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October 09, 2005

Preschool

■ Good for business

This afternoon, West Virginia business executives will sit down with education researchers, public policy experts and elected officials to talk about something important to business: early childhood education.

How young children pass their time, even before they are able to talk, turns out to have lasting effects on how they pass their time later in life, whether they are well-prepared for school, both academically and socially. It affects their chances of living up to their potential, of finishing high school, going beyond high school and earning a living wage. Because everything else — from access to health care to civic participation to whether one goes to jail — is influenced by education and income, early childhood experiences have great ramifications.

In West Virginia, where there are very few children and a quarter of them live in poverty, early childhood education is especially important.

First lady Gayle Manchin is to host the two-day event at the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences. Marshall University researchers will share their conclusions about the effect of good early education on the state economy. Participants will also hear from representatives of the Federal Reserve Bank, PNC Financial Services Group in Pittsburgh and the H.B. Fuller Co. of St. Paul, Minn.

It is a good sign that West Virginia's business leaders recognize the value of early childhood education and have set aside time to educate themselves about it. Politicians are so fond of mouthing that "children are the future" that it is easy for everyone to forget the truth of that simple sentence.

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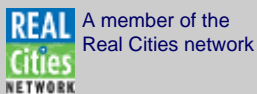
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