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THE PUBLIC PULSE

Early childhood education pays

Samuel Meisels, founding director of the University of Nebraska's Buffett Early Childhood Institute, spoke May 1 at the Holland Center about "Why the Early Years of Life Matter." After attending this presentation, I am enthusiastic about the future of early childhood education in Nebraska.

The experiences of children before kindergarten are critical in their long-term development. Early childhood education starts with infants and toddlers. Ensuring our children have equal opportunities to participate in high-quality programs will create a strong foundation for children.

Early education is a long-term investment that will contribute to the well-being of society. Research shows that when children from low-income families enter kindergarten, a gap often exists. In order to close this gap, children must make up more than a year's growth in a year.

Early childhood education enhances the lives of children. The positive effects of investment in early childhood education can reduce the long-term costs to society of having to bear a less productive citizen. As a state, we must intervene sooner to achieve the greatest return on our investment.

Contact your local school board or state legislator and encourage them to make early childhood education a priority.

Jean R. Ubbelohde, *Papillion*