



**Talking Early Child Development and
Exploring the Consequences of Frame Choices
A FrameWorks Message Memo**

This memo reports on the findings from FrameWorks' research on how the public views early childhood issues in general and school readiness policies in specific. This work was first undertaken with the specific intent of providing a foundation for understanding how the public thinks about school readiness, what are the implications of these thinking patterns, and what alternative frames might yield better public support for the kinds of policies that child-focused organizations propose. In subsequent years, as the research base has expanded, the research question has evolved as well to test whether frames currently in use by advocates, legislators, policy experts and scientists are in fact advancing a coherent understanding of how children grow and develop, sufficient to support a movement that must persist over time, and address a range of issues that spans health, education, housing, and economic policies.

The goal of this work is to help civic leaders, state government representatives, and coalitions of organizations that work with and for children to explain to their extended networks how early child development works. Our research is designed to help these groups explain this in such a way that those ameliorative policies, programs and practices that experts believe make a positive difference on the lives of children can be discussed more fruitfully. When concepts are ill understood or ill communicated, such issues rarely emerge on the public agenda nor do they attract a broad and diverse constituency capable of motivating political action.

This Message Memo reports on the findings from an integrated series of research projects conducted by the FrameWorks Institute, based on the perspective of strategic frame analysis. Additionally, this Memo extends this descriptive research by providing another level of more speculative analysis and translation necessary to its application to the work of community-based organizations. Finally, this Memo synthesizes these findings and makes specific recommendations for incorporating these findings into a coherent communications strategy to engage the public in supporting a wide range of policies and programs that child development experts deem most critical to healthy development.

FrameWorks wishes to thank Meg Bostrom of Public Knowledge and Axel Aubrun and Joseph Grady of Cultural Logic for the rich body of work that informs this Memo. While this Memo draws extensively from the work of other researchers, these conclusions are solely those of the FrameWorks Institute. Additionally, we wish to acknowledge Dr. Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. whose insights and analysis were a major contribution to this Memo.

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Background

Beginning in July 2001, the FrameWorks Institute began a year-long investigation to determine how the public thinks about school readiness and to recommend communications strategies to enhance public understanding of, and support for, relevant policy solutions. That seminal research has since been greatly amplified through ongoing experimental research designed to probe a broader set of issues that explicitly include a mix of health and mental health issues, the impact of neglect and environmental factors, as well as to test a broader public's ability to grasp critical findings from developmental psychology and the neurosciences.

To inform its work, the FrameWorks Institute brings together a group of communications scholars and practitioners with a unique perspective on communicating social issues. That perspective – strategic frame analysis – is based on a decade of research in the social and cognitive sciences that demonstrates that people use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world. These mental shortcuts rely on “frames,” or a small set of internalized concepts and values that allow us to accord meaning to unfolding events and new information. These frames can be triggered by language choices, different messengers or images, and these communications elements, therefore, have a profound influence on decision outcomes.

Traditionally, news media is the main source of Americans' information about public affairs. The way the news is “framed” on many issues sets up habits of thought and expectation that, over time, are so powerful that they serve to configure new information to conform to this frame. When community leaders, service organizations and advocacy groups communicate to their members and potential adherents, they have options to repeat or break these dominant frames of discourse. Understanding which frames serve to advance which policy options with which groups becomes central to any movement's strategy. The literature of social movements suggests that the prudent choice of frames, and the ability to effectively contest the opposition's frames, lie at the heart of successful policy advocacy. A more extensive description of strategic frame analysis can be garnered at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

While strategic frame analysis brings new methods to bear on social issues, this perspective only confirms something that advocates have known for years: communications is among our most powerful strategic tools. Through communications we inspire people to join our efforts, convince policymakers, foundations and other leaders to prioritize our issues, and urge the media to accord it public attention. Every choice of word, metaphor, visual, or statistic conveys meaning, affecting the way these critical audiences will think about our issues, what images will come to mind and what solutions will be judged appropriate to the problem. Communications defines the problem, sets the parameters of the debate, and determines who will be heard, and who will be marginalized. Choices in the way we frame early child development in general and such particular issues as pre-K, school readiness, family visitation or the earned income tax credit must be made carefully and systematically to create the powerful communications necessary to ensure that the public can grasp the recommendations of early childhood experts and the policies they propose.

Doing this requires a base of research that probes beneath visible public opinion to determine why people think the way they do. This research must help communications directors choose wisely between competing options on the basis of empirical evidence. Only in this way can child development proponents feel secure that their individual communications tactics are accruing value to the larger goal of advancing child-friendly policy attitudes and solutions.

Working from this perspective, the FrameWorks research was initially designed to explore the following questions:

- How does the public think about school readiness and the larger context of early child development?
- Are there dominant frames that appear almost automatic?
- How do these dominant frames affect policy preferences?
- How are these dominant frames reinforced; what frames are available to people from media, science and child advocates' own communications?
- How can young children's issues be reframed to evoke a different way of thinking, one that reveals alternative policy choices?

As the research base expanded, those questions were amended to include:

- What are the consequences of current frames in use on the long-term policy agenda supporting early child development?
- Can advocates and experts “have their cake and eat it too” by combining powerful meta-frames with specific policy advocacy?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of framing development in ages-specific policies, e.g. zero to three, pre-school, etc.?
- What are the key supporting elements of the frame that are most important for growing a new ECD frame of mind among the public and policymakers?

The Research Base

To answer these questions, the FrameWorks research team published the results of a series of studies conducted in 2001 and 2002, available at www.frameworksinstitute.org:

- a review of materials provided by child-focused organizations, resulting in a descriptive analysis of the way advocates position the issue and a conceptual metaphor analysis of the implications of the frames advanced by these materials (“What Kids Need and What Kids Give Back: A Review of Communications Materials Used by Early Childhood Development Advocates to Promote School Readiness and Related Issues, Cultural Logic for the FrameWorks Institute, May 2002);
- a meta-analysis of existing public opinion on school readiness and early child development (“The Whole Child -- Parents and Policy: A Meta-analysis of Opinion Data Concerning School Readiness, Early Childhood and Related Issues,” Public Knowledge for the FrameWorks Institute, May 2002);
- cognitive elicitations, consisting of 40 interviews with civically active adults in four states (AZ, KY, RI, WI), exploring how they think about school readiness in specific and early child development and learning in general (“Promoting School Readiness and Early Child Development: Findings from the Cognitive Elicitations,” Cultural Logic for the FrameWorks Institute, March 2002); and
- a series of 12 focus groups with civically active adults in seven states (AZ, CA, MA, KS/MO, NJ, VA), exploring their understanding of school readiness and child development, and testing reframes (“Hearts, Souls and Minds: An Analysis of Qualitative Research Regarding Communicating School Readiness and other Child Development Policies,” Public Knowledge for the FrameWorks Institute, April 2002).

At the same time, FrameWorks was able to complement this work with an additional study, supported by the Working Group on Public Dissemination and Social Policy of the MacArthur Foundation and the McDonnell Foundation Research Network on Early Experience and Brain Development:

- 10 cognitive elicitations with business leaders, exploring how they think about early child development and school readiness (“Business Leaders and Early Child Development: Findings from the Interviews,” Cultural Logic for the FrameWorks Institute, unpublished document, September 2001).

Through FrameWorks’ ongoing research partnership with UCLA’s Center for Communications and Community, we were able to have access to the following body of work:

- a content analysis of local news about children’s issues in six cities, assessing approximately 11,000 stories (see “A New Dominant Frame: The Imperiled Child,” Franklin D. Gilliam for the FrameWorks Institute, FrameWorks Kids

Count E-Zine Issue No. 22, July 2005).

Building on this original research base, FrameWorks undertook in 2003 a study for Prevent Child Abuse America, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Trust. While that work focused quite specifically on public conceptions of child abuse and neglect, it necessarily explored such related concepts as the public's understanding of the impacts of stress and environment on a child's development, the locus of responsibility for prevention, and the fine line between family and society. This body of work, available from Prevent Child Abuse America, included the following:

- a meta-analysis of existing public opinion on parents and parenting, children, development, discipline, child abuse, child sexual abuse and the political context for these issues, based on an exhaustive review of more than 100 surveys and focus group reports conducted within the past six years, as well as long-term trends (“Discipline and Development: A Meta-Analysis of Public Perceptions of Parents, Parenting, Child Development and Child Abuse,” Public Knowledge for FrameWorks Institute, May 2003).
- cognitive elicitations, consisting of recorded one-on-one interviews conducted in summer 2003 with a diverse group of 22 average citizens around Seattle and Philadelphia, one half of whom were parents, of which one half had children living at home. (“Two Cognitive Obstacles to Preventing Child Abuse: The ‘Other Mind’ Mistake and the ‘Family Bubble’,” Cultural Logic for FrameWorks Institute, August 2003).
- a series of six focus groups with engaged citizens in Manchester, NH, Atlanta, GA, and Chicago, IL in July 2003. (“Developing Community Connections: Qualitative Research Regarding Framing Policies,” Public Knowledge for FrameWorks Institute, August 2003).
- a literature review of frames currently in use by Prevent Child Abuse America and in news media. This news analysis was based on 120 news articles provided by PCA America and supplemented by a search conducted by the Center for Communications and Community at UCLA, drawing on their existing database of more than 10,000 news stories, both national and local. (“How the News Frames Child Maltreatment: Unintended Consequences,” Cultural Logic for FrameWorks Institute, September 2003).

A critical piece of research was supported in 2003 by the A. L. Mailman Foundation, the Texas Program for Society and Health (James Baker Institute, Rice University) and the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis University:

- “Talk Back Testing” of more than 400 informants to identify more powerful conceptual models for distilling the science of child development (“Moving the

Public Beyond Familiar Understandings of Early Childhood Development: Findings from TalkBack Testing of Simplifying Models,” Cultural Logic for the FrameWorks Institute, November 2003.

In 2004, working with Zero to Three and the A. L. Mailman Foundation, FrameWorks again added to this body of work with a new comparative analysis of the frames in the field and their probable consequences, based on the framing research conducted to date:

- A cognitive review of communications materials collected by Zero to Three, mainly through Web searches for texts mentioning pre-kindergarten, including dozens of news articles and op-eds, brochures, and other communications materials produced by experts and advocates; and several videos produced by advocacy groups on topics related to early childhood (“Framing the Birth to Three Agenda: Lessons Learned from Pre-K Campaigns,” Cultural Logic: A Report for Zero to Three in partnership with the FrameWorks Institute, September 2004).

Beginning in 2004 and continuing, FrameWorks and its research partners have continued to extend this research by: (1) exploring the impact of current messages in use by advocates and scientists on such specialized publics as state legislators, and (2) testing and retesting frames in popular use among scientists to explain developmental basics and their impacts on children, families and societies. This work, funded initially by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, will be extended in future years. To date, it consists of:

- Four focus groups, two each with engaged citizens and state legislators/executive staff, in Arizona in November 2004 (“Educating, not Advocating: An Analysis of Qualitative Research Exploring Public and Policymaker Views of Early Childhood Policy: Arizona Case Study,” Public Knowledge for the FrameWorks Institute, January 2005)
- Cognitive elicitations and ethnographic micro-studies with twenty legislators and staff in New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut and Rhode Island (“The Acid Bath: ECD Information in the State Legislative Environment,” Cultural Logic for the FrameWorks Institute, July 2005).

It is on the basis of this combined body of work that FrameWorks researchers have developed the following analysis and related recommendations for improving public communications on early child development and the cluster of issues that comprise it – from school readiness and pre-K to maternal and child health and economic support for families. This MessageMemo is based on an earlier version posted following the initial round of research and has been updated to incorporate the newer findings.

While we begin with a selective review of key highlights from the reports, we strongly encourage readers to review the full body of research that informs this Memo; the majority of reports are posted or linked in the Early Childhood section of the

FrameWorks website (www.frameworksinstitute.org).

Situation Analysis

In the earlier analysis, we put forward ten observations, based on our first wave of research. These observations have, in the main, been borne out by the subsequent research. However, as our research was able to probe more deeply into promising and problematic areas of public thinking, we have identified important nuances in framing that we believe mark noticeable improvements in messaging.

1. *Child Development is a Black Box.* Americans have only a loosely organized model of early child development, leaving them to view what happens inside the child as a “black box.” This in turn makes them especially vulnerable to “default” habits of thinking and less able to assimilate new learning into a coherent approach.
2. *Default Explanations Predominate.* Because of this, many conversations about early child development “default” to those aspects of child-rearing with which Americans are most familiar: it’s “about” the family, self-reliance is the main goal of the successful, self-made child, and physical safety is the primary concern.
3. *Americans Struggle for Working Models to Explain Child Development.* People talk about children as sponges, blank slates or disks, precious objects, young plants to be nurtured, clay to be molded, empty vessels to be filled, little adults, etc. While these are often sketchy and inadequate, they nevertheless have consequences for the ways people think about what is necessary for healthy child development; most of these metaphors and simplifying models elevate certain types of responses and downplay others.
4. *Most popular default frames and current models downplay the full range of a child’s critical interactions, concentrating attention solely on the domain of the family and on observable, largely cognitive, development.* Such important issues as the influence of a child’s physical environment, network of community relationships, social and emotional growth, are largely invisible to most adults. Indeed, interdependence and interactivity outside the family are downplayed by these working models, in favor of individualism and self-reliance. Love, family and cognitive learning are most familiar to people as the foci for improving young children’s outcomes.
5. *News media promotes many of these stereotyped frames of early childhood, while experts’ and advocates’ materials fail to contest them effectively or to substitute better frames.* Few news reports address young children’s issues and even fewer do so from a developmental or systemic perspective, choosing instead to focus on “the imperiled child.” Expert materials are confused about the message they wish to deliver on such critical issues as the definition and characteristics of good parenting. When they are conscientiously framed, these materials often choose narrow interpretations of development that serve to lock out non-cognitive aspects.

6. *Daycare isn't about development.* Americans view the institutions which have traditionally cared for very young children as necessary but regrettable aspects of the fact that many women must work or choose to do so. Thus, there is little positive foundation for early child development to be accrued from Americans' long-standing familiarity with this issue.
7. *The brain research has been little understood to date and, in the absence of more substantive information, can seem cold and calculating; better science education is needed.* While there appears to be broad acceptance of the idea that something important happens to children "from zero to three," this appreciation is based on an understanding of brain development as ingesting information, not wiring the circuitry. While many ordinary Americans are leery of approaching child development from the utilitarian standpoint of building a better labor force, for example, policymakers are amenable to arguments about investments in future productivity. Yet, without a model to anchor the mind in the dynamics of brain development – how it works – both groups are left with some fuzzy knowledge about "the brain" that can be quickly undermined by opposition.
8. *School readiness is not yet an effective organizing principle for the lay public.* School readiness is not a clear and motivating concept ready to be tapped by advocates to advance lay support. Indeed, if communications are misdirected, school readiness can be interpreted pejoratively as hurrying children, judging them inappropriately, or as the misguided practice of "fancy" parents. By narrowly framing child development in terms of education, school readiness redirects attention to a certain age of child and to a certain locus of solution; unless carefully used, it can preclude other aspects of child development.
9. *Americans are more likely to consider the policies and programs that form the core of school readiness when communications uses simple concrete analogies or models to make child development material for people.* While the phrase "hearts, souls and minds" is more effective in setting up a discussion of the developing child than are explicit school readiness and general "brain development" messages, it doesn't quite get us past the problem that emotions are not perceived as subjective and abstract. Moreover, because of Americans' tendency to place emotions at odds with reason, and to see "emotionality" as something to be overcome through discipline, these messages can get subsumed into powerful defaults of individuality and the Self-made child. The Brain Architecture simplifying model, with its focus on material aspects of development, achieves a better result without seeming cold and serves to educate about the interaction between experiences and capacity-building.
10. *Messages framed in terms of community exchange, future, stewardship and prosperity for society serve best to engage the public in the conversation that needs to take place in order to prioritize the constellation of policies associated with development in general and school readiness in particular.* Community stakeholders will need to be diligent in translating their policy agendas into these frames in order to advance their cause and avoid the debilitating effects of many of the default frames

and faulty understandings associated with early childhood and school readiness. Numerous examples of mistakes made with respect to levels of thinking lead FrameWorks to strongly suggest that advocates do their homework in choosing the level one values, level two categories of issues and level three policies they wish to insert into public discourse. Mistaking frames for policies is a particularly problematic habit that must be challenged through more conscientious messaging.

In the following section, we further develop these points and explain the research that supports them. Where newer research is available, or where earlier understandings have been contested, we explain changes in our recommendations.

Findings from the Research

Child Development is a Black Box and default explanations predominate.

While many Americans recognize and are articulate about the various stages of child development, few can relate these impressions to a coherent theory or organizing principle about the way children grow. What happens inside the child is largely invisible to them: a black box. When asked to think and talk about what matters in the early years and why, most Americans “default” to three explanations:

1. **The Family Bubble:** Child rearing takes place in the family, making those things that occur outside the family largely irrelevant to the discussion. Parents are responsible, making those programs and policies that support and extend good parenting very accessible to the public. Public opinion about these policies is often mixed. On the one hand, as Cultural Logic found in the elicitations, people say parents should be supported in whatever way possible. On the other hand, as Public Knowledge found in the focus groups, people can be easily persuaded that parenting is a diminishing art due to such declining values among parents as selfishness, materialism, and elitism. According to this latter view, the only way to improve outcomes for children is to “fix” their parents.
 - “I think [families] are more like kingdoms in the fact that they have their own rules, their own laws but they interact with other countries.” (Virginia man)
 - “I think it is just the mother's affection, closeness, some kind of bond or relationship between mother and father and the kid. It's a bonding process.” (LA man)
 - “I think one parent at least in the first five years until they get to school ought to be at home because that sets the tone for the kids.” (Virginia man)
 - “I think they absorb. Through three and five -- I know my son absorbs just everything that came around him. He just wanted to know everything. Everything is why, why. What is that? Why does it do that?” (New Jersey woman)

2. **The Self-Made Child:** The goal of this family-centered child rearing is to raise a

successful and self-reliant child, who can “stand on his own two feet in the world,” placing the emphasis on autonomy over interdependence. While Cultural Logic reports some important public concern for the socialization of children, for the most part social, emotional and regulatory development are less top-of-the-mind than self-reliance. Furthermore, this developmental view raises concerns for “spoiling” children and equates this with too much attention, too much guidance and “overprotection.” This perspective, so prevalent in the focus groups, often leads our informants to a positive interpretation of age-inappropriate parenting, seeing this as “letting the child make his own decisions.”

- “The parents are so protective now compared to what they were 20, 30, 40 years ago, especially the child that’s born in the suburbs. I did a lot of things on my own. When we played sports, there was no parental involvement. The kids made up their own games and played. We didn't have to be ferried, driven to a place where we played. There weren't parents sitting there coaching us, urging us on. We made up our own thing. We were independent... I think this holds back the development of children.” (Boston man)
 - “It is kind of overprotecting; keeping them a baby. Let them make decisions. Ask them questions about what it is they want as opposed to always making decisions for them.” (Los Angeles man)
3. **Safety First:** The priorities for child-rearing are defensive: protect from harm and disease, directing parental and community energies to the child’s physical well-being and not to what happens inside the black box. This tendency is no doubt fuelled by the media’s overwhelming emphasis upon crime and safety in news coverage of children’s issues, from child abductions to the dangers of daycare. Moreover, as Cultural Logic points out, when people cannot fathom the internal dynamics of child development, they tend to focus on observable phenomena, making physical development more available to them than emotional growth, for example.
- “I guess you’re looking for clean and safe facilities, and the right number of staff per children, and you’re looking for activities that help the children grow intellectually rather than make sure they stand in line and be quiet.”
 - “She’s in this really safe little pre-school, this safe little yard with two adults there...”
 - “There’s just so many kids in one area, especially when they’re infants, they just get so sick. Their immune systems are so immature...”

Americans struggle for working models to explain child development. Most popular default frames and current models downplay the full range of a child’s critical interactions, concentrating attention solely on the domain of the family and on observable, largely cognitive, development

The commonsense metaphors and models that people rely upon to convey a child’s development are mostly at odds with expert understanding, and lead people to make

inaccurate assessments of what very young children need. As Cultural Logic comments, “It’s almost as though people think about how to ‘fill’ kids’ heads with the right knowledge, but do not think of how we are actually shaping or even creating the ‘tools’ they will have for the rest of their lives (intellectual, emotional, social, etc).”

- [I]f we don't instill a sense of discipline and values and that kind of thing in our children, our society eventually is going to be a place where things just don't have much structure.
- I think it's evident in our culture with drugs, gangs, violence, all that kind of thing, that the time we don't spend with our kids keeping them on track and making sure they understand our values and our way of life and what we want for them, and in the end means that it's easier for them to get sidetracked.
- Q: What’s happening inside a kid’s head when he or she is just sitting on Mom or Dad’s lap with a book?
A: Um, I think without knowing it, they are absorbing a lot of things.
- “We’ve all seen how children are like sponges in the early years...”

As demonstrated in both the early elicitations and the focus groups, people also talk about kids crossing *thresholds*, kids' *circuits* being overloaded, making an *impression* on a kid, *formative* experiences, kids being *ahead* or *behind*, etc. In this context, the introduction of education and learning issues tends to direct people’s reasoning toward learning as explicit instruction, learning faster rather than developing well, learning by imitation, developing habits, and practicing skills through experience, trial and error. While these are important aspects of a child’s development, it is important to note that they concentrate attention on observable phenomena and not on what is happening inside the child.

In choosing to frame early child development as education, advocates often fall into a kind of frame trap that comes with the education territory: the idea that education is like filling a container, not building capacity. As Cultural Logic notes in its report for Zero to Three, “Education per se is often understood as giving kids knowledge/facts/skills – filling a metaphorical container. The Development frame, by contrast, emphasizes the idea of building the container itself, the architecture that a child will need throughout life.”

What these commonsense models and metaphors conceal are many of a child’s critical interactions:

- Their environments: housing, neighborhoods, schools, museums, libraries, community resources;
- Their relationships: caregivers, neighbors, other children, adults in addition to parents;

- Their healthy development: multi-track, age-appropriate stimuli and opportunities, from protection to stimulation; and
- The broad range of human learning and values: social, cognitive, emotional and moral.

As Cultural Logic puts it, such factors as “lead paint in the home, whether or not the mother received prenatal care, whether or not there were mental health services or family support programs available in a child’s community, or whether a child might be lacking in confidence due to lack of a nurturing bond with parents – are essentially off the radar screen.”

On the rare occasions when people do think about the above aspects of child development, they think of information and explicit teaching as the method of conveying morals.

News media promotes many of these stereotyped frames of early childhood, while experts’ and advocates’ materials fail to contest them effectively or to substitute better frames.

In a review of more than 11,000 local news stories, drawn from 3 affiliates in each of 6 cities, the Center for Communications and Community found the following:

- *Crime and health stories predominate*
- *In health stories, the dominant frame is child safety (seat belts)*
- *Only 13% of stories look at systemic factors*
- *Only 3% look at development*
- *The dominant media frame is “the imperiled child” or child as precious object.*

This emphasis on the “at-risk” nature of childhood, and more particularly physical risks, further directs adults’ attention to the external aspects of child development.

Ideally, the messages conveyed by child development experts and advocates would temper this emphasis and serve to redirect it to a broader range of developmental challenges and opportunities. Unfortunately, a review by Cultural Logic of these materials – acquired through the Kids Count network, www.connectforkids.org, and Packard’s own School Readiness Initiative – reveals that this is not yet the case. These materials convey too many messages, they are often mixed and contradictory, and they fail to communicate simple, enduring models of child development upon which school readiness concepts can be built. For example:

- Kids are very complex

- Children are made for learning
- Infants become persons at a very early age
- Everything counts
- Children should be immunized
- The brain is not developed at birth
- Early intervention services are critical
- Education is about individualized service
- Zero to three is the key period
- Schools need to take responsibility
- Early childhood development is a national concern

Even the most committed reader is left with a grab-bag of insistent messages, with few directions for prioritizing them, relating them, or acting upon them.

Similarly, messages about parents and parenting suffer from the similar contradictions:

- Parenting is difficult
- Parents are teachers
- Parents are students
- Trained coaches are needed for parents
- All parents are good
- Parents are experts
- Educated parents are good decision makers
- Parents are the final authority
- Parenting has lasting impacts
- Preschool replaces poor home environments
- Parents need to create time for breastfeeding and parenting
- A stable family life is critical

This is an especially dangerous arena for confusion. The elicitation and focus group research are clear on the effects of raising the bar on parenting: people resist the professionalization of parenting in favor of “the old ways are the best ways.” As Cultural Logic comments, this emphasis “risks creating a wider gap in public discourse between good parents (i.e. well-informed ‘superparents’ who usually happen to have higher incomes and levels of education) and inadequate ones (who don’t know or care enough to provide quality daycare for their children, etc.). One effect of raising the bar on parenting is to reinforce the widely held ‘Parent Deficit’ model.”

In virtually every focus group, this conflict between old fashioned child rearing and “fancy” parenting arose, often spurred by an informant’s query to the effect that “none of us went to pre-school and we turned out OK.” Indeed, left poorly defined, this revisionist approach to parenting tends to drive people to conclude that the experts are pushing an elitist agenda. That agenda divides the potential school readiness constituency into those who believe that “fancy parents” are those that hurry and spoil children while regular parents pursue tried and true methods of child-rearing.

- “They seem to push kids into education a little too fast sometimes and they don't allow them to be kids and play. I mean people are getting their kids into pre-school at three years old... you see a lot of people that want to teach their kids like you said multiple languages before they are five and teach them to read before they get to kindergarten. A lot of these kids don't have social skills because they haven't been allowed to interact with other kids.” (New Jersey man)
- “Are we trying to get them there too early? Eventually that child is going to be potty trained and ...that child is going to read and write, and are we trying to push a two year old to be ready to read and write?” (Virginia woman)

In a later cognitive analysis of advocates materials conducted for Zero to Three, Cultural Logic found both patterns observed in its earlier analysis to be still operative. First, too many arguments are made with little coordination:

“There are many different arguments offered in the materials: pre-K is a smart investment, it’s about justice and fairness; it’s about improving the experiences of young children, etc...In many cases multiple arguments are offered within a single piece, often without the sense that the lines of reasoning are related or mutually reinforcing. This multiplicity of arguments represents an important missed opportunity for advocates on behalf of young children to present communications with a coherent message that resonates with policymakers and the public... (A) good number of the pieces really offer no rationale at all, and seem to take for granted that ‘if it’s about education, people will support it’.”

And, second, the arguments that are made play directly in to the Default Frames enumerated above. They invite backlash against the Hurried Child Syndrome, and they add little in the way of concrete explanations to advance people’s understanding of how development works. Left to figure it out by themselves, most people interpret early child education as developing academic skills leading to individual success in life. Issues like child mental health, or exposure to stress in the home, are not compatible with this framing.

Indeed, many of the existing child development messages currently in practice cue negative perceptions of parenting and child development, and lead to policy preferences that, in the opinion of experts, are less than effective.

If school readiness is really about “daycare,” then it is perceived by most informants to be an unfortunate by-product of women’s massive entry into the workforce, a necessary but regrettable situation. For most Americans, as these quotes attest, daycare isn’t about development.

- “It's a babysitting service is what it is. The kids are going there and that is where kids go when mom goes out and works her half a day or whatever and comes home and picks them up. They have the choice. They don't have to work.” (Boston man)
- “They did pick up nasty habits. They did come home with nasty things and not just diseases but manners, behaviors, attitudes and everything else. I felt like it institutionalized them. You throw them in this room full of all these other heathens, and all I saw was absolute chaos going on.” (Virginia woman)
- “I think that the people who are doing it really need to have a heart for kids and really love them...Just enjoy the children where they are at. I don’t think they have to have a lot of things to manipulate and all that kind of stuff but just to feel comfortable with the person taking care of them.” (Cultural Logic Elicitations)
- Since he was so young, I wanted to make sure that he wasn’t going to sit there crying forever before somebody came to see what was wrong with him, because I held him so much and I knew that he kind of wasn’t used to just sitting there, I wanted to make sure that if he just wanted to be held that there was somebody available to do that. (Cultural Logic Elicitations)

This leads people to prioritize policies that would allow mothers to stay home with children; it also promotes negative assessments of those who chose to work instead of staying home and judges them too materialistic. It does little to support better training for early childhood professionals, as this representative conversation clearly demonstrate.

Why does a childcare provider have the same stature as teachers?

Moderator: What do you think?

I would think teachers are better educated. They are given the job of teaching your children. The others are hired to care for your children.

Moderator: And care would mean?

Watching the children, feeding them but not teaching them necessarily. Maybe they do in a sense. . .

Kansas City Men’s Focus Group

If school readiness is really about education, then it must have something to do with explicit knowledge, knowing facts and concepts, numbers, colors, words – and not getting along with others. It might mean developing good habits, but it would not include the deeper understanding of a healthy mind. Moreover, the very topic of education naturally leads them to think of older children and more formal schooling. This in turn, as Public Knowledge points out, results in a competition frame between established

schooling and pre-school, to the clear detriment of the latter. Indeed, those who would attach school readiness to a school reform agenda should pay careful attention to the fact that the school reform frame tends to remind people that the existing system is already broken, and to make them less, not more, enthusiastic about confining very young children to such a system. This finding has been consistent across the research. The education frame reminds people that “Johnny Can’t Read,” as Meg Bostrom has shown in work on the No Child Left Behind Act and global education. This, in turn, leads people to focus on fixing the existing system before expanding to new issues and levels. It also tends to focus people on “the basics,” to the detriment of “the frills,” whether defined as pre-K, youth development programs, music, art or international exposure.

When school readiness is explained as helping children get ready to learn, it encounters even more troublesome interpretations. As Public Knowledge points out in analyzing responses by focus group participants to these terms, they tend to be misinterpreted as judging whether a child is “willing to learn” or “able to learn.” Both of these assessments strike people as too deterministic, clear negations of the “level playing field” that the American public education system is ideally designed to create. Even to label a child as “already behind” strikes most adults as unconscionable.

- “It rubs me wrong...it’s judgmental.” (Phoenix woman)
- “She’s judging each child when she looks at him.” (Boston woman)
- “It’s like labeling or stereotyping children and you really can’t do that because that will lower their self-esteem...” (Boston woman)
- “They may not be able to learn but I think the natural instinct is that a child is ready to learn outside of some disabilities or whatever.” (Los Angeles woman)

When school readiness policies and programs are explained superficially as responses to the new brain research, they encounter a populist backlash. The “new improved” message strikes people as a step in the wrong direction; they believe we need to go back and rediscover the kind of caring, leisurely childhoods of a perhaps mythic past:

- “I look 30 years ago, 40 years ago when I was in school they taught you the basics. We scored very high on tests on an international basis. Now it seems like the more fancy we get and the more studies we have and everything else, we’re doing worse in school.” (Virginia man)
- “None of us went to pre-school. Right?” (Boston man)
- “What we’re looking at is a society full of kids that have been institutionally raised and pop culture raised and so we’ve got a bunch of problems.” (Virginia woman)

It is important to note that this round of research attempted to introduce “brain development” before the work of Cultural Logic had resulted in more powerful and concrete models for explicating that idea. Given this, we wish to make an important

distinction between talking about “the brain” or “brain development,” on the one hand, and using a powerful model like Brain Architecture to explain how early experiences and interactions create either a solid or weak structure for subsequent development. Rarely, without probing, did informants bring up the brain in focus groups and elicitation. Short-hands like “the new brain research” or “brain development” are empty statements for most people, lacking the explanatory power and concreteness of a fully developed analogy or tested model like Brain Development.

Relatedly, while scientists can bring enormous authority to child development issues, they need to be used carefully as effective science educators and to avoid cueing up a populist backlash. Put another way, it is not only the authority that science brings to this set of issues that defines its contribution, but it is also and centrally the scientist’s ability to explain cause and effect, to attest to valid research findings and to explain to us how something complex works. In the earlier focus group work, we see the reaction to shallow explanations from scientific experts:

- “Scientists don't always know what needs to be done. I'm not sure what the scientist has to do with it.” (New Jersey man)
- “What makes you an expert? Just because you've got a Ph.D. behind your name or something? I disagree with a lot of the experts.” (Virginia man)
- “It don't require an expert to understand what has to be done. Anybody with any common sense...” (Virginia man)
- “You read the books all the time on children and their development and what you are supposed to do and what you are not supposed to do. They want to lump all the kids into one category. ‘This is what kids are like.’ Well, it is not what kids are like. Kids are all different and you really have to nurture each one of the children's needs individually. And everything here seems to want to lump all the kids into one category.” (New Jersey man)

Unfortunately, without a grasp of child development that is more in keeping with science, people are left with outdated folk models and a kind of subjective family-centric approach where anybody’s ideas about child raising are as good as anyone else’s. In more recent research in both Arizona and four New England states, both the public and policymakers responded more positively to effective passages from developmental scientists who explained how development works, and to economists who explained the impact on workforce development. Extreme care must be taken to ensure that the information offered is not over-technical, or perceived as academic and not practical. Good teaching is what is needed, and scientists who can explain a core concept of early child development – such as critical periods – have a great deal to offer the field.

In sum, neither day care, early education, school readiness, ready to learn, nor the new brain research served to put the public in mind of the full range of programs and policies that support the developing child. In fact, most of these terms serve as barriers to that critical understanding. Regrettably, while school readiness has galvanized the

professional community as a simple, organizing frame that effectively communicates via short-hand a host of related programs and policies, it has little salience for ordinary Americans – even for the educated, community stakeholders that served as our research informants.

Put simply, because Americans lack a coherent concept of child development, the school readiness frame defaults to other, more familiar issues. School readiness, they reason, must be about child rearing and, if so, then it has to do with the realm of the family, keeping children (physically) safe, and grooming them for self-reliance. Alternatively, if school readiness is about education, they may “toggle” into discussions of elementary and secondary education or they may judge the discussion as elitist, more about “fancy” parenting than about the tried and true responses to children’s growth. None of these options results in a sense of society responsibility, nor a respect for the impact of experiences and environments on the developing child that is at the heart of the experts’ understanding of school readiness.

Americans are more likely to consider the policies and programs that form the core of school readiness when communications uses simple concrete analogies or models to and make child development material for people.

The good news from the early body of research, as Public Knowledge points out in the focus group analysis, is that “the public, child development experts and community stakeholder actually share similar beliefs about what children need to grow and develop. The language is the problem, not the core recommendations. The public wants what community stakeholders also want: for children to explore, discover, and have a variety of stimulating experiences. They want an emphasis on the whole child: heart, soul and mind.”

Unfortunately, as Cultural Logic acknowledges, we have few readily understood terms for talking about this idea. The “whole child” has been used by experts but means little to lay people. This is, of course, the very problem that the school readiness frame set out to solve.

While FrameWorks researchers were initially attracted to the receptivity accorded to nutrition metaphors and other nurturance analogies, research from Cultural Logic soon convinced us that a “Hallmark Card problem” was in effect. Presented with perfectly sound metaphors about growth and development, people tended to stop thinking and to resort to platitudes about family. The new information was literally consumed by its ability to cue up powerful existing frames.

In response, Cultural Logic made a key recommendation about the importance of moving from a “mentalist” communications perspective to a “materialist” perspective. The former focuses on subjective, abstract mental experiences (thoughts, feelings,

emotionality, willfulness) while the latter emphasizes the physical changes that take place in a child's brain (pruning, circuits, hormones, chemicals). As Cultural Logic explains:

Much of the public's resistance to new information about ECD results from a "mentalist" or Cartesian perspective inherent in our folk models of the Mind. That is, people reason as if minds were nonmaterial objects, defined only in terms of our subjective and abstract mental experience. According to the folk theory, our minds are characterized by internal states such as perceptions, beliefs, feelings, desires, intentions, and most importantly, an inner Self. While this mental world can involve causal connections (e.g., desires lead to intentions), these causal stories bear little connection to the sort of material events (such as the firing of neurons) that are central in expert understandings. For most people, the gap between the nonmaterial mind/soul and the material body is a very wide and even unbridgeable one.

... the mentalist perspective acts as a barrier to new learning about important aspects of early childhood development. For example, the mentalist perspective does not include the important notion of a "damaged system" (i.e. the idea that a person might behave a certain way because of a damaged internal system rather than a moral failure); it excludes certain kinds of causality, such as the lasting effects of chronic stress; and it tends to imply a kind of "all or nothing" perspective, in which personhood emerges fullblown even in very young children, rather than developing through the growth of individual parts and systems.

*The task of translating the sorts of expert models of ECD that lead directly to sound policies – such as those found in *Neurons to Neighborhoods* – is difficult largely because it depends on opening the public to materialist explanations of mind. Expert models and folk models are in this case truly like oil and water.*

To achieve a more material conversation with the public, FrameWorks invested in models research. The cumulative heft of FrameWorks' research on child development suggested that what is lacking in the public's ability to incorporate new learning about early childhood development is one or more models, sufficiently powerful and developed to displace the limited default frames (safety, auto-pilot, bad parents, etc.) in favor of concepts that highlight the importance of interaction. In 2004, Cultural Logic pursued the identification of a simplifying model, which they define as "a kind of metaphorical frame that both captures the essence of a scientific concept, and has a high capacity for spreading through a population."

Over the course of a year, Cultural Logic experimented with prescriptive framing to determine whether researchers could identify and create new models that effectively allow ordinary people to see the world in much the same way (though greatly simplified) as do experts who work on young child development. Working with the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child and the landmark National Academy of Sciences Study, *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, Cultural Logic identified the core causal story that was lacking in the public's mind. This story linked positive and negative interaction to the child's developing brain, explaining how emotional, social and cognitive development created a kind of "feedback loop" that, in turn, made the brain

either more or less responsive to the successive stimuli. Working with a team of scientists and communications experts, Cultural Logic identified and classified well over 500 candidate models, from “attunement” and “emotional brain” and to “brain regulator.” Approximately 400 informants were exposed to the models in various ways, culminating in a series of “TalkBack Tests” in which pairs of non-related subjects are asked to listen to an explanatory model for early child development, are queried on its meaning, and asked to teach a new generation the model in turn. As each ‘generation’ of subjects acquires the material, it has an opportunity to distort what it has learned, and to introduce unwanted elements. The strongest frames show some ability to self-correct – i.e., to lead subjects back to the original formulation, even if they themselves were given a somewhat distorted version of the stimulus.”

The strongest model to emerge from testing, deployed as a simple communications paragraph, goes something like this:

More and more doctors are talking to parents and communities about what they call “brain architecture.” Brain architecture refers to the structure of the brain. We now know that if a baby doesn’t have the right kinds of interactions in the first few years of life the baby’s brain architecture doesn’t build itself properly. And if the brain architecture doesn’t build itself properly, kids can be at a disadvantage in long term ways. We know a lot about what helps and hurts the growth of brain architecture. What helps build and solidify brain architecture is positive and repeated interaction with attentive adults. What weakens and damages brain architecture is frequent stress – from fear, hunger, or interacting with a parent under stress, for example. Stress releases toxic chemicals in the baby’s brain. These chemicals corrode and weaken brain architecture. This stops brain cells from growing and forming connections with each other.

Subjects from the *TalkBack Testing* help demonstrate the power of the model to move people from a mentalist perspective, in which emotion is largely dismissed, to a materialist view that takes development seriously, as in this informant’s comments:

“I think what really gets me from the study is that it could actually have a chemical or biological or some sort of impact on the child’s brain. ... Behavior is one thing, and attitude and personality is one thing, but if it can really negatively impact ... the chemistry and the makeup of the brain - you can damage that that early – that’s really serious. That’s more than just having a bad personality, that’s really screwing up a kid.”

Importantly, this model helps people understand that the connection between stress and brain structure is important and is a reason why children from poor families are at a disadvantage. As Cultural Logic notes, “The ‘family bubble’ problem is very stubborn, but the recommended models seem to help people recognize that the stresses caused by poverty affect children in ways that parents are not ultimately responsible for.” These passages, quoted from Cultural Logic’s report on the Talk Back Testing, further illustrate the contrast between the new model and those currently in use, such as school readiness.

Here is a response from a person who has heard an “Emotional Brain” paragraph, which includes no mention of poverty:

Q: How does growing up in poverty affect the emotional brain?

A: I believe because you're stressed a lot because you have a lot of stress; usually parents that do not make a lot of money are usually under a lot of stress, so that makes the child be under stress as well, so that would affect I guess the growth of the brain.

By contrast, here is a less helpful response from a subject who has heard a “School Readiness” paragraph:

Q: How does growing up in poverty affect a child's school readiness?

A: I would say in a lot of cases, I wouldn't say in all cases, growing up in poverty would hinder them, but I guess in some cases it would hinder them, sort of being ready to get to school as knowing, I guess maybe kids who are not in poverty growing up do have an advantage, as far as they probably know a little more when they do start school than children who are raised in poverty.

The Brain Architecture model was further tested in the Arizona focus groups in late 2004. Most focus group participants understand the Brain Architecture simplifying model and find it to be a useful way to talk about development. Note the following comments by one group of informants, prompted by the introduction of the model:

Moderator: What does it mean to you?

Building of the brain. (Democratic woman)

They say learning another language, if you learn it in the early years it is a lot easier because we lose that connection or like some of those tasks, the left brain, right brain. That's what it means to me is that there is a little road map in there but we could miss the road and lose that. (Democratic woman)

The brain chemistry is constantly changing and evolving so that would -- I think they compare -- they use the word architecture in computers a lot. (Democratic woman)

It's like a building. The beam goes up, the beam goes up and one goes across and one goes sideways. I think the way the brain develops, as you use it, these pathways are built, connected and they are there. (Democratic man)

The impact of the Brain Architecture simplifying model is perhaps most evident by contrast to the earlier candidate model widely in use among child advocates and experts – school readiness. In effect, school readiness is a kind of simplifying model. It represents a metaphorical attempt to equate what happens inside the child with the more obvious physical preparation of a child for school – acquiring an emotional toolkit as the equivalent of owning a school lunch box. At the end of our research, we are left reluctantly to conclude that, while it is an organizing principle for experts, it is not a clear, available and motivating concept which can be relied upon to engage ordinary people.

This contrast – between the deleterious effects produced by the model of school readiness and the more powerful effects associated with brain architecture – should establish the importance of research as a critical tool in “pre-flighting” advocacy and scientific communications, as Cultural Logic has termed it. At the same time, caution should be exercised in assuming that any model can provide a “silver bullet” to move majorities of citizens to endorse universal fully-funded pre-K programs. Simplifying models are a powerful frame element but, if communicators get the rest of the frame wrong, a model will not save the communications.

Messages framed in terms of community exchange, future, stewardship and prosperity for society serve best to engage the public in the conversation that needs to take place in order to prioritize the constellation of policies associated with development in general and school readiness in particular.

Our earlier research had yielded a set of values frames that held promise for redirecting the conversation toward familiar values. These included: A Nurturance Frame, a Community Frame, an Opportunity Frame, a Community/Exchange Frame, and a Future Frame. Our most recent focus group experiments in Arizona were oriented to refining and retesting values primes that had emerged in the earlier qualitative work.

In light of our understanding of the mentalist/materialist challenge, and the success of the Brain Architecture simplifying model in overcoming that challenge, we dropped the Nurturance Frame. We modified the Opportunity Frame to make it less about individual success and more about our shared Prosperity. We experimented with a Cost Efficiency Frame, much in use among economists and policy advocates. And we continued to experiment with Future, Steward and Community/Exchange.

Our results lead us to conclude that early child advocates are best served by referring to “values such as stewardship, future prosperity for society or reciprocity (giving to children who give back to society later), all of which allow people to respond both morally and rationally.”

Interestingly, each frame did some positive good, but each lacked critical information. As is often the case with frame elements, values are powerful but insufficient in themselves. It’s the combined force of values plus models plus tone plus messengers that accomplishes the reframe.

The very best Cost Efficiency Frame, clearly making the case that early child education programs save money in the long run because they prevent problems before they start, is impaired unless accompanied by explanatory information about development. Public Knowledge concludes that “the prevention message is largely lost because focus group participants do not understand *why* investing early matters.” Predictable problems -- confusing pre-K with babysitting and playtime – occur. And focus group participants’

perception of a failed public education system dampens their support for spending further resources on public early child education.

The Child Development Frame works powerfully for Democrats, especially if determinism is tempered by plasticity, and less well for Republicans, who worry about the intrusion of government and implications of determinism. The inclusion of the Brain Architecture model helps Republicans see the value of pre-school as developmental, not frivolous. The findings of Cultural Logic in combining the Development Frame with a causal sequence are encouraging. The two-part message they took into testing was as follows:

The Simplifying Model: Brain Architecture as a model of brain development shaped by interactions and environment.

The Causal Story: Good environments and interactions create solid brain architecture which means a “Solid Kid.” The “Solid Kid” becomes a building block of solid economies and communities.

In response, “most state legislators and staffers reported that the argument about investing early in order to reap greater rewards is a familiar one. What the brain research offers is a potential way to make such information new, more concrete, and more rooted in clear cause and effect. Even in these brief conversations that were more about general principles than specific cases, the causal story stayed in the forefront.”

Reactions from a legislative staffer in Maine are illustrative:

Q: Do you think people generally get that argument? That good solid kids means then a good solid community, and a good solid economy. That it’s kind of a basic building block.

A: I think that presenting it in that frame is more important than just saying: “Healthy kids.” . . . What were you referring to? The brain . . . ?

Q: The brain architecture.

A: The brain architecture is good because then they’ll be good college students. I didn’t know that until you sat down here. I mean I know the concept of healthy kids. . .

A combined Child and Economic Development Frame began with an argument about future prosperity, but used enough of the Child Development Frame to explain why early child development matters. It proved extremely powerful, especially with Republicans. And, Public Knowledge observes, “after hearing the Brain Architecture model for child development, focus group participants can better understand the economic opportunity and prevention messages . . . as well as societal responsibility.”

We belabor the values primes here because they are so complex, and so important to the overall messaging. FrameWorks will continue to work to recombine and refine these primes and to suggest how they can best be used to help advance an understanding of

development and the policies required to support it. But the combination of values with models with causal sequences and tone, as elaborated in this Memo and the research that informs it strongly suggests more powerful ways to frame early child development. And, at the end of the day, framing early child development appears to be the task that must be undertaken. Without a clearer, more tangible understanding of the (simplified) science of early child development, people are left predisposed to the old pictures in their heads, even when they know better.

But we belabor the values issue as well in order to point out what we believe to be a key fallacy in the framing of early child development and school readiness. Our critique in this Message Memo is not with the policies that comprise school readiness, but rather with its reputation as a frame. Frames are not policies. Typically, when advocates confuse Level Three policies for Level One values, they lose the public debate. School readiness is neither an effective frame nor an effective model. Similarly, Pre-K is not a frame but a program. It has been framed to associate with the Level Two Category of Education – which has both limitations and exclusions that may be altogether lost on those advocates championing it, e.g. how do you fit maternal depression, earned income tax credit and requiring child seat belts into the education frame? Finally, School Readiness should not be confused with a Level One Frame that will lift Pre-K. In our estimation, it is only by carefully enumerating frame elements including levels of thought and matching the research to a long-term policy agenda that is rooted in an understanding of child development that advocates can hope to achieve an enduring change in the way that this culture views the primary task of child rearing.

Recommendations

We conclude with a series of recommendations for effective framing of early child issues, based on FrameWorks' interpretation of the research.

DON'T:

- Begin the conversation with school readiness, brain, or daycare
- Use the language of experts: multi-track development
- Focus only on observable learning
- String together lists of impacts or numbers to stand in for explanations
- Assume that “science says” is enough explanation
- Use an extortion model: if you don't get early ed, you'll bomb the school
- Assume that people can understand why development saves money, improves society, etc. without help
- Talk about parents as incompetent or supercompetent
- Make child rearing something you must have resources or education to do well
- Fall into the determinism trap (it's all over by age three)

- Reinforce the family, safety or individualism frames verbally or visually (defensive child rearing)

DO:

- Prime the discussion with values of stewardship, future prosperity for society or reciprocity (giving to children who give back to society later)
- Use the Brain Architecture simplifying model to give people a vivid analogy of how development works: experiences affect the structure of the brain
- Use examples that are not specifically cognitive & observable
- Use simple causal sequences to connect cause and effect, child and society, experience and impact
- Explain what derails development: stress, for example, and how it works
- Position early child programs as an opportunity for foundational growth that all should have
- Make community actors visible
- Wherever possible, connect the child to the larger environment

In the following paragraph, we attempt to demonstrate how a conversation about child development and school readiness might be more effectively introduced, combining these recommendations into a single “priming” paragraph:

If our society is to prosper in the future, we will need to make sure that all children have the opportunity to develop intellectually, socially and emotionally. But recent science demonstrates that many children’s futures are undermined when stress damages the early architecture of the brain. The stress may come from family tensions over a lost job or death in the family or even changes in caregivers. But the damage that is done from these critical experiences affects the foundation on which future growth must depend for either a strong or weak structure. Serious and prolonged stress – toxic stress – makes babies’ brains release a chemical that stunts cell growth. When communities make family mental health services available so that early interventions can take place, they put in place a preventable system that catches children before they fall. When communities invest in a stable workforce of trained early child providers, they also help to ensure that a child’s basic foundation will be durable. These early investments reap dividends as child development translates into economic development later on. A kid with a solid foundation becomes part of a solid community and contributes to our society.

In addition to the above recommendations, many of the individual research reports convey those researchers’ own recommendations for specific aspects of the communications challenge. Most reports can be accessed at www.frameworksinstitute.org.

The FrameWorks Institute is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to advance the nonprofit sector's communications capacity by identifying, translating and modeling relevant scholarly research for framing the public discourse about social problems. FrameWorks designs, commissions, manages and publishes communications research to prepare nonprofit organizations to expand their constituency base, to build public will, and to further public understanding of specific social issues. In addition to working closely with social policy experts familiar with the specific issue, its work is informed by a team of communications scholars and practitioners who are convened to discuss the research problem, and to work together in outlining potential strategies for advancing remedial policies. Its work is based on an approach called "strategic frame analysis," which has been developed in partnership with Cultural Logic, Public Knowledge and UCLA's Center for Communications and Community. FrameWorks also critiques, designs, conducts and evaluate communications campaigns on social issues from this perspective. Recent projects focus on such diverse issues as gender equity and school reform, leadership development, race, government, global education, positive youth development, children's oral health, global warming, and transitional work.

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