

**BASICS Early Childhood Subcommittee**

The BASICS Early Childhood Subcommittee is an advocacy and educational subcommittee of the Blair Chamber BASICS Steering Committee. The goal of the subcommittee is three-fold:

- To jointly advocate to our business and early learner provider community on the benefits of investing in high quality early learning programs.
- To educate the business community on the long-term workforce development outcomes and significant return on investment (ROI) in high-quality early learning programs.
- To identify and act upon specific actionable strategies that will expand the number of high-quality early learning programs available in the Blair County area.



Ann Benzel, of Benzel’s Pretzels, visits a local program to learn more about the benefits of high quality early learning.

The Early Childhood Subcommittee was initially formed in 2011 to better educate the business community. However, over time the focus has shifted to identifying specific strategies that will expand high-quality early learning programming in our county.

The subcommittee is composed of numerous business and educational partners who meet the first Thursday of every month. The faces “around the table” are ever-changing. Also present at many meetings are representatives from policy and political offices. A key strategy of the Early Childhood Subcommittee is to engage in legislative advocacy. And based on the bi-partisan support that has emerged in recent state budgets, the subcommittee’s legislative advocacy has been a definite success.

A significant mentor and supporter of the subcommittee has been the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC). The ELIC has provided expert support to plan and staff our regional BASICS Early Childhood Summits in 2012, 2015 and 2018. ELIC has also provided a \$20,000 grant to conduct the Blair County Early Childhood Needs Assessment. Armed with the results of this assessment, the subcommittee has been quite successful in educating the business community on the needs and possible solutions. In fact, our local business community has moved on from asking “Why is this important?” to the more fundamental question of “How can we help?”

Also emerging from the Needs Assessment was the recommendation that significant state funding could be obtained through the leveraging effect of private investment. As a result, the subcommittee has initiated a campaign to create an Early Learning Impact Fund. The goal is to raise \$100,000 over a period of three years. The fund was started in October of 2018 and has already obtained pledges of \$65,000 toward the \$100,000 goal. There is no doubt that this private investment strategy will create more high- quality early learning capacity in our region.



Dr. Judy Cameron, noted expert on brain development in early childhood, gives the Keynote Address at the 2018 Blair BASICS Early Childhood Summit