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Investing in Early Care & Education Benefits Our Economy and Our Community

Investing in early care and education for children ages 0 to 5 is one of the most cost-effective ways to improve the San Joaquin Valley's economy now and in the future. Early care and education programs produce important short- and long-term benefits for children, families, taxpayers, and the community.

Currently, the early care and education industry is an important community economic driver. In Madera County, the child care industry provides 840 jobs and boosting Madera County's economy by \$39 million. Additionally, access to affordable child care and education programs allows parents to participate in the workforce.

Early care and education is also a smart investment in this region's ability to compete in the national economy. According to a survey by Partnership for America's Economic Success, 54% of US business leaders believe that finding skilled and educated workers will be a significant challenge to managing their businesses in the future. In order to ensure San Joaquin Valley's economic success, we must find ways to better educate our workforce. Research proves that children participating in high-quality preschool programs gain lifelong skills and improve their chances for future job market success.

Investing in quality early care and education programs provides long-term social and economic benefits for our community:

- Children enrolled in a quality early care and education program are 70% less likely to commit a crime later in life.
- Taxpayers save up to \$16 for every dollar invested in future costs on special education, remedial education, teenage pregnancy and welfare payments.
- Children who participate in quality early care and education programs have higher academic achievement, salaries and employee benefits than children who do not participate in these programs.

Our children will be the future employees, consumers and leaders driving our economy. We must create and sustain the infrastructure to support their development now, to benefit children still in their formative years. Policymakers, business leaders, philanthropists, and community based organizations must ensure that investment in early care and education remains a top priority. It is an opportunity our businesses, neighborhoods and communities cannot afford to miss.

To hear from regional and nationwide business leaders and economic experts about why early care and education is a sound and necessary economic investment, attend the San Joaquin Valley Regional Business Leader Summit on Early Care and Education on April 29, 2010 in Fresno County. For more information, contact Madera County Office of Education, Dana True at 662-3864 or dtrue@maderacoe.k12.ca.us.

Dana True is the Director of Early Care and Education for Madera County Office of Education.