



PRE-K INVESTMENT PAYS OFF FOR EVERY STATE WITHIN NINE YEARS, ON AVERAGE

State tables show returns in budget, salary, crime reduction for 50 states, DC

High-quality prekindergarten programs that either serve all 3- and 4-year olds or target children in the poorest families begin to pay for themselves in as little as one year and no more than 13 years, while saving states and the federal government billions over decades, according to new state-by-state data released today by the Economic Policy Institute.

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[New fact sheets](#) for all 50 states and the District of Columbia serve as an addendum to EPI's recently released book [Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation](#) by Robert G. Lynch. It examines the costs and benefits of pre-K programs and their positive impact over time on federal and state budgets, crime costs, and the earnings of participating children and adults.

To the data provided in the book, these sheets add a calculation for each state on when pre-K programs – both universal and targeted for children in the lowest-quarter of income distribution – would begin to pay for themselves. This new analysis tracks when total benefits, including budget savings, compensation increases and reduction in the costs of crime, would exceed costs in every state.

The data show that for some states, pre-K investment would almost immediately pay for itself. In **Connecticut**, for example, a targeted program would begin to pay for itself just a year after implementation (In *budget benefits alone*, the program would pay for itself after four years.) In several states like **Minnesota**, **Kentucky**, **West Virginia**, and **Alaska**, a similar targeted program would begin to pay for itself after three years.

Universal programs on the whole take a bit longer for total benefits to exceed costs. It would be six years for **West Virginia** compared to three years for a targeted program in that state. But the data reveal most universal programs would pay for themselves within a decade, taking seven years in **Washington, DC**, and **New York**, and nine years in **California**, for example. In **Alabama**, a universal program would take 13 years to pay for itself. Regardless, by 2050, the data show that all states would see millions of dollars in benefits to government coffers and improved living conditions for many residents.

“Pre-K investment is a no-lose proposition for every state,” said author Robert Lynch, Everett E. Nuttle professor and economics chair at Washington College. “The benefits not only go to participants but to governments and citizens across the board.”

These state-specific data come just as early childhood education is gaining ground as an issue on the 2008 presidential campaign trail, with candidates like Sen. Hillary Clinton and Rep. Dennis Kucinich declaring the need for universal preschool for 4-year-olds. Each state table also contains national data of benefits and costs for a universal and targeted pre-K program to serve as a point of comparison.

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