MAKING OHIO WORK
FOR EVERYONE

PRE-K ALL THE WAY
THE FITZGERALD PLAN

FITZGERALD
NEUHARDT FOR OHIO
Pre-K All The Way

FitzGerald Plan for Pre-K for ALL four-year-olds in Ohio

"John Kasich has shown his priorities. In a massive $62 billion state budget larded with giveaways to special interests and those at the top, he can find virtually no new real investments for Pre-K education, the one solution that Republicans and Democrats, business and labor, teachers and parents all agree is the single most effective way to improve learning and build a skilled workforce. Ohio ranks very near the bottom nationally in Pre-K because John Kasich simply won't properly invest in our littlest minds, preferring to heap more and more resources on the biggest wallets."

- Ed FitzGerald

Why Pre-K Matters

Numerous studies, including those published by America’s Edge, Rand Corporation and NIEER and cited by the Rauch Foundation, have shown that 85% of brain development occurs from birth through age 5, but just 14% of public education funding is spent on early childhood education serving this age group.¹ The problem is that Ohio’s children are not just competing for jobs among their peers from neighboring communities and states, they will battle for an economic future in an increasingly global and information-based economy.
Pre-K in the USA

While Ohio suffers from persistently high unemployment under Governor John Kasich, the irony is that many businesses can’t find the skilled workers they need to fill jobs and to compete both here and abroad. According to a 2012 survey of its membership, the Business Roundtable found that more than 95% of CEOs said their companies suffer from a shortage of skills.² Figures from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics showed that in the summer of 2013, 3.9 million jobs went unfilled while 11 million Americans were unemployed, further demonstrating the “skill gap.”³ The skill gap begins with Ohio’s failure to invest in early childhood education to lift up children early and keep those gains rolling through high school and college. American children are falling behind their peers in other industrialized countries in nearly every academic subject, not just in math and science but in reading scores as well. A big part of this trend relates to the failure of our educational system to enroll and effectively teach children at ages 3 and 4, despite the fact that scores of studies show learning and brain function are at critical stages of development during this time.

According to a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, or OECD, the United States ranks near the bottom of its 34-member group of industrialized countries in key measures of Pre-K enrollment and investment⁴

- 26th in preschool participation for 4-year-olds
- 24th in preschool participation for 3-year-olds
- 22nd in the typical age that children begin early childhood-education programs
- 15th in teacher-to-child ratio in early childhood-education programs
- 21st in total investment in early childhood education relative to country wealth

The failure to invest in early childhood education and development has a direct bearing on how our children measure up to their competition abroad. As the Center for American Progress (CAP) noted, Russia enrolls a higher percentage of its children in Pre-K than does the United States and the performance of their children in a number of educational areas, most notably reading, shows that investment is moving their children ahead.⁵

After trailing the United States by 14 points among fourth-graders in the 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Russian children beat their American counterparts by 10 points on the same measure in 2011.⁶
State-Funded Pre-K is Working in Tennessee, Oklahoma

Closer to home, states that invest in universal Pre-K have also achieved dramatic improvement in student performance. A 2011 study of Tennessee’s Voluntary Pre-K program by Peabody Research Institute at Vanderbilt University showed that children in Tennessee’s state-funded pre-K program saw a 75 percent improvement in letter-word identification, a 152 percent improvement in oral comprehension, a 176 percent improvement in picture vocabulary, and a 63 percent improvement in quantitative concepts, compared to those children not enrolled in pre-K.7

Likewise, the Co-Director of the Center for Research on Children in the U.S & a Georgetown University Public Policy Professor, William T. Gormley Jr., noted in a study of the Tulsa, Oklahoma universal pre-k program that kindergarten students who attended the pre-K program are “9 months ahead of their peers in reading, 7 months ahead in writing, and 5 months ahead in math.” 8 Gormley also notes that Oklahoma, while among the nation’s leaders in Pre-K, fails to capitalize on its early success because it has one of the lowest level of funding of K-12 education, resulting in weak test scores among older students.

The Washington Post made the point Oklahoma’s success was not just borne of funding Pre-K for the vast majority of children, but of demanding high quality as well. “The law also created stringent standards for the classroom: All pre-K teachers had to have a college degree and a certificate in early-childhood education, and they were paid the same wage as K-12 teachers. The student-teacher ratio had to be at least 10-1, and class sizes were limited to 20.” 9

In fact, the Washington Post article further made the point simply expanding access to Pre-K is no guarantee by itself to improve learning. After noting that Florida spent just $2,400 per child on Pre-K in 2011 and failed to meet the majority of the National Institute on Early Education Research’s benchmarks, Oklahoma spent $3,500 in state funds, and its Head Start partnerships brought total average spending to $7,700 per pre-K pupil in 2011. The state met 9 out of 10 of the NIEER’s quality benchmarks. 10
Under Governor John Kasich, Pre-K Isn’t Working in Ohio.

We’re way behind with no real plan to catch up.

In a 2010-11 study, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University concluded that Ohio was one of the worst states in the country for Pre-K investment, with just 2% of Ohio children having access to state funded Pre-K. While the study did not count those children enrolled in federal-funded Head Start or local church or elementary programs, they did show that every neighboring state to Ohio except Indiana far outpaced Ohio’s investment in young minds.

And since that report was published, Governor Kasich has made little effort to increase the percentage of Ohio children in state funded Pre-K, with just 1-2% of children enrolled in state funded Pre-K, according to updated numbers from NIEER. Even with the federally Head Start program, an estimated 81% of Ohio’s four year-olds are not enrolled in a quality Pre-K program.

In addition to the NIEER study, the Education Commission of the States, a non-partisan interstate compact found that Governor Kasich invested virtually no new funding for Pre-K in Ohio from school year 2011-12 to 2012-13, raising it less than one-half of 1%. While ECS noted that funding increased in 2013 for Ohio Pre-K, enrollment in and the quality of state funded Pre-K in Ohio remains woefully inadequate.

Kasich’s Ohio is Way Behind on State Funded Pre-K

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Indiana</td>
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</tbody>
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Percentage of Children in State Funded Pre-K

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University as reported in New York Times 2/13/2013

Ohio had 5 times the percentage of children enrolled in-state funded Pre-K in 2008 as we did in 2012 under Governor Kasich.
Ohio is not just badly trailing its neighbors in state funding for Pre-K, it’s one of the worst states in the country. Florida and Oklahoma enroll 76% and 73% of their students in state funded Pre-K respectively, and the national average of 28% children enrolled is 14 times higher than Ohio.¹⁴

Note: this data shows enrollment in state-funded preschool programs for 4-year-olds and does not include Head Start or local church or elementary programs.

**Consequences of Failure to Invest in Pre-K**

**Keeping Ohio Behind on High School Graduation Rates**

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 21 states had a better high school graduation rate than Ohio in 2012, including Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska.\(^{15}\)

Failure to broaden access to Pre-K is a recipe to keep Ohio children from catching up to their neighbors on graduation rates from high school.

A study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation shows that failing to teach children how to read proficiently by third grade has an overwhelming impact on high school graduation rates, and therefore earning potential as an adult.\(^{16}\)

The Casey study chart below shows that those students who are not proficient in reading by third grade are FOUR TIMES more likely not to graduate from high school as those who can read proficiently.

**While students who cannot read proficiently by third grade make up about 33% of all students, they make up an astounding 63% of those who fail to graduate high school.**\(^{17}\)

By failing to improve reading proficiency through expanded Pre-K as Oklahoma, Tennessee and other states have done, Governor Kasich is dooming Ohio children to a future of lower graduation rates and lower lifetime earnings.

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**High School Graduation Rates by Early Reading Level**

*Students with Proficient 3rd Grade Reading Skills versus Student without*

![Graph showing high school graduation rates by early reading level.](image)

**Note:** High school graduation rate is for students graduating high school by age 19.


Not Just Serving Very Few Children, Kasich’s Pre-K Serves Them Badly

Minimum Educational Requirements for Lead Teachers in State-Funded Pre-K

All of the 30 states in blue, orange and green require at least a four-year bachelor’s degree to teach Pre-K.

The others in white and brown, including Ohio, don’t. ¹⁸
Low Quality Pre-K

Governor Kasich is not just shortchanging our children from a dollar sense, his failure to institute real quality standards means Ohio’s few state funded Pre-K programs are little more than day care by another name. In Kasich’s Ohio, Pre-K teachers are not required to have a four-year bachelor’s degree.18

Yet according to a Pew Foundation Center on the States report entitled “A Matter of Degrees: Preparing Teachers for the Pre-K Class”, 30 states require at least a bachelor’s degree to teach Pre-K.19 The Pew study states “Studies suggest that Pre-K teachers with higher levels of education are more likely than those with less preparation to implement the developmentally appropriate practices linked to better learning among young children.” In short, higher degrees mean better learning.20

Enormous Class Sizes

Not just teachers without four-year degrees, Ohio under Governor Kasich allows as many as 28 children per classroom. That’s no way to teach individualized skills like reading. NIEER blasted Ohio’s poor quality Pre-K saying Kasich’s state “permits up to 28 children in a class while teachers need have no more than an associate’s degree.”21

Under Kasich, Ohio Achievement Gap is Widespread & One of the Nation’s Worst

While the failure to enroll students of all backgrounds in Pre-K is hurting children in every single school district in Ohio, the impact is even more acute among children of color. The Newark Advocate reported, "While gaps between achievement of black and white students are not new, the study from the Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that Ohio’s black children fared particularly poorly compared with the rest of the country. In addition, data from the Ohio Department of Education shows the problem of achievement gaps stretches across every corner of the state."22

Kasich Has Done “Miserable Job” of Funding Early Childhood Education

Retired Cleveland Plain Dealer Editorial Board Editor Brent Larkin summed up Kasich’s failure to invest in Pre-K saying, "Gov. John Kasich's 'Ohio miracle' doesn't apply to the state's most precious citizens -- the very young...Ohio continues to do a miserable job of funding quality education programs that give disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds a chance to succeed in school... of Ohio's 138,000 3- and 4-year-olds who live in poverty, only about 66,000 receive some preschool -- much of it low-quality."23
For a FitzGerald Administration, **Pre-K All the Way**, his plan to deliver high quality early childhood education to every Ohio child is a part of a comprehensive, cost-effective, inclusive and forward-looking education and economic plan for a strong Ohio.

The successful implementation of universal Pre-K has both short and long term implications for the success of children, families and businesses in communities all across Ohio. When our children enter first grade equipped and prepared to learn, the results are striking, and our students, teachers, families and communities all benefit directly.

Consider the difference between a classroom of children all largely ready to learn versus a classroom of children at very different levels in basic vocabulary and math skills. In a first grade classroom of children with markedly different preparedness levels, educators are forced to focus either on those children that require more attention (leaving some children woefully unchallenged) or, as evidence tells us, on children who enter "grade-ready" and capable of advancing.

The result: those children, who enter first grade unprepared, begin a pattern of falling further back from their peers.

**This reality is wholly avoidable and easily solved. And the smartest part: investing in Pre-K today saves millions and millions of dollars tomorrow.**

FitzGerald’s **Pre-K All the Way** agenda addresses and eliminates the preparedness gap in early learning. And, by addressing this gap, tax dollars normally spent on future outlays for remedial education can be saved and used elsewhere.

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**$5-7 of Benefit for Every $1 invested in Pre-K**

Dozens of studies point to the effectiveness of early childhood education programs, including the landmark 2007 study of the federally funded Head Start program "**The Benefits and Costs of Head Start**," by Jens Ludwig and Deborah A. Phillips. **Polifact Ohio** has cited this article in evaluating the claim, since made by members of Congress, by academics and by the White House that for every $1 invested in Pre-K programs like Head Start, we get $5 to $7 back into our economy.  

The study showed that compared to those not enrolled in Head Start, children who were enrolled...

- Were more likely to finish high school.
- Were less likely to commit crimes as adults.
- Found better jobs with greater earning power.
A Plan For 2015 And Beyond

Pre-K for ALL Ohio’s Four-Year-Old Children, Not Just a Lucky Few

The FitzGerald Administration would implement Pre-K All the Way seeking not just to enroll all Ohio’s children in Pre-K, but also to infuse higher quality in a system that desperately needs it.

In January of 2015, Governor FitzGerald will designate a senior level aide to convene all stakeholders to address the path Ohio will take to institute Pre K All the Way.

The administration, with the input of all stakeholders will advance legislation to fund and begin a phase in of Pre K All the Way beginning in the fall of 2016 with full implementation and access completed by the fall of 2018, the end of the FitzGerald administration first term.

Beginning in 2018-2019, Pre K All the Way will require all new Pre-K teachers have a bachelor’s degree.

Pre K All the Way will reduce the maximum number of students in Pre-K classes from 28 to 20 to conform the National Institute of Early Education (NIEER) standards.

With this plan of action, the FitzGerald Administration will not only put Ohio on a path to provide all of our children with Pre-K, our children will also receive a quality early childhood education that meets a majority of the standards set forth by NIEER.

In 2012, Ohio met just 4 of 10 NIEER’s benchmarks. By 2018-2019, Ohio will meet quality standards in at least 7 of the 10 benchmarks, including learning standards, teaching degrees and specialization, student to teacher ratios, class size, screening and referrals for vision, hearing and other health related issues, and monitoring.

To address capacity concerns, the FitzGerald Administration will work closely with all stakeholders: parents, educators, local and county governments, school districts, current Pre-K providers, universities and businesses. Central to success will be stakeholder agreement that Pre-K education is not a daycare system. Consensus will ensure that Pre-K All the Way is a focused education component that combines socialization and play activities young children require with directed skills development.
Paying for Pre-K All the Way is About Setting Priorities

Governor Kasich has made his priorities clear.

He believes tax cuts for the wealthiest Ohioans are more important than ensuring all Ohio's children receive a quality education. Even in his most recent budget he proposed additional tax breaks for the most well off that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. In a $62 billion dollar budget it is entirely possible to make this investment. This is an investment that will not only save the state exponentially in future expense such as, remedial education and reduced incarceration rates but also result in increased earning potential and employment opportunity resulting in more state revenue.

The consequences of inaction are too serious. Moving Ohio forward on Pre-K all the Way will position Ohio to be a leader among states with a workforce fully prepared to compete in the global market place.
Annotations

1. Long Island Index, Rauch Foundation [http://www.rauchfoundation.org/how-we-work/what-we-support/]


5. Center for American Progress (2013) The United States Is Far Behind Other Countries on Pre-K, Juliana Herman, Sasha Post, and Scott O’Halloran


12. Ibid

13. Education Commission of the States, State Pre-K Funding: 2012-13 School Year


16. Annie E. Casey Foundation (2013), *Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading*.


20. Ibid


23. Plain Dealer, “Ohio can and should beef up funding for early-childhood education: Brent Larkin,” May 11, 2013

