economy needs.

Congratulations to the Department of Early Learning and their partners for this grant achievement. There is little question that what they will accomplish for Washington's youngest learners as a result of this grant will lead to a more prosperous future for our state.