

JEFFERSON

EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY

Jefferson's Early Childcare Investment Policy Initiative

**School Starts at Birth:
'Years that Count Most for Education are Often Left
Out'**

**By Court Gould
March 2024**

Praiseworthy indeed is Erie County Judge John J. Trucilla's leadership in lifting up the importance of education, particularly earning a high school diploma or GED.

“The notion that education serves as the great equalizer in an often uneven playing field is widely accepted,” the judge wrote in a March 10 [op-ed published by the Erie Times-News](#). “Throughout Erie County, our citizens and educators have made significant investments in education, striving to enhance opportunities for quality learning. With numerous universities, a community college, an expansive medical college, the United Way's Community Schools initiative, and more, Erie stands as a beacon of hope for students.”

Acknowledging this recounting of Erie's excellence in education, our community stands to smartly leverage its investments in education by being equally committed and generous to learners' earliest years, because education for children from birth to three years old is critical to laying the foundation upon which future learning is built.

Infants and toddlers nationwide have long been the overlooked age group to be recognized as [needing high-quality teaching and learning](#). But that mindset is changing. Quality childcare focused on education of the newborn through three years is increasingly recognized as casting the human die. [The first three years of human brain development](#) largely determines whether a person finishes high school or goes on to college and lives a life to one's fullest productive potential. Our children, in their first 1,000 days of life, or first three years, benefit from high quality childcare “schooling” (e.g., licensed center, group home, or family

home) that puts them on the path to making the most of pre-K and kindergarten through high school and beyond.

What's more, high-quality early care and learning programs [can positively impact children for years into the future](#). Young learners who start behind in kindergarten tend to stay behind their classmates. But [if a child is on track in kindergarten](#), they're more likely to read at grade level in third grade, graduate high school, and continue on for more education.

Thus, Erie's educational promise boils down to addressing its child-care crisis. Bluntly put: Too many infants and toddlers are being turned away from receiving the care they need.

[ZERO TO THREE](#)

During the first three years of life, emotionally nourishing relationships lay the foundation for lifelong health and well-being.

Local journalist Chloe Forbes addresses this, connecting the dots between early development and future progress in her essay, "[Erie's Child Care Crisis](#)," published in the Erie Reader in December 2023.

"Research shows that the return on investment for high-quality child-care centers is high, with increased school and career achievement and reduced costs in remedial education, health, and criminal justice system expenditures," Forbes writes. "Childcare is a place to nurture skills like impulse control, persistence, teamwork, cognition, and character, which drive education, career, and life success."

In her reporting, Forbes exposes the dysfunction of today's child-care system, making her article worth a close read. In it, readers will find a call to action, as Forbes recounts Erie's great potential to round out its educational prowess, such as highlighted by Judge Trucilla, by doubling down on early childcare.

"Looking at research in economic development and various forms of research could help Erie create the first of its kind: an American city with universal childcare. ... Erie County and the city of Erie are in the news for their economic development already, talking about its many benefits to reviving the area," she writes. "Childcare reform would be a crucial notch in that belt."

Rising to the challenge posed by Judge Trucilla and journalist Forbes, the Jefferson Educational Society is heeding that call through the [JES Early Childcare Investment Policy Initiative](#). The team of policy experts working on the initiative that began in January will present the data to characterize and quantify the supply, demand, and thus gaps, as well as most impactful remedies in which to invest to address Erie's child-care crisis. Our goal is to deliver recommendations this summer after conducting further research for Erie to bolster its education systems at the very beginning — by ensuring the contributions to the public good that accrue through access to quality, affordable childcare education for all our infants and toddlers.

Subscribe to JES Publications Emails!

Subscribe to Book Notes Emails!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A featured JES contributor, Gould served 20 years as founding executive director of Sustainable Pittsburgh. After three years with the Erie Community Foundation as vice president of Community Impact, he is a sustainable solutions consultant and certified professional coach.

In Case You Missed It

[Jefferson's Early Childcare Investment Policy Initiative | The Case for Investing in Erie's Childcare System](#) written by **Andrea Heberlein**

[The Wider World | Lebanon: Internal Disarray and External Threat Projection](#) written by President of DC Analytics **Diane Chido**

[Truth in Love | Cognitive Conception: When Men Become Fathers](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Parris J. Baker**

[Be Well | Supercharge Brown Fat to Burn Calories](#) written by health and wellness expert **Debbie DeAngelo**

[Classic Book Notes #99 | Great Poems About Spring \(Part Two\)](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. Andrew Roth**

[On the Waterfront | Finding the Forts: Schwinn Expands Our Territory](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence **Dr. David Frew**

Jefferson Educational Society | jeserie.org



The Jefferson Educational Society | 3207 State Street, Erie , PA 16508

[Unsubscribe ferati@jeserie.org](mailto:Unsubscribe_ferati@jeserie.org)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [info@thejeffersoneducationsociety.ccsend.com](mailto:info@thejeffersoneducationalsociety.ccsend.com) powered by