



start small
GROW GREAT

OREGON HEAD START PRE-KINDERGARTEN (OPK)

Making Sure All Eligible Children Have Access to OPK:

- ★ Oregon has a high quality early education program proven to prepare children for kindergarten and improve the odds for disadvantaged kids – ***Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten (OPK).***
- ★ Because of a lack of funding, OPK reaches far too few of the eligible children.
- ★ Oregon can't afford to wait to make sure that all eligible kids have access to OPK.

The pay-off for Oregon's children: Children who attend OPK enter school ready to learn. They are more likely to graduate from high school and college and have better paying jobs. High quality pre-kindergarten for economically disadvantaged children is the most cost effective strategy for closing the achievement gap.

The pay-off for Oregon's economy: Money invested in OPK reduces later expenditures for social services, remedial and special education, criminal justice, unemployment and more. Investing in early education is a powerful economic development strategy that yields big dividends.

What Is OPK?

Oregon's Head Start Prekindergarten Program (OPK) serves 3- and 4-year-olds growing up in poverty. It is a high-quality, comprehensive early childhood education program with the overall goal of increasing school readiness.

OPK provides:

- ★ Pre-kindergarten education
- ★ Access to child health, mental health, dental and nutrition services
- ★ Parent education
- ★ Family support including home visits.

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***Making sure all eligible children have access
(con't.)***

How many eligible kids don't have access to OPK?

- * 40% of the eligible children -- about 6,400 kids who are living in poverty -- aren't able to enroll because of a lack of funding.
- * Almost all OPK providers across the state have a waiting list of kids who can't get in because of the lack of funding.

How Much Will This Cost?

- * According to Oregon Department of Education estimates, it would cost \$40 million to fully fund OPK for the 2007-09 biennium.
- * \$13 million would be spent in the first year of the biennium
- * This funding would create 3,296 new OPK slots over two years.

Expanding OKP allows us to:

- * Focus on disadvantaged kids who have the most to gain and are most at-risk of school failure.
- * Increase access to a high quality comprehensive program that reduces the future cost of special education and juvenile crime.
- * Build on a program that is run locally, producing results in all 36 of Oregon's counties.
- * Support a program in which parents actively participate.
- * Ensure children get medical and dental care and at least one nutritious meal a day.
- * Narrow the achievement gap before kids get to kindergarten.