



Telluride Economic Summit on Early Childhood Investment

September 9 – 11, 2007 in Telluride, Colorado

*Building a framework to improve America's workforce productivity
and customer base strength, by leveraging America's greatest untapped resource:
the success and well-being of its children*

The Telluride Summit is a “Davos” forum on building human capital through research-based investments in early childhood. The invitation-only Summit of 100 business, finance and policy leaders will review new evidence of proven investments in young children and propose principles to guide the process and improvement of American youth human capital development. It is co-hosted by the Telluride Foundation, www.TellurideFoundation.org, and the Partnership for America's Economic Success, www.PartnershipforSuccess.org.

The Summit builds on these observations –

- Our highest priority is the lifetime wellbeing of every American child.
- The first five years of a child's life are vitally important in shaping later life success.
- The U.S. approach to ensuring the successful development of young children can be significantly improved.
- Improving the system and allocating needed resources depends on achieving a new public/private consensus on investments in early childhood development.
- Consensus will require agreement on a set of principles that will characterize the nation's approach to supporting the successful maturation of young children into the future.
- These principles need to reflect the priority of every child's wellbeing, the primary importance of parents and families, and America's unique, mobile, market-based culture.

The challenge is clear –

- More than 20 percent of U.S. workers are functionally illiterate and innumerate.
- American youth lag their foreign counterparts in math and science. According to the 2003 TIMS Study, U.S. fourth graders scored 12th out of 25 participating countries in mathematics (behind such countries as Singapore, Hungary and England) and 6th in science – a decline in the U.S. position relative to other countries since the 1995 results. The U.S. rank was even lower for 8th graders in both subjects.
- The United States has the highest child poverty rate of the top 20 countries of the OECD.
- Of 50 children experiencing problems reading in first grade, 44 will still be struggling three years later. These same children are at the greatest risk of dropping out, committing crimes, becoming teen parents and failing to find productive work.

U.S. early childhood policies need to be modernized. If they are not –

- Workforce productivity will be threatened
- Customer base strength will be compromised
- The U.S. will fall behind as competition expands and intensifies on a worldwide playing field
- The life success of many American children will be diminished



But we can address these challenges. New data show that proven strategies can help young children grow to be successful adults – literate, numerate, job-ready and team-capable. These investments would have substantial effects on adult productivity, GDP growth, job creation and fiscal sustainability. Researchers have estimated that one strategy alone – early education – would contribute up to 2 percent growth in GDP and over three million new jobs. Other investments – such as in health care and improved parenting – should increase those totals even more. Ultimately business, nonprofit and government leaders need to align to target resources to proven strategies with clear incentives, commensurate with the evidence of economic return.

The Telluride Summit will bring business, finance and policy leaders together in a setting conducive to careful, effective discussion, to assess new evidence and provide input to private and public policy development in the U.S. and abroad. Depending on participant interest, the Summit would convene annually to review and use the best evidence and practices to maximize U.S. future workforce productivity and customer base strength.

Summit Goals

- Review new evidence and findings on the economic benefits of investments in young children
- Develop principles to guide the improvement of American youth human capital development
- Propose options for achieving needed change
- Report the Summit's principles and options to the nation's business community, state and national decision makers, leaders in fields that support healthy child development, and the public

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