

talking about four preschool programs in the traditional sense. When this legislation was passed it was a recognition of the first five years of life being terribly critical for the outcomes that we get later and so it was to be any kind of services that support healthy development in those first five years of life. So each community was challenged to look at their particular needs. For example, in the Scottsbluff-Gering area they presented a very exciting proposal. They have a...one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state and so their proposal focuses on teen parents, helping them to be the best possible parents, sharing with them good information about child development, as well as providing good developmental programs for their young children. Another city is doing a home-base approach that is based on the Missouri program, parents are teachers first. And this is a program where child development professionals go into the home and assist parents in sharing with them information that enables them to do the best possible job as parents and to make the best use of those first five years of life. So it's important to recognize that everyone of these proposals that was submitted also offered local commitment in terms of dollars because they knew it was going to take more than what was going to be...that was said to be available through LB 567 in terms of state support. There are all kinds of groups in this country who have acknowledged that the early years are what we need to invest our money in. They may be political groups, legislative groups. The Council on Governors has listed early childhood education as one of their top priorities. The National Council of Economic Development, which is made up of CEOs of major corporations around the country looked at our children who are at risk and said the most important thing we can do is invest early. We have one study after another which has demonstrated the importance of investing in those early years. We know that if we do good early education programs in the first five years of life, we can substantially reduce the number of high school dropouts, we can substantially decrease the number of unwed mothers. We can decrease dependency on welfare. We can even decrease the number of people who become involved in illegal activities. One of the things that's happening this year is we're saying we can't use our cigarette tax money for capital expenditures, we need to save that money for prisons. The best thing we could do to address the issue of overcrowded prisons is to invest early. We know that by doing this that we can also spend a lot less money on remedial education...