

However, Hong believes that it would be beneficial to start at a younger age.

“Kids come to preschool already behind, and the achievement gap is evident even before four years of age, and so we really need to start younger,” she said. “We know young children are more likely to be living in poverty and facing adverse risk factors which will have long-term effects. So if we can start targeting kids even before they hit preschool, and then also couple that with a quality preschool program like GSRP, we know we’re going to get the most bang for our buck.”

And programs like these affect everyone in Michigan, not just those with preschoolers. According to Menzel, providing early childhood programs can have an impact on the value of homes and the job opportunities available in a community.

“How we treat and value our youngest citizens, those who don’t have a voice, who don’t get to vote, says a lot about who we are as a state and also reflects on our country,” he said. “We can actually raise the level of opportunity for all of our students and citizens, and it starts with early childhood and goes through the entire educational continuum. That’s what’s at stake for the state of Michigan.”

-Michelle Nelson, Michigan Radio Newsroom

Listen to the full interview above.

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