

# FACT SHEET | An Excellent Start for Every Child

*2015 Budget for a Better Minnesota*

An excellent education starts early. That is why Governor Dayton is proposing bold new investments in early learning to get every child off to a great start. These proposed investments would help narrow our state's achievement gap, ensure every kid is ready for Kindergarten, save families tens of thousands of dollars on child care costs, and help prepare every child for excellence in education and life.

## Investing in Early Learners and Families

Governor Dayton's budget proposal would invest \$109 million to provide voluntary, full-day pre-Kindergarten early learning opportunities for every 4-year-old, statewide. This bold new investment would directly address Minnesota's achievement gap, and prepare every student for success in school and life.

- **Providing High-Quality Pre-K for 31,000 Learners** – Right now, too many children are entering kindergarten unprepared to learn. Under the Governor's proposal, an estimated 31,000 students would gain access to free, all-day, high-quality PreK – giving them the excellent start they need to succeed in school. This would build on the progress of the 9,500 early learning scholarships the Governor and Legislature funded over the last four years.
- **Tackling the Achievement Gap** – Minnesota has one of the largest achievement gaps in the nation. A growing body of research shows that giving kids a great early start is the best strategy to close gaps, and help all students achieve their greatest potential.
- **Leveraging a Huge Return on Investment** – Economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis have found that every \$1 invested in high quality early learning can yield up to a \$16 return on the state's investment. Most of those cost savings are in education, human services, and justice system savings, as well as increased tax revenue.
- **Saving Families Money** – Minnesota has some of the highest child care costs in the country. To make child care more affordable for working families, Governor Dayton proposes expanding the Child and Dependent Care Credit. This would help provide families more economic security and give more flexibility for families with small children, aging parents, and family members with disabilities.
- **Investing in Quality, Affordable Child Care** – The Governor's budget would provide \$17.5 million to improve access to quality child care for low-income working families. This investment would provide child care for an additional 1,375 children and enable 8,000 more children to enroll in highly-rated ParentAware programs. The proposal would provide incentives for providers to improve quality while also simplifying paperwork for the Child Care Assistance Program.

## Eliminating the Head Start Waiting List

- **2,485 Kids Are Waiting** – While 12,070 children benefitted from Head Start services last year, 2,485 children were stuck on the waiting list. Governor Dayton's \$19.4 million investment would work toward eliminating the waiting list and ensure no child is denied service.
- **Head Start Works** – Head Start promotes school readiness for low-income children by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development and by providing their families health, educational, nutritional, and other social services. Governor Dayton's proposal would promote school readiness, family support, and education for low-income children.

## By the Numbers

<b>33,485</b>	Number of students who would gain access to high quality early learning
<b>16:1</b>	Every \$1 we invest in early learning can yield up to a \$16 return on investment
<b>\$10,812</b>	The average annual cost of child care for one 4-year-old in Minnesota