

NEW HAMPSHIRE UNION LEADER

Another View

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Another View -- Laura Milliken: Children need early childhood education

By LAURA MILLIKEN

New Hampshire is a wonderful place to live, work and raise a family. We have strong communities, deep ties to our history and one another, and a commitment to preserving the high quality of life we know and love.

We take seriously our role as stewards of the next generation and are willing to work hard to ensure that children have what they need to live, work and lead in our state in the future. An essential part of this work is to ensure high quality early childhood education for all New Hampshire children.

Our children face a future that is very different from the past. They are relying on us to prepare them for that future, so it is essential that New Hampshire's young people have the best possible start in life and that includes access to high quality early childhood education.

Early experiences literally shape the architecture of the developing brain and healthy engagements with caregivers are the best way to ensure that young brains have what they need to thrive.

Children who have access to high quality early learning do better in school.

They are less likely to need special education services, less likely to have to repeat a grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school.

Children who get a strong foundation in the early years are more likely to be productive contributors to our communities and the economy.

Early learning is an essential part of the growth and development of our youngest citizens and yet far too many of our young children do not have access to quality early learning opportunities.

It takes more of a family's income to pay for child care in New Hampshire than it does in two thirds of the other states in the United States.

And even when they can afford it, parents struggle to find high quality child care.

For these reasons, we support Spark NH's recommendation to expand access to proven and effective early childhood education for all young children.

To learn more about Spark NH, the governor-appointed early childhood advisory council and its Framework for Action for NH's Young Children visit: www.sparknh.org.

Laura Milliken is director of Spark NH, and is writing on behalf of herself and 63 other New Hampshire residents.

- See more at: <http://www.unionleader.com/Another-View-Laura-Milliken-Children-need-early-childhood-education-07272016#sthash.kaGrPyFg.dpuf>