

## **The Social and Economic Impact of Quality Public Education**

**Introduction:** Many people assume that only students, teachers, staff, and administrators benefit from increased spending on public education. In fact, the benefits of a quality public education system impact everyone in Pennsylvania. Education plays a significant role in reducing crime, improving public health, strengthening political engagement, producing a better trained work force, and decreasing taxes and government spending.

Here are some ways that quality public schools improve our social and economic well-being --

- Evidence shows a strong relationship between education and reducing crime.
  - Well-educated people are less enticed by the opportunities of crime, because they have the job skills to make a decent and legitimate living.
  - In 1997, 41% of all federal, state, and local prisoners had not completed high school or received a GED. In the general population, only 18% of adults had not completed high school or received a GED.
  - When arrests are analyzed by crime, people who commit murder, assault, and vehicle theft are the least likely to have graduated from high school or received a GED.
  - Studies have shown that children who start with a strong pre-kindergarten education have reduced rates of participation in violent crimes.
  
- A strong relationship also exists between education and public health.
  - Well-educated people are more likely to have comprehensive health insurance and seek preventative health care.
  - Adults who do not graduate from high school are more likely to die prematurely from cardiovascular disease, cancer, infection, injury, lung disease, and diabetes, compared to high school graduates.
  - People who drop out of high school are six times more likely to develop alcohol abuse or dependency than people with a college degree.
  - Well-educated people tend to remain longer in stable relationships and are less likely to live with high levels of stress that harm health and decrease life span.
  
- While it reduces government spending, quality education also improves the job market, the economy, and it increases tax revenue.
  - On average, people with college or graduate degrees earn incomes that are 100% higher than people who have not completed high school. This leads to higher tax revenue and reduced reliance on welfare, public health care, and other public benefits.
  - For every new high school graduate resulting from stronger pre-school programs or reduced class sizes in elementary schools, taxpayers can save over \$20,000 in public assistance expenditures.
  - Improving male graduation rates nationwide by only 1% would produce a \$1.1 billion savings in the cost of prosecution of murder cases.
  - By decreasing crime, experts estimate that the United States could save \$450 billion annually from reduced costs associated with court administration, prosecution of crime, settlement costs, costs of incarceration, wage losses to victims and offenders, and decreased opportunities for people with criminal records.