



Telluride Economic Summit on Early Childhood Investment 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 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 a project of the Pew Charitable Trusts.

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 TIMSS 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

Telluride Principles for Investing in Young Children

The development of the Principles began at the first Telluride Summit, on September 9-11, 2007, when 125 business, finance and policy leaders reviewed new evidence of proven investments in young children, such as data released by the Partnership for America's Economic Success showing significant economic impacts of early education, health care, housing insecurity, and family income for young children.

During the 2007 summit discussions, the need became clear for a set of principles to help Telluride participants convey their thoughts to other business people and to guide policymakers, legislators, and program managers and funders. Using a table-discussion format, participants listed and prioritized the features they judged most vital to effective child development policies and programs.

These priorities were combined into five principles, each with several sub-principles, which were then reviewed by Telluride Summit participants and distributed for comment to the over 1400 members of the Invest in Kids Working Group of the Partnership for America's Economic Success. Based on their input, the proposed principles were redrafted several times and then ratified unanimously by the Telluride 2008 participants. Following the principles is the original summary of Telluride Summit table reports.

Telluride Principles --

Long-term US economic strength and fiscal sustainability depends on our future workforce. Investing in children is a vital economic growth strategy and a priority of business, government and philanthropy. Private and public resources are limited and should be allocated based on evidence of effectiveness. To provide a framework for understanding and discussing how to allocate resources for investing in children, the Telluride Summit proposes the following principles --

- 1. Maximizing the life success of every child in America is our highest priority.**
 - a. Every child has an equal right to achieve his or her full potential.
 - b. The earliest investments in a child's development appear to have the highest returns and have the greatest effect if support continues through adolescence.
 - c. Achieving full potential requires attending to a child's physical, emotional, cognitive and social capabilities; cultural diversity, and unique needs.

- 2. Involvement of parents, family and other loving adults are crucial to a child's life success.**
 - a. For best development of the whole child, parents, families and other loving adults need to be involved, wherever possible, at every step.
 - b. There should be a variety of good options for obtaining high quality child development services.
 - c. Ending generational cycles of ineffective parenting is vitally important.

- 3. Children are helped most and the economy is made strongest when resources are allocated on the best evidence of what will lead to positive child outcomes.**
 - a. Public and private funders should allocate resources (for children and for other purposes) based on rigorous evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes whenever possible.
 - b. Policy officials, service providers, and parents should be accountable to each other and to the children and families they serve.

- 4. Sound performance evaluations can ensure goals are attained.**
 - a. High quality child development programs need to have clear goals, rigorous evidence of likely success and draw on best practices – when possible, proven practices should be relied upon to ensure benefits.
 - b. Ongoing performance evaluation, flexibility and continuing quality improvement should be built in at the beginning of program operation and funding design and continue throughout.

c. Evaluations should never be used to penalize children.

5. Child development programs that use private and public incentives and are scalable will be stronger.

a. Parent and family aspirations, and the incentives of for-profit, non-profit, and government health, nurturing and education providers, are powerful forces that can benefit every child and make the economy stronger.

b. Programs that can be replicated in other communities and expanded regionally or nationally are more desirable.

c. As programs are scaled up, they must not be watered down.