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New Study Estimates 1 in 4 Children Come from Low-Income Families and Enter Kindergarten Not Ready To Learn

Pritzker Children's Initiative and The Bridgespan Group Release New Funder's Guide with Proven Early Childhood Investments to Prepare Children for Success

Oct. 20, 2015 – The Pritzker Children's Initiative of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation and The Bridgespan Group released a [new paper](#) that estimates that 1 in 4 kindergarteners nationwide – 1 million total – come from low-income families and enter school not fully ready to learn. In response to this overwhelming statistic, a new guide for funders outlines numerous specific, evidence-based, early childhood investment opportunities that have been shown to help ensure children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn so that they achieve success throughout their lives.

Based on 18 months of research and interviews with leading early childhood experts and current early childhood funders, "Achieving Kindergarten Readiness for All Our Children: A Funder's Guide to Early Childhood Development from Birth to Five," written by J.B. Pritzker of the Pritzker Children's Initiative, and Jeffrey L. Bradach and Katherine Kaufmann of The Bridgespan Group, illustrates that, together, philanthropy, business and government can expand early childhood opportunities, ensuring our children starting kindergarten are ready to learn.

Children who enter kindergarten ready to learn are more likely to graduate from high school, attend college and earn a [higher income](#). According to research from the Center on Children and Families at the Brookings Institution, when a young child enters kindergarten ready for school, there is an 82 percent chance he or she will master basic skills by age 11, compared with a 45 percent chance for children who are not school-ready. The paper describes how targeted investments in early childhood development strategies with proven success could better lay the foundation for kindergarten readiness, and build the cognitive and character skills that children need to do well in school and in life. Furthermore, research from Nobel Prize-winning economist Professor James Heckman shows that early childhood investments produce a 7-10 percent return on investment through better education, health, economic and social mobility outcomes. Yet, as the paper details, we still vastly underinvest in programs and strategies that are proven to work.

“This paper crystalizes an overwhelming body of cognitive and education research and points to those specific, evidence-based early childhood investment opportunities that give young children the skills they need to succeed, improving not only their academic and life trajectories, but also the economic future of our nation,” said J.B. Pritzker, president of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation. “We hope that this paper serves as a catalyst to significantly expand funding for early childhood opportunities across the country.”

The paper also includes a data-driven guide that illuminates proven, high-impact early childhood investment opportunities. It argues that investments for infants and toddlers from low-income families during the first three years of life, when 700 new connections between cells in the brain form each second, are most critical in helping more children be ready for kindergarten while also yielding the highest returns.

“The research is clear: Investments in early childhood development programs, particularly for children birth to age 3, make some of the most positive impacts on children, families and society through better education, health and economic outcomes, and ultimately, the promise of social mobility,” said Jeffrey L. Bradach, managing partner and co-founder of The Bridgespan Group.

According to research from The Urban Institute, the United States vastly underinvests in highly effective early childhood programs and continues to publicly fund K-12 education on both the state and federal levels at a rate of nearly four times as high, per capita, as spending for children from birth to 5. That funding, if partially reallocated to early childhood programs, could improve outcomes for low-income children and enhance the impact of K-12 programs as well. With having better educated and self-sufficient students prepared for the rigors of K-12 schooling and, eventually, a competitive workforce as the end goal, this guide outlines how funders can help children arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

Bipartisan leaders and experts across the country – Nobel Prize-winning economists, Republican and Democratic lawmakers and philanthropists – have already [praised](#) this paper as an important guide to the best, proven early childhood investment opportunities available today.

The paper can be found at:

<http://www.bridgespan.org/early-childhood-funder-guide-2015>

About the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation

The J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, has as one of its primary focus areas, the enhancement of early learning capabilities of infants and toddlers, with a special focus on at-risk children and their families. The Foundation is a private family foundation deeply committed to the pursuit of social justice and to shaping innovative and effective strategies for solving society’s most challenging problems. Among the initiatives supported by the foundation are the Pritzker Consortium on Early Childhood

Development, a research collaborative led by Nobel Laureate economist James Heckman of the University of Chicago; the First Five Years Fund, a national early childhood advocacy project; and the Ounce of Prevention Fund, one of the nation's leading providers of programs, research and policy focused on helping at-risk infants and toddlers and their families.

About The Bridgespan Group

The Bridgespan Group (www.bridgespan.org) is a nonprofit advisor and resource for mission-driven organizations and philanthropists. Bridgespan collaborates with social sector leaders to help scale impact, build leadership, advance philanthropic effectiveness and accelerate learning. Bridgespan works on issues related to society's most important challenges in three primary areas: pathways to opportunity for disadvantaged populations, environmental sustainability and civic engagement. Bridgespan's services include strategy consulting, executive search and leadership development, philanthropy advising, and developing and sharing practical insights.