

# Baby Bliss: Investing in Early Childhood

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**Baby bliss.** It's that emotion of immeasurable joy many parents experience with the arrival of a child, despite stinky diapers and sleepless nights. It's the limitless possibilities we envision for our newborn that motivate us to dig deeper, work smarter, and invest wisely in our child.

Each time you breathe in that scent of fresh baby skin, each time you play peek-a-boo, sprawl on the floor for tummy time, or read a good-night book, you are investing in your child. Providing nutritious meals, introducing letters, shapes and numbers and playing regularly with your child ... all are solid investments in your child's future.

As a parent, you are your child's first and most-loved teacher. Your interactions help build brain function that guides learning and behavior for a lifetime; your nurturing interactions are an investment in who your child will become.

"Baby bliss" is just the beginning of an investment partnership founded by parents and supported by educators, child care providers, community groups, local leaders, and early childhood organizations such as First 5 Shasta. These supportive partnerships are a win-win-win investment: a win for the child, a win for the family, and a win for the community. Everyone involved invests in young children in different ways, all critical to healthy child development. This may include brain development, social development, and the essential skill-building that takes place from birth to age 5, helping children grow into successful students and caring, productive adults.

First 5 Shasta is dedicated to improving the lives of Shasta County's young children and their families, as is each "First 5" in all fifty-eight California counties. First 5 Shasta has put over \$20 million from tobacco taxes toward the changing needs of young children and families in Shasta County. First 5 Shasta increases this investment in young children every time they award grant funding to a program or service in the community. Preschool teachers, child care providers and other professionals dedicate each workday to educating and caring for young children. All are partners in early childhood investment ... partners in the well-being and future potential of each child and each child's family. and future potential of each child and each child's family.

*"There's no better investment opportunity in the world than early childhood."*

world than early childhood. The more time, energy, effort and financial resources a community puts toward helping young children thrive, the less needs to be spent later in costly interventions that may be associated with crime, teen pregnancy or substance abuse. Quite simply, we save money when we focus our initial investment on healthy young children who grow into successful students who then grow into responsible adults.

Baby bliss. It's the beginning of a beautiful partnership with the most promising return on investment that time, patience, nurturing and money can buy. It's an investment that benefits our children today and our community for generations to come.

