

THE TRUTH ABOUT DEGREED TEACHERS FOR FLORIDA'S 4-YEAR-OLDS

A few vocal groups are spreading misinformation about degreed lead teachers in pre-K classrooms. It is time to *Separate Fact from Fiction.*

Fiction

FACT

We can gradually increase the quality of Florida's pre-K programs without requiring degreed teachers. Nothing will be lost.

Scientific research clearly establishes that a child's foundation for learning occurs at a very young age. If missed, a child is at a disadvantage.

Current pre-K instructors without a college degree will likely lose their jobs if Florida requires degreed teachers.

Jobs will not be lost. Degreed teachers will elevate the status of the entire early learning workforce. Current pre-K personnel who seek to improve the quality of pre-K education will be encouraged to acquire credentials in order to become lead teachers. Florida TaxWatch has charted a variety of realistic paths that will enable them to accomplish this goal.

Improving the quality of Florida's pre-K program will take funding away from K-12.

According to Florida Tax Watch, for every dollar Florida spends on pre-K, the state will recoup 7 dollars in subsidizing costs associated with social problems and K-12 failures.

Private and faith based providers will not be able to participate if degreed lead teachers are required.

Florida's pre-K program is voluntary and optional for all providers whether they are public, private or faith based. Reimbursement rates are the same for any participating provider.

The Legislature will need to write a new law to require degreed lead teachers in pre-K classrooms.

In order to ensure degreed teachers in pre-K classrooms by 2013, and to fulfill the original voter intent, a simple amendment change in section 1002.65, Florida Statutes, is all that is needed now.

We do not have the teacher capacity to recruit degreed teachers for pre-K classrooms.

Florida TaxWatch has researched and designed a multifaceted teacher recruitment model that is available to meet the demand for high quality degreed teachers in Florida.

Continued

Fiction

FACT

Degreed lead teachers do not make a difference for pre-K students.

Research has established that children taught by degreed teachers are better prepared to positively interact with their peers, engage in more creative activities, and develop more expansive vocabularies. It has been documented that it really DOES make a difference.

This requirement will have an immediate impact on pre-K providers across the state.

State agencies and providers have 6 years to prepare for delivering quality education for Florida's pre-school children. Amending the pre-K statute to clearly define legislative intent will enable the stakeholders to begin planning now.

There will be a fiscal impact this year.

There is no immediate fiscal impact for fulfilling the legislative intent for degreed teachers in Florida Statutes this year. Any worthwhile program, including providing a quality pre-K education, will have future cost factors. We need to begin planning now so we can phase in our plans to ultimately deliver the quality programs supported by Florida voters, parents and educators.

I'm for children but don't support degreed teachers.

We cannot ignore our responsibility to provide all children in Florida the right start in their early formative years. The voters spoke and the research confirms that a quality pre-K education, including degreed lead teachers, creates the foundation every child deserves.

See Florida TaxWatch's *Routes to Degreed Teachers* study.

Join Governor Crist in defending the facts. Author or Support an amendment today, to get degreed teachers in Florida's pre-K classrooms by 2013.



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Degreed Pre-K Teachers: Economic Benefits

Widely accessible early childhood education programs will do more than prepare individual children for personal success. The economy will benefit from a better prepared workforce, increased employment opportunities, stronger growth, and rising standards of living while society will benefit from less crime, enhanced schools, and children who are better prepared to participate in the democratic processes.¹

Tomorrow's Skilled Workers

*Students who attend high quality preschools are less likely to participate in criminal activity during their juvenile or adult years, or be victims of child maltreatment or neglect.¹

*Former preschool students are less likely to depend on public assistance, become teenage parents, or endanger their health by smoking.¹

*As adults, former preschool students are less likely to be unemployed and more likely to have higher earnings than similar students who do not participate in preschool programs.¹

*Children who participate in high quality preschool programs demonstrate higher academic achievement, are less likely to repeat a grade or require special education classes, and are more likely to graduate from high school and enroll in college.¹

*Today's preschoolers will become tomorrow's better-skilled workers.¹

*The gross domestic product (GDP) grows faster when educated workers join the labor force.¹

Tomorrow's Economy

*A national program would cost the federal government \$59 billion through the year 2080, but the return is expected to produce an additional \$2 trillion dollars in National GDP (\$7,700 per capita), an increase of 3.5 percent by the year 2080.²

*Preschool investments for just one age cohort of students could generate as much as \$150 billion in net present-value benefits to the United States.¹

*For every dollar spent on preschool, states are projected to recoup .50 to .85 cents in reduced crime costs and .36 to .77 cents in school savings.¹

*Preschool is far more cost-effective than programs that correct educational and social problems in later years.¹ percent.¹

*Preschool programs provide opportunities for employment to parents in the short run and to graduates in the long-run.²

*A billion dollar state investment in a part-day, part-year preschool program is expected to increase long-run state employment by about 1.3 percent.¹

1. The Committee for Economic Development. The Economic Promise of Investing in High-Quality PreSchool, 2006. Accessed 3 April 2006. <www.ced.org>.

2. Dickens, William T., Sawhill, Isabel, & Tebbs, Jeffrey. The Effects of Investing in Early Education on Economic Growth. April 2006 The Brookings Institute; Policy Briefing #153, Accessed 2 April 2007, <www.brookings.edu>.



MYTHBUSTERS

MYTH #1 Requiring bachelor's degrees for pre-K classrooms will have a huge impact on this year's budget.

BUSTED

There is no fiscal impact this year, next year, or the year after. In fact, the fiscal impact doesn't take place until 2013 when the requirement for a degreed lead teacher would take effect. This gives Florida more than 6 years to prepare.

MYTH #2 There will not be enough teachers to cover the requirement.

BUSTED

At Florida's current pre-K enrollment rate, with a half-day model, Florida needs between 2,500 – 3,000 degreed lead teachers to reach the goal. Not only is it a doable number, but also consider the following: (1) Certified or degreed teachers are currently required for summer pre-K; (2) Education was the most popular undergraduate major in Florida in 2005 and Elementary Education, which includes pre-K, was the top program area with more than 16,000 students; (3) Florida's K-12 student enrollment is actually dropping, relaxing demands for new teachers.

MYTH #3 If degreed lead teachers were required for pre-K, the current caring staff would lose their jobs.

BUSTED

Again, the change won't take place until 2013. Opponents make it sound as if jobs would be lost immediately, which isn't only wrong now but is wrong in the future too. Current non-degreed associates would work as assistants to the lead teachers. Avenues will be opened in the community colleges and universities to provide opportunities for current associates to matriculate upward to higher professional credentials if they want to. No one will be displaced.

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