

## **The Chamber's Human Capital Investment Policy**

The Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce recognizes the importance that quality early childhood care and education has on our current and future business community's workforce. Based upon economic research we know that the benefits to our local community include job creation, a better-educated workforce and a stronger and more cost effective educational system.

The Chamber recognizes that the fundamental skills employers demand -- creativity, communication, team working, problem solving, and critical thinking are forming in the first five years of life. Therefore, improving children's lives in their earliest years is not only the right thing to do, but also what businesses need to succeed. We believe that children supported by quality early childhood care and education enter our education system ready to learn. Early educational influences and social experiences supported through family and community create an environment of improved academic achievement and higher graduation rates. Learning readiness is a precursor to student success within our school systems. To maximize educational effectiveness, while remaining fiscally responsible, we believe there must be greater support to improve quality in all early childhood programs so that the short and long-term economic benefits identified through research are achieved. These programs should include a strong family engagement component to facilitate early literacy development; should focus on academic preparation; and be held accountable for their performance.

The Chamber supports and encourages policies that:

- Invest in high quality early care and education programs that stimulate learning in a safe and nurturing environment;
- Educate parents about how to provide an environment that helps a child prepare to enter school ready to learn;
- Provide resources to families to meet their basic needs so that children are raised in a safe and nurturing environment;
- Continue to research the impact of early care and education to identify best practices and promote programs with proven results; and
- Encourage early care and education programs to obtain the highest quality accreditation possible through the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (Keystone Stars, with a 3 or 4 star rating, and Pre-K Counts), The National Association for the Education of Young Children - NAEYC, and Middle States.

VOTES:

1/9/12---Executive Committee passed unanimously

1/23/12 – BOG passed unanimously