



Telling Your Story

*An **A,B,C** guide to getting involved and telling your story to lawmakers, media and other concerned groups and individuals to improve the quality of early care and education in New York State*

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You have a powerful story to tell,

one that can change the way New York State educates and cares for its most precious resource: our children. Laws get passed in Albany, but for these laws to be meaningful, lawmakers need and want to hear from people in their own backyard – people like you!

This handbook is a step-by-step guide to help tell your story. We've provided samples, helpful tips and key facts on the importance of early care and education.

By sharing your experiences, you can help secure a Winning Beginning for New York's children for generations to come.

In this handbook, you'll find:

Background on Winning Beginning NY

What Winning Beginning NY is about, how it can help you, and how you can get involved in this growing statewide movement.

Early care and education facts

Research showing why high-quality early care and education improves lives and saves taxpayer dollars – and why it should be better funded.

Tools and tips for telling your story

From drafting a letter to the newspaper editor to setting up a meeting with your state representative, we provide a step-by-step guide and samples to help you tell your story.

Thank you for sharing your passion in improving the lives of New York State's children. Please help us spread the word about Winning Beginning NY, a growing statewide movement.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact Winning Beginning NY at: www.winningbeginningny.org, or call: (518)463-1896 or (518)690-4217.



About *Winning Beginning NY*

What is Winning Beginning NY?

Winning Beginning NY is a statewide coalition committed to making high-quality, affordable early care and education available to all New York children and families. Further, we believe all early childhood professionals in New York State should have credentials and should receive compensation comparable to their level of education and experience.

Who is Winning Beginning NY?

Child care providers, parents, employers, children's advocates, schools, physicians, labor unions, educators, researchers and community groups have joined together to work for a Winning Beginning for every child in New York.

Why was Winning Beginning NY started?

Research proves that the period from birth to age five is crucial in determining the lifelong success of a child. Better health, higher income and greater savings in social services are all direct benefits of a coordinated, fully-funded early care and education system.

However, New York State's current approach to early care and education is fragmented. Winning Beginning NY is committed to creating a high-quality, well-funded and coordinated system by targeting four key areas:

- Uniform quality and standards
- Sufficient funding for early care and education programs, including funding for appropriate workforce compensation
- Education and professional development opportunities to enhance the skills of early childhood teachers
- Planning and governance



Who are the Conveners of Winning Beginning NY?

Each of these organizations is available to assist in providing information and answering your questions:

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

150 State Street, 4th Floor
Albany, NY 12207

For 136 years, the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA), has provided a valuable and highly regarded voice in New York State for low income and vulnerable populations.

Throughout our history, the mission has remained the same - to advise policy makers on comprehensive improvements to health, education, and human services.

New York State Child Care Coordinating Council

230 Washington Avenue
Extension, Albany, NY 12203

Established in 1975, the New York State Child Care Coordinating Council (NYSCCCC) is a statewide, not-for-profit membership organization. Our mission is to promote excellence in early care and education with equal access for all families. Since its inception in 1975, NYSCC-CC has worked with a collaborative philosophy and has been instrumental in bringing together diverse groups to work on a range of early childhood issues.

New York State Association for the Education of Young Children

230 Washington Avenue
Extension, Albany, NY 12203

Founded in 1965, the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC) is a professional membership organization of early childhood practitioners, teachers, researchers, parents and other professionals who work on behalf of the needs and rights of young children. Our mission to promote excellence in early care and education through education, advocacy and support of the profession is accomplished through a broad array of programs and supports. NYSAEYC brings the voice of practitioners to policy makers and works to ensure that policies meet the needs of young children and the professionals that care for and educate them.

Child Care, Inc.

322 Eighth Avenue, New
York, NY 10001

Child Care, Inc (CCI) is a child care resource and referral agency dedicated to the expansion of high-quality early care and education services for every child. CCI is a leading policy and advocacy organization in New York City and works extensively with diverse early childhood programs and providers and supports parents in finding and choosing early care and education services.



an early care and education coalition



What can I do to help Winning Beginning NY improve the quality of early care and education in New York State?

1) Tell your story

Telling your personal story is the most important thing you can do to influence lawmakers and improve New York State's early care and education system. Whether you are a parent of a toddler, a child care provider or a business owner with employees who need high-quality child care, your "real life" story demonstrates the importance of this issue.

This handbook will help you reach out through letter writing, phone calls, invitations to events, contacting the media, working with elected officials, and drafting articles for newsletters.

Change doesn't happen overnight, but by establishing a relationship with your elected officials you can help influence them and become a valuable resource on early care and education issues.

2) Become an e-advocate

Sign up at www.winningbeginningny.org for email updates and important information about the movement to change early care and education in New York State.

3) Make a donation

Winning Beginning NY operates on grants and donations to advocate and create materials like this handbook.

If you or someone you know can help support our efforts through a financial or in-kind donation, please contact Winning Beginning NY at 518.690.3217 or mail your check to: Winning Beginning NY c/o NYSCCCC, 230 Washington Ave. Ext., Albany, NY 12203.

Making the Case:

Why New York State needs a high-quality early care and education system

You know – first hand – why early care and education is so important. But compelling statistics can help make the case to others. The information below can be used when talking to lawmakers, reporters, and others.

What is early care and education?

Early care and education is defined as consistent, high-quality services for all children from birth to age five that take place in many settings including:

- Child care centers
- Home-based family and group family child care programs
- Head Start
- Universal Pre-kindergarten
- Preschool special education
- Nursery schools and preschools



Economic savings and other benefits

- Children who attend high-quality early childhood programs are 50% less likely to need special education services and 25% less likely to be held back before third grade. That translates into major savings for school districts battling burgeoning budgets.
- A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis calculated that a \$1 investment in high-quality early childhood programs saves up to \$16 in reduced demand for law enforcement and public assistance.
- Children who attend high-quality early childhood programs are less likely to drop out of school and more likely to attain higher levels of education.
- Children who attend high-quality early childhood programs grow up to have significantly higher incomes and rates of home ownership.
- Parents who feel confident about their early childhood program are more productive employees.

Corporate leaders worry they won't have the skilled workers necessary to compete in the global economy. Investing in high-quality early care and education will fill this gap with a better educated work force.



Health and safety studies show

Children who attended high-quality early childhood programs are less likely to:

- Smoke
- Abuse alcohol and illegal drugs
- Engage in high-risk sexual behavior leading to AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases
- Be arrested and incarcerated

Adults who attended high-quality early childhood programs are more likely to:

- Eat balanced, nutritional meals and lead active lifestyles
- Have health insurance
- Wear safety belts

While high-quality early care and education has a profound effect on children, it also benefits parents and other family members. They learn from their children's experiences in programs and have access to more services and information.



“Eighty-five percent of a person’s intellect, personality and social skills are developed by age 5.”

Ninety-five percent of public investment in education occurs after age 5, when the most critical learning years have passed.”

Purves, Body, & Brains

Tools and Tips

How to share your story with your state representatives, the media and others

You are passionate about children – but you’ve never lobbied a state legislator. Nervous?

Here’s an important thing to remember: you have what every elected official needs – a vote. And you have knowledge and experience that will help legislators make informed decisions.

Whether you are a parent, an early childhood professional or a local business owner whose employees need high-quality child care, your state representative is elected by you, and wants to hear what you have to say.

There are some ways to maximize the impact of your lobbying efforts. In this section you’ll find tools and tips you can use for the following communication:

- **Letters:** drafting a letter to the Governor or your state representative
- **Calls:** making calls or setting up meetings with state representatives and their staff members
- **Invitations:** inviting an elected official to tour or attend a special event at your child care or preschool facility and then alerting the media to cover the event
- **Media:** drafting a letter to a newspaper editor
- **Newsletters:** drafting an article for your organization’s newsletter

Step by step

Who are my state representatives?

Every New York resident is represented by two members of the New York State Legislature: a Senator and an Assembly Member. If you don’t know who your elected officials are, you can visit:

- **NYS Assembly:** www.assembly.state.ny.us
- **NYS Senate:** www.senate.state.ny.us

Both sites feature a “zip code lookup” where you can find your representatives.

To send a letter to the Governor, you can write to:

Honorable David Paterson
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12224

When is the best time to write, call, or visit with a legislator?

The legislative session runs from January to June, so we encourage Albany-based visits then. However, you may visit your legislators in their district offices any time of the year. Since they are usually in Albany Monday through Wednesday during the legislative session, end of the week visits to the district office work best.

We also encourage you to sign up for e-mail alerts at www.winningbeginningny.org. We’ll keep you posted on bills being introduced and what is happening with early care and education legislation.



Working with legislators, media, and others



Send us a copy!

It helps us to know which legislators have been contacted.

Mail us a copy at:

Winning Beginning NY,
c/o the Schuyler Center for
Analysis and Advocacy,
150 State Street, 4th floor,
Albany, NY 12207

or e-mail us a copy at:

info@winningbeginningny.org

Writing a letter to your legislator

In a letter writing campaign, just ten letters can be perceived as a ground swell of support and move a legislator to take action. Most legislators are conscientious about their mail and want to hear the views of their constituents. Many will respond. The best letters are those that share your personal story. See the samples beginning on page 18 if you would like an example.

Important: Sending a personal letter carries much more weight than signing a form letter or a prepared postcard.

Tips on drafting your letter:

- *Use your own words.* Legislators want to hear your personal story. Write from the heart when expressing your thoughts.
- *Type letters if possible.* Typed letters are easier to read, but handwritten letters are fine too, as long as they are legible.
- *State your reason for writing.* Explain how the issue affects you and those around you. Remember to share your personal experiences.
- *List bill number, author and title.* If you are writing about legislation, include the bill number or budget line item number if your letter is about state funding. Sign up for Winning Beginning NY's email alert or drop us a line and we'll make sure you have the correct information.
- *State what action you are seeking.* Are you asking your legislator to support or oppose a particular bill? Are you requesting an increase in the funding of a particular line item?
- *Be reasonable, specific and positive.* Don't be afraid to ask legislators to state their positions on the issue in a written reply.
- *Be gracious.* Thank your legislators for their time and attention, and for his/her support and vote.
- *Have someone else read your letter.* Before you send it, ask a friend, co-worker or spouse to proofread your letter. They can spot typos and help you clarify your point.
- **Important:** Include your return address in your letter – envelopes are often lost or thrown away!

E-mailing your legislator

While email is not as effective a way to communicate as writing and sending a letter, it is useful when time is limited. Your state Assembly Member's email address may be found at www.assembly.state.ny.us and your state Senator's email address will be listed at www.senate.state.ny.us.

Calling your legislator

Letters are preferable to phone calls, because they are a tangible, lasting expression of your support. However, if you do not have the time to draft a letter, or you wish to express support for a specific bill, a phone call to a legislator's office can often be effective.

Use the same preparation tips and examples for writing a letter when preparing your call. Be sure to identify yourself and where you live, and then explain that you wish to speak with a staff member about an issue related to early care and education.

Meeting with your legislator

Every year, state representatives and their staff sit down with dozens of constituents like you, who care about specific issues. It may sound intimidating, but remember you are a voter and you are the expert on how the issue affects you! Sharing your story and concerns in a face-to-face conversation with your elected official or staff member is one of the most effective ways to influence your lawmaker's thinking.

Here are some steps to follow to make sure your visit goes well:

- **Call ahead.** Ask for an appointment at the end of the week. This is when elected officials are usually in their home offices. If there is a specific bill you wish to discuss, mention it in your call or, you can say, I am a parent/child care provider/ business owner from (town), and I am very interested in discussing issues around early care and education.
- **Prepare ahead of time.** If you are visiting as a group, get together to discuss what topics you want to address and who will be the lead speaker. Anticipate likely questions and develop good answers ahead of time. If you are unsure, contact Winning Beginning NY by calling NYSCCC (518) 690-4217 or SCAA (518) 463-1896. We are happy to help.
- **Do your homework.** Know the legislator's background (is he a former teacher? Did she grow up in the same town you did? Most legislators have a bio on their website). Also, if the legislator was in the paper for something recently, mention it. It shows you are paying attention to what your lawmaker is doing in the community.

- **Be brief and stick to the issue.** Most appointments are scheduled for 15 to 20 minutes, and lawmakers won't remember you favorably if you fail to appreciate their time constraints. Be clear about what you are asking for (support of a specific bill or program in the budget?) and focus on 2 or 3 main points. They'll want to know what specific changes you want and why, and how those changes will better meet the needs of children and families in their district.
- **Remember you are the expert.** Don't be intimidated – he or she agreed to see you. You're a constituent who represents other constituents. Keep in mind legislators may not be familiar with early care and education issues. Your experience, knowledge and personal stories are important. If you don't know the answer to a question, tell them you will get back to them – and keep your word.
- **Be willing to meet with legislative staff.** It is just as useful to speak to the legislative staff member who works on early education or child care issues. (Sometimes these are not the same individual, because child care is sometimes seen as a "social service" and pre-kindergarten as "education"). Be sure you are set up to speak with the staffer responsible for the issue you are addressing. Staffers brief legislators on their conversations with constituents. They are sometimes the expert in that office on your issue. So don't feel as if your visit or call will be ignored by your legislator simply because you were unable to meet in person.

- **Leave something behind.** Good handouts are important: They must be brief, informative and clearly articulate your priorities. See the sample "leave behind" on page 18.
- **Make the "constituent connection."** Show the lawmaker how his or her constituents are helped by the legislation you support or hurt by legislation you oppose.
- **Be prompt, patient and respectful.** Legislators may arrive late or send a staff person at the last minute. Take advantage of the opportunity. If your legislator disagrees with you, do not become argumentative. State politely that you have differing opinions, but that you hope to work together in the future. Always leave the door open to future dialogue.
- **Bring your camera!** Most legislators are very happy to pose for a photo with your group.
- **Say please and thank you.** And don't forget to ask your representative for his or her support before you leave.
- **Follow up.** Send a follow-up note thanking the lawmaker for taking the time to see you. Reiterate your major point(s) in the letter.

Remember: legislators work for you!

Their job is to represent your concerns when making policy decisions.

You elected them, and they need your vote to get re-elected. Share your story!



Send a thank you

After the event, send a thank you note to your state representative(s).

Include a photo you took and invite them to use it on their website or in a newsletter.

Be sure to reiterate your main points about the importance of supporting early care and education.

Invite a legislator to your early childhood program

Whether it is a special event, a celebration or a tour of your child care facility, consider inviting your state representative to visit. Be sure to alert parents – and invite them to be part of the event.

Elected officials love to meet voters! You may also want to snap a few pictures to send to your local paper or invite local television stations to cover the visit.

Giving your representative a first-hand look at the importance of high-quality early care and education is something he/she won't forget! It is also a great way to build recognition for your child care facility and show parents that you are working on behalf of their children.

Some tips to remember:

- *Be flexible.* Remember that most state lawmakers are in Albany during the beginning of the week. If possible, host your event at the end of the week. And, if possible, offer them a few dates to choose from on when to attend.
- *Involve parents.* Notify parents once the visit has been scheduled. If you are a parent planning the event, discuss it with your child's provider. You will also want parents to sign a permission slip for their child to be photographed or filmed by a camera crew. Ask a few parents to participate in the tour or speak with the lawmaker afterwards.
- *Plan ahead.* Make sure you have learning activities planned when the lawmaker is scheduled to attend. You want the children to be active – especially if you invite the media. You may also want some time at the end of your visit to discuss early care and education issues one-on-one. Make sure you know how much time you have and stick to a schedule.
- *Invite the media.* While lawmakers love to meet voters, they also love publicity! Consider notifying newspapers, radio and television stations that a lawmaker will be visiting your facility (see sample media alert).
- *Have your own camera ready.* Ask a staff member, friend or parents to take pictures during the event and then arrange for some “posed” photos with the lawmaker. A good picture can be sent with a caption to your local paper (see sample on page 19). You can also send it with a thank you note to the lawmaker – many will use the photos in their newsletter!



Submitting a newsletter article

Like a letter to the editor, a newsletter article is another way to share your views about the importance of early care and education with a large group of people. A sample article that you can use, with space to tell your personal story, is on page 20.

Writing a letter to the editor

Another way to make a powerful impression – not just on your lawmaker but on your community – is to draft a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Most papers are looking for residents to share their views in this section. And legislators read these letters carefully! Sharing your story may also convince others in the community to get involved. There's a sample on page 19 to help you get started.

Here are some tips on drafting your letter:

- *Be brief and powerful.* Many newspapers have word limits and other criteria for letters. Check the letter to the editor section for details. A good rule is to keep your letter to 3 to 4 paragraphs. Many papers accept letters by email.
- *Be accurate and personal.* If you are unsure about a fact, don't use it. There are several facts in this packet you can reference. Remember, your personal story, about how early care and education affects your family, is what legislators and others will relate to.
- *Be legible.* If possible, type your letter. Editors won't publish letters they can't read, so if yours is handwritten, be neat!
- *Contact information.* Always include your name, address and daytime telephone number.
- *Ask for help!* If you have any questions, or want someone to read your letter before you send it, we are happy to help! Contact Winning Beginning NY at 518.463.1896 or 518.690.4217

Be in touch:

If your letter gets published, let us know and send us a copy!

Frequently asked questions

This section includes additional information about early care and education, Winning Beginning NY and answers to other questions you may be asked when speaking about the issue.



*I'm just one parent, child care provider,
or concerned employer.
Can my voice really make a difference?*

Yes! You have a powerful story to tell – one that can change the way New York State treats its most precious resource: our children. Laws may get passed in Albany, but lawmakers want to hear from people in their own backyard – people like you!

See the “Tips and Tools” section of this handbook for information on:

- Writing letters, making calls or visiting your state and federal lawmakers
- Inviting elected officials to your child care facility and inviting the media to attend
- Drafting a letter to the editor or a piece for a newsletter

What does “early care and education” mean?

Early care and education is defined as consistent, high-quality services for all children, from birth to age five including:

- Child care centers
- Home-based family and group family child care programs
- Head Start
- Preschool special education
- Universal Pre-kindergarten
- Nursery schools and preschools

What defines “high-quality” in early care and education?

There are five (5) key factors that determine the quality of an early care and education program:

- ***Safe and stimulating learning environments:*** learning environments are safe and provide developmentally appropriate learning
- ***Professional development:*** early care and education professionals are appropriately educated, trained, and credentialed
- ***Compensation:*** early care and education professionals are compensated commensurate with their education, experience and credentials
- ***Family involvement:*** families are encouraged to participate in their children’s development
- ***Diversity:*** culture, family composition, and language differences are respected and used to strengthen learning



Is early care and education considered part of a child’s overall education?

New York’s highest court has ruled that every child in New York State is constitutionally entitled to a “sound basic education.” The New York State Board of Regents has identified early education as part of the State’s educational responsibility. Winning Beginning NY believes that a comprehensive early care and education system should include:

- ***Accessibility.*** High-quality early care and education programs should operate in both public schools and community settings, providing children and families with multiple options.
- ***Availability.*** Working parents need full-day care. Early care and education programs must be scheduled accordingly, including those for children with special needs. Transportation must be available to meet family needs.
- ***High-quality early learning.*** Every early care and education program must be staffed by early care and education professionals who earn pay and benefits commensurate with their education, experience and credentials. Professional development, technical support and appropriate materials and equipment must also be available.
- ***Supportive environments.*** Children must be cared for in stimulating learning environments that are culturally and linguistically sensitive and safe and appropriate to the age of the child. Further, programs must be connected to the social, health and mental health supports children and their families may require.

Why is there such high turnover among early care and education professionals?

While research demonstrates that a consistent relationship with appropriately educated and trained staff is key to a child’s development, the early care and education field has difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified people.

The inability to pay competitive wages drives professional staff from community-based programs to public schools and other occupations with higher salaries. Staff who want to pursue higher education (such as a degree in early childhood), are often unable to because their salary is not enough to pay tuition. Many take out loans that they are unable to repay on their salary, forcing them to seek employment elsewhere — often with older children. High staff turnover undermines all of the proven cost benefits of high-quality early childhood programs.

If early care and education is so important, why aren't more children enrolled?

Child care is expensive. In New York State, the average cost of care for a four-year-old is almost twice the cost of tuition at a four-year public college. For younger children the price tag is even higher. While 55% of children have no parent at home during the day because they work, less than 22% of the almost 560,000 eligible children in New York State live in families that receive financial assistance to pay for child care. As a result, parents often use a patchwork of caregivers, work opposite shifts, work part-time, or use informal care in the neighborhood. Many of these solutions are fragile and unreliable, leaving parents stressed and worried about their children's well-being and concerned about missing work or losing their jobs.

In most communities, parents of infants and toddlers face a shortage of regulated child care and, because the cost of regulated care for our youngest children is the highest, it is also the least affordable for families.

Fewer than half of eligible children attend pre-kindergarten programs – despite New York State law that calls for free Universal Pre-K. In addition, many children who would benefit from a Pre-K program miss out because parents must have full-day options in order to work full-time. Pre-K generally lasts only a half-day and is still not available in every community.

Early learning and education costs money. What is the return on investment?

- **Corporate support.** A 2005 survey of the largest Fortune 1000 companies showed, “unease about the American workforce, and the U.S.’s ability to compete in the global economy.” However, three quarters felt universal access to early learning would improve the workforce. And, 88% of the respondents felt that “public investments in effective preschool programs for children are important if the U.S. is to remain competitive.”
- **Employers benefit.** Studies show that working parents who have access to reliable, full-day early care and education programs have better attendance, are less distracted and are more productive. In every economic sector, worker efficiency is enhanced when such programs are available.
- **Boosting local economies.** Early care and education facilities employ people who pay taxes and spend their earnings in local communities. Further, child care providers and programs purchase goods and services, supporting the local economy. In addition, communities will have a hard time attracting new businesses (especially big businesses) if those same communities do not provide child care for potential employees who move to the area.



Promotes self-sufficiency

High-quality early care and education programs help move families from welfare to employment.

Child care subsidies play a major role in creating self-supporting families, who contribute to New York State's tax base.

Nationally, expanding availability of **child care subsidies** **increased poor mothers' work participation from 29% to 44%**, according to the U.S. Government Accounting Office.

What is the government's role in early care and education?

The Federal Government impacts early care and education in New York State through funding and laws. It funds child care subsidies, child care quality improvements, and Head Start. In addition, it creates, and “reauthorizes” laws that affect early care and education. At the state level, New York impacts early care and education by “matching” federal funds for some initiatives, providing state-only funding for others, and by creating laws regarding child care and early education.

- Federal Funding comes to New York under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Block Grant (TANF). New York combines these grants with state and local funds to provide child care assistance. With these funds, New York makes a limited number of subsidies available to low income families to help pay for child care. While New York has done a great deal to support low-income families, many low and middle income families cannot obtain essential support for child care.
- Federal funds also support Head Start programs and a more limited number of Early Head Start programs for children under three. These comprehensive programs are provided free to families at or below the federal poverty level, but reach only a fraction of those who qualify.
- With its own dollars, New York State funds Universal Pre-kindergarten and several other preschool initiatives. While there is a substantial commitment, New York still has a long way to go to ensure that every four year old has access to a Universal Pre-kindergarten program, especially one that is full-day.
- With state and federal dollars, New York can fund several initiatives to improve the quality of early care and education programs. New York can pay for quality measures such as grants and loans to ensure better-educated and paid teaching staff, improved health and safety inspections, building improvements, and improved standards. In recent years, funds for many of these initiatives have been cut or decreased.
- New York State also plays a major role in setting standards for early care and education programs and for administering and regulating many of these programs.

What should the federal government do?

- Increase the amount of federal dollars going to the state for child care and Head Start. Because so much of the money used to increase the quality, supply and supports for child care and Head Start comes from federal sources and because the need is still so great, it is very important that Congress increase the amount of money it provides to the state.
- Encourage states to improve standards, increase professional qualifications, and better coordinate the many early care and education programs. The federal government reauthorizes a number of important acts every few years including The Child Care and Development Block Grant, Head Start, Higher Education and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). At little cost, the federal government can provide language in the re-authorization to ensure high standards and encourage better coordinated early care and education systems.



What should the state government do?

- Ensure that every child has access to high-quality, affordable early childhood programs. In order to receive federal child care dollars, New York is required to put some state funding into the child care block grant. But the amount deposited is small in comparison to the need. New York State should allocate additional state funding to increase the number of subsidies available to low-income families, expand quality initiatives – including those for infants and toddlers – and fully fund pre-kindergarten across the state.

Samples

for an electronic copy of any of these documents, visit **Winning Beginning NY** at www.winningbeginningny.org and click on the Advocacy tab.

Sample letter

Date

The Honorable _____
New York State Senate/Assembly
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Senator/Governor/Assembly Member:

Research shows that 85% of a person's intellect, personality and social skills are developed before age five – yet 95% of public investment in education occurs after age five, when the most important learning years have gone by. We are missing a critical window of opportunity.

Ensuring that every family in New York State has access to high-quality, affordable early care and education is a smart investment in our state's future. Studies show children who attend high-quality programs require fewer government services, such as welfare. They also attain higher levels of education, income and home ownership – which all benefit our economy.

(Describe your own story as a parent, provider or advocate, here.)

EXAMPLE: As a mother of two young children, I am able to support my family because both children can attend affordable, high-quality full-time child care in my community. However, I currently spend 15% of my income on care and if the cost continues to rise, I will no longer be able to afford this program. It is important to me that my children are getting safe, appropriate care and instruction, so they can lead successful lives.

OR: I have been amazed to watch my four-year-old daughter, Madison, since she started her pre-kindergarten program. She knows her letters and numbers and loves school. Unless more funding is provided for Universal Pre-kindergarten, however, my son may not be so lucky. I am worried he'll miss out on important learning that will help him succeed in school.

OR: As a family day care center director, I see first-hand, the importance of providing high-quality early care and education. One child, who began our program last fall, barely said a word when he arrived. Just a month later he was socializing, could identify colors and numbers and was always helping other children and his teacher. Families depend on me, yet I continue to lose excellent teachers because I cannot pay them enough to stay.

Everyone wants to make smart investments – and what is good for children is good for New York State. That is why I am asking you to support (bill number, if applicable, and name here) to ensure that all of our children have access to high-quality, affordable early care and education – these programs don't just save money, they are an investment in our children's future as well.

Sincerely,

(Sign here)

Your name

Address

Email

Date: Month, Date, Year

Meeting with: your name, organization, or business name

Re: Support of (bill number or early care and education funding)

About Winning Beginning NY:

Winning Beginning NY (www.winningbeginningny.org) is a statewide coalition committed to making high-quality, affordable early care and education available to all New York children and families. Further, Winning Beginning NY believes early childhood professionals in New York State should have credentials and compensation comparable to those of public school teachers.

Child care providers, parents, employers, children's advocates, schools, physicians, labor unions, educators, researchers and community groups have joined together to ensure a Winning Beginning for every child in New York.

Facts about early care and education:

- 75% of brain growth and 85% of a person's intellect, personality and social skills are developed before age five. Yet 95% of public investment in education occurs after age five, when the most critical learning years have gone by. Early brain research documents the importance of high-quality early learning experiences, starting at birth, in helping every child to reach his/her potential.
- A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis calculated that a \$1 investment in high-quality early childhood programs saves up to \$16 in reduced demand for law enforcement and public assistance.
- Studies show children who attend high-quality early childhood programs grow up to have significantly higher income and rates of home ownership.
- Parents who feel confident about their child's early childhood program are proven to be more productive employees.

What does New York State need to do?

New York State needs to ensure that all of its children have access to high-quality, affordable early childhood programs that employ an appropriately trained early childhood workforce.

*Sample
"leave behind"
for legislators*

To the Editor:

Scientists say 85% of a person's intellect, personality and social skills are developed in the first five years – yet many families in New York State do not have access to the high-quality, affordable early care and education programs that could make a life-long difference in a child's life.

In New York State, 55% of children under age six need child care because their parents are working. As a parent of two children/child care provider/business owner, I know first-hand the importance of high-quality care. Child care subsidies are good for our economy. They help families continue working, supporting themselves, and contributing to our communities.

It is proven that children in high-quality programs do better in school, require fewer government services and eventually earn higher incomes. It is time for our state leaders to invest in early care and education. Our future – and our children – depend on it.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

Daytime Phone Number/Email

*Sample
letter to the editor*



Sample news alert

(YOUR LOGO OR CHILD CARE CENTER NAME HERE)

NEWS ADVISORY
and
PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

For Immediate Release
Date Here

Contact: YOUR NAME
CHILD CARE CENTER NAME
Phone Number Here

Assembly Member Smith to Attend Children's Art Exhibit
Parents, Child Care Providers to Express Support for Early Care and Education
Legislation at Event

WHO: Assembly Member Susie Smith to speak with parents, child care providers
about proposed early care and education legislation during holiday event.

WHAT: Children will be creating an art exhibit for senior citizens living at
Longbrook Nursing Home.

WHEN: Friday, February 4, from 3:00pm p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

WHERE: 1324 West Genesee Street, Anywhere, NY

WHY: Studies show that children who have access to high-quality early care and
education require fewer remedial services and save taxpayers dollars. They
eventually go on attain higher levels of education, income and home ownership.
Yet New York does not have a coordinated system for maximizing child
development between ages zero and five.

CHILD CARE CENTER NAME is a member of Winning Beginning NY, a statewide
coalition working to improve the quality, availability and affordability of early care
and education programs in New York State.



Sample newsletter article

Everyone is looking for a smart investment. What if the government could offer a program proven to return up to \$16 for every \$1 invested?

This isn't a high stakes Wall Street scheme – it is making sure every child in New York State receives high-quality early care and education, from birth until age five.

Studies show that every \$1 spent on such programs saves up to \$16: by reducing later costs for special education, welfare and crime. Children who attend such high-quality programs also attain higher levels of education, significantly higher income and higher rates of home ownership.

The research is clear. Scientists report 75% of brain growth and 85% of intellect, personality and social skills develop before age five. Yet 95% of public investment in education occurs after age five, when the most critical learning years have gone by.

New York State is missing a vital window of opportunity – one that will continue to benefit our state for years to come.

Today, many working families with young children cannot afford high-quality early care and education. Counties offer too few subsidized child care slots and co-payments often exceed a family's ability to pay. And public pre-kindergarten programs are not designed to fit working parents' schedules. As a result, too many children are spending their most critical years of brain development in unregulated and, sometimes, dangerous settings.

(Describe your own story as a parent, provider or advocate, here.)

It is time for New York State to adopt a legislative agenda targeting ages birth to five. Creating consistent, high-quality early care and education programs will maximize child development during this critical period and save taxpayers money.

While corporate leaders worry they won't have the highly skilled workers needed to compete in a global economy, schools continue testing for greater achievement. Yet research shows we are missing a fundamental link – one with a proven track record of success – by failing to create an effective system of early care and education.

Head Start began over 40 years ago and continues to demonstrate the power of pre-school – yet many families do not qualify. And despite both parents working, many families in New York State lack the extra income to pay for high-quality early care and education. Closing this gap is crucial because studies show low-income children benefit most from these programs.

We all want to make wise investments. Universal Pre-kindergarten, as part of a comprehensive system of early care and education, has proven to not only save money, but save children for generations to come.

Over the next few months, the Governor and Legislature will be negotiating New York's budget. If they truly care about our state's economic future, they cannot ignore the scientific data that shows the benefits of investing in high-quality early care and education:

- Parents are more reliable and efficient employees
- School districts save precious resources by reducing the need for remediation
- New York produces a greater percentage of highly-skilled workers
- The demand on welfare, criminal justice and other services is reduced
- Children grow up to attain higher education, incomes and home ownership

Contact your legislators today and urge them to support funding for early care and education.

For more information, contact Winning Beginning NY, a coalition of over 50 organizations committed to ensuring high-quality early child care and education for New York's children. For a full copy of the Winning Beginning NY legislative agenda, sample letters to your elected officials, or to attend an advocacy day in Albany, visit www.winningbeginningny.org or call: 518-463-1896.



Appendices

How to contact your state representatives

New York State Governor

Governor David Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224
(518) 474-8390 (General)
(518) 474-1041 (Public comments,
opinions, complaints)
www.state.ny.us

New York State Senate

Your Senator
New York State Senate
Albany, NY 12247
(518) 455-2800 (General)
(518) 455-3216 (Public Information)
www.senate.state.ny.us

New York State Senate Bill Status Hotlines:

(518) 455-7545
(800) 342-9860

New York State Assembly

Your Assembly Member
New York State Assembly
Albany, NY 12248
(518) 455-4100 (General)
(518) 455-4218 (Public Information)
www.assembly.state.ny.us

New York State Assembly Bill Status Hotlines:

(518) 455-4218
(800) 342-9860

New York State budget timeline

July

- Division of the Budget (DOB) develops the Budget Request Manual

August

- DOB issues call letter to agencies including guidelines for budget request-based financial plan and submission due date

September

- Agencies submit their budget requests to DOB

October

- DOB Fiscal Planning Unit prepares base budget reflecting cost of projecting current year programs into next year, including inflation, salary adjustments & eliminating one-time costs
- Revenue projections developed and agency budget requests analyzed

November

- DOB holds hearings on agency budget requests

December

- DOB holds hearings on agency budget requests

January

- Governor conducts State of the State address
- Governor releases his Executive Budget Briefing ("Budget School") help for Legislative leaders and membership

February/March

- Governor submits 30-Day amendments (technical corrections)
- Legislature holds public hearings on proposed budget
- Legislators participate in budget forums in home districts
- Legislative leaders and Governor begin budget negotiations
- Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees issue Yellow Book
- State comptroller releases analysis of Governor's Budget
- DOB, Ways & Means and Senate Finance staff meet to develop negotiated budget bills

April

- New York State's fiscal year begins
- Budget passage deadline on 1st of the month

May, June or July

- State Budget is adopted
- Ways & Means and Senate Finance Committees issue Green Book
- State Comptroller issues analysis of adopted budget

How a bill becomes a law in New York State

Legislative process

The Legislature convenes

The Legislature convenes on the first Wednesday after the first Monday in January. Early in the session the Legislature meets on Mondays and Tuesdays. Later more meetings are held.

Bills are introduced

Bills are introduced and each is given an introductory number which identifies it throughout its progress. Each time the bill is amended, a letter is added to the number, e.g. 21A, 21B, etc. After introduction, the bill is referred to a standing committee.

Committee action

Committee action is probably the most crucial step in the legislative process. Except under certain conditions, no bill is taken up for final consideration until it is reported out of its committee. An affirmative vote of a majority of all members of a committee is necessary for a report on the bill. The committee may report a bill favorably, unfavorably, or merely for the consideration of the appropriate house. Many bills are not acted on at all.

Passage of bills

A bill must be on the desk of members in final printed form for 3 days before it is voted on, unless the Governor issues a message of necessity. To pass, a bill must be voted favorably by a majority of those elected to each house. When a bill is passed in one house, it is sent to the other. If a companion bill has been introduced in the house receiving the bill, the passed bill may be substituted for its companion in the same order of business. When a bill passes both houses, it is sent to the Governor.

Action by the Governor

During the session, the Governor has 10 days, exclusive of Sundays, to approve or veto a bill. If no action is taken within that time, the bill becomes a law. If vetoed, it may only become law if repassed by a 2/3 majority of each house.

After the session adjourns, the Governor has 30 days within which to act. Bills not acted upon within that time are dead. In practice, the Governor does not practice the "pocket veto." He either signs or vetoes all bills sent to him. Bills passed during the last 10 days of the session are considered 30 day bills.

The citizens' role

If you want to see your legislators about a bill, try to make an appointment towards the end of the week, at their district office, early in the session.

Request copies of bills from the Legislature. Indicate the latest letter, number, and name of the introducer.

Now is the time for action on bills which you favor or oppose. When communicating with legislators about a bill, remember to give the bill number, the name of the introducer, and the subject of the bill. Keep your letter brief and to the point. Communications should be addressed to the committee chairperson. It is also wise to communicate with your own representative if she/he is a committee member.

Communications to the legislature at this stage should be addressed to your own Senator or Assemblyperson and to the majority and minority leaders of each house.

Since the great majority of bills reach the Governor during the 30 day period, he and his staff are faced with a great concentration of work during this short period. If you wish to communicate with the Governor at this time, it would be most helpful to keep your remarks brief and to the point. The correct subject, number, and the introducer of the bill should be included.

How to contact your federal representatives

President of the United States

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500
(202) 456-1111 (Comments)
(202) 456-1414 (Switchboard)
www.president@whitehouse.gov

United States Senators

Your Senator
US Senate Offices
Washington, DC 20515
Main Switchboard for Senate and
House: (202) 224-3121
www.senate.gov

United States Representatives

Your Representative
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Main Switchboard for Senate and
House: (202) 224-3121
www.house.gov



Websites

Winning Beginning

www.winningbeginningny.org

Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (SCAA)

www.scaany.org

NYS Child Care Coordinating Council (NYSCCCC)

www.nyscccc.org

NYS Association for the Education of Young Children

www.nysaeyc.org

Child Care, Inc.

www.childcareinc.org

Docs for Tots

www.docsfortots.org

Empire Justice Center

www.empirejustice.org

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

www.fightcrime.org/ny

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRA)

www.naccra.org

National Head Start Association

www.nhsa.org

NY Children's Action Network (NY CAN)

www.scaany.org/nycan

NY State Education Department

www.nysed.gov

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

www.naeyc.org

NYS Council on Children and Families

www.ccf.state.ny.us

NYS Head Start Association

www.nysheadstart.org

Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)

www.ocfs.state.ny.us

Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA)

www.otda.state.ny.us

Visit
www.winningbeginningny.org

*to download the current
legislative agenda and
background information on
high-quality early care
and education issues.*



an early care and education coalition

150 State Street, 4th Floor, Albany, NY 12207
Telephone 518/463-1896 x23 or 518-690-4217 • Fax 518/463-3364
info@winningbeginningny.org • www.winningbeginningny.org

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