

# Child's Path Full Case Statement

## ***The Importance of Investing in Early Childhood Learning***

Supporting early childhood development is an investment - not a cost. Numerous studies show that there is at least a 7:1 return for every dollar invested in early childhood development.

Since 80 percent of a child's brain is developed by age three, quality early childhood education has a lasting impact on the child's ability to learn and succeed in school and life. Access to quality early childhood education is essential to form the basis of personality, intelligence, social behavior, and capacity to learn for further education. Children who receive quality early childhood learning are healthier, happier, more likely to graduate from high school and college, avoid teen pregnancy, be employed, earn higher wages and enjoy home ownership. Children are also less likely to repeat a grade, require special education, be incarcerated, live in poverty as adults, and rely on public assistance. Parents with children participating in high-quality childhood education saw sustained parental wage growth. Access to affordable, reliable, and high-quality early learning and care opportunities provides working families with better job stability and overall economic security.

## ***The Future of Collier County Children is in Our Hands***

Many children in Collier County are facing poverty and early learning deficits. Almost two-thirds of children are economically needy.<sup>1</sup> Less than half the children are socially and emotionally ready for kindergarten, and less than 25 percent of them can read at kindergarten levels. Due to the lack of affordable early childhood learning facilities, over 4,000 economically needy children do not have access to affordable and high quality early childhood learning and are placed in unlicensed facilities or stay at home in sometimes unstable environments. These deficits will have long lasting impacts on their future, leaving them ill equipped to develop a foundation for future success. If we can help solve the childcare affordability issue, everyone will benefit. If childcare costs were more affordable<sup>2</sup>, 76,335 more parents would have the option to work and contribute \$7.6 billion in new economic activity in Florida<sup>3</sup>. The future of Collier County depends on the success of the next generations.

## ***You Can Help – Child's Path Makes a Difference***

Since 2008, Child's Path has been improving the quality of life for our children and families to help break the cycle of poverty. Even though at least 75 percent of our children come from economically needy households, 100 percent of our students made gains in all their developmental areas in the past year. Over 80 percent of our children were socially, cognitively and emotionally ready for kindergarten, well above the Florida state average of 53 percent and the Collier County average of 43 percent.

1. Page Three

### ***Inspire a Child's Love of Lifelong Learning***

Child's Path is one of only three organizations in Collier to offer a unique approach to early childhood education. Early childhood learning at Child's Path is inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach – a project-based curriculum that is flexible and emerges from children's ideas, thoughts, questions and observations. It leads with the belief that children are full of potential and that their natural curiosity will lead their learning. Reggio-inspired learning views young children as individuals who are curious about their world and have the powerful potential to learn from all that surrounds them. We encourage children to engage and work with their peers to achieve common goals and

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<sup>1</sup> 64% of students in Collier County Schools qualify for free or reduced lunch programs.

<sup>2</sup> Economic Policy Institute: If child care [costs] were capped at 7% of income, 76,335 more parents would have the option to work.

<sup>3</sup> Economic Policy Institute

develop confidence for them to learn on their own. Learning goals are based on each child’s individual interests and the teachers act as partners and collaborators. Learning is deep and meaningful, rather than rote and superficial.

“INFANT CARE IN FLORIDA COSTS TWO TIMES MORE THAN ANNUAL COLLEGE TUITION AT A STATE COLLEGE”

Educational, psychological, and sociological influences are important factors to consider in understanding children and working to stimulate learning in appropriate ways. It requires additional resources to ensure the learning environment is warm, loving, healthy, safe, art-based, nature-inspired and flexible – promoting creativity and problem solving.

### ***Addressing the Underserved***

Child’s Path is one of the largest providers of early childhood learning for underserved families in Collier County. It is one of only a handful of organizations to offer scholarship assistance to children in economically needy working households. These scholarships are one of our greatest expenses. Without these sliding-scale scholarships, many of our children would not have access to quality early learning and its lifelong benefits and the households would lose their ability to work and provide for their families.

Child’s Path aspires to expand to serve many more children, particularly in the Golden Gate community where larger gaps exist for affordable and high quality early childhood care and learning.

You can help ensure the success and future of Collier County children and the community by investing in Child’s Path today. You can also provide a gift online at [www.collierchildcare.org/invest](http://www.collierchildcare.org/invest).

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### ***Five Current Investment Opportunities for a Brighter Future***

1. Partial Scholarship Assistance
2. Healthy Meals/Healthy Minds
3. Technology
4. Adopt a Classroom (arts/music, books, furniture, flooring, assessment tools, STEAM Start equipment)
5. Outdoor Learning Adventures (playground, outdoor musical instruments, nature field trips)

### ***Partial Scholarship Assistance***

Quality early childhood education in Florida is expensive and generally unaffordable for most families. Infant care for one child would take up 17 percent of a median family’s income in Florida. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), child care is affordable if it costs no more than 7 percent of a family’s income. By this standard, only 13 percent of Florida families can afford infant care.

Families with two children carry an even larger burden. Child care for two children—an infant and a 4-year-old— costs \$16,520. A typical family in Florida would have to spend 31 percent of its income on child care for an infant and a 4-year-old.

## Annual cost in Florida

College: \$4,423

Housing: \$11,965

4-year-old care: \$7,688

Infant care: \$8,694

Source: Economic Policy Institute: *The cost of child care in the United States*

ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE

The situation is even worse for more than 70 percent of our children’s families who fall at or below 230 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. Child’s Path helps alleviate this financial burden and barrier to quality early childhood learning by offering sliding-scale scholarship assistance to needy working families. Our partial scholarship recipients must provide proof of income and/or school transcripts. Parents are also required to attend monthly parent/teacher meetings and must volunteer at least one hour per month.

In fiscal year 2019, the organization spent over \$374,000 providing partial scholarship assistance – a 163 percent increase from 2016.

The demand continues to grow. Your support will help us provide these needy families the resources they need to provide high quality early childhood learning for their children. Education provides a pathway out of poverty.

### **Healthy Meals/Healthy Minds**

Nutrition is crucial to the process of early childhood development and learning. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that children who do not eat breakfast, or eat an insufficient breakfast, are more likely to have behavioral, emotional and academic problems at school.

Healthy eating in a child’s early years can increase their cognitive development and ability to learn for years to come. Child’s Path provides healthy breakfasts to prepare the children for a day of learning.

At mid-day children receive nutritional lunches followed later by a healthy afternoon snack to tide the children over until dinner. In many cases this is the only access to healthy food and nutrition the disadvantaged children may receive. Many of our underserved children live in areas called “food deserts” where there is limited access to healthy and affordable food.

### **Technology**

Learning about technology is a significant part of the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) Start program at Child’s Path, and it is critical to correctly assess children’s kindergarten-readiness.

Access to technology for students can play a key role in learning and in kindergarten readiness and beyond. Technology (computers, laptops, tablets, Smart Boards, Smart Tables, etc.) enhances the learning experience and the results. When technology is involved in learning, children (both native English speakers and English learners) make statistically significant gains in expressive and receptive English language skills, a prerequisite for reading.

Child’s Path teachers also rely on technology. Our educators employ Teaching Strategies GOLD® - an authentic, observational assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten. This online system blends ongoing observational assessment for all areas of development and learning with performance tasks that predict school success. These help teachers gather and organize meaningful data quickly, including online portfolios where children’s work can be stored and evaluated to customize individual learning plans and progress and shared with family members and other

stakeholders. The Teaching Strategies GOLD® assessment system continues to yield highly valid and reliable results for student development. Access to computers and laptops will let our teachers maximize the use of this assessment tool and allow them to spend more time with the children.

### ***Adopt a Classroom***

All children have unique learning styles and not all classroom environments are conducive to all children's needs. That is where a Reggio Emilia-inspired school stands out. It provides children with unique learning environments and tailored curriculum based on unique learning styles.

Students are encouraged to use all their senses beyond verbal and written communication. Improving and maintaining the diversity of activities and supplies in the Reggio-inspired classroom maximizes a child's learning, but is also more costly.

### ***The Arts***

Artistic expression is valued as a rich, complex, and meaningful *language* for children to learn and guides understanding of themselves and the world around them. This includes visual arts, music, drama and dancing

Through encounters with a wide range of visual arts media and materials, children become more comfortable and skilled and begin to use them to communicate or represent their understandings, emotions, discoveries, and interests.

### ***Music and Movement***

Children participate in activities that include vocal exploration, chants, songs, singing games, musical stories, instrument play, listening activities, and dancing/movement exploration. Music activities inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach include light and shadow play, song composition, and video documentation.

### ***Classroom Design***

Reggio classrooms are warm, home-like, full of light and inspiring. Activity and learning centers motivate and interest students - an art center, drama center, library area, science center and math center. Each center needs to be well equipped with natural, soft colors and wood. Use of primary colors in the classroom setting is minimal.

### ***Assessment Tools***

Assessments and feedback are key components to the Reggio-inspired approach and to ensure the children are ready for kindergarten. In addition to the technology and online access required for Teaching Strategies GOLD® and Ignite by HATCH™ assessment systems, annual subscription fees also apply.

### ***PACT Time (Parent and Child Together Time)***

Children develop some of their most important cognitive skills during their preschool years. By taking an active role in the early childhood education process, parents can help ensure that their child has all the support they need to develop to their full potential. Parent involvement helps extend teaching outside the classroom, creates a more positive experience for children and increases children's performance when they are in school.

Child's Path requires that parents attend a monthly one-hour session in our classrooms to learn about their children's progress. Sessions may involve reading to the children, participating in arts projects and general learning that will extend the children's education into the home.

### ***Outdoor Learning Adventures***

Since the "classroom" is the "third teacher" in a Reggio-inspired early childhood development center, the playground and outdoor field trips are also considered classrooms, inspiring and enhancing the children's learning.

Play is the key to physical, mental, intellectual and social wellbeing of children. It hugely impacts almost every developmental aspect of children’s lives. Studies have shown that preschool playgrounds improve the physical and mental health of children, improve school readiness, increase school attendance rates and decrease the school dropout rate.

***Summary***

The future of Collier County depends on the success of our next generations – ones who can enter kindergarten ready to learn, successfully complete school and move on to become productive adults. We hope you, your friends and neighbors rally with us to ensure a bright future for Collier County, its children and all residents. Please contact us to learn more at 239.643.3908 and online at [collierchildcare.org](http://collierchildcare.org).