

## OPEN MIC

# *Emphasize education at our childcare centers*

Maybe our opinions about childcare and its problems would change if we got rid of the term "childcare centers" and replaced it with what many are — and many more should be: Early Care and Education Centers.

Perhaps if more of our legislators had a better understanding of the overwhelming importance of the 1,000 days following conception, appropriate support at last be recognized for the true value it provides not only to the child and family but to society years later.

Yes, we have prekindergarten for 4-year-old children, but for many, it is too late to take full advantage of the remarkable brain development that has been occurring even before birth.

The goal should be to establish high quality centers with teachers providing not only care of children but also education, by enhancing the brain's genetic growth instructions with a scientifically-based background and the environment needed for optimal brain development of infants, toddlers and young children.

This is not new knowledge. Ever since President George H.W. Bush declared the 1990s the Decade of the Brain, research has provided evidence recognizing the immense changes that occur in brain functioning long before children enter kindergarten.

Economists have also shown a significant benefit to society as these children grow into adulthood, a benefit that outweighs the cost of providing quality.

Unless or until we provide all of our youngest citizens with a quality education based upon brain research, we continue the risk of seriously limiting the social, emotional and intellectual potential available for our country.

- Wil Blechman,  
co-chair,

Health Advisory Committee,  
Miami-Dade  
United Way Center  
for Excellence  
in Early Education

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