The next Governor of New York State stands at the threshold of an extraordinary opportunity: The chance to articulate a vision and to build frameworks that will make New York’s early care and education the Best in the Nation.

To begin, in the First 100 Days, the Governor will need to:

- **Establish an Early Learning Commission** to develop a plan of action to bring lasting coherence and coordination to early care and education programs and services.

- **Budget for expanded investments** in early education, child care, and for services in the earliest years such as early intervention and home visiting.

- **Design a system of incentives and compensation** to retain teachers and caregivers and improve supports for professional development.

- **Begin implementation of a quality assurance system**, with program incentives and consumer awareness.
The next Governor can provide the leadership to strengthen our state economically, and improve the lives of children and families.

Why does New York need to invest in the best?

- To help children succeed in school and throughout life
- So we can better compete in the global economy
- Because business leaders need a qualified workforce
- To reap lasting returns on investment and save taxpayers money
- Because parents need and want the best for their children

To do this the Governor will need to:

- Bring coherence by building long term structures and supports
- Expand investments, so every child comes to school ready to learn
- Assure highly skilled teachers and caregivers
- Implement a system of quality assurance
- Improve services for New York’s youngest children
In the First 100 Days the Governor Will Need to:

Establish an Early Learning Commission. The Governor needs to direct the Secretary to the Governor to establish this commission. The Commission’s charge would be to develop a plan of action for lasting frameworks to bring coherence and coordination to early care and education. Hundreds of practitioners and policy makers from inside and outside the field have already been at work on this. They include experts from academic, public education, non-profit and business sectors as well as individuals from federal and state agencies and members of the Assembly and Senate. Together they have developed New York’s Action Plan for Children and Families (www.winningbeginningny.org/brochure/documents/action_plan.pdf). This ambitious blueprint for early education provides a good starting place for considering next steps for our state. The Secretary should look to members of this group, and others, to bring the Early Learning Commission to life.

Budget for expanded investments in early education, child care, and for services in the earliest years such as early intervention and home visiting. As a down payment on this vision, the next Governor needs to commit to wise investments. In the first year New York State might increase funding for prekindergarten by $100 million, child care funding by $140 million and home visiting by $8 million. Another approach would be to commit to budgeting for broad expansion in all forms of early care and education, perhaps $250 million.

Design a system of compensation and incentives to retain teachers and caregivers; and improve supports for professional development. New York needs to examine its expired Professional Retention Program, the proposed Workforce Incentive Program, and other alternatives. Then the state needs to establish and begin to fund a program that will assure a stable qualified early education workforce. To do this will require financial and other incentives to remain in the field, and a system of supports – such as loan forgiveness, paid fees, and release time – that will enable teachers and caregivers to move up the professional career lattice.

Begin implementation of a quality assurance system, with program incentive and consumer awareness components. In order to build improvement into the system, better educate parents and provide quality incentives for programs, New York State needs to establish a system of quality assurance. One such approach is represented is a “quality rating system” (QRS). Currently implemented in 13 states and planned in another 26 states, a QRS would rate programs according to levels of quality tied to research-based quality indicators. The success of these programs led to the formation of the NYS Work Group on Quality Rating Systems. The Work Group, which includes providers (from all venues of care), researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders is nearing completion of just such a rating scale. By examining the work undertaken by these and other experts, the next Governor should put in place a concrete plan on how to achieve a fully functioning system.

The Cost of Child Care

$11,887: Average annual fee paid for full-time care for an INFANT (up to 12 months old) in a center in 2005
$9,391: Average annual fee paid for full-time care for a CHILD AGE 4 YEARS in a center in 2005
$5,300: Average tuition and fees paid for STATE COLLEGE in 2005

Source: NYS Child Care Fact Sheet, NYS Child Care Coordinating Council, www.nysccc.org
“Eight-five percent of a person’s intellect, personality and social skills are developed by age 5. Ninety-five percent of public investment in education occurs after age 5, when the most critical learning years have passed.”

Purves, Body, & Brains

For more information, or to read the full The Best in the Nation, go to http://www.winningbeginningny.org/advocacy.html