FACT SHEET | Investing in Early Learning

2016 Budget for a Better Minnesota

Governor Mark Dayton and Lt. Governor Tina Smith are working to build an economy that works for all Minnesotans, not just the wealthy few. Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith are proposing smart new investments in early learning to get more kids off to a great start. These proposed investments would help narrow our state's achievement gap, ensure more kids are ready for Kindergarten, and save families tens of thousands of dollars.

Voluntary PreKindergarten: Helping More Families Afford Early Learning

Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith's budget proposal would invest \$25 million to move our state a step closer to voluntary PreKindergarten for all Minnesota families, everywhere in Minnesota. Their proposal would allow 3,700 more Minnesota four-year-olds and their families across the state to attend quality, affordable early learning programs. Added to existing preschool scholarships serving 5,600 kids, this additional investment in early learning would help about 12.6 percent of Minnesota four-year-olds attend a high-quality early learning program. This smart new investment would directly address Minnesota's achievement gap, and prepare more students for success in school and life.

- Tackling the Achievement Gap A growing body of research shows that giving kids a great, early start is the best strategy to close gaps, and helps all students achieve their greatest potential. Race, ethnicity, and family income level can all impact educational disparities. That is why Governor Dayton and Lt. Governor Smith's proposal would allow families to choose the option that works best for them, while getting our state closer to the goal of voluntary PreKindergarten for all Minnesota families, everywhere in Minnesota.
- Helping More Children Succeed in School and Life Only 60 percent of kids from middle-income Minnesota families start Kindergarten fully prepared to learn. Even if every low-income child in Minnesota attended preschool and was fully-prepared for Kindergarten, approximately 30 percent of all Minnesota children would still not be prepared for school. To both close achievement gaps and build a statewide workforce that is ready to innovate and build opportunity, we must ensure all children begin school ready to do their very best.
- Catching Up to Other States Programs across the country, including in Maryland, North Carolina, New Jersey, Georgia, Michigan, and Oklahoma, have shown that when families have access to high-quality voluntary PreKindergarten, all kids benefit. For many families in Greater Minnesota, it can be difficult to find a preschool provider near their home where they can use a scholarship. Offering thousands more families voluntary PreKindergarten would help ensure that more four-year-olds have the chance to get a high-quality head start before entering Kindergarten.
- Saving Minnesota Families Money Minnesota has some of the highest child care costs in the country. In Minnesota, it can cost over \$11,000 to send a four-year-old to child care for just one year. Voluntary PreKindergarten would keep that money in Minnesota families' budgets, while ensuring that kids get a high-quality head start that will set them up for success in school and in life.
- 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.

Voluntary PreKindergarten – By the Numbers

11,700	Number of kids who could take advantage of expanded access to voluntary PreKindergarten and early learning scholarships
16-to-1	Every \$1 Minnesota invests in early learning can yield up to a \$16 return on investment
\$11,119	Average annual cost of child care for one 4-year-old in Minnesota