



AMHERST H
WILDER
FOUNDATION
ESTABLISHED 1906



Bush Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Nancy Hartzler, communications manager, Wilder Research; nqh@wilder.org; (651) 280-2696

Richard Chase, consulting scientist, Wilder Research; rick@wilder.org; (651) 280-2706

Victoria Tirrel, communications associate, Bush Foundation; vtirrel@bushfoundation.org; (651) 379-2238

New study estimates unprepared kindergarteners cost Minnesota K-12 school system \$113 million annually

Bush Foundation funds study to provide data to Minnesota Legislature, schools and communities

Saint Paul, MN (Dec. 29, 2008) – Wilder Research today released a report highlighting its findings that the state of Minnesota experiences an annual cost burden of \$113 million to its K-12 education system due to children entering kindergarten unprepared. The cost-benefit study focuses specifically on the costs and benefits to the Minnesota K-12 system as a whole, excluding costs or benefits for the child, family or society.

The study estimates the costs incurred due to children who are unprepared for kindergarten as:

- \$42 million net loss of per-pupil aid to school districts as a result of students dropping out before graduation.
- \$28.9 million for teacher-related costs due to absenteeism, turnover, and extra pay to compensate teachers for unsatisfactory working conditions.
- \$24.4 million for special education and grade repetition costs.
- \$11 million for serving English language learners with no early education.
- \$6 million spending on school safety due to delinquent behavior in the schools.

The Wilder report determined the total cost of providing two years of targeted evidence-based early education for all low-income three-years-olds not now being served to be approximately \$377 million. If the potential cost savings, or \$113 million, are subtracted, the annual net cost of such a program will be about \$264 million.

“This study shows the K-12 school system bears a substantial cost for unprepared students,” said Richard Chase, Wilder Research consulting scientist and author of the study. “However, our study also found that the full cost of high-quality early education to send all children to school prepared is far beyond the potential savings to the

school system itself. We estimate if the school system pays the full cost, it will only get back about 30 cents on the dollar.”

The Bush Foundation funded the study as part of its strategy to develop courageous leaders and engage entire communities in problem solving. A key part of that strategy is to use data to guide community decision-making. “There is much debate about the costs and benefits of early childhood education,” said Peter Hutchinson, president of the Bush Foundation. “It is our hope that this study can help provide the kind of impartial information we all need before decisions are made.”

A full copy of the study’s findings, along with an executive summary, can be found at www.wilder.org/report.html?id=2117

Wilder Research, part of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation in Saint Paul, is one of the nation’s largest nonprofit research and evaluation centers dedicated to the field of human services. Wilder Research issues nearly 150 reports per year that help improve the community’s understanding of major social issues and identify effective ways to strengthen individuals, families and communities.

The **Bush Foundation** was established in 1953 by 3M executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth. The Foundation strives to be a catalyst to shape vibrant communities in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota by investing in courageous *and* effective leadership that significantly strengthens and improves the well-being of people in these three states. More information about the Bush Foundation can be found at www.bushfoundation.org.

###