Partnerships for Excellent Early Childhood Education

Overview
High quality early childhood care and education are critical to lifelong success. Cities are addressing this critical issue in innovative ways, including successful efforts to foster collaboration in this area with the business community.

Materials


Sharon Schmickle, “Making the Case for Early Ed, Art Rolnick has had Enormous Impact,” MinnPost, April 16, 2012.


Pages excerpted from: “Network Helps Diverse Communities Improve Third Grade Reading,” Casey Connects, accessed July 2013.


Speakers

Phil Peterson is Senior Vice President and a Human Resource Consultant and actuary for Aon Hewitt, specializing in global retirement strategies, stock option valuation, and human capital metrics development. Mr. Peterson joined Aon in 1987 and has more than 30 years of employee benefit consulting experience. He formerly managed Aon’s retirement practice in Philadelphia, chaired the National Defined Benefit Practice Council, and lead Aon’s national state and local government consulting practice. He currently consults with clients on retirement finance and planning issues.

Mr. Peterson has served on the board of the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia and on the state board of the PA Economy League. He helped co-create, with Child Care Matters, the Aon/United Way of Southeastern PA Hand-in-Hand Award for quality child care in the business community. He has also testified before the House Education Committee of the state House of Representatives on the importance of child care to the business community. Mr. Peterson is former co-chair of the Early Learning Investment Commission and is current co-chair of ReadyNation. Phil Peterson earned a B.S. in Mathematics at Dickinson College. He is a fellow of the Society of Actuaries, and an enrolled actuary.

Arthur J. Rolnick is a Senior Fellow and Co-Director of the Human Capital Research Collaborative at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, the University of Minnesota. Rolnick is working to advance multidisciplinary research on child development and social policy. He previously served at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis as a senior vice president and director of research and as an associate economist with the Federal Open Market Committee—the monetary policymaking body for the Federal Reserve System. Rolnick’s essays on public policy issues have gained national attention; his research interests include banking and financial economics, monetary policy, monetary history, the economics of federalism, and the economics of education. His work on early childhood development has garnered numerous awards, including those from the George Lucas Educational Foundation and the Minnesota Department of Health, both in 2007; he was also named 2005 Minnesotan of the Year by Minnesota Monthly magazine.

Rolnick has been a visiting professor of economics at Boston College, the University of Chicago, and Lingnan College, Guangzhou, China. He is past president of the Minnesota Economic Association. He has served on several nonprofit boards including the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Harvard University; the Northside Achievement Zone, Minneapolis, Minnesota; the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation; Greater Twin Cities United Way; and Ready 4 K, a Minnesotan advocacy organization for early childhood development. A native of Michigan, Rolnick has a bachelor’s degree in mathematics and a master’s degree in economics from Wayne State University, Detroit; and a doctorate in economics from the University of Minnesota.
Carolyn Newberry Schwartz became the Collaboration for Early Childhood’s first executive director in July 2009. The Collaboration has developed and supported the implementation of a strategic plan that provides the road map for developing a comprehensive early childhood care and education system in Oak Park that supports all families and promotes kindergarten readiness. Ms. Schwartz has almost 30 years of experience working in the not-for-profit sector developing and administering programs for children and teens. She served on the Oak Park Elementary School District 97 Board of Education from 2001-2009 including two years as president. Ms. Schwartz helped to establish the Collaboration in 2002 and has served on the Illinois Early Learning Council since 2004.

Ivy R. Taylor was elected to serve as the District 2 Councilperson on June 13, 2009 and was re-elected to serve a third term on May 11, 2013. Ms. Taylor is a wife, mom and City Planner. Ms. Taylor began her career working for the City of San Antonio in the Housing and Community Development Department and the Neighborhood Action Department. While at the City, she worked with a variety of neighborhood associations, developers and nonprofit organizations in order to facilitate inner city redevelopment. She also planned several of the City’s Housing Summits which provided an opportunity for community partners to exchange practical ideas on how to address our city’s housing needs. After six years, she left employment with the City of San Antonio to become a Vice President at Merced Housing Texas. At Merced, she worked to create and implement programs focused on children, education, health and financial literacy for apartment community residents. Councilwoman Taylor is a lecturer at UTSA in the Public Administration Department.

Ms. Taylor currently serves on the board for Healthy Futures of Texas and Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Texas. She has served on the City’s Planning Commission and as a Commissioner for the City’s Urban Renewal Agency (SADA) and on the advisory board for Our Lady of the Lake’s Center for Women in Church and Society. Ms. Taylor completed the Leadership San Antonio class sponsored by the Greater San Antonio Chamber of Commerce, and in 2004 was acknowledged by the San Antonio Business Journal as a "Rising Star" in their "40 under 40" class. In 2008, she completed Bank of America’s Neighborhood Excellence Leadership Training Program.

Ms. Taylor obtained a Master’s Degree in City and Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1998. In 1992, she received a Bachelor’s Degree from Yale University.
Real Economic Development:
Early Childhood Intervention on a Large Scale

Arthur J. Rolnick, PhD, Senior Fellow and Co-Director, Human Capital Research Collaborative, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota and Rob Grunewald, Associate Economist, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

For well over 30 years, government leaders at the state and local levels have been deeply engaged in efforts to promote economic development. Unfortunately, many economic development schemes using public dollars are at best a zero-sum game. In the name of economic development and creating new jobs, virtually every state in the union has a history of trying to lure new companies with public subsidies.

Previous studies have shown that the case for these so-called bidding wars is shortsighted and fundamentally flawed. From a national perspective, jobs are not created—they are only relocated; the public return is at most zero. And the economic gains that seem apparent at state and local levels are also suspect because they would likely have been realized without the subsidies. In other words, what often passes for economic development and sound public investment is neither.

Persuasive economic research indicates that there is a far more promising approach to economic development with government assistance. It rests not on an externally oriented strategy of offering subsidies to attract private companies, but rather on government support of those much closer to home—quite literally: our youngest children. This research shows that by investing in early childhood education, governments—in partnership with private firms and nonprofit foundations—can reap extraordinarily high economic returns, benefits that are low-risk and long-lived.

We would like to put forth a pragmatic proposal for economic development at the state and local levels that capitalizes on the high returns that investment in early childhood education can yield. We don’t pretend to have all the answers to economic development, but we’re quite certain that investing in early childhood education is more likely to create a vibrant economy than using public funds to lure a sports team by building a new stadium or to attract an automaker by providing tax breaks.

Careful academic research demonstrates that tax dollars spent on early childhood development provide extraordinary returns compared with investments in the public, and even private, sector. Some of these benefits are private gains for the children involved, in the form of higher wages later in life. But the broader economy also benefits because individuals who participate in high-quality early childhood development programs have greater skills than they otherwise would, and they’re able to contribute productively to their local economies.

The promise of early childhood programs is based on fundamental facts about early human development. A child’s quality of life and the contributions that child makes to society as an adult can be traced to his or her first years of life. From birth until about the age of 5, a child undergoes tremendous development. If this period of life includes support for growth in language, motor skills, adaptive abilities, and social-emotional functioning, the child is more likely to succeed in school and to later contribute to society. Conversely, without support during these early years, a child is more likely to drop out of school, depend on welfare benefits, and commit crime—thereby imposing significant costs on society. Early childhood development programs recognize this potential—and this risk—and seek to nurture healthy development from the earliest years.
Several longitudinal evaluations all reach essentially the same conclusion: the return on early childhood development programs that focus on at-risk families far exceeds the return on other projects that are funded as economic development. Cost-benefit analyses of the Perry Preschool Program, the Abecedarian Project, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, and the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project showed returns ranging from $3 to $17 for every dollar invested. This implies an annual rate of return, adjusted for inflation, of between 7 percent and 18 percent.

These findings, promising though they are, pose a challenge: small-scale early childhood development programs have been shown to work, but can their success be reproduced on a much larger scale? There are reasons to be skeptical; some recent attempts at scaling up early childhood development have been disappointing. But based on a careful review of past and current programs, we believe that large-scale efforts can succeed if they incorporate four key features: careful focus, parental involvement, outcome orientation, and long-term commitment.

Achieving these characteristics in large-scale early childhood development programs requires the flexibility, innovation, and incentives that are inherent in markets, as well as the long-term assurance and stability that government backing provides. To establish a successful, large-scale early childhood development program, therefore, we propose a permanent scholarship fund for all families with at-risk children. Similar to endowments in higher education, earnings from an endowment for early childhood development would be used to provide scholarships for children in low-income families who aren’t able to afford a quality early childhood program.

The scholarships would cover child tuition to qualified programs plus the cost of parent mentoring to ensure parental involvement. Scholarships would be outcomes-based, meaning that they would include incentives for achieving significant progress toward the life and learning skills needed to succeed in school. Parent mentoring would include parent education; information about available financial, health, and human services resources; and guidance on selecting an early childhood development program. Research shows that reaching children with multiple risk factors as early as possible is essential; even age 3 may be too late. So we suggest that while scholarships would pay tuition for a child to attend an early childhood development program beginning at age 3, the parent-mentoring program could start much earlier.

Through parent decisions and provider responses, the market would determine the structure of the early childhood development industry. Market participants would include early childhood providers from the public and private sectors, which represent a mix of preschools, child care providers, and home visiting programs. The market structure, however, would be influenced by standards set by an executive board that manages the early childhood development endowment. Providers would have to comply with these standards in order to register the scholarship children. The standards would be consistent with the cognitive and social-emotional development needed to succeed in school. We envision a diverse mix of providers competing to serve at-risk children, leveraging the existing early childhood development infrastructure and opening the door for new providers.

Based on costs used in previous studies and current programs for at-risk children, we estimate that total resources needed to fund an annual scholarship for a high-quality early childhood development program for an at-risk 3- or 4-year-old would be about $10,000 to $15,000 for a full-day program that included parent mentoring. The scholarship either would cover the full cost of tuition or would be layered on top of existing private and public funds, such as child care subsidies, to enhance quality features that correlate with school readiness outcomes. The endowment’s board could vary the amount of the scholarship to reach children in families just over the poverty line on a sliding scale, or increase the amount of the scholarship for children facing multiple risk factors.

To derive an approximate dollar amount for the endowment, a state would have to estimate the number of children to be covered, multiply that by the average scholarship, and calculate the investment return for the interest derived from investing the endowment funds in low-risk government or corporate bonds.

In Minnesota, for example, we estimate that to ensure that all 3- and 4-year-olds living below the poverty line receive high-quality early childhood development, the state needs about an additional $90 million annually. For children who aren’t already involved in an early childhood program, the scholarship would provide access. For children who are enrolled in a child care center or preschool, the scholarship would ensure that the quality is at the necessary level to meet school readiness goals.
A one-time outlay of about $1.5 billion—about the cost of two professional sports stadiums—would create an endowment that could provide scholarships to the families of children in Minnesota living below poverty on an annual basis. With the endowment’s funds invested in corporate AAA bonds, earning about 6 percent to 7 percent per year, we estimate that $90 million in annual earnings would cover the costs of scholarships, pay for program monitoring and assessments, and supplement existing revenue sources as needed for early childhood screening and teacher-training reimbursement programs.

The evidence is clear that investments in early childhood development programs for at-risk children pay a high public return. Helping our youngest children develop their life and learning skills results in better citizens and more productive workers. Compared with the billions of dollars spent each year on high-risk economic development schemes, an investment in early childhood programs is a far better and far more secure economic development tool. Now is the time to capitalize on this knowledge.

To fully achieve the benefits of early investments in children, they need to be followed up with quality education in the K-12 school system. However, if we are successful in getting most at-risk kids ready for school, K-12 will be more successful.

In our view, the case is closed for why we must invest in early childhood development. Now it is time to design and implement a system that will help society realize on a large scale the extraordinary returns that high-quality early childhood programs have shown they can deliver.

**Does preschool have long-term educational and economic benefits? Research suggests the answer may be YES.**

Intensive preschool interventions targeting disadvantaged children have been shown to yield significant gains that may last well into adulthood. Longitudinal studies have been conducted to evaluate the enduring outcomes of several well-known preschool programs.

- Michigan’s Perry Preschool program served 123 4-year-olds for two years. Participants have been tracked to age 40.
- North Carolina’s Abecedarian preschool served 111 children from age 4 months to 5 years. Participants have been followed to age 21.
- Illinois’ Chicago Child-Parent Centers served 1,500 children. Participants have been followed to age 30.

**How did children served by these programs fare later in life?**

- They were more likely to stay in the regular classroom and out of special education.
- They were more likely to go through school without repeating a grade.
- They were more likely to complete high school without dropping out.
- As adults, they were more likely to be employed and to have higher earnings.

Although long-term benefits of such interventions have been demonstrated, the costs of some exemplary programs can be quite high. On an annual per-student basis, the Perry Preschool and Abecedarian programs, respectively, spent about $9,000 and $10,500 (adjusted to $2,000). As a result, some have questioned the cost-effectiveness of such programs and the extent to which they can serve as models for larger-scale interventions.

**Citations:**

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Making the case for early ed, Art Rolnick has had 'enormous impact'

By Sharon Schmickle | 04/16/12

Art Rolnick's arguments on behalf of preschoolers have stirred a potent movement in Minnesota and far beyond.

While covering important events in our civic and cultural life, journalists typically focus on facts, controversies, issues and their impact. They rarely look through the lens of understanding leaders and leadership: who is leading the causes and creating change, how those leaders were motivated to tackle tough problems and create opportunities for their communities, and how they worked through the challenges that arose.

In this series, "Driving Change: A Lens on Leadership," MinnPost is profiling such leaders in order to provide new insights — and, we hope in some cases, inspiration — for our readers. Each profile is paired with comments from members of a panel of experienced leaders and scholars of leadership. The project is made possible by a grant from the Bush Foundation.

“This is Minnesota’s future work force,” Art Rolnick said, standing in a play lot full of heart-meltingly sweet 4-year-olds.

No doubt, these kids at the New Horizon Academy in St. Paul’s Frogtown will shed their beaded braids and Spiderman tattoos before they’re ready to claim pay checks. But will they have the skills and the diplomas they need to earn decent wages – and, in the process – boost Minnesota’s economy?

Pose that question, and you get Rolnick going.

Anyone who’s had any recent contact with the former research director at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis knows the argument, because he sounds it every chance he gets: Minnesota’s best economic investment, by far, would be these kids and others like them. If they are healthy and ready to learn by the time they start kindergarten, they will do better throughout their lives.

Rolnick and others established that fact – a decade ago in rigorous research and more recently in a $20 million practical demonstration involving 650 St. Paul preschoolers and their parents.

Yet, Minnesota hasn’t found the money or the will to make the full investment.

How can it be, Rolnick asks, that Minnesotans could build a new ballpark for the Twins and now prepare to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in a Vikings stadium – but fail to secure the future for vulnerable children who make up the fastest-growing segment of the state’s next work force?

“When do the kids get their turn?” he demands. “Stadium proponents keep telling me we can do both. ... They pat you on the head and tell you that these kids are their No. 1 priority. I don’t believe that – not until they come up with the bucks for these kids.”

Framing the tradeoff

Rolnick has argued for years that the billions of dollars taxpayers around the country have spent on professional sports venues pay nothing in the way of real public returns. In essence, he says, privately owned and well-heeled major league
teams “blackmail” the public by pitting one city or one state against another without truly creating new jobs or other economic gains.

Invest the same sums in early childhood education, Rolnick insists, and the returns will be far greater. By linking the two issues, Rolnick has locked horns with some staunch allies in his education campaign.

In a recent faceoff on Minnesota Public Radio, Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak said he is in “radical agreement” with Rolnick that “it’s most important to invest in education and early childhood.” Where they disagree, the mayor said, is on the question of whether it’s smart to invest in sports infrastructure. For Rybak, the answer was yes. He argued that a “great community” needs sports facilities just as it needs arts and parks. Further, he said, a new stadium would create jobs.

Rolnick was relentless. In his hometown, Detroit, he said: “They have two brand new stadiums. They have three casinos. It is a Third World economy. It’s going to stay a Third World economy because 75 percent of their kids don’t graduate high school on time or don’t graduate at all. ... What's going to create jobs is educating your kids.”

'A complete leader'

Stadium debate aside, Rolnick’s arguments on behalf of preschoolers – delivered with passion, wit and persuasive data – have stirred a potent movement in Minnesota and far beyond. From the Frogtown playground to policymaker gatherings in palatial international settings, Rolnick has thrust the cause of early education into the forefront like never before.

“Art has been a complete leader on this ... and he has really helped our state advance because of his commitment,” said Kendall Powell, chairman and CEO of General Mills Inc., one of many Minnesota corporate leaders who’ve been recruited for the cause.

On a national level, Rolnick’s ideas were “part of the mix” in shaping the Obama administration’s early-childhood policies, said Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, a University of Pennsylvania bioethics professor who has served as special advisor for health policy to the director of the White House Office of Management and Budget.

Sen. Al Franken questioning Art Rolnick on early childhood development and education.

'The Rolnick thing'

“Art is kind of the folk hero of the movement,” said Duane Benson, a former Minnesota Senate minority leader who served as executive director of the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation.

Rolnick defined the issue years ago in tough-minded terms of return on public investment, Benson said. Then he sounded a “constant drumbeat” for action, arguing incessantly that setting tots on the right track would save the state billions down the road in costs for prisons, police, welfare and other services.

“He has been like a conscience, providing a constant reminder of why we need to do this,” Benson said.

Constant indeed! Rolnick never lets up on his push for preschoolers.

“I don’t care what the question is, Art’s answer will be ‘early childhood education!’ ” quipped Todd Otis, a former state legislator who directs community partnerships for Think Small, a St. Paul-based agency focused on early childhood programs and services.

The preschool cause and Rolnick’s name are so synonymous in Minnesota, Otis said, that prominent educators refer to the cause as “The Rolnick thing.”

Accidental advocate

All of this stirring passion comes from an economist whose academic expertise is in pre-Civil War banking.

Rolnick, 67, is almost an accidental advocate for disadvantaged kids.

That is not to say he hadn’t cherished education. He grew up during the 1950s and ‘60s in one of Detroit’s prominent Jewish communities where every boy automatically was seen as a future doctor or lawyer.
“Well before I went to high school, it was a given – not only that you were going to go on to college from high school, but you are going to get a graduate degree,” he said. “Just finishing college wasn’t going to be enough.”

At Detroit’s Mumford High School, Rolnick and other Jewish students shared classrooms with African-Americans, and many from both ethnic groups went on to fame in music, film and other arts as well as to prestigious universities such as Harvard and Stanford.

“At the time I went there, it was one of the top high schools in the country,” Rolnick said. “It was very competitive. It also was integrated, and a significant number of the African-American students went on to do well. So I had this deep-seated view of education and its importance. That may be part of the reason I ended up obsessing so much on early education.”

**The Heller influence**

Back then, though, his obsession was mathematics and economics. After earning a master’s degree at Wayne State University, Rolnick moved to Minnesota in 1967 for doctoral studies under Walter Heller, who was a top economic adviser to Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

Rolnick would get more than brilliant schooling in economic theory at the University of Minnesota. Heller’s fame was based in part on his penchant for translating theory and research into real-world policy. That bent rubbed off on Rolnick and stayed with him after he landed a job at the Minneapolis Fed in 1970.

In Minnesota, Rolnick enjoyed an intellectually stimulating environment; three of his colleagues – Edward Prescott, Christopher Sims and Thomas Sargent – eventually shared Nobel Prizes in Economic Sciences.

Rolnick also learned that policy change comes hard – if at all. As the research director in Minneapolis, he could translate studies of employment, inflation and business cycles into sound policy recommendations. That was no guarantee, though, that Washington would move on the recommendations.

“It takes a lot of rigor if you are going to improve public policy,” he said. “There are a lot of ideas out there, but very few you could confidently say would be effective. It takes a lot of hard work to bring about change.”

Such was the backdrop 12 or so years ago when Rolnick fell into the early education cause – as he puts it, “almost by accident.”

“If you had asked me then about early education, I would have talked about kindergarten, I guess,” he said. “That was all I knew.”

'I didn't like the argument'

Increasingly, though, research had shown that kindergarten was too late for the all-important stimulation and nurturing care kids need in order to thrive in school. In Minnesota, roughly half of the children weren’t ready to learn what kindergarten was supposed to teach them.

In response to the emerging research, Minnesota leaders – including Otis, former Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser and former Gov. Al Quie – had launched Ready 4 K, a campaign to jump-start public awareness and support for school readiness.

Making the Ready 4 K case at a luncheon attended by prominent Twin Cities leaders, Otis challenged Minnesota to invest substantial sums in the cause.

A very skeptical Rolnick sat in the crowd.

“I was listening to Todd, and I didn’t like the argument,” Rolnick recalled. “He was making the moral argument, saying this is the right thing to do. ... I raised my hand and said, ‘Moral arguments are not going to get you there. You need an economic argument.’ ”

The collective response went something like this: OK, Rolnick. Help us make the economic argument.

**The landmark paper**

Otis recalls getting this initial reply when he asked Rolnick to sit on the Ready 4 K board: “Well, Todd, there are a million worthy causes; why in the world should I care about yours?”
Rolnick relented, though, and recruited Rob Grunewald, an economic analyst at the Minneapolis Fed, as a research partner. The two economists collected every rigorous study they could find tracking what had happened over the years to kids who attended high-quality preschool programs.

“We looked at the results, and they were overwhelming,” Rolnick said. “We calculated the returns on investment, and they are extraordinary — not from just one longitudinal study, but four longitudinal studies. We came to the conclusion that for a public investment, you can’t beat it.”

In 2003, Grunewald and Rolnick published a landmark paper estimating that dollars invested in high-quality preschool education for disadvantaged kids paid an inflation-adjusted 16 percent return. Kids who show up ready to learn in kindergarten do better all through school and beyond to become more productive workers who are less likely to burden the taxpayers with costs of crime and welfare.

Other experts reviewed the findings, and some quibbled with the rate of return – setting it at 10 percent rather than 16. But no one shot down the basic conclusion.

“We had some of the best scholars in the world look at our stuff and agree with us that in terms of public investment you can’t do any better than this,” Rolnick said.

Only the beginning

At that point, Rolnick thought he was finished.

“I figured I could go back to my Fed job full time and not have to worry about this anymore,” he said. “I was done.”

Not so fast, said other leaders of the early-education movement. His value to the cause had just begun.

“Art had added the financial side of the argument,” Don Fraser said. “That was part of it. The other part was the fact that he was making the argument at all. That impressed so many people, not only because of his position at the Minneapolis Federal Reserve but also because he was so articulate on the issue.”

In no time, the “Rolnick Thing” went worldwide.

“Every week, virtually every week over the last 10 years, I’ve had an invitation to speak on this issue,” Rolnick said. “I’ve been all over the world with it.”

His stops around the globe included Chile and several African countries as well as a conference sponsored by the prime minister of Turkey and attended by Saudi royals. At the invitation of Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, Rolnick was a keynote speaker at a National Governor’s Conference.

A highlight for Rolnick was an invitation in 2008 to speak at the Aspen Ideas Festival, where Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, the bioethicist, invited him to Washington, D.C., to meet with key advisors to the campaign of then-candidate Barack Obama. In September that year, Rolnick had dinner with Rahm Emanuel, Ezekiel’s brother, who was to become the White House chief of staff in the new Obama administration (and now mayor of Chicago).

Rolnick outlined his ideas and put in a plea for early-education funding.

An economic lens, with strong articulation

While the basic argument wasn’t new, Rolnick was putting an economic lens on it, and he articulated it with engaging wit and humor, Ezekiel Emanuel recalled.

“Sometimes what you’ve got are people who create the data, and then people who illuminate the data where others haven’t done a great job,” Emanuel said.

Did Rolnick influence the Obama administration?

“It’s very rare when you can draw a straight line from one person or one meeting to the final policy decisions,” Emanuel said. “Art’s ideas definitely were part of the mix that influenced us. ... People were aware of them, and they definitely were having an influence, in conjunction with a lot of other things.”

Obama’s “Race to the Top” program now provides grants and other benefits for early learning.

“We obviously haven’t done everything that Art wants,” Emanuel said. “But I think we’re slowly — and, I would say too slowly – pushing in that direction.”
Even 3 years old was too late

Over the years, Rolnick had not only illuminated the subject; he also had learned. After speaking in Boston, he was invited to lunch with Dr. Jack Shonkoff who directs the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

I like what you are saying, Shonkoff told Rolnick. But you are focusing on 3- and 4-year-olds.

Once again, Rolnick was to see that his focus was too late.

Shonkoff explained research that was revealing new insights into child brain development. Deploying new imaging technology, scientists could see that stress and neglect actually altered the architecture of the brain during critical formative stages, diminishing a child’s long-term prospects well before age 3.

Rolnick went back to the research, this time poring over studies of kids’ brains. Particularly revealing – and heartbreaking, too – were findings about Romanian orphans. These kids had suffered severe neglect, and as a result their brains were far smaller than normal.

That second round of research led to another Grunewald-Rolnick paper setting out a plan for ramping up early childhood education to a scale large enough to make a real difference.

Called for scholarships

The economists called for awarding scholarships to at-risk children and their families. In addition to tuition, the scholarships would cover home visits during which parents could get mentoring beginning during pregnancy, information about support services and guidance on selecting a preschool program. The programs would compete in a free-market setting.

“It had to start early, it had to be high-quality, and it had to involve the parent,” Rolnick said.

At that point, Rolnick was deep into the cause – committed (some say obsessed) far beyond anything he had expected.

“It was really fun to see him evolve and see his role take shape,” said Otis at ThinkSmall (formerly Ready 4 K). “I just am so impressed and inspired by this guy. He has been one of the most powerful and credible – but, also, hopeful – advocates for this issue I have ever seen. ... He thinks big in a field where people are used to getting very little in terms of public support.”

‘... almost stupid not to do it’

Back on the speaking circuit, Rolnick peddled the new ideas with promising feedback. Warren Staley, the former Cargill CEO, joined forces with the McKnight Foundation and other prominent organizations to create the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF). Heads of other major Minnesota corporations joined the cause and raised more than $20 million for a pilot project.

Rolnick is the first to say that he and Grunewald did no original research. Their conclusions were drawn from more basic studies, some of which had been in circulation for a decade or more.

Why then did so many people listen when Rolnick trumpeted the findings?

“Art was successful in presenting the case in a way that captured people’s attention, which was to emphasize that every dollar invested will bring a return,” said Douglas Baker Jr., Chairman and CEO of Ecolab Inc., another MELF board member.

While Rolnick showed passion on behalf of the kids, he spoke as a respected economist using the language of return on investment.

Put that way, Baker said, “it was almost stupid not to do it, given the returns.”

Further, Rolnick backed his argument with drive.

“He has been tireless in terms of drumming up support and money,” Baker said. “He has convened groups of people who can make a difference on this issue. He lobbied personally in Washington. ... He has had an enormous impact.”

Powell, the CEO at General Mills said Rolnick’s involvement motivated him to join MELF’s board, which shaped up to be a veritable Who’s Who of big business in Minnesota. The General Mills Foundation also donated money to the cause.
Art has so much credibility in this field that I think he did help attract business to the board,” Powell said.

Not in the background

By the time MELF was fully operating, Rolnick was getting ready to retire from the Fed. He and his wife, Cheri, coveted time for their hobbies, including ballroom dancing – at which they were good enough to compete and also to be in demand for performing at Twin Cities functions. Further, Arizona beckoned during the winter.

Rolnick certainly could have handed the torch to others. And he does now winter in Arizona. The other half of the year he serves as a Senior Fellow at the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs where he co-directs the Human Capital Research Collaborative.

But meanwhile, Rolnick hasn’t backed away from the point position on the early-childhood cause, said Benson, MELF’s executive director.

“He was not in the background by any stretch,” Benson said. “He was on the board. He was subtly reminding the board why we were doing this: This is going to affect all of us – the economy, the state budget ... less prison time, less welfare cost.”

MELF’s four-year pilot project gave 650 St. Paul children a chance at scholarships to attend high-quality preschools supplemented by parent mentoring. The program included “Parent Aware,” a rating system for monitoring the quality of the providers.

One of the lucky kids was Nicole Swierczek’s eldest son, Benjamin. He had struggled with development challenges, including problems with his fine-motor and speech skills, Nicole said, and she worried whether he could handle kindergarten.

“Nowadays, kindergarten is what first grade was when I was in school,” she said.

How could little Bennie be ready in time for that level of learning?

The answer came when Ben, 3 at the time, got a MELF scholarship. Nicole was allowed to choose from a wealth of preschool programs that had been prescreened through the Parent Aware system.

She chose a New Horizon Academy near the family’s East St. Paul home. Nicole – a stay-at-home mom with two younger children – said the family couldn’t have afforded the tuition on the single salary from her husband’s work as a loan officer at a mortgage company.

Now, at age 6, Ben is far better prepared to hold his own in school.

“He had a really good experience,” Nicole said. “It really helped him.”

Beyond the pilot project

Apparently it helped the other children too. As a group, they showed significantly improved vocabularies, social skills, attention spans, math and pre-reading skills by the time they were ready for kindergarten. At the same time, good preschool programs flourished in the project’s neighborhoods, attracted by the chance to compete for scholarships that could run more than $13,000 a year.

“The Scholarship Program was successful in increasing the school readiness of the participating children from low-income families,” concluded an independent evaluation conducted by SRI International. The children will continue to be tracked over the years by the University of Minnesota’s Center for Early Education and Development.

Meanwhile, MELF’s plan from the beginning was to sunset itself at the end of 2011, which it did. So the pilot project has ended.

Now a private successor organization, Parent Aware for School Readiness is raising funds to market and maintain the Parent Aware rating system. Armed with the results of the pilot project, MELF supporters also are lobbying the Legislature to fund a scholarship program for early education.

The MELF project had validated Rolnick’s ideas in one of the nation’s largest ever demonstrations of the value of preschool programs.
“That pilot program was critical for me because it said that this is not a theory,” Rolnick said. “In practice, we showed that we can do this. And we can bring this to scale overnight. If I had the resources, it would be easy to provide virtually every child in poverty in the state of Minnesota this opportunity to start school healthy and ready to learn.”

Rolnick is pushing for a permanent endowment. If Minnesota could put up $700 million, federal money and private donations would be available to grow the fund to the $1.8 billion level it needs, he estimates.

The question of funding

But with the state in tight financial straits, where would the money come from? That question provides the pivot for Rolnick to sound his argument against public investment in professional sports facilities.

The nearly $1 billion in public and private funds proposed for a new Vikings stadium, would put Minnesota within reach of leading the nation by creating the early-childhood endowment, he argues.

“You would think that the endowment would be funded right away, and the Vikings would be second, third or fourth on the priority list,” he said. “It’s just the opposite. In fact we are lucky to get a few million out of the state.”

Why is that?

“Well, these kids don’t vote,” Rolnick said. “Their problems are invisible if you come out to where I live in Plymouth. Nobody sees these problems. Nobody even sees these kids. ... And their parents have very little political clout. They have no way of lobbying.”

Most of those parents also could not afford a ticket to watch a game in a new Vikings stadium.

“A stadium is built for extremely wealthy people – for guys like me, so that I can come in from the suburbs and go to games, and the price of the ticket will be less than it would have to be otherwise,” Rolnick said. “So you are subsidizing wealthy people all across the board. And it does nothing for the economy.”

Many of Rolnick’s allies in the early-childhood cause are deploying a different strategy, decoupling the stadium and education issues. Further, they’re not calling for the state to put up the large initial endowment he champions. Instead, they advocate cobbling together funding from existing programs to start the initiative and build it gradually.

With characteristic flourish, Rolnick dismisses what he calls “small thinking.”

“This is hands down the best investment we can make,” he said. “So the thing that has surprised me is how difficult politically it has been to move this issue. ... We are making progress, but not relative to the sports guys – not relative to how much public money goes into the Timberwolves, The Wild, the Twins and the Vikings, all private businesses that would exist anyway without the public money.”

So, like a scolding conscience, he asks again and again: “When do the kids get their turn?”
The Collaboration for Early Childhood is a model public/private partnership that leverages the resources of more than 40 local agencies to create a community-wide system of high-quality programs and services that foster physical, cognitive and social-emotional development during the critical first five years of life.

**Why Is Early Learning So Important?**

- Increased educational achievement
- Improved job outlook and higher earnings
- Lower rates of participation in special education
- Lower rates of involvement in the criminal justice system

**Young Children in Oak Park and River Forest**

- Approximately 5,400 children under kindergarten age live in Oak Park and River Forest.

The early childhood sector is fragmented and of wide-ranging quality and access often depends on a family’s ability to pay.

- 800 children are at-risk for academic failure due to family income or developmental delays

Research shows that high-quality early care and learning experiences lead to annual aggregated rates of return on investment of 7% - 10%.

**How the Collaboration Is Making a Difference**

At the Collaboration for Early Childhood, we provide the resources and connections vital to every child’s opportunity for success in learning and in life.

**Return on Investment**

Source: Heckman (2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs targeted towards the earliest years</th>
<th>Preschool programs</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
<th>Job training</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of return to investment of human capital</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Information and Support</th>
<th>Connect parents to the information and resources they need to support their child’s growth and development</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>Support and training for people involved with our youngest children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Screening</td>
<td>Early identification of children with developmental delays to ensure they receive services they need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Preschool</td>
<td>Promote access to and foster high-quality public preschool programs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

All parents report stress and isolation when seeking early childhood services.
Oak Park Integrated Early Childhood System • Key Outcomes and Benchmarks

As part of the strategic planning process engaged in during 2008-2009, the Collaboration adopted benchmarks for the Oak Park Early Childhood System. The benchmarks were chosen because they are relevant, measurable and provide data that can be used and acted upon to further system development and better prepare children for success in school and in life. The benchmarks allow for targets and dates to be specified. The Collaboration will define these measures in increasing increments, based on funding levels. Upon establishing a baseline, all benchmarks can be read as: By Year Y, X% of children will...

**Child Outcomes:** Every child arrives at kindergarten healthy, safe, ready to succeed, eager to learn.

*Benchmarks:*
- Children identified through screening as needing assessment and or services receive them
- Children in Oak Park Preschool for All and Head Start programs demonstrate age-appropriate proficiency in each domain of development in accordance with the Illinois Early Learning Standards
- Children entering kindergarten demonstrate age-appropriate proficiency in the kindergarten readiness assessment administered by District 97

**Service Delivery Outcomes:** Parents and children receive the early childhood care and education and parenting education and support services they need.

*Benchmarks:*
- Kindergarten students with Free or Reduced Price Lunch assistance have a history of participation in Preschool for All/ Head Start, a National Association for the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC) accredited program or a program meeting the Illinois Quality Rating System of 3 or 4
- Teen parents and families receiving All Kids Level 1 health insurance for their child under age 3 receive referral to intensive parent education program
- Referred parents participate in the intensive parent education program
- Kindergarten/1st grade students with Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) have documentation of receiving services in early childhood (if they lived in Oak Park during their early childhood years)

**System Outcomes:** Oak Park has a high quality, coordinated early childhood system.

*Benchmarks:*
- Families with children under age five are included in the voluntary database and receive developmental information and an early childhood resource directory
- Teachers and directors in Oak Park early childhood programs have above minimum state educational requirements for their role
- Teachers and child care providers have more than the state-mandated 15 documented hours of continuing professional development each year
- Preschools and child care centers and homes are engaged in the Illinois Quality Rating System, and improve their scores each year.
### Early Detection Screenings
- Establish system to assure all children birth to five receive periodic developmental screening
- Conduct vision and hearing screenings at preschools
- Implement follow-up processes to ensure all children needing assessments and services receive them
- Maintain accurate, up-to-date inventory of services and disseminate to all providers and families

### Parent Information and Support
- Provide information about child development and services to every parent
- Offer every at-risk family intensive parent education/support
- Make available group support and periodic visits to all families
- Publish Early Childhood Resource Directory bi-annually

### Professional Development
- Provide training programs in best practice and career development advice to preschool and child care staff
- Coach centers on quality improvement and qualify them for state recognition and financial incentives
- Provide leadership coaching to center directors
- Develop loan/scholarship program for college credit and training programs
- Offer annual symposium on critical early childhood issues

### Public Preschool Coordination
- Coordinate outreach for, and referral to, all programs for at-risk children
- Lead curriculum planning, instructional improvement, and unified assessment by programs to ensure high quality
- Work with all early education providers to establish community expectations for incoming kindergarteners

### Voluntary Database
Includes all children birth to five to monitor program participation, service usage and program impact

Includes staff of early care and education programs to monitor staff qualifications, professional development activities and participation in Illinois State quality enhancement programs to monitor impact of programs
Oak Park Villager of the Year: Collaboration for Early Childhood

Nurturing success from the start and taking a pro-active approach to education

Tuesday, January 1st, 2013 10:00 PM

By Anna Lothson

Staff Reporter

A child can't read the board or hear the teacher. There are family stressors at home. The student is being taught at the wrong level or has fallen behind. Parents don't know where to turn. Their child, at his or her most impressionable age, remains at risk.

These scenarios have become increasingly apparent in the education system, particularly in the early childhood years, the most vulnerable period of a child's development. For 10 years, the Collaboration for Early Childhood has worked to bridge these gaps, and in 2012, that commitment reached a new level.

In recognition of their efforts to focus the attention of our two communities, Wednesday Journal has named them Villagers of the Year.

In 2009, the Oak Park and River Forest High School board and the Village of Oak Park launched a community-wide strategic planning process in conjunction with the Collaboration for Early Childhood Care and Education. The goal was to create a comprehensive system that integrates high-quality programs and services for children age 0-5 that helps advance their development. Three years later, funding for the initiative has been, or is expected to be, approved by multiple governing boards in Oak Park and River Forest, allowing the collaboration to move forward.

"It needs to be underscored that we do have a significant need in the achievement gap," said Eric Gershenson, a volunteer board member and one of the founders of the Collaboration for Early Childhood, citing data that indicates close to 20 percent of kids from birth to 5 years old are at risk of academic failure. This is a growth of about 11 percent in the last decade, he said.

"It's a values issue for Oak Park, and it's a fiscal issue," he said. "Fortunately in this instance, the approach we believe in is responsive to both of those things. If you do both of those things you're going to get a significant response on both your investments."

The groups have agreed that no one governmental body is entirely responsible for the success of children's educational and emotional development. The effort in 2012 to fund the initiative garnered support from six independently operating governing bodies.

Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, executive director of the nonprofit Collaboration, said the group has secured a public-private partnership, which was very intentional. The structure of the organization, she said, allows everybody to feel they can participate in an equal manner.
"It's in the interest of everybody to make sure we needed to — and we did — leverage private funding to support early childhood in Oak Park," Newberry Schwartz said.

The merging of private and public funding has contributed to the overall success of the project because it's "enabled people to participate meaningfully and at multiple levels," she said. Private assistance is immensely helpful because Oak Park can't tap into the small pool of public dollars available statewide for such initiatives.

"You provide better services if people have working relationships with each other. There are major gaps in the early childhood field," Newberry Schwartz said. "It's relatively recent that we've learned how important early childhood is."

Although Oak Park has needs, compared to other districts in the state our early childhood programs don't have to deal with the magnitude of concerns others face, but Gershenson said the group has followed research created by national education leaders.

"While we'd like to think that we are absolutely at the cutting edge of social policy, and in many ways we are, this didn't just spring on us. We've really been paying attention to the national policy," he said. "There has been observation about the nature of this whole situation and the fragmentation of services."

Gershenson said that fragmentation occurs because gaps often aren't seen until students hit high school, even though children may have been falling behind for years. Essentially, early child development has a domino effect that has the potential to either boost or delay a child if they aren't reached at a young age. This includes the very pivotal 0-5 age group that the Collaboration for Early Childhood group is targeting.

"We know now that we need to start before birth — but especially at birth," Newberry Schwartz said. "If we don't do that, we are going to continue to struggle with the same issues we've had. We've got to become smart about how we're investing our public dollars."

It's time for a change, she said, and community support is the resource that will make the program sustainable.

"We've been told by the state that there is nothing in the near term that we can plan for. If we're going to make a meaningful change and really do this plan that the community developed, we need to do a little more."

The strategic plan for the early childhood initiative establishes a blueprint for a more systematic approach, Gershenson said, and this includes four primary strategies: early detection screenings, parent information and support, professional child care development and public preschool coordination. A series of groups — the task group/executive board, the Collaboration's board, and the jurisdictional oversight board — will implement, direct and monitor the progress and outcome of the programs.

"It's an issue for all families in Oak Park," Newberry Schwartz said. "There is lack of understanding where to go for support. There is a need for information that wasn't being met."

The goal is to get more children properly prepared for kindergarten, help parents and children received the support needed, and eventually ensure that Oak Park has a "high-quality, coordinated early childhood system."

The overall goal, which includes time for data collection, and time to determine if the program is hitting benchmarks, is a three-year window. If progress isn't at the level expected, the groups will reevaluate and make tweaks. Many of the early childhood programs are already being monitored.

"If we're going to make this kind of commitment to education, we have to at the very least acknowledge that we've got to lay that foundation," Gershenson said. "No architect starts a world-class building on the seventh floor. You've got to have that foundation, and if you do, your kids are going to be that much more successful."
Markers that Matter: Success Indicators in Early Learning and Education

Hallie Preskill, Ph.D., Nathalie Jones and Afi Tengue
Executive Summary

The field of early learning is complex, dynamic, and critical to the individual and collective success of children in the United States. From birth to age 8, the fundamental building blocks that prepare children for a lifetime of learning and development are established. National, state, and local efforts have increased attention on the importance of early learning, but in the process, they have also created a proliferation of related indicators and standards. With an overabundance of measures, there is increasing confusion about how to define and measure positive early childhood outcomes. At the same time, this field and the country are changing. We know more about how the young brain develops, including the range of domains (cognitive, social-emotional, physical) and array of actors (families, school and care settings, communities) that are part of healthy development. The field needs indicators that reflect this evolving understanding and that also address a changing country. Despite increasing racial and cultural diversity in the United States, particularly among children, there are few indicator efforts that reflect and appreciate this diversity and that address disparities that affect a growing population. The early learning field is poised to benefit from a synthesized set of indicators that can serve as a platform for communication and collaboration among actors working on behalf of all young children.

This report is the result of a multi-phased process to identify and vet a set of early childhood indicators and emerging themes to support the early learning field. Our research focused on identifying a set of early learning indicators and emerging themes that aim to support the variety of actors in this space by:

- Emphasizing a **systems view of early childhood**, where indicators reflect the various layers that affect young children (such as families, education and care settings, and communities) and actors that influence the range of domains that are part of "whole child" development from birth to age 8
- Addressing the critical and growing importance of **issues of equity**, as the population of young children in the U.S. reflects increasingly diverse racial and cultural backgrounds
- Highlighting the role of indicators to serve as a common language and foster **communication and collaboration** in a field that has been historically fragmented

The resulting indicators and emerging themes reflect a distillation of many existing efforts to define early learning indicators. We began with interviews with 40 early childhood experts and conducted a literature review in early learning and related fields. We then reviewed over 1,100 indicators from 11 existing indicator sets, from which we synthesized and prioritized 48 indicators based on our analysis and expert input. In addition to distilling these indicators, we identified gaps where new themes are emerging and further research is needed to develop additional indicators, particularly in the area of racial and cultural equity.

The potential value of this set of indicators comes from their relevance and utility to the broad range of actors who support the healthy development of young children. Using these measures is highly context-dependent and is driven by how a given effort aims to help young children, and where indicators can
inform a common understanding of and guide coordination toward a shared goal. This report highlights two examples where indicators have helped to support collaboration on behalf of better outcomes for young children in Bremerton, Washington and Boston, Massachusetts.

Ultimately, this report is intended to spark thinking, conversation, and action about the potential role of indicators to support the healthy development of young children—not just in Bremerton and Boston, but in communities across the country. The indicators and themes identified reflect a broad understanding of a changing field—where the health of a whole system enables the healthy development of young children, where indicators can be used to understand and address inequities across racial and cultural groups, and where a common language facilitates enhanced communication and coordination on behalf of all kids. This report aims to inspire the range of early childhood actors to see the value of early learning indicators in their work and to motivate them to use existing and emerging indicators to ensure that all children are nurtured, supported, and prepared for success in school, work, and life.
The Time Is Now

Exciting changes are afoot in the early learning field. National attention on the importance of early learning—from policy makers and others—has never been greater. The population of young children in the U.S. is becoming increasingly diverse, as the country’s racial, ethnic, and socio-economic make-up shifts. At the same time, we know more about what constitutes early learning, including the importance of different domains of development and the role of early childhood in setting the stage for success later in life. The field of early learning is complex, with many actors—including parents and families, early childhood care and education and social service providers, program evaluators, funders, and policymakers, as well as researchers and academics—that affect young children. Each actor plays a part in supporting healthy child development, often pursuing different outcomes with different definitions of success. As a result, the field is often described as fragmented, with myriad actors working in disconnected ways and without alignment toward a shared goal. Given this complexity and fragmentation, early learning indicators can serve as a common language and platform for collaboration among actors seeking to achieve positive outcomes for young children.

This report is the product of an effort to assess and synthesize the current state of indicators in the early learning field and to identify gaps in what currently exists. Through our research, FSG distilled over 1,100 existing indicators to 48 indicators (also called markers) and identified gaps and emerging themes in an evolving field. The indicators, emerging themes, and resulting recommendations reflect three priorities for the early learning field:

- The need to understand early learning in the context of a complex ecosystem, including the system layers and actors that affect the five domains of whole child development from birth to age 8
- The critical and growing importance of issues of racial and cultural equity
- The role of indicators in supporting communication and collaboration in a historically fragmented field

In a field that is highly complex, indicators can create a common language and understanding, foster collaboration, and support data-driven change to improve outcomes for all children.
Attention on early learning from policy makers, practitioners, and others is growing. The importance of early childhood is becoming clearer as we learn more about early brain development and its implications for success later in life.

The attention that early learning is increasingly receiving from policy makers, practitioners, funders, researchers, and others highlights its role in laying the foundation for success later in life. With 700 neural connections made every second between the ages of 0 and 3, the quality of the brain architecture is determined early and provides the building blocks for a lifetime of brain development that follows (Center on the Developing Child, n.d.). In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama emphasized the connection between early learning and lifelong success when calling for universal high-quality preschool for all children: “In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children… studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, and form more stable families of their own” (Obama, 2013). This focus has grown among those outside of the policy arena as well. In communities across the country—from Seattle, Washington to Broward County, Florida; Northfield, Minnesota to San Antonio, Texas—cross-sector initiatives are emerging to support “cradle-to-career” success of young people (Strive Network, n.d.). These initiatives, pioneered by Strive in Cincinnati and implemented in dozens of urban and rural communities nationwide, highlight the importance of early childhood as foundational to success in school, work, and life. In addition to better understanding brain development and a favorable policy arena, researchers, including Nobel Laureate James Heckman, have pointed to the impact of early learning on the long-term economic outcomes for individuals (Heckman, 2008) and for the country (Shankoff & Phillips, 2000).

Demographics of the United States are shifting, with greater racial and cultural diversity, more families living in poverty, and more dual-parent families where both parents work and rely on childcare from others. With increasing diversity, pervasive disparities in development and achievement affect large and growing numbers of children of color.

While interest in early learning grows, the picture of young children in the U.S. is changing dramatically. Families across the country have been hard hit by the economic downturn in recent years. As individuals and families struggle to make ends meet, more children are living in poverty. In 2010, over 16 million children accounted for 36 percent of the poor in this country (United States Department of Commerce, 2011). Increasingly, both parents in two-parent families are working outside the home, and labor force participation among mothers with young children has increased steadily, growing from 34 percent of mothers with children under the age of three in 1975 to 60 percent in 2006. With more parents working outside the home, young children are increasingly placed in the care of others—including other family members, friends or neighbors, or care and education centers. In 2006, 73 percent of two-year-olds were cared for by someone other than a parent on a weekly basis, creating a childhood development “ecosystem” that extends far beyond the home (Halle et al., 2009).
Along with the increase in poverty and growing reliance on non-parental childcare, the country’s racial and ethnic make-up is also shifting, particularly among children. In 2009, 55 percent of all children in the U.S. were non-Hispanic white. Today, a majority of babies born are children of color and by 2030, more than half of the population under 18 will be children of color. Growth in the Latino population in the U.S. is particularly dramatic. In 2010, Latinos in the U.S. numbered over 50 million, accounting for more than half of the country’s population growth since 2000. Among children, these shifts are even greater. As of 2010, Latinos accounted for 23 percent of the population under age 18; by 2035, one in three children will be Latino (National Council of La Raza, 2011).

With socioeconomic and racial/ethnic shifts in the U.S., pervasive academic achievement gaps between these groups will increasingly threaten the individual success of a large and growing population of children, and the collective success of the country. Disparities in development and achievement are established early and persist through school, with research demonstrating that half of the achievement gaps (between students of color and white students, and low-income and non-low-income students) in twelfth grade can be attributed to gaps that already exist in first grade (Jencks and Phillips, 1998). Though a majority of public school children from all socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds are not proficient in reading or math in fourth and eighth grade, a staggering 75 percent of Black and Latino students lack these skills (Children’s Defense Fund, 2012).

Experts interviewed for this project indicated the growing emphasis on early childhood among groups working on equity issues to prevent such gaps before they begin. The National Council of La Raza, for example, now includes six early learning indicators (including families that read to children, enrollment in early care or education programs, and prenatal care and birth weight) to their Latino Child Well-being Databook to emphasize disparities between Latino children and the general population that affect the country’s youngest children. As the face of the country changes, equitable opportunities are critical to supporting the success of children from all backgrounds, which are widely and increasingly varied.

Knowledge about the process of early learning is evolving, where “whole child” development occurs across multiple domains and is affected by the environments and actors with which children interact every day.

The field’s understanding of the healthy development for a changing population of young children is also shifting. “School readiness” is no longer limited to the cognitive skills children bring with them to the kindergarten door. Rather, it includes a range of domains that contribute to a child’s ability to learn and
thrive in school, including social and behavioral skills. Knowledge of how different capacities develop and relate to one another is growing and has brought the importance of "whole child" development into focus. Whole child development requires attention to each of five developmental domains, as described below (adapted from Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, 2005).

### Developmental Domains

- **Social Emotional Development** includes a child’s behavioral health and development, including the ability to interact and self-regulate. Relevant capacities include self-perception, ability to understand the feelings of others, and to understand and interpret one’s own feelings.

- **Cognitive Development** reflects thinking and problem-solving and understanding of objects and the way the world works. This domain includes mathematical knowledge, abstract thought, and imagination.

- **Language Development and Literacy** includes communication and emergent literacy capacities, such as listening, speaking, vocabulary, print awareness, story sense, early writing, and connection between letters and sounds.

- **Approaches to Learning** describe a child’s disposition to use skills and knowledge and include enthusiasm, curiosity and persistence.

- **Physical Development** reflects health status, growth and disabilities, and includes physical capacities such as gross and fine motor skills and conditions before, at, and after birth.

Whole child development occurs within an early childhood ecosystem, which includes the environments and settings (“layers”) that surround young children and the multitude of actors that affect them.

**Figure 1. Layers of the Early Childhood System**

[Diagram showing layers of the early childhood system, including family, education and care settings, community, and child.]

Development across the five domains is affected by a wide range of actors and environments with which young children interact every day. This perspective represents a system view of early childhood, where the success of young children is considered in the context of the various environments that impact them, including the family, education and care settings, and the broader community. The child is at the center, with the surrounding layers affecting healthy development in interdependent ways (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) (See Figure 1). In this
view, each part of the early childhood system includes programs, policies, and strategies that meet certain needs related to child development. For the system to operate well, each layer or component must operate effectively and reach all children for whom it was designed. To improve outcomes for children, the system’s components must be connected to leverage collective strengths and achieve better outcomes than would be possible through each component acting alone (Coffman, 2007).

There are actors within each layer of the early childhood system that have a role to play in supporting young children across the five domains of development. Given the breadth of domains and the system layers that affect development, it is not surprising that the number of individuals who play some sort of role in supporting young children is large and incredibly diverse. Figure 2 reflects a system map of the wide range of actors that influence the development of young children across the five domains, within and across the layers of the early childhood system.

**Figure 2. Actors in the Early Childhood System**

In a complex and fragmented field, connections matter.

The different layers and actors that support healthy development point to a recognized need to increase collaboration and alignment in a traditionally fragmented field. The field’s fragmentation reflects the number and diversity of settings and actors that affect young children and the multi-faceted nature of healthy development. Supporting young children relies on those working in formal and informal education
settings, healthcare (including physical and mental), a range of social and human services, as well as parents, extended family, and others who may be part of a child’s home environment.

Experts interviewed for this report indicated a range of issues that have contributed to a fragmented field, including a lack of shared identity or common purpose; a sense of competition, particularly for funds; and a lack of awareness of opportunities for alignment. These challenges are compounded by the fact that the number and types of early childhood actors depend on the context and vary widely across communities and states.

Despite this historic challenge, there are promising examples of collaboration and alignment within communities and across systems. For example, as early learning is increasingly considered on a continuum of development that begins at birth (or even before) and continues to age 8, there are new efforts to align how children are supported in their youngest years (ages 0–5) with what happens when they reach school (ages 5–8). Similarly, communities across the country are bringing together a wide range of actors—including parents, families, education and care providers, social service agencies, businesses, and funders—to align efforts toward a common goal, such as school readiness. Examples of two such initiatives are highlighted later in this report.

Indicators have a role to play in an evolving field by providing a shared language and understanding among actors. Indicators provide a starting point for conversation, connections, and collaboration toward a common goal of improved outcomes for young children.

The changes in the field and the country provide an opportunity to assess and refine how early childhood development is defined and measured. With increased attention on early learning, indicators have proliferated at the national, state, and local levels. The federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant competition focused attention on the identification and use of common indicators in the earliest years. Meanwhile, states have their own standards and competencies for young children in pre-K programs and the K–12 system; a recent survey found that every state had adopted or was developing its own standards for children younger than kindergarten age (Scott-Little, Lesko, Martella, and Milburn, 2007). These efforts are in addition to those that are focused nationally or across multiple localities, which include the 11 indicator sets (and over 1,100 indicators) that were analyzed for this report. Beyond the sheer number of indicator efforts, each has its

“We need to be more strategic about getting the parts that constitute early care and education to work together. Our approach is so siloed. We think ‘those are parents,’ [and] ‘over there are education and care centers,’ as if kids don’t actually experience all of those settings. We need to create [shared] ideas about what we want the kids to be.” – Expert interviewee

“There is no shortage of high-quality, well-developed indicators—it is more the opposite, there are a lot and there is not consensus on what’s best to use where. It’s a bit of a Tower of Babel problem. Can we help agencies in choosing indicators to use and communicate with each other?” – Expert interviewee
own approach to and treatment of the various dimensions of early learning, including developmental domains, stages of development from birth to age 8, and the various system layers and actors that support healthy development. Assessing and synthesizing the wide range of existing indicators can support this field during an exciting time of change. Understanding and distilling the breadth of indicators that are important to a wide range of actors fosters shared understanding, enables clear communication, and supports greater collaboration for an evolving field.
Pre-K 4 SA
An Investment in Education
City of San Antonio

Early Childhood Education Initiative
Mayor Julián Castro convened a blue ribbon taskforce of Chief Executive Officers, Superintendents, and education professionals to identify the most effective method for improving the quality of education in San Antonio. The Brainpower Taskforce recommended the development of a program focused on high-quality prekindergarten services for four-year-old children.

Research shows high-quality prekindergarten has the most impact in improving overall education outcomes for a community and helps children to learn and read on grade-level, making them less likely to fall behind their classmates and more likely to graduate and attend college.

Published on September 21, 2012
Program Eligibility

- Program services are free for qualifying families based on the following State of Texas Pre-K eligibility criteria:
  - At or below 185% of federal poverty level (families are eligible for free or reduced lunch)
  - English as a second language
  - Child of active duty member of U.S. Armed Forces
  - Child of injured or deceased member of U.S. Armed Forces
  - Homeless
  - Currently or previously in foster care

- Ten percent (10%) of enrollment in Model Centers available at affordable tuition rates based on family income for families above 185% of federal poverty level

Getting to the Target Population

20,000 four-year-olds in San Antonio
16,500 eligible for State Pre-K funding
10,800 currently enrolled in full-day Pre-K programs
5,700 are not benefitting from full-day Pre-K

Parent Engagement

- Parent engagement fostered through components within the program including:
  - Parent leadership classes
  - Parent education classes
  - Fatherhood initiatives
  - Parents and teachers sign commitment contract
  - Parents will be asked to regularly read to their child, help with homework and attend school events, including parent/teacher conferences

Figures are projections based on 2010 U.S. Census, American Community Survey, and the Texas Education Agency.
**Funding**

- **Pre-K 4 SA** to be funded using the City's available 1/8-cent sales tax rate
  - Eight year average of approximately $31 million in revenue annually
  - Current sales tax rate in San Antonio: 8.125%
  - State maximum allowable sales tax rate: 8.25%
  - San Antonio has 1/8 cent remaining capacity

- **Average sales tax increase of $7.81 annually to San Antonio households with median income**
  - for every $1 invested in Pre-K, studies show a $3 to $7 return on investment
  - Funding contingent on Nov. 6, 2012 Special Sales Tax Election

**Program Revenues**

$41.2 Million

- Sliding Scale Tuition: $180,000 (0.4%)
- USDA Match: $2 Million (4.8%)
- Federal Match (Special Ed): $69,000 (0.2%)
- State Match (Pre-K revenue): $5.4 Million (13.1%)
- Sales Tax: $33.6 Million (81.5%)

(Figures shown represent program year 2020)

**Budget**

**Program Expenditures**

$41.2 Million

- Administration: $1.5 Million (3.7%)
- Program Assessment: $267,000 (0.7%)
- Grant Awards: $8.6 Million (20.9%)
- Facilities: $2.4 Million (5.8%)
- Professional Development: $4.2 Million (10.2%)
- Model Centers: $24.2 Million (58.7%)

(Figures shown represent program year 2020)

- Program includes a structurally balanced budget
- Grant Awards of $8.6 million and Professional Development of $4.2 million goes directly to benefit school districts and other educational institutions.
- Low administrative expenses
## Service Model

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<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children served at Model Centers through Sliding Scale Tuition (10% of Model Centers)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>200</td>
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**Three-Year Ramp Up**

**Five-Year Academic Assessment at Full Capacity**
Model Centers

- Four Model Center facilities opened in the first two years of the program
- 2,000 four-year-olds provided full day Pre-K instruction in centers
- 20 Students per 2 teaching professionals (1 teacher and 1 teacher’s aide)
- Strategically located in four different quadrants of the City
  - Near major highways and VIA transportation routes
- Extended-day care service provided at Centers to help working parents
- Family support services included
- Enrollment for the Centers will be chosen through objective and unbiased lottery systems administered by participating school districts
- Full-day Pre-K doubles the amount of academic learning during a school year compared to half-day Pre-K providing more than 200 hours of additional academic instruction

Competitive Grants

- Beginning in Program Year 2016-2017, competitive grants will be available for school districts, charter schools, private/parochial schools, and community providers
- Will provide additional full-day and/or enhanced Pre-K services in existing programs
- Projected total students served in grant awards: 1,700 per year

Program Assessment Checks & Balances

- Program Assessment provides “checks and balances” to the community
  - Independent Program Evaluation
  - Assessment for Model Center students
  - Annual Bridge Study
  - School districts use assessment tools of choice
  - Third-party analysis creates compatibility in test scores among various scales
- The initiative will be governed by a City Council appointed 11 member board. City Council will provide fiscal oversight for the initiative to include approval of the program’s annual budget. The initiative includes annual performance audits and assessments to measure success that will be conducted by independent third-party entities.
- The initiative will be for an eight-year period and will be subject to voter re-authorization in November 2020.

Professional Development

- Consists of four distinct areas available to teachers in school districts, charter schools, private/parochial schools, and community providers
  - Classroom Training with Master Teachers at the Model Centers
  - Teacher Coach Training in school district classrooms
  - In-Service Training
  - Monthly workshops for informal community childcare providers will be offered at the Centers. The workshops will allow informal providers to work and learn from master teachers and will focus on strategies for literacy and numeracy development.
Introduction
Today more than ever, businesses need employees who are well prepared to succeed in a competitive economy. But the current workforce pipeline is not sufficient—not for businesses that need highly-skilled staff, not for young people who need good paying jobs, and not for the nation that needs a growing economy.

When processes fail, business leaders do not look for solutions after the fact—they look upstream to prevent them from happening in the first place. The foundation for success starts in the earliest years of children’s lives, when they begin to develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviors they need to do well in school and beyond. To fix our failing workforce pipeline, we need to help our children get the good start in life that will enable them to succeed.

The skills gap
The nation is struggling to produce qualified workers. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 26 percent of 12th grade students are proficient in math and 38 percent are proficient in reading. In Pennsylvania, only 48 percent of fourth graders and 39 percent of eighth graders are proficient in math, and 41 percent of fourth graders and 38 percent of eighth graders are proficient in reading. These skill deficiencies track back to the earliest years. The achievement gap opens as early as nine months of age, and disadvantaged children can start kindergarten as much as 18 months behind their peers.

In addition to so called “hard skills” such as math and reading, people need skills like critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication for success in today’s workplace. In a 2010 survey by the American Management Association, three out of four executives reported that these “soft skills” are increasingly important in today’s business environment, but they said that less than half of employees were rated as above average in these skills.

Too many people lack both skill sets at a time when American companies are demanding more. In a 2011 survey of manufacturers, 67 percent of respondents reported a moderate to severe shortage of available, qualified workers and 56 percent anticipated the shortage to grow worse in the next three to five years. Pennsylvania faces the same type of challenge. One study predicts that by 2018, one million of the projected 1.8 million vacancies will require postsecondary credentials. By that time, 57 percent of all Pennsylvania jobs will require postsecondary education.
An unprepared workforce comes at a cost to society and the economy. The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2009 was $20,241, compared to $30,627 for a high school graduate, $39,771 for an Associate’s degree, and $56,665 for a Bachelor’s degree. The estimated additional lifetime income if Pennsylvania’s dropouts had graduated with their class in 2011 was over $4 billion.

Starting early to fix the skills gap

The skills gap means that too often businesses spend time remediating basic skills and developing good workplace habits and not on actual job-specific training. Investing in high-quality early childhood care and education is an effective way to meet this challenge.

Science tells us that early experiences shape the development of a young child’s brain, or “brain architecture.” Simple skills come first; more complex skills build on top of them (figure 1). A strong foundation in the early years improves the odds for positive outcomes and a weak foundation increases the odds of problems later in life. This strong foundation is laid through nurturing early environments, good nutrition, health care, and high-quality early learning experiences.

Development can be derailed when a child’s stress response system is activated excessively, through lack of nurture, exposure to violence, or similar situations. Learning how to cope with moderate, short-lived stress can build a healthy stress response system, but excessive “toxic stress” can weaken brain architecture.

Results from the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study from Center for Disease Control showed that persons who had experienced four or more categories of childhood exposure to ACEs, or “toxic stress,” compared to those who had experienced none, were more likely to adopt high risk behaviors, leading to a greater propensity for severe health problems and possible early death. ACEs include emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, emotional or physical neglect, and exposure to household dysfunction such as alcoholism, drug use and spousal abuse. These experiences are detrimental to healthy development and costly to society (figure 2). The good news is that high quality early childhood programs can begin to address these issues. Systems that support the quality of relationships in early care settings, communities, and homes help build the brain architecture that lays the foundation for a child’s success.

Benefits of Pennsylvania’s early childhood programs

Pennsylvania has a comprehensive early childhood system. Nearly two-fifths (38 percent) of Pennsylvania’s children under age 5 participate in publicly-funded early education programs such as Early Intervention, Head Start, Keystone STARS, Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, and Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts.

And this system is yielding results. After attending one of Pennsylvania’s high-quality early education programs in 2011-2012 (Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts, Keystone...
STAR 3 and 4 centers and Head Start Supplemental Assistance Programs), the percentage of children with age-appropriate language, math and social skills more than doubled.

Penn State University’s Prevention Research Center for the Promotion of Human Development completed a study of the Harrisburg Preschool Program (HPP) in 2011. The researchers found that third-graders who participated in HPP scored significantly higher on Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests than did a matched group of students who did not take part in HPP (58 percent vs. 29 percent advanced/proficient in math, 45 percent vs. 23 percent advanced/proficient in reading). These gains persisted through fifth grade (35 percent vs. 19 percent advanced/proficient in math, 22 percent vs. 8 percent advanced/proficient in reading). In addition several local communities have observed encouraging signs from children participating in pre-k programs:

- **Pottstown School District** reported 94 percent of its PA Pre-K Counts students scored at grade level on literacy assessment in kindergarten, compared with 85 percent of the overall school district.

- **The Tyrone Area Elementary School District** reported children participating in district preschool fared better than non-district preschool participants on third grade PSSA scores in math and reading (97 percent vs. 87 percent in math and 95 percent vs. 80 percent in reading).

“Exposing at-risk children to high quality pre-k has had demonstrated success in making our kids ready to learn. That preparation positions children for continued success throughout school and life.”


- Students in the Philadelphia School District participating in formal pre-k care also fared better than non-participants on the same literacy assessment.

Because the evaluation design used in these studies cannot show a causal connection between the pre-k programs and later academic outcomes, additional evaluations, using better evaluation design, are needed to draw more definitive conclusions about the impact of the pre-k programs on these children.

**Programs across the nation show results**

Rigorous, independent evaluations of various pre-kindergarten programs across the nation continue to reinforce the observations being made in Pennsylvania.

- **Tennessee**: In a 2011 study, Vanderbilt University researchers found children participating in Tennessee's Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) made significantly greater gains across all achievement measures during the pre-k year than similar children not in VPK.

- **New Jersey**: A 2013 study of New Jersey’s Abbott Preschool Program shows that children in the state’s most disadvantaged communities who participate in the pre-k program make significant gains in literacy, language, math and science; and these gains persist through 4th and 5th grade.

- **New Mexico**: Children attending preschool saw gains in language, literacy, and math over those who did not attend, with the state estimating a return of five dollars for every one dollar invested according to the National Institute of Early Education Research in 2009.

- **Michigan**: A 2012 study of Michigan’s Great Start School Readiness program found less grade retention through 12th grade and more on-time high school graduation. The estimated reduction in grade retention generated cost-savings equal to about 40 percent of the cost of the pre-k program.

Pennsylvania’s Commitment to Quality: Keystone STARS is an initiative of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) to improve, support, and recognize the continuous quality improvement efforts of early learning programs in Pennsylvania. It is one of the largest and most mature quality rating and improvement systems in the nation.

Rising STARS—an OCDEL initiative—was developed to promote greater access for at-risk children to higher quality child care and better prepare them to succeed in school. This initiative makes it more attractive and sustainable for child care providers to earn a high quality STAR 3 or 4 rating and serve a larger percentage of children receiving Child Care Works subsidy.

www.ReadyNation.org
Seminal, longitudinal studies of early childhood programs for disadvantaged children such as the Perry Preschool Program, Chicago Child Parent Centers, and the Carolina Abecedarian Project show that, over time, participants in early childhood programs are less likely to be assigned to special education classes, more likely to graduate high school and enroll in college, less likely to engage in criminal activity, and more likely to be employed and earn higher wages.

**Short run economic pay-offs**

**Reduced special education costs:** Economic modeling estimates that a quality pre-k program available to 20 percent of Pennsylvania’s four year olds would yield savings sufficient to offset 26 percent to 31 percent of the pre-k program costs, including $68 million in reduced special education costs.

**Economic stimulus and job creation:** Projections estimate that for every dollar Pennsylvania invests in early childhood programs, more than two dollars is circulated throughout local economies through employment and purchasing of goods and services; and for every ten jobs created in the Pennsylvania early care and education sector, three jobs are created outside that sector.

Pennsylvania is a leader among states with its comprehensive early childhood system and commitment to quality. The commonwealth must continue its commitment to children for the state to thrive in the future.

**Conclusion**

A variety of rigorous studies show that supporting children in the earliest years—especially before kindergarten—can help start them down a path toward academic achievement and vocational success. Children who have these supports have a better chance to enter kindergarten ready to learn, read at grade level by third grade, graduate from high school, attend post-secondary education and/or enter the job market as a tax-paying citizen.

ReadyNation, a project of America’s Promise Alliance, is a business partnership for early childhood and economic success. Our mission is to amplify the voice of business leaders in support of early childhood policies and programs that strengthen our economy and workforce. ReadyNation is a key component of Grad Nation, a large and growing movement of individuals, organizations, and communities working together and with America’s Promise to end the dropout crisis.


This report was written by William Carpluk, with research assistance from Michelle Hill, Educational Research Associate 2, Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning.
Long-Run Economic Effects of Early Childhood Programs on Adult Earnings

Executive Summary

By
Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Teachers College and College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University
Katherine Magnuson, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Jane Waldfogel, Columbia University
Executive Summary

Need to Develop this Methodology

Researchers and policymakers alike want to better understand the long-run effects of investments in children’s well-being. Yet, only a few studies have examined how participants in early childhood interventions fare as adults. These studies suggest that early investments may have sizable payoffs for children’s later success. Such studies are valuable, but also rare and costly. In the absence of long-run data on children’s outcomes, how can we determine the long-run monetary value of improvements in young children’s well-being?

In this report we describe a way to estimate the connections between improvements in aspects of children’s early health, achievement, and behavior, as well as early parenting, to improved labor market outcomes when they become adults. Our results suggest that investments in early childhood that improve these aspects of development will likely have important payoffs. However, the magnitude of these payoffs is strongly dependent on the extent to which early program effects are maintained over time.

Methods

The most direct way to estimate the effects of early interventions on later outcomes is to randomly assign children to a treatment group that receives the intervention or to a comparison group that does not receive the intervention, follow both groups of children years after the intervention has ended, and compare them on important outcomes (ideally with a large sample and multiple sites). However, this takes considerable time and can be very costly. In addition, long-term studies are often plagued by attrition, which makes it difficult to accurately estimate long-run program effects.

We describe two approaches to estimating the long-run effects of early interventions on adult earnings. In the first, we look for evidence directly linking an early childhood outcome to later earnings. For example, several high quality studies have linked low birth weight to later earnings. We use the second approach for early childhood outcomes whose links with later earnings are not well studied, in that studies are rare and often specific to a particular population. Thus, for the domains of early achievement, behavior, and parenting, we engaged in a two-step estimation process. First, we surveyed the literature to arrive at an estimate of the extent to which early achievement, behavior, and parenting predict achievement during adolescence, and second, we surveyed the literature to determine the extent to which achievement during adolescence predicts success in the labor market as measured by adult earnings. It is important to note that a drawback of this approach is that, in contrast to directly assessing the effect of early outcomes on later labor market outcomes, the economic benefit of only one pathway of influence is estimated, and so our estimates will likely understate the full benefits.

Translating results from empirical studies into specific dollar amounts required that we estimate the value of lifetime earnings for an infant or a young child. We calculated value of earnings for individuals with a high school degree or some college (the average worker in the U.S.) in 2006.
dollars. We report in this executive summary middle-range estimates which assume 1 percent growth in wages and a 3 percent discount rate (the full report includes estimates based on a range of values for both wage growth and discount rates). Although we present these findings as point estimates, it is important to recognize that like the empirical estimates they are derived from, they represent the midpoint of confidence intervals.

**Health: Low Birth Weight**

We begin by estimating the economic value of preventing low birth weight, an important early health outcome. We find that the value of preventing a low birth weight birth ranges from $60,261 to $90,393 (depending on assumptions about the effect of low birth weight on earnings). These estimates approximate the value of preventing low birth weight for an individual, but we might also want to understand the value of a program to prevent low birth weight, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Using the above assumptions, we estimate the present value of the benefits of WIC with respect to reducing low birth weight to be between $1,416 and $2,123. If the WIC program improves other early outcomes for children that translate into higher earnings, the long-run benefits of the program will be larger.

**Achievement: Academic Skills**

We next examine early academic skills, which are the foundation of later learning, using the two step method outlined above. The estimated economic value of a one standard deviation improvement in early achievement varies depending on the assumptions made, ranging from a low value of $13,294 to a high value of $106,350. However, a standard deviation is a much larger improvement than any single program is likely to produce. If a program had more moderate effects, raising both math and reading scores by 0.40 of a standard deviation, the likely economic benefits would range from $10,634 to $53,175.

**Behavior: Attention Skills**

An important dimension of early behavior is a child’s ability to pay attention and focus on tasks at hand. Again applying a two-step method, first estimating the links between early attention skills and later achievement, and second estimating the link between later achievement and adult earnings, we find that increasing a child’s attention skills by one standard deviation at age 5 is likely to yield between $3,323 and $15,000 in benefits. The expected value of programs that seek to improve children’s attention is likely to be smaller given that the average effect of programs on children’s attention is also likely be smaller, with benefits in the range of $1,994 to $11,698.

**Parenting: Home Environment**

Studies of child development consistently point to the important role played by the parenting children receive in early childhood. Our estimates indicate that improvements in the early home environment can yield sizable benefits in adult earnings. Our middle-range estimates suggest benefits of between $7,976 and $33,899. A program such as Early Head Start that improved the home environment by 0.10 of a standard deviation would provide between $798 and $3,390 in benefits (counting only its effects that worked through improving home environments).
Conclusions

Our key substantive finding is that early improvements in child health, academic achievement, and behavior as well as improved parenting can yield sizable economic benefits for adult earnings. This is all the more striking when we recall that our estimates, for the most part, capture only a portion of the effects that early interventions are likely to have. Given data constraints for early achievement, attention, and the home environment we have focused on effects that work through improvements in school achievement in adolescence and that result in gains in one adult outcome, earnings. We have ignored effects that work through other intermediate outcomes, such as behavior and health, including peer effects, as well as effects on other adult outcomes, such as physical health. Moreover, our estimates do not take into account any synergies that might arise from concurrent improvements across more than one domain. If we could measure the full range of effects, the economic payoffs would surely be much larger than those estimated here.

Our key methodological contribution is the development and application of a two-step method for linking improvements in early outcomes to long-run economic gains. To date, estimates of the long-run effects of early intervention programs have primarily relied on the relatively few studies that track program participants over time. Although such estimates have proved extremely useful, the downside of that approach is its reliance on a very small number of studies, and studies that often represent “hothouse” interventions delivered to very disadvantaged participants, often many decades ago. Our method allows for the use of nationally representative data from more contemporary samples to piece together the likely effects of improvements in domains of early health and development on later outcomes, even when long-run follow-up data are lacking. As such, the method outlined here can be used flexibly to estimate a range of program impacts and to help analysts and policymakers think about the relative merits of addressing one type of early health or developmental problem rather than another.
"The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too little too late, as it fails to recognize that skills beget skills in a complementary and dynamic way. Efforts should focus on the first years for the greatest efficiency and effectiveness. The best investment is in quality early childhood development from birth to five for disadvantaged children and their families."

James J. Heckman
December 7, 2012

Those seeking to reduce deficits and strengthen the economy should make significant investments in early childhood education.

Professor Heckman’s ground-breaking work with a consortium of economists, psychologists, statisticians and neuroscientists shows that early childhood development directly influences economic, health and social outcomes for individuals and society. Adverse early environments create deficits in skills and abilities that drive down productivity and increase social costs—thereby adding to financial deficits borne by the public.

Early childhood development drives success in school and life.

A critical time to shape productivity is from birth to age five, when the brain develops rapidly to build the foundation of cognitive and character skills necessary for success in school, health, career and life. Early childhood education fosters cognitive skills along with attentiveness, motivation, self-control and sociability—the character skills that turn knowledge into know-how and people into productive citizens.

Investing in early childhood education for at-risk children is an effective strategy for reducing social costs.

Every child needs effective early childhood supports—and at-risk children from disadvantaged environments are least likely to get them. They come from families who lack the education, social and economic resources to provide the early developmental stimulation that is so helpful for success in school, college, career and life. Poor health, dropout rates, poverty and crime—we can address these problems and substantially reduce their costs to taxpayers by investing in developmental opportunities for at-risk children.

Investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy for promoting economic growth.

Our economic future depends on providing the tools for upward mobility and building a highly educated, skilled workforce. Early childhood education is the most efficient way to accomplish these goals:

- Professor Heckman’s analysis of the Perry Preschool program shows a 7% to 10% per year return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced costs in remedial education, health and criminal justice system expenditures.

- It is very likely that many other early childhood programs are equally effective. Analysts of the Chicago Child–Parent Center study estimated $48,000 in benefits to the public per child from a half-day public preschool for at-risk children. Participants at age 20 were estimated to be more likely to have finished high school—and were less likely to have been held back, need remedial help or have been arrested. The estimated return on investment was $7 for every dollar invested.¹

¹National Institute for Early Childhood Education Research
Make greater investments in young children to see greater returns in education, health and productivity.

Keep these principles in mind to make efficient and effective public investments that reduce deficits and strengthen the economy:

• **Investing in early childhood education is a cost-effective strategy—even during a budget crisis.** Deficit reduction will only come from wiser investment of public and private dollars. Data show that one of the most effective strategies for economic growth is investing in the developmental growth of at-risk young children. Short-term costs are more than offset by the immediate and long-term benefits through reduction in the need for special education and remediation, better health outcomes, reduced need for social services, lower criminal justice costs and increased self-sufficiency and productivity among families.

• **Prioritize investment in quality early childhood education for at-risk children.** All families are under increasing strain; disadvantaged families are strained to the limit. They have fewer resources to invest in effective early development. Without resources such as “parent-coaching” and early childhood education programs, many at-risk children miss the developmental growth that is the foundation for success. They will suffer for the rest of their lives—and all of us will pay the price in higher social costs and declining economic fortunes.

• **Develop cognitive AND character skills early. Invest in the “whole child.”** Effective early childhood education packages cognitive skills with character skills such as attentiveness, impulse control, persistence and teamwork. Together, cognition and character drive education, career and life success—with character development often being the most important factor.

• **Provide developmental resources to children AND their families.** Direct investment in the child’s early development is complemented by investment in parents and family environments. Quality early childhood education from birth to age five, coupled with parent-coaching, such as home visitation programs for parents and teen mothers, has proven to be effective and warrants more investment.

• **Invest, develop and sustain to produce gain.** Invest in developmental resources for at-risk children. Develop their cognitive and character skills from birth to age five, when it matters most. Sustain gains in early development with effective education through to adulthood. Gain more capable, productive and valuable citizens who pay dividends for generations to come.

The Heckman Equation project is made possible with support from the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation.

[www.heckmanequation.org](http://www.heckmanequation.org)

The economics of human potential.
Economic development starts at birth.

Professor James Heckman’s equation on human capital development is a solution for securing America’s economic future.

James J. Heckman is the Henry Schultz Distinguished Service Professor of Economics at The University of Chicago, a Nobel Memorial Prize winner in Economics, and an expert in the economics of human development. His groundbreaking work with a consortium of economists, developmental psychologists, sociologists, statisticians and neuroscientists shows that early childhood development heavily influences health, economic and social outcomes for individuals and society.

Professor Heckman has proven that there are great economic gains to be had by investing in early childhood development.

After winning the Nobel Prize for Economics, Professor Heckman set out to determine why our workforce was falling behind other countries, jeopardizing the nation’s present and future economic security. He zeroed in on how well America developed its most precious resource — its people.

What he found dramatically changes the way America should look at the human and economic potential of its children.

We must take action today to raise the next generation of American prosperity.
Many major economic and social problems in America — crime, teenage pregnancy, high school dropout rate, adverse health conditions — can be traced to low levels of skill and social skills such as attentiveness, persistence and working with others.

These so-called “soft” social skills are neither soft nor unimportant. Professor Heckman found hard evidence that these capabilities are essential ingredients for success in life. Life cycle skill formation is dynamic in nature. Skill begets skill; motivation begets motivation. In fact, early development of effective social skills greatly influence the successful development of IQ and ultimately, personal and social productivity.

Professor Heckman found that early nurturing, learning experiences and physical health from ages zero to five greatly impact success or failure in society. The most economically efficient time to develop skills and social abilities is in the very early years when developmental education is most effective.

Today's challenges are real — record rates of high school drop outs, a lack of college graduates, increasing rates of obesity and chronic diseases, rising crime and a growing underclass. Professor Heckman's work proves that prevention through early childhood development is more life and cost-effective than remediation. It’s time to invest in upstream solutions for future generations while we continue to address today’s problems.
Professor Heckman’s Discovery

America’s advantage will come from helping the disadvantaged.

Professor Heckman shows that disadvantaged families are least likely to have the economic and social resources to provide the early developmental stimulation every child needs as a basic opportunity for future success in school, college, career and life. Poor health, high school dropouts, poverty, crime — America will continue to create costly social burdens if it fails to relieve the developmental burden of disadvantage among children.

Providing developmental resources pays dividends for the disadvantaged child and society as a whole by providing better future outcomes in social and economic productivity.

Quality economic returns come from quality investments in early childhood development.

Professor Heckman studied decades worth of data from early childhood development programs that gave disadvantaged children and their families developmental support. This form of comprehensive early childhood development provides children and their families with the resources for early nurturing, learning experiences and physical health that lead to future success, breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

Professor Heckman’s value analysis of these programs reveals that investing in early childhood development for disadvantaged children provides a great return to society through increased personal achievement and social productivity.
America’s greatest value has always been its people. Professor James Heckman has clearly proven that America’s economic development starts at birth — and that our economy is only as healthy as our investment in the healthy development of children from birth to five.

The Heckman Equation is a call for America to invest in the value of its people.
The Heckman Equation

Invest + Develop + Sustain = Gain

Invest in educational and developmental resources for disadvantaged families to provide equal access to successful early human development.

Develop cognitive skills, social skills and physical well-being in children early — from birth to age five when it matters most.

Sustain early development with effective education through to adulthood.

Gain a more capable, productive and valuable workforce that pays dividends to America for generations to come.

How you can be a part of the equation for American success.

Act on the Heckman Equation as you design and implement policy for economic recovery:

Accept that there is a range of skills that must be fostered in individuals in order for them to be productive members of the workforce and society.

Understand that knowledge, social skills and health acquired very early in life will lead to greater success later in life.

Realize that families play a vital role in helping children acquire critical skills at an early age. Not all families have equal resources, but every family should have equal access to the resources their children need for successful early development. Providing equal access to early child development opportunities is one way government can help parents be better parents.

Demand that support for children spans all agencies. Government needs to integrate policies, break down barriers across agencies and support programs that show measurable results in improving the odds for economic and social success.

Lead the change. America doesn't have to "reinvent the wheel" when it comes to effective early childhood development. Professor Heckman's analysis of economic return is based on two long-running pilot programs in the United States, Perry Prekindergarten and Abecedarian. Similar programs, such as Early Head Start and Educare, demonstrate many of the principles Professor Heckman has identified as necessary for an effective investment in early childhood education for disadvantaged children.
EDUCATIONAL ALIGNMENT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

PROFILES OF LOCAL INNOVATION
In recent years, new research has produced a sea change in our understanding of children’s educational development. Municipal leaders are increasingly aware that the learning experiences and opportunities available to children early in life are key predictors of their future academic success and well-being.

They also possess a ground-level perspective on the profound impact that school readiness and achievement gaps have on the lives of young people and the prospects for their cities. The development of human capital through high-quality early learning and K-12 education is becoming ever more critical to the long-term vibrancy of communities as economic trends continue to reward individuals with skills and education. Key city priorities such as economic development, public safety, civic engagement and the stability of families and neighborhoods all hinge on whether children enter kindergarten ready to succeed, develop to their full capacity during the school years and graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and a career.

In order to fulfill a vision in which every child is prepared for success, community leaders have recently begun paying greater attention to one particularly important indicator of future academic achievement: reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Students who do not meet this milestone are left behind when classroom learning shifts from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” These students are more likely to require expensive remediation in higher grades, to drop out of high school and to suffer the long-term consequences of a poor education, such as reduced earning potential and increased reliance on social services. Moreover, those left behind are disproportionately children of color, perpetuating an achievement gap that undermines our nation’s commitment to equal opportunity. More than 80 percent of all African-American, Latino and American Indian children were reading below grade level, according to the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress, compared to just over half of white and Asian-American children. Sadly, these statistics are correlated with a broad range of indicators that are critical to student success, from proficiency in other subjects to child health indicators.

This publication highlights an emerging city strategy for ensuring that more children are succeeding by the end of third grade: the alignment of early care and education programs with K-12 education systems. Historically, these systems have developed independently from each other despite sharing a common purpose. Researchers, practitioners and policymakers increasingly believe that a more seamless educational pipeline that addresses a range of academic, behavioral, health and family issues could serve young children more effectively. While early childhood investments are the starting point for a high-quality, aligned educational pipeline, the benefits of a high-quality early education can dissipate if these programs are not designed to meet the public schools’ standards for school readiness or if children transition into elementary schools that do not adequately support their development. Furthermore, insufficient communication and coordination among systems and programs for young children can make these transitions difficult and lead to missed educational opportunities.

City officials are working to move the needle on grade-level reading by improving both the quality and the alignment of early childhood and elementary school learning experiences. At the same time, they recognize that reading at grade level is just one important indicator of future success, rather than the sum total of our aspirations for young children. As a result, their alignment efforts on behalf of young children from birth to age 8 go well beyond the classroom to include strengthening connections within their communities and linking families to a broad range of supports and opportunities that help them thrive. Their experiences show that a high-quality, well-aligned educational system for young children that bridges the divide between early childhood programs and K-12 schools can improve outcomes for children, engage and support families, strengthen the local workforce and economy and enhance their cities’ quality of life.
Elements of an Aligned System for Young Children

Based on a review of the most advanced city efforts to align education for young children from birth through third grade, the National League of Cities (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education and Families (YEF Institute) identified 10 common elements of effective systems alignment. This report contains case studies of local efforts in Boston, Hartford, San Antonio, San José and Seattle that provide examples of how cities are incorporating each of the following elements into their alignment strategies:

- **Formal partnerships or governance structures** to develop common definitions and goals and take joint action to implement a high-quality, aligned system. In Hartford, this element took the form of a Mayoral Cabinet on the Young Child, with a designated local government office to carry out the work. In San José, the city and county teamed up with local school districts and other key stakeholders to implement the countywide early learning master plan, with two leadership groups focused on civic engagement and program development.

- **Access to quality early education** in a variety of settings to ensure that young children enter school prepared to succeed. San Antonio is establishing Very Early Childhood Centers to bring together Head Start and Pre-K programs and extend training and resources to area child care providers. By braiding several funding streams, Seattle supports quality improvement initiatives and child care subsidies to improve access to high-quality center-based child care and preschool programs. Both communities complement these efforts with outreach and training programs for family, friends and neighbors who care for children.

- **School quality and organization** to improve access to full-day kindergarten, support developmentally appropriate room designs and teaching practices and promote communication and collaboration across the early grades. Boston has promoted access to quality early education through the establishment of a voluntary preschool program in the public schools (called K1), followed by full-day kindergarten (K2). In San Antonio’s Edgewood School District, grade-level reading by fourth grade has been on the rise due to enhanced professional development, expanded support for leveled guided reading and other research-based reading interventions and individualized “reading success” plans that take into account academic, health and other pertinent data for every child in the early grades who is reading below grade level.

- **Communication and data sharing** to provide parents, early educators, teachers and service providers with access to common information that will improve how each supports the learning and development of the children in their care. In Seattle, preschool and afterschool providers work with school teams to complete an Alignment Partnership Plan each spring for implementation in the fall. In exchange for rent-free lease agreements in school buildings, these community-based providers specify how they intend to work with the schools to support children’s learning before, during and after school and commit to ongoing communication throughout the year. Data were used to conduct longitudinal research to inform local efforts in San José, while Hartford is piloting a system that would enable sharing of data among early childhood providers, family support centers, home visiting providers and schools to better meet the needs of young children and families.

- **Qualified teachers and administrators** in both early childhood and elementary school settings. When the City of San Antonio, the local Head Start grantee, made local school districts the academic leads in providing Head Start services, the proportion of Head Start teachers in the program with a bachelor’s degree jumped from 10 percent to 100 percent. In 2010-11, Seattle Public Schools offered a Coaching Institute focusing on the core habits of teaching and learning for Pre-K, kindergarten and first grade teachers and created a tool to promote peer observation and instructional practice discussions.

- **Alignment of standards, curricula, teaching practices and assessments**, with a focus on both social competence and academic skills, to build on what children have learned and how they have learned it from one level to the next. Seattle developed a common definition of school readiness, aligned multiple readiness frameworks, identified
appropriate measurement tools, created a citywide assessment process for all 4-year-olds and trains Pre-K through first grade teachers to use the assessment data to improve instructional practices. Hartford’s 2010 Connecting the Dots of Teaching & Learning guide, along with city-led professional development, helps early childhood providers better understand and align their curricula to state preschool curriculum and assessment frameworks.

- **Parent engagement and family supports** to ensure that parents are empowered to be their child’s first teacher and most important advocate, and to connect families with the diverse supports that they need for a safe, healthy and economically secure household. Hartford’s Family Civics Initiative promotes parent engagement, including parent leadership training and professional development for family support workers. In addition, a robust Welcome Center program within the schools engages parents in their children’s education even prior to school entry and helps families address barriers to attendance, such as chronic health issues or transportation. In San José, the Franklin-McKinley Children’s Initiative offers a family resource center to help connect parents to needed services, and the county’s inclusion collaborative offers a “warm line” to answer questions from and offer support to parents of children with special needs.

- **Programs to facilitate smooth transitions to school** by helping families understand school registration processes and making children and parents feel comfortable and welcome in the new school environment. Boston’s Countdown to Kindergarten initiative helps parents navigate the school selection and enrollment process, promotes school readiness activities and events, works with child care providers and schools to ensure that children and families know what to expect when they start kindergarten and engages the entire community in visible, family-friendly events that promote the transition to Boston Public Schools. Hartford has launched an effort to clarify school registration procedures, promote early registration and test models of transferring standard information from early education programs to kindergarten teachers.

- **Public awareness of the importance of early education** to increase the value that is placed on the first segment of the educational pipeline and demonstrate how the success of young children is integral to the long-term success of the city. Early childhood success emerged as one of the top priorities in San Antonio’s recent SA2020 visioning process and Mayor Julián Castro has made it a highly visible objective through the establishment of Very Early Childhood Centers and a community-wide conversation on educational alignment. Mayor Thomas M. Menino in Boston has similarly been a longstanding advocate for children and youth. He has supported public education efforts by Thrive in Five Boston, Boston Children’s Museum, Countdown to Kindergarten ReadBoston and other partners, which raise awareness through the “In the Know” early childhood blog and meet regularly to coordinate other public awareness campaigns.

- **Creative funding strategies** to allow communities to provide a more comprehensive and collaborative system of support for children and families. For more than two decades, Seattle has benefited from a voter-approved levy that supports programs for children and their families, allowing the city to take a more coordinated approach and address needs that are not covered through other state or federal funding sources. In San José, public funds through the city and county, along with First Five funds from the state tobacco tax, have been crucial to local efforts. In San Antonio, dollars from external sources have been critical to the neighborhood initiatives described below — including an Annie E. Casey Foundation Making Connections investment in the Westside and a new Promise Neighborhood implementation grant in the Eastside — and the mayor has proposed a one-eighth cent sales tax to fund his new Brainpower Initiative to improve the full educational continuum.
Structure of the Report

This report focuses on the efforts of five cities to create a high-quality, aligned system of education and support for young children and their families. The first page of each case study provides a summary of the high points of each city’s work, followed by the full case study and the local and state context surrounding their efforts. The case studies describe the most interesting and relevant activities in each of the communities, organized around the ten elements described above. Understanding that these efforts are continually growing and changing, these profiles offer a snapshot of local progress as of July 2011. However, we have attempted to note major changes or developments that occurred during the latter half of 2011 as this report was being written.

While the majority of what is described in each section focuses on systemic changes or programmatic interventions, all of the city efforts ultimately aim to make a difference in the lives of local children as they grow and develop. To highlight the human element to these initiatives, each case study concludes with a fictional story that seeks to paint a picture of how these structural changes could lead to real, positive changes in outcomes for individual children and families. While it is unlikely that any one child would be touched by the full range of services, supports and initiatives described in the stories, they offer an aspirational vision of how all of these efforts, if taken to scale, could impact a whole family.

Leaders in the cities profiled in this report recognize that there is more to do and that many challenges lie ahead. However, their efforts to date provide a rich array of ideas for strengthening the first segment of the educational pipeline. It is our hope that these case studies will offer inspiration for other city leaders who are similarly committed to ensuring that young children have the key assets they need — knowledge, skills, confidence, health and a stable, engaged family — to get off to a strong start in education and in life.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The YEF Institute serves as a resource to municipal leaders on a wide array of issues, including early childhood, education, out-of-school time programming, community wellness, family economic success and reengaging disconnected youth. The Educational Alignment for Young Children project built on a decade of experience promoting municipal leadership in both the early childhood arena and the K-12 education system.

In the first half of 2010, the YEF Institute interviewed representatives of more than a dozen cities to learn about their efforts to help young children succeed by age 8. These interviews examined existing local practices to align early childhood programs and elementary education in ways that increase the likelihood that children will be poised for educational success by the time they reach the third grade.

Following this exploratory phase, the YEF Institute took a multi-pronged approach to support local leadership for young children. Starting in July 2010, the YEF Institute began hosting a peer learning community for the cities participating in the scan process. This learning community brought local leaders together on a quarterly basis to learn more about innovative approaches to each of the major components of educational alignment for young children. Topics included:

• community mobilization efforts to improve early literacy;
• initiatives to address absenteeism in the early years;
• an overview of efforts to build and sustain a quality early education system in Providence, R.I.; and
• comprehensive approaches to promote positive child outcomes.

In the late summer and fall of 2010, the YEF Institute provided assistance to four cities to design and implement “community conversations” focused on engaging key stakeholders and building consensus around a concrete action agenda. These conversations took place in Seattle (August 12-13), Petal, Miss. (August 18), San Antonio (in conjunction with the White House Initiative for Excellence in Education for Hispanic Americans) and Richmond, Va. (September 22).

Finally, through site visits and in-depth interviews, the YEF Institute documented “birth through third grade” initiatives in five cities where alignment efforts are effectively changing the early childhood, family support and education systems. Teams from each of these cities presented their work to one another in March 2011, allowing for further exploration of themes of interest to other cities. The case studies that follow represent the culmination of this project, offering a detailed analysis of exactly how these efforts are designed, who is involved, funding strategies and how the city (or program) is tracking impact over time.
Under the leadership of Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the City of Boston and Boston Public Schools (BPS) have launched a number of innovative efforts to support early learning and help children transition into elementary schools. These efforts formed the foundation for a strong collaborative partnership among the city, schools, United Way and community members called Thrive in Five. Key elements of Boston’s educational alignment work include:

- **Collaborative planning and accountability through Thrive in Five**, a 10-year effort to ensure that all children will be ready for sustained school success. Thrive in Five serves as the coordinator and convener of the city’s early childhood programming, knitting together four different components — ready schools, a ready city, ready systems and ready families — essential to promoting school readiness for all of Boston’s children.

- **Access to high-quality early education in a variety of settings**, including universal Pre-K (called K1) operated by BPS and a robust system of high-quality, community-based care is available for the majority of preschool aged children. Boston also boasts a high rate of accreditation, with a growing number of center-based, Head Start and public Pre-K programs holding National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and other national accreditations.

- **Qualified teachers for young children through targeted professional development**: Thrive in Five and its partners are implementing an ambitious plan to provide professional development to every early learning caregiver in the city and achieve universal accreditation of all programs, including those that are family-based, center-based or operated by BPS. They are starting with a focus on providing individualized professional development plans and access to career coaches to early childhood providers within the city’s “Circle of Promise,” where needs are the greatest.

- **Parent engagement in both early childhood and elementary school settings**: Through Countdown to Kindergarten’s Talk, Read, Play campaign and Play to Learn groups, the Boston Children Thrive in Five community engagement initiative and BPS’s Parent University and parent engagement coordinators, Boston is equipping parents to be their child’s first teacher and sustaining that involvement into the school years.

- **Countdown to Kindergarten to ensure smooth transitions**: Countdown to Kindergarten (CtK) provides information and support to parents and children to promote a smooth transition from early childhood to elementary school. CtK helps parents navigate the school selection and enrollment process, promotes school readiness activities and events, works with providers and schools to ensure that children and families know what to expect when they start kindergarten and engages the entire community in visible, family-friendly events that promote the transition to school.

Since its inception in 2008, Thrive in Five has had significant impacts in a variety of sectors. In the last two years, Thrive in Five has generated $23 million in new resources for Boston’s early childhood community, more than 95 percent of which has been granted to local organizations to improve and expand services for families. Based on an external evaluation, there is also evidence that Boston
parents feel less isolated, are increasingly aware of community resources and are becoming more informed and engaged in their children’s healthy development. Local partners have also promoted accreditation, with 56 community-based early care and education providers, 27 family child care educators and 12 BPS early education classrooms achieving or maintaining accreditation from NAEYC or the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC).

In addition, Thrive in Five and other key partners, in response to a need for a comprehensive, common school readiness measure, have initiated and advanced work on the School Readiness Pipeline Project. The project will create a holistic, citywide measure of school readiness, which will supplement the strictly academic DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) scores that are currently used, and facilitate aligned data sharing. The outcomes listed here represent only a portion of the work encompassed by Thrive in Five. (See the Contacts and Resources section of this document for links to more information about how Thrive in Five is impacting early childhood and education).

**Historical Context**

Mayor Menino has been a leader in strengthening early learning and K-12 education throughout his 19-year tenure as mayor. With the superintendent of schools reporting directly to the mayor, the push for quality early learning is connected to school reform efforts designed to nurture sustained school success.

Under former BPS Superintendent Thomas Payzant, BPS launched a comprehensive school reform strategy called Focus on Children, a two-phase, 10-year plan for reform. This effort was based on five primary elements: clear expectations for what students should learn; a common, rigorous curriculum; common instructional practices; extensive support for teachers; and appropriate assessments that both provided feedback to teachers to tailor their teaching strategies and tracked outcomes for accountability. Impacts of the reform efforts include improved student performance in math and English language arts through the fourth grade; increased rates of postsecondary enrollment for BPS graduates; establishment of district-wide common curricula and pedagogical approaches for literacy and math; and enhanced professional development for teachers and administrators, including school-based coaching.

Current Superintendent Carol Johnson has built on this foundation of reform with her own roadmap for improvement, the Acceleration Agenda. The Acceleration Agenda continues the systemic reform approach instituted by Payzant, with emphases on improving instruction and assessments, supporting teachers and school leadership and establishing aligned K-5 curricula. The agenda also focuses on improving school organization and strengthening parent, student and community engagement. Recently, BPS launched
In 2004, the City of Hartford — working with Hartford Public Schools, a state commission and a community foundation — launched a strategic planning process that resulted in the Hartford Blueprint for Young Children. The Blueprint is a comprehensive, five-year plan to enable Hartford’s children to achieve success in school and in life. Guided by this plan, the city has made progress in aligning diverse programs and services for a more coordinated system of policymaking and investment for families with young children. This case study focuses on several innovations that have resulted from this multi-year effort:

• **Institutional leadership for young children within city government:** The Mayor’s Cabinet for Young Children advises the mayor on all policy matters affecting young children and their families, and until recently the city’s Office for Young Children (OFYC) performed the day-to-day planning, coordination and implementation of early learning and family support policies and programs. OFYC also served as the interdisciplinary lead agent on the implementation of the Blueprint and advised the mayor on issues related to children from birth to age 8. In July 2011, the city consolidated leadership and services for families, children, youth and recreation into a single department to improve coordination, with a division on young children within this department.

• **Greater alignment of early childhood curricula and assessments with state frameworks:** A *Connecting the Dots* publication, which helps local early education programs follow state early learning frameworks, clearly outlines requirements that local programs must meet to ensure that children are ready for school entry.

• **An emerging initiative to facilitate smooth transitions to school:** The city, in partnership with the schools and the civic organization Achieve Hartford, is offering greater clarity about school registration, promoting earlier registration and working to transfer standard information from early education programs to kindergarten teachers to facilitate a seamless transition from preschool to kindergarten.

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**CITY PROFILE**

**LEADERSHIP:**

*Mayor:* Pedro E. Segarra (since June 2010)

*Superintendent:* Dr. Christina Kishimoto (appointed February 2011; Dr. Steven J. Adamowski served as superintendent between November 2006 and June 2011)

*Population:* 123,925

*Percent Population Below Age 5:* 7.6 percent

*Percent Population Ages 5-9:* 7 percent

*Poverty Rate:* 29.1 percent (Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates)

*On-Time Graduation Rate:* 42 percent (Source: Hartford Public Schools)

**CITY DEMOGRAPHICS BY RACE/ETHNICITY**

<table>
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<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian</th>
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<td>41.4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
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(Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-08 American Community Survey. Margin of error +/-2.642)

Hartford Public Schools serves more than 21,000 students, 14 percent of whom are English Language Learners. The public schools offer parents an intra-district choice system of theme-based and neighborhood schools, with a nine-member board (five of whom are appointed by the mayor) responsible for selecting the superintendent of schools.

(Source: Hartford Public Schools)
• **Parent engagement and support through the city and school system:** A partnership between the Connecticut Commission on Children and the City of Hartford has helped leverage state and local funding for a Family Civics Initiative, including parent leadership training institutes and professional development for family support workers. In addition, the Hartford Public Schools Welcome Center reaches out to all parents in the community to promote healthy child development, helps parents get more involved in their children’s education and serves as a resource when parents or students face challenges related to school.

• **Data sharing through an Efforts to Outcomes (ETO) pilot:** Already being utilized for older youth, Hartford is designing an ETO system developed by Social Solutions to share child and family outcomes data among early childhood providers, family support centers, home visiting program providers and schools to better meet the needs of young children and families.

Since he was sworn into office in June 2010, Mayor Pedro E. Segarra has exercised high-level leadership for early childhood education in the city. Under his leadership, Hartford is developing a second Blueprint to guide the city’s work for the next five years and elevating the city’s work on behalf of young children as a critical part of the full educational pipeline.

Results for children attending Hartford Public Schools continue to improve. According to a November 2010 report on the state of the schools by former Superintendent Steven Adamowski, student performance on state standardized tests improved for the third consecutive year in 2010, with average third grade reading scores up by 8 percent — the largest improvement since the inception of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test. Furthermore, test scores in mathematics rose for every grade level in the public schools. Overall, Hartford students’ academic achievement as measured by state test scores improved at more than double the rate of the rest of Connecticut in 2010, and the number of schools testing at the highest achievement category doubled, from five to 10.

**Historical Context**

Hartford’s investment in early childhood education has increased significantly over the past two decades. Both the city (through the Department of Health and Human Services’ City Day Care program) and Hartford Public Schools (through its “lower kindergarten” Pre-K program and elementary schools) have been serving young children and families for more than 50 years. In 1997, Hartford became one of 14 initial communities funded by the newly created School Readiness Program in Connecticut (see State Context).

Hartford took this work to a new level in 2004, when then-Mayor Eddie Perez asked the Hartford Public Schools, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and the Connecticut Commission on Children to develop a citywide system to promote the healthy growth and development of young children and families. In doing so, he prompted the creation of a team to strengthen and coordinate existing policies, programs and services for Hartford’s children ages birth to 8.

This team discovered a fragmented system of public and private early childhood programs and policies. Many essential ingredients were missing, including visible leadership, adequate resources, a clear strategy for distributing available funds, alignment between early education and the schools and the ability to track student outcomes. In May 2005, after seven months of work, the team crafted the Hartford Blueprint for Young Children, recommending a significantly changed organizational leadership structure for the city to drive implementation of the plan.
San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro is passionate about strengthening the educational continuum from birth through college, viewing early childhood development as a critical foundation for the success of children, families and neighborhoods. Building on a long history of innovative work to support early childhood success in the city of San Antonio, Mayor Castro has launched Very Early Childhood Centers (VECCs) to collocate services for young children — including early education providers, public schools and key wraparound services — in two high-need neighborhoods: Eastside and Westside.

Westside/Making Connections

Over the past decade, the city and the Edgewood Independent School District (EISD) have been key partners in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiative in San Antonio’s Westside. Through this effort, they are focusing not only on ensuring high-quality academic experiences and smooth transitions for the district’s 11,000 students, but also providing wraparound support for their families. Major efforts related to educational alignment for young children include:

- **School commitment to healthy, well-prepared students:** EISD hired a specialist to focus on ensuring that all children are healthy and prepared for success in school. Some of the components of this work include enhanced professional development for early educators, expanded support for leveled guided reading and other research-based reading interventions, and individualized “reading success” plans that take into account academic, health and other pertinent data for every child in the early grades who is reading below grade level.

- **Access to high-quality early care and education in all settings:** Efforts include a new Head Start contract that includes the school system, professional development and substitute teachers for center-based and registered family child care homes, outreach to informal child care providers — family, friends and neighbors — and citywide training and supports.

- **Parent engagement and access to family supports:** Through the Families and Schools Together program, parents participate in an eight- to 10-week family support program, gaining expert advice and sharing parenting ideas with their peers. Family Service Association also provides health and developmental screening, works with families to make sure they have health insurance and a medical home, and connects parents to resources that support workforce participation and asset development.

- **Universal reviews prompting needed referrals:** The sharing of data about individual students enables school personnel to identify what supports are — or are not — available to families of children who are falling behind. As a result, there is increased communication among schools and family-serving entities and more targeted service referrals.

As a result, the number of children ready for school in the neighborhood increased from 25.9 percent in the 2005-06 school year to 38.7 percent in 2008-09, and participating schools saw improvements in grade-level reading in third grade in 2008-09.
Eastside/Promise Neighborhood

Through the Promise Neighborhood initiative on the Eastside, the city is partnering with United Way, the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), the San Antonio Housing Authority and other key stakeholders to improve educational outcomes and revitalize the neighborhood. The Tynan Very Early Childhood Center (VECC), a new family-school-community hub, serves almost 260 children in school, at least 100 FFN and their parents and caregivers, offering:

- **Collocation of high-quality early childhood programs**: Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K programs at the Tynan VECC and across SAISD utilize a HighScope curriculum for consistent, developmentally appropriate early learning.

- **Tynan VECC as a professional development hub**: Early education teachers within the VECC hold at least a bachelor's degree, and the Tynan VECC has become a professional development hub, promoting initiatives such as the Model Classroom Project.

- **Parent and informal caregiver engagement and family support**: Families and informal caregivers have access to Play and Learn groups, health services, parenting classes and adult education at the Tynan VECC. The city, United Way and now through Promise Neighborhood, have committed to relocating additional wraparound services, including dental, health, library, financial education and parenting programs to this location, establishing Tynan as a comprehensive, community-linked campus.

In addition to the unique efforts in each of these communities, the VECCs in both locations help leverage citywide programs and services for neighborhood residents, such as a $450,000 general fund investment in professional development for early childhood caregivers; the Born to Read public awareness and literacy promotion campaign; and a well-developed initiative for family, friend and neighbor (FFN) caregivers, including an annual FFN Training Institute, and community-based Play and Learn groups.
Through the leadership of San José Mayor Chuck Reed and Santa Clara County Office of Education Superintendent Charles Weis, Santa Clara County developed an Early Learning Master Plan. The Early Learning Master Plan provided the basis for San José 2020 (SJ2020), an initiative with one unifying standard of success: All students will test as proficient or advanced on grade-level state assessments. In working to close the achievement gap in San José by focusing on early learning, San José leaders have created a network of partnerships intent on significantly improving educational outcomes for young children.

This case study focuses on some key elements of these local efforts, including:

• **An Early Learning Master Plan implementation team:** Local stakeholders are mobilizing an advanced “system of systems” with two leadership groups focused on civic engagement and program development and six programmatic working teams addressing the early childhood workforce, quality, parent engagement and leadership, articulation and alignment, data management and facilities.

• **Access to quality early education, particularly for students with special needs:** The city’s Smart Start San José program helped construct or renovate early childhood spaces for nearly 7,000 children and has trained more than 450 family child care providers. First 5 Santa Clara launched the Power of Preschool (PoP) project, serving children in four high-need school districts, and manages the CARES program to reduce turnover among early educators through education and wage supports. Finally, the Inclusion Collaborative has been working to support families with special needs children by answering questions and offering referrals through a website and “warm line,” training library staff and early educators and creating a unified referral system.

• **A longitudinal analysis of school readiness and third grade success in Santa Clara County:** This research informs the efforts of early childhood and school leaders and helps motivate community support by demonstrating the link between school readiness gaps and large achievement gaps on third grade reading assessments.

• **Leveraging funding streams** to enhance services to children and families and to tap additional government and philanthropic funding sources.

Because San José contains 19 independent school districts, some of the most innovative efforts to improve educational alignment for young children have emerged at the school district or neighborhood level. The neighborhood-based Franklin-McKinley Children’s Initiative stands out as an especially promising approach modeled on the Harlem Children’s Zone. Funded with a large planning grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, it is designed to coordinate existing educational, health, social service, housing, neighborhood and economic development programs to ensure all children are prepared for kindergarten and that schools are ready to receive and serve young students.

According to a report on SJ2020 issued in early 2012, third grade scores in both English language arts and mathematics rose between 2007 and 2011 for students in San José. The achievement gap also narrowed between 2007 and 2011, from 43 percent to 37 percent in English language arts and from 41 percent to 32 percent in mathematics. During the same period, however, teacher reports indicated a decline in kindergarten readiness, with up to 40 percent of entering kindergarteners not considered...
ready for school. The city and county are working to develop a standard kindergarten readiness assessment to more reliably track school readiness.

Historical Context

The City of San José, Santa Clara County and the State of California have all led efforts over the past two decades to raise the quality of early care and education and provide a roadmap for advancing educational alignment for young children.

Responding to research showing the critical importance of the earliest years of life to brain development and long-term success, the City of San José created an Early Care and Education Services Unit in 1988, which now includes 10 staff members. Its purpose at that time was to facilitate the expansion of child care in San José. The Early Care and Education Services Unit administers the Smart Start San José programs, which include a 10-month Family Child Care Training program funded by federal Community Development Block Grants, funding for child care facilities construction and renovation using redevelopment and grant money and professional development and public education events such as the annual Smart Start Conference and San José Children’s Faire. The Smart Start Conference provides information on current trends and best practices in child development to more than 500 early educators, administrators and parents. The Children’s Faire draws more than 5,000 participants each year, and more than 40 local community organizations, businesses and governmental agencies provide resource information to parents and a fun, hands-on activity for children.

Smart Start San José further raises the visibility of these issues and makes a long-term strategic impact by increasing access to quality early education and setting quality standards for all organizations receiving city funding under this initiative. These standards include:

1. Licensing standards and regulatory compliance;
2. Program environmental rating scales;
3. Developmentally appropriate care;
4. A curriculum that meets kindergarten readiness criteria and the use of a recognized kindergarten readiness assessment tool;
5. Ongoing parent participation in programs;
In November 2010, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) and community partners completed their most ambitious city-school district joint planning effort in 20 years. Building on the city’s investments in the quality and availability of Pre-K, the school district’s ongoing efforts to improve elementary schools and the New School Foundation’s example of Pre-K through third grade alignment at the South Shore School, the resulting Pre-K-3rd Grade Five Year Action Plan seeks to prevent or eliminate the achievement gap for future generations. Key assets in this educational alignment work include:

- **Joint leadership and a shared commitment to collaboration:** The Seattle Early Education Collaborative (SEEC), composed of early childhood stakeholders and preschool providers, enables systematic planning across Pre-K and K-3 education and helps institutionalize a shared commitment to collaborative action, both before and after school entry, to help all children achieve grade-level success by third grade. The director of the new SPS Department of Early Learning provides critical leadership within the school system and as a member of the SEEC.

- **Structured communication between early childhood and out-of-school time (OST) providers and public elementary schools:** The SPS Community Alignment Initiative promotes regular communication among OST and early learning providers and public school staff, as well as collaborative efforts to support student success. In conjunction with school principals, OST program directors develop alignment agreements that outline in detail how their programs’ activities will support school readiness or student learning goals.

- **Access to quality early learning opportunities:** By braiding several funding streams, Seattle supports quality improvement initiatives and child care subsidies to improve access to high-quality center-based child care and preschool programs. A strong family, friend and neighbor caregiver program, led by Child Care Resources, helps support early learning for the large number of children in informal care.

- **Parent engagement and support in a culturally diverse context:** Responding to the fact that close to 20 percent of residents are foreign-born, Seattle has created cultural task forces and a network of immigrant and refugee family support programs to ensure that all families can access high-quality care and find ways to engage in and support their children’s education.

- **Alignment of standards, teaching practices and assessments rooted in the use of data to improve student outcomes:** Culturally responsive assessments of classroom quality and child outcomes are used in more than 100 classrooms at all Seattle preschool programs operated by SEEC’s 22 partner agencies. Training and coaching helps teachers interpret and use assessment data to tailor their teaching practices to improve child outcomes, while the school district’s professional development for Pre-K through first grade teachers is improving and aligning instructional practices, particularly related to literacy development.

- **Flexible funding through the Families and Education Levy:** For more than two decades, Seattle has benefited from a voter-approved levy that supports programs for children and their families, allowing the city to take a more coordinated approach and address needs that are not covered through other state or federal funding sources. Levy programs, which support children
and families both in and out of school, provide needed “glue money” to create a more strategic and unified Pre-K through third grade effort.

Education is a top priority for Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn, the Washington Department of Early Learning and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the public-private Thrive by Five Washington initiative. All are highly supportive of collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for young children and their families.

According to the 2009-10 Families and Education Levy Annual Report (published in February 2011), more than 1,600 (unduplicated) elementary school students are now meeting grade-level standards who had not done so prior to the 2004-05 school year.

**Historical Context**

The City of Seattle's Pre-K to third grade efforts build upon a long history of cutting-edge strategies to support quality education for young children. While the city started its child care work in 1972 with a focus on affordability, local initiatives expanded over time to encompass quality, access and supply as well. In 1999, Seattle and King County leaders launched Project Lift-Off as a community-wide partnership to create new and improved child care, education and OST activities for youth ages birth to 18. With support from elected leaders and in partnership with the school district, Philanthropy Northwest and the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce, Project Lift-Off created a community-wide action plan that led to new and improved programs for more than 23,000 children and youth. Project Lift-Off created three key strategies: the Alignment Initiative (described in detail in this case study); the Getting School Ready Initiative, including Getting School Ready Teams that are now active throughout King County; and Seattle's nationally recognized Family, Friend and Neighbor Care Initiative.

In 2003, the United Way of King County Children's Initiative merged with the countywide Project Lift-Off. The merged initiative, known as SOAR - Helping Kids Reach for the Sky, offers school readiness workshops and training to more than 9,000 parents and 9,500 early childhood professionals. Additionally, kindergarten readiness teams are in 30 elementary schools where 94 percent of participating teachers report to SOAR improved transition processes and relationships.

The 2004-12 Families and Education Levy focuses on kindergarten readiness, improved student learning and high school graduation. Through this levy, a new Step Ahead Preschool Program has been established, along with Community Learning Centers in three elementary schools and a revitalized family support worker program in Seattle Public Schools (SPS). Preschool outcomes include classroom quality, school readiness and third grade student test scores. The city's work to implement Step Ahead and the new focus on preschool outcomes set the groundwork for the city’s 2008 effort to convene the Seattle Early Education Collaborative (SEEC).
What will it take to forge deeper connections between early education programs and elementary schools to ensure that more children are prepared for a lifetime of learning? How can city leaders ensure that the fictional portraits of alignment in action allow all children in the community to receive the support and opportunities available to Marco, Jerome, Maria, Oscar, Olivia and Jin?

While each city in this study was unique in its approach, some common themes and lessons emerged across all of the cities:

- In each of these cities, it is clear that **strong leadership from the mayor and key city staff** can help spur new partnerships, structures and policies to create a better aligned system of education and support for young children from birth to age 8.

- In order to overcome the inherent challenges of breaking down silos and sustaining cross-sector efforts, cities need **collaborative bodies** with accountable working groups and solid work plans.

- Because it spans multiple program areas, alignment efforts are most effective when there is **“glue money”** available that can piece together funding — federal, state, local or philanthropic — that is brought to the table by collaborative partners and help fill in the gaps.

- Even in cities where this work is quite advanced, there is a great need for **better data** to allow the city to understand what is working and what is not. Cities are eager to develop new systems to collect and analyze existing data, develop common data systems, use data to improve programs and policies, and communicate outcomes to the public.

- **High-quality, developmentally appropriate programs** — in both the early childhood and elementary arenas — are crucial to sustained educational success for young children.

- **Joint professional development** at multiple levels (including policymakers, administrative leadership and teachers) is needed to build on the strengths of each system and create a common language among the fields of early childhood, education and human services.

- **Smooth transitions**, with as much information and consistency as possible, are critical for young children and can help families make the best choices for their families.

- Children need **wraparound programs and services** to facilitate and reinforce learning in the classroom, including parent education and training programs, access to health care and behavioral health services, aligned afterschool and summer learning programs and safe neighborhoods to call home.

While these case studies focused on children from birth to age 8 and the critical milestone of reading at grade level by the end of third grade, the cities recognized that these efforts are part of a larger educational pipeline that continues to have important milestones along the way. As a result, their initiatives for young children were typically embedded in, or coordinated with, a broader P-20 agenda. This framing helped increase buy-in among administrators and teachers in the K-12 education sector, demonstrating the importance of focusing on the front end of the educational pipeline in order to achieve desired results for children as they grow.
The cities in this study also highlight the balancing act between instituting citywide policies and programs and creating neighborhood initiatives that seek to improve and align young children’s early childhood and elementary school experiences. Not surprisingly, cities with multiple school districts placed greater emphasis on the neighborhood approach, but all of the cities had a healthy mix of both approaches.

Local officials in each of these five cities acknowledge that there is much more to be done. Few of these efforts are happening at the scale to which city leaders aspire and each faces the ongoing challenges of sustaining momentum, leadership and funding over the long term. Nevertheless, Boston, Hartford, San Antonio, San José and Seattle — along with numerous other communities large and small across the country — offer compelling examples of what educational alignment can look like on the ground and the potential impact of concerted community efforts to give all children the foundational skills and supports they need to succeed.
Dear Mayor Dean:

This report represents a diligent effort of eighteen outstanding and insightful Nashvillians working to analyze early child education and development as it stands today in our community. The overarching goal that continually guides these community members is developing ways to foster high-quality early years programming and healthy brain development that will promote the long-term health and stability of our city’s youngest children.

As you well know, the early years have a long-lasting impact on the city and the quality of life for the residents we serve. High-quality development experiences in the early years increase the odds for academic success during the K-12 years and beyond, but it doesn't stop there. When our young children grow up to be adults, what occurs in the early years will strongly influence the social fabric of the city and the prosperity of our local economy.

Regarding our work, members assembled as an Advisory Council for the first time on September 1, 2010, and subsequently broke into three work groups: Public Access, Public Awareness, Economic Development Strategies and Models. Throughout our time, we had regular work group meetings and convened full council gatherings to share and report out progress in our work groups. Collectively, we were able to analyze local, state, and national data; consult international research and best practices; interview local practitioners and policy makers; and identify key needs of Nashville-Davidson County families. We also received valuable technical assistance from National League of Cities regarding successful models and practices from around the country that would be beneficial for the needs of our local community.

As a result of the extensive work, we have established a city-wide vision of success for our children from birth to eight, and offer key and concise recommendations that are appropriately aligned to achieve this vision. Improvement in our recommended areas of focus will ultimately have a significant effect on the outcomes and quality of life for our youngest children, their families, and our city as a whole.

The contributions of all the committee members, the report’s staff, and Laura McComas with National League of Cities are significant and substantial. This report is much richer and meaningful with their noteworthy investment of time and knowledge.

We are appreciative that as Mayor, you have made education a top priority for our city. Thank you for a keen focus and attention to the critical beginning years of the education lifecycle and the impact it has for our families and our city.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Neighbors
Vice Mayor
Metropolitan Government of Nashville-Davidson County
The Mayor’s Advisory Council on Early Childhood Development & Early Education was charged with the following:

To assess existing programs, services, policies and public awareness within Nashville-Davidson County, and use such assessments to make objective recommendations to the Mayor as they relate to the long-term health and stability of these provisions for children (0-8 years of age).\(^1\)

-September 2010

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1. See appendix A for the full Scope of Investigation and Timeline of Action for the Council & Appendix B for a general context of Early Childhood Education and Development in Davidson County.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Early child development and education programming have proven to be effective investments in both young children and the communities in which they live. An international body of research points to strong evidence that high-quality early child development and early education policies, with appropriate standards and accountability, yield many more benefits than costs through the use of finite community resource dollars. Not only do young children acquire important social-emotional skills that yield long term benefits to both society and individual families, but the early years are the greatest opportunity to develop cognitive skills for optimal brain development, healthy habits, and lay a foundation for years of future academic success. Employers also capture short and long-term benefits for their local firms when early care and education is supported. Yet many communities, including Nashville-Davidson County have not made concentrated, comprehensive efforts to support robust and aligned early care and education efforts to ensure the sustained healthy development and success of their youngest citizens.

While Nashville-Davidson County does many things “right” in providing key services and supports to promote early childhood development and education, there are undoubtedly needs and weaknesses within the landscape of early care and education that must be addressed. A wide variety of service providers exist within the field of early child development and education. As a result, this has created a patchwork system of care in which:

- Access to high-quality early learning opportunities is limited.
- There is limited public knowledge and awareness, especially among the business community in terms of how to support employee-parents and partner with the early childhood community.
- Transitions between the public schools and the private, public, and informal provision of early care and education are weak and/or uncoordinated.
- Providers lack the supports they need to provide the highest quality of services consistently.
- Perhaps most important, the city lacks an aligned, comprehensive vision for supporting the healthy development, both cognitive as well as physical and sustained school success of all Nashville-Davidson County children.

These concerns are highlighted given the intimate connection of this industry to the productivity of the local economy. The child development and education domain is a source of employment and livelihood for a considerable number of individuals, while simultaneously providing assistance to many more families and single parents seeking active participation in the local workforce.

This report serves two purposes. First, it provides a picture of the current landscape of Nashville-Davidson County’s early childhood policies and programming, including influences from local, state and national forces, and particular barriers that impede high-quality programming. Second, it articulates a vision going forward and recommends a set of prioritized concrete action steps to accomplish the proposed vision.
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

1. While Metro Nashville-Davidson County is home to many robust early childhood education programs, there continues to be limited access to both public and private early childhood education for children and families.
   A. Access to programs and support services varies across different geographical locations and neighborhoods. Of Davidson County’s approximately 48,285 children ages 0-5, it is estimated that only 37% participate in some form of licensed child care or education program.
   B. Approximately 35% of eligible children who apply for Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) Voluntary Pre-K program are wait-listed.
   C. Formalized infant and toddler care, which is especially critical for a child’s earliest developmental stage, is most difficult to access. This is due in large part to its higher costs of operation which are necessary to help ensure the health and safety of young children.

2. High-quality early child development programming among all providers is not universal.
   A. While only 37% of all children are in any type of care, an estimated 27% of Davidson County’s entire 0-5 year old population participates in a high-quality formalized care program.
   B. The Department of Human Services (DHS) licensing process for child care providers is designed to ensure the health and safety of children. All programs – Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K (TN-VPK), Head Start, and community-based child care programs – must meet minimal DHS licensing standards.
   C. However, not all programs pursue a DHS star rating. DHS maintains a 3-star rating system that is built upon the licensing process. The 3-star rating program is meant to differentiate program quality among individual providers. Tracking by enrollment in Nashville-Davidson County, 15.7% of County 0-5 year olds are in 3-star centers, 1.8% in 2-star centers, 0.3% are 1-star, 7% are in 0-star centers, and 11.5% are in centers that do not participate (NP) in the star rating system (such as MNPS Voluntary Pre-K).
   D. As a state of Tennessee Department of Education program (DOE), Voluntary Pre-K classrooms in Nashville-Davidson County do not participate in the DHS 3-star rating system, maintaining their own quality oversight process, but must still be licensed by DHS.
   E. Two local supplementary programs, United Way’s Read to Succeed and Vanderbilt’s Early Reading First Project, have both shown statistically impressive gains in preschool children’s language and literacy skills, and especially for Economically Disadvantaged children. Read to Succeed is a program affiliated with a group of local community-based child care providers while Early Reading First is a program based in MNPS Pre-K classrooms.
3. Better accountability is needed that more closely reflects outcome measures of early childhood development and education for young children.

A. Ambiguity exists about whether the DHS 3-star rating system and the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K oversight processes are accurate and effective mechanisms to incentivize and comprehensively measure quality learning and developmental outcomes for children.

B. Programs use different standards and assessments that promote and determine a certain set of early childhood programming practices. The data systems, standards, and assessments currently in place do not emphasize non-cognitive skill development for all children that participate in programs as much as they should.

C. Current and potential funders, both private and public sources, of early child development programs are unsure of what they are funding – child care or early childhood development and education – and why.

4. Many community-based providers in Nashville-Davidson County struggle with day-to-day business management operations. Ultimately, this affects the programming and quality outcome for children in these centers.

A. Center operators and personnel face multiple challenges, including budgetary restrictions and lack of time, to implement advanced management technology and techniques to help streamline business operations. Supports such as business and organizational management training and business technologies are needed to help develop and acquire greater business efficiencies.

B. Providers throughout Nashville-Davidson County have opportunities to increase the efficiency of the licensing compliance process -- thus allowing more focus and monetary resources to be spent on increasing the quality of early child development programming.

5. There is a public awareness gap (both collective and individual) of the critical importance and opportunity of early childhood development (both physical and cognitive) in a child’s first few years, and knowledge of the corollary best practices that foster this development.

A. As their child’s first teachers and greatest advocates, it is important that Nashville-Davidson County families have easy access to a complete set of parent education and support resources. While many parents choose not to access the formal early learning/child care system and arrange for informal care, there is still a need to provide all parents, especially those outside of the care system, with access to information and community resources that will help them promote their child’s healthy development.

B. The health care and public health provider communities present an excellent opportunity to share early childhood development information and support resources. These are especially crucial partners related to the birth process and pediatrician visits during the window of opportunity to share critical information at the start of a child’s physical and developmental life.

C. The profile and importance of early care and education and healthy child development need to grow to create a city-wide value for investing in all young children.
6. Transitions between the public schools and the private, public, and informal provision of early care and education are weak and/or uncoordinated.

A. Communication and synergy between MNPS, parents, and community-based early education providers (such as Head Start, Early Head Start, informal care givers, and private providers) needs to be improved.

B. School readiness expectations for MNPS students entering Kindergarten are frequently misaligned with community-based providers and informal care givers’ early childhood programming. In addition, community-based teachers, parents, and elementary public school teachers need to more effectively communicate individual student needs to each other when a child is moving through a transition phase.

C. MNPS should formulate a partnership with community-based providers – private and public, informal and formal – to widely and effectively disseminate publicly known Kindergarten intake expectations, and to assist community-based providers to help align curricula, assessments and teaching practices to meet the published expectations. Other developmental expectations including health and nutrition should be included in the conversation.

7. Few businesses in Davidson County are active community partners in the early childhood education and development landscape.

A. Without question, businesses generously support K-12 education and civic initiatives in Nashville-Davidson County. While much has been done to promote the “family friendly” life of the city, current and newly arriving young families often find limited or nonexistent access to early care services, benefits, or opportunities through employers.

B. Relationships between the early care and learning community and the business community are not well-developed. These relationships need to be better leveraged to garner greater public support and resource support for early childhood issues.

C. Employers tend to overlook policies, opportunities and workplace supports that would help reduce employee work-family conflicts, even though many of these measures are low-cost to no-cost. Incorporating these employee policies and benefits to a workplace environment would help increase profitability and productivity by reducing costs associated with higher absenteeism, higher turnover (and new hire training), and low employee satisfaction levels.
The program provides breakfast and lunch, reading and math intervention, enrichment activities and educational field trips.

In one classroom, parents who are not native English speakers are learning the meaning and pronunciation of vocabulary words and synonyms. “Now, I can help my daughter with her spelling tests and check her work, and she is happy when I come to class to talk to her teacher,” says Nelly Alvarez.

At the Brookfield Elementary School in Oakland, California, children in kindergarten to second grade who would otherwise struggle to stay afloat are reaping gains in literacy and reading through Super Stars Literacy — a nonprofit founded 10 years ago by the Junior League of Oakland-East Bay that provides lively after-school sessions and one-on-one tutoring by AmeriCorps members.

Even in mid-July, the Robert L. Bailey, IV Elementary School in Providence is abuzz with activity as 120 children populate a summer program run jointly with the YMCA to help prepare preschoolers for school, boost academic performance and prevent children from losing ground over the summer.
What do Oakland and Providence have in common? Both cities have a long history of mobilizing formidable coalitions to strengthen families and improve outcomes for vulnerable children, in part stemming from their involvement in the Casey Foundation’s Making Connections initiative. And both are part of a national network dedicated to ensuring that all children, whatever obstacles they face, read on grade level by the end of the third grade.

Every year, 68 percent of America’s children, and more than 80 percent of children from low-income families, miss this critical milestone. Because third grade is the pivotal year when children should shift from learning to read to reading to learn, failing to read proficiently at this juncture greatly increases the odds of failing to complete high school and succeed in a career. Research shows that children from low-income families not reading at grade level by the end of third grade are up to 13 times less likely to graduate from high school on time, compared with their more affluent peers.

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, launched with Casey leadership in 2010, is a collaborative effort by funders, nonprofit partners, states and communities across the nation committed to:

- Quality teaching for every child every day in every setting, from home to child care to school.
- Community-driven efforts to ensure that children are ready for school, attend regularly and do not lose ground over the summer.
- A seamless system of care, services and support for children from birth through third grade and their families.

In June 2012, 124 cities, counties and towns became part of the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network, a community of places launching comprehensive, locally owned plans to improve school readiness, reduce chronic absence and promote summer learning to put students on track for third grade reading success.

The network — representing 34 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, 350 school districts and more than 8 million school children — was launched at a Denver gathering to announce recipients of the National Civic League’s annual All-America City Award. The league teamed up with the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, the National League of Cities and United Way Worldwide to make grade-level reading the focus of its 2012 awards. They honored 14 sites with the most robust Community Solutions Action Plans to tackle early literacy. Providence was one of them. But all the communities that applied are reaping benefits from the technical support, information and access to experts that the network provides.

Coming Together in Oakland

The Oakland Literacy Coalition is a network of literacy service providers, foundations, businesses and city and school district officials convened by the Rogers Family Foundation in 2008. The coalition partnered with Mayor Jean Quan’s Office to garner widespread support in developing Oakland Reads 2020, an early literacy campaign the city launched to pursue the goals of the national campaign.

The Grade-Level Reading Campaign “has had a tremendous impact on us and helped us galvanize a range of players from the mayor to government agencies and community organizations,” says Cassie Perham, director of literacy grants at the Rogers Family Foundation. “It encouraged us to put a stake in the ground and set a goal to ensure that 85 percent of our third graders are reading proficiently in 2020,” up from 42 percent in 2011. Currently, only 33 percent of children from low-income families...
read proficiently. “It’s not about winning an award but about how we as a community can come together to meet this goal.”

Brookfield is one of 10 East Bay schools served by the Super Stars Literacy program, which coaches AmeriCorps members and other community volunteers to inundate underperforming children from kindergarten through second grade with tutoring during and after school. Some 60 to 80 percent of participants accelerate their reading progress by at least one grade level each year. The program also works with parents and takes them on educational field trips with their children.

Oakland Reads 2020 “has broken down some silos that had existed among literacy providers and related organizations in the past, and we’re learning quite a bit from each other,” says Mike Mowery, executive director of Super Stars Literacy.

Solid Support in Providence

Providence had a solid base to compete for the All-America City Award, with a strong focus on early literacy stemming from Making Connections. Rhode Island also has federal Race to the Top and Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grants, and Providence was the first city selected in Casey’s Evidence2Success initiative, which promotes programs proven by research to foster children’s healthy development.

Mayor Angel Taveras, the city’s first Latino mayor and a graduate of Head Start as well as Harvard University and Georgetown Law School, is a vice chair for grade-level reading for the U.S. Conference of Mayors. His office heads Providence Reads, an effort backed by the Mayor’s Children and Youth Cabinet. It has a 25-member Grade-Level Reading Working Group representing 19 agencies.

“It is really important to me that we are successful in educating our kids, because I see the children in our schools and they remind me of what a lifeline education was for me,” says Taveras, who was encouraged by a school teacher to pursue his dream to become a lawyer. He wrote a book called How to Do Well in School, which he reads to children at libraries and schools. Libraries play a key role in Providence Reads, offering free after-school and summer activities to stimulate reading.

The city’s efforts are also supplemented by federal funding for full-service community schools and nonprofit programs like Inspiring Minds, which helps bridge the performance gap between low-income children and their peers through tutoring, kindergarten preparation and programs for parents.

Only half of Providence’s children enter school with preschool experience. However, Rhode Island recently adopted a new school funding formula that includes pre-K, and a 10-year plan to boost slots is underway. Through its Early Learning Challenge grant, the state is also expanding its five-star quality child care rating system that challenges child care programs to meet a set of quality standards.

“Our goal is to have all programs involved in the rating system in 2013,” says Leslie Gell, director of Ready to Learn Providence, a non-profit that helps child care providers get expanded training. She also co-chairs the city’s Grade-Level Reading Working Group with Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

Chronic absence is another barrier. In 2011–2012, 32 percent of Providence kindergartners missed at least 10 percent of the school year, and 26 percent of children from kindergarten through third grade were chronically absent. The Providence Children’s Initiative, launched in 2010 by Family Service of R.I., followed up with the parents of some chronically absent children at Mary E. Fogarty Elementary School. They found issues ranging from a lack of safe transportation to parents working the third shift and being too tired to wake their children.

Through solutions like getting volunteers to help walk children...
to school or the nearest bus stop and offering child care as early as 6:30 a.m., the initiative improved school attendance for the 50 families involved. Work is also underway to address environmental hazards in homes and schools that affect children’s health. “Without the data, you can’t take the next step of informing what the practice will be,” says Michelle Cortés-Harkins, director of the Providence Children’s Initiative.

Dana Gist Williams shifted her 10-year-old daughter Marissa Benton to Bailey from another school she felt was dangerous, and the services at Bailey have helped her and her daughter survive tough times. “They follow the children from grade to grade, and the team relays information to the next teacher” to provide the right academic and support services, says Williams, who has joined a new parent-teacher organization at the school. “The parents who come to the PTO are very happy, because they treat them with respect and have the educational programs children need.”

New communities interested in becoming part of the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network can submit a letter of intent by April 1 and develop a sponsoring coalition and an action plan. For more information, visit www.gradelevelreading.net.

Page 14, from left, Leonardo Rodriguez, Mileysha Glacken and Manuel Javier at the Bailey Elementary School. Above, from left, Dana Gist Williams, her daughter Marissa Benton and teacher Robin Sampson. Page 16, left, Jaycee Cardona at the Ready to Learn Providence Pre-K; right, Queen La’Rosa Harden Green and her granddaughter Princess at the Dunbar Learning Complex in Atlanta.
Virginia Beach GrowSmart Program Wins National Innovation Award

Karen Kehoe

Thursday, April 11, 2013 · 08:30 am

Virginia Beach GrowSmart – a city program that improves early childhood education, attracts new jobs to the city and improves the lives of hundreds of local families – has won a national award for innovation.

Yesterday, the national Alliance for Innovation honored GrowSmart with an Outstanding Achievement in Innovation Award. GrowSmart is one of 11 local government programs that were recognized at an awards banquet in Atlanta at the Transforming Local Governments Conference. GrowSmart was chosen by a committee of city and county managers from among more than 70 applications.

GrowSmart won praise for two specific innovations

- Partnering with local child care centers – small businesses often owned by women and minorities – to provide business counseling and mentoring.

- Becoming part of the city’s Economic Development staff – an explicit recognition that outstanding child care and education helps to create a skilled and educated workforce for the future.

In announcing the award, the alliance said, “The selection committee looks for those local governments that have shown their dedication to stretching and improving the boundaries of day-to-day government operations and practices, implementing creative business processes, and those who have improved the civic health of their community.”

Studies show that every $1 spent on early childhood education returns $7 to $10 in community benefits. Another study found that quality early education provides Virginians with $2 billion in benefits over 17 years, including reduced needs for special education, child welfare and grade retention, fewer juvenile and adult crimes, higher earnings by parents and increased tax collections.

“Quality education for our youngest citizens makes good business sense,” said Warren Harris, Virginia Beach’s director of economic development. “Businesses go where the quality of life is high. That includes outstanding schools and preschools. That’s why GrowSmart is such an important investment in Virginia Beach.”

The Alliance for Innovation is an international network of progressive governments and partners committed to transforming local government by accelerating the development and dissemination of innovations, in partnership with the International City/County Management Association and Arizona State University. For more information on GrowSmart, contact program coordinator Karen Kehoe at (757) 385-0144 or kkehoe@vbgov.com.
In D.C., public school for 3-year-olds is already the norm

By Susan Svrluga

February 20, 2013

Tricia Pietravalle remembers her days in preschool: Playing in the sandbox, doing some painting, listening to stories. So when she met with her son’s preschool teachers, she was taken aback when they showed her “this whole grid of how they’re evaluating him, academically, socially, emotionally.”

Joseph was learning letters and numbers in full-day classes and making connections she didn’t expect from a 3-year-old. “It was overwhelming — in a good way,” she said.

For generations, children have started school with kindergarten, when they’re 5. Not in the District. For most families in the city, school now starts at 3.

In his State of the Union address, President Barack Obama called for a dramatic shift in early childhood education: free public preschool for all low- and moderate-income 4-year-olds. Opponents voiced concern about increased spending and ineffective government programs. Supporters argued that the initiative could jump-start learning, using the latest brain research to erase some of the disadvantages faced by children from low-income families.

The District is already doing something more ambitious. Nearly 13,000 of the city’s roughly 15,000 3- and 4-year-olds are attending public preschool.

“Any 3-year-old in the District is guaranteed a spot to be at a full-day preschool program. That’s basically unheard-of,” said Daphna Bassok, an assistant professor at the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia.

So as national and state leaders consider a major expansion of public education, the city offers an example of how that can play out on the ground.

Inside Amidon-Bowen Elementary School, where an AppleTree Early Learning public charter school has taken over a couple of classrooms, 3-year-olds were buzzing about happily one recent morning. Some were playing with blocks; some had puppets and were making shadows. Pietravalle’s daughter Lucy and several other children sat at a small table, and teacher Briana Bourne asked, “What do you want to know about outer space?”

When Lucy said she wanted to learn about planets, Bourne asked, “What sounds do you hear in the word ‘planet’?”

Lucy wrote a P on her paper, and Bourne gave her a high-five. “What other sounds do you hear in PLLAANNETT?”
It’s a rare opportunity for the city, said Jack McCarthy of the AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation, which runs public preschools at seven sites in the District, including the one in Southwest Washington that two of Pietravalle’s children attend.

“Here is a place where funding is in place, universal preschool is policy,” McCarthy said. If the quality could be improved and ensured for all students, he said, “we could close the achievement gap here in five years.”

The president’s call — outlined last week without any funding plan — reflects a growing national movement to enroll children in public school before kindergarten. Federal Head Start programs have been available for low-income children for decades, and many special education students start school before kindergarten. But more states are adding classes for 4-year-olds.

In the Washington area, when and how a public-school education begins is influenced by where you live. In Loudoun County, most children start with half-day kindergarten when they’re about 5. In Arlington County, parents can pay, on a sliding scale, for Montessori programs for 3- and 4-year-olds, or they may qualify for a free program for low-income 4-year-olds. Charles County offers full-day classes for 3-year-olds at six schools with high percentages of low-income children.

In the District, officials created a program about three years ago, leveraging federal Head Start funding to offer seats to 3- and 4-year-olds in public schools with many children from low-income families. The program has a research-based curriculum, improved professional development and ongoing assessments of the children, according to Danielle Ewen, director of the office of early childhood education for D.C. public schools.

About 6,000 students are enrolled in D.C. school system’s preschool program, and 7,000 or so more attend charter schools and other programs that offer free preschool. The National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University estimated the annual cost, across the board, at $122 million in 2010-11.

The institute gives the traditional school system’s preschool standards a favorable rating, in part, because they require teachers to have a college degree and ensure class sizes stay small.

But Andrew Coulson of the Cato Institute questioned whether the school system is the best provider of early education. According to his analysis, traditional D.C. public schools spend, on average, $29,000 per student on educating students from kindergarten through 12th grade. “I don’t think anyone would say children in D.C. are getting $29,000 worth of education.”

http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-02-20/local/37198632_1_public-preschools-full-day-preschool-program-childhood-education
The District of Columbia has provided funding for prekindergarten programs since the 1960s. The D.C. Public Pre-Kindergarten program as it now exists serves students in schools run through D.C. Public Schools (DCPS), community-based organizations (CBOs), and charter schools authorized by the D.C. Public Charter School Board (PCSB). The Pre-Kindergarten Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act, passed in 2008, aims to provide high-quality, universally available prekindergarten education services through a mixed delivery system across all education sectors. The distribution of program funds by the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is based on a per-pupil funding formula with additional funds for serving children who receive special education services or are English Language Learners. Charter schools receive a separate facilities allowance per child.

DCPS piloted blended classrooms that enroll pre-K students funded through various sources in the pre-K program during the 2010-2011 school year. Additional freedom was also granted to non-public providers to manage their own contracts for technical assistance and comprehensive health service consultations.

The PCSB provides oversight to participating pre-K programs in charter school settings, referred to here as the D.C. Public Charter School Pre-K. Charter schools participating in the public school program must meet the standards set by the Pre-Kindergarten Enhancement and Expansion Amendment Act, though they have autonomy as granted by the School Reform Act to design their educational program according to their charters. For the 2012-2013 year, DCPS is piloting a new accountability system called the Early Childhood Performance Management Framework (PMF). Outcomes on assessment data are collected through the schools’ accountability plan and Early Childhood PMF. Additionally, PCSB is piloting the usage of CLASS for pre-K site observations. Since the nature of charter schools allows for individual schools to set their own goals, charter schools in D.C. are profiled separately in this report from programs run by DCPS and CBOs to allow for more accurate reporting.

To increase availability of services, D.C. has sought to align early learning programs that include district-funded preschool and pre-K, Head Start, and special education. Efforts have been made to unduplicate enrollment figures presented in this report.

The District of Columbia has the unique situation of being a city that is not within a state. To be inclusive, we indicate how the District compared to the states. For example, as indicated by the “1*” ranking here and elsewhere in the report, when D.C. is compared to the states, it has a higher percentage of children enrolled at ages 3 and 4 and a higher expenditure per child than any of the states.
DISTRICT OVERVIEW

Total district program enrollment ................................................11,267
Total district spending ..............................................................$157,440,000
District spending per child enrolled .........................................$13,974
All reported spending per child enrolled*.............................$14,938

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DC PGMS*</th>
<th>HDST**</th>
<th>K-12***</th>
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<tr>
<td>$14,938</td>
<td>$6,606</td>
<td>$18,075</td>
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STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT
AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

- **3-YEAR-OLDS**: 24% Pre-K, 7% Head Start, 69% Special Ed†, 8% Other/None
- **4-YEAR-OLDS**: 92% Pre-K, 8% Head Start

† This is an estimate of children in special education who are not enrolled in state-funded pre-K or Head Start.

* Pre-K programs may receive additional funds from federal or local sources that are not included in this figure.
** Head Start per-child spending for the 2011-2012 year includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds served. Past years' figures have unintentionally included funds for Early Head Start.
*** K-12 expenditures include capital spending as well as current operating expenditures. Data are for the '11-'12 school year, unless otherwise noted.
D.C. PUBLIC PRE-KINDERGARTEN (DCPS & CBOs)

ACCESS

Total district program enrollment ............................................... 5,827

School districts that offer state program ........................................ 100%

Income requirement................................................................. None

Hours of operation ................................................................. 6.5 hours/day, 5 days/week

Operating schedule ................................................................. Academic year

Special education enrollment ...................................................... 852

Federal Head Start enrollment, ages 3 & 4 ................................... 2,645

District-funded Head Start enrollment .......................................... 0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY | DISTRICT PRE-K REQUIREMENT | BENCHMARK | DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?
--- | --- | --- | ---
Early learning standards ..................................................... Comprehensive | Comprehensive | ✔
Teacher degree ................................................................. BA (public and nonpublic) | BA | ✔
Teacher specialized training ......| EC Certification (public); AA (nonpublic) | Specializing in pre-K | ✔
Assistant teacher............. AA, 48 credits, or para-pro exam (public); | CDA or equivalent | ✔
(degree | CDA (nonpublic) | 
Teacher in-service ................................................................. 5 days/1 year (DCPS); | At least 15 hours/year | ✔
1 day/month (CBO) | 
Maximum class size ............................................................. 20 or lower
3-year-olds ................................................................. 16
4-year-olds ................................................................. 20
Staff-child ratio ................................................................. 1:10 or better
3-year-olds ................................................................. 2:16
4-year-olds ................................................................. 1:10
Screening/referral ................................................................. Health; and support services | Vision, hearing, health; and | ✔
and support services | at least 1 support service | 
Meals ................................................................. Breakfast and lunch | At least 1/day | ✔
Monitoring ................................................................. Site visits and other monitoring | Site visits | ✔

RESOURCES

Total district pre-K spending....................................................... $157,440,000

Local match required? ................................................................. No

District spending per child enrolled .............................................. $13,974

All reported spending per child enrolled* ...................................... $14,938

*BENCHMARKS MET

† All special education children are in district-funded pre-K.

1 Some duplication may exist in enrollment counts for the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program and federal Head Start although that amount is unknown.

2 Teachers in public settings are required to have a BA with early childhood certification. Teachers in nonpublic settings, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), are required to have at least an associate degree in child development, early childhood education, or child and family studies, and must be enrolled in a bachelor's degree program and on track to receive the degree by September 1, 2017.

3 Federal Head Start per-child spending for the 2011-2012 year includes funding only for 3- and 4-year-olds served. Past years’ figures have unintentionally included funds for Early Head Start.

4 While the program does require site visits for both DCPS and CBO settings, there is no guarantee that programs receive a visit on the schedule required for this benchmark. Based on further clarification, this policy does not meet NIEER’s requirement.

5 While some programs have an on-site Health Center, health exams are not always available. Students must have a completed DC Universal Health Certificate. Support services include annual parent conferences (plus one annual home visit for Head Start programs), parent involvement activities, and transition to kindergarten activities. Other support services are determined locally.

6 Spending amounts include district-level funding for the D.C. Pre-K Program across all DCPS, Charters, and CBOs, totaling $157,440,000. Spending is based on the per-pupil funding formula of $11,978 per 3-year-old and $11,629 per 4-year-old with adjustments for special education and limited English proficiency students. DCPS also spends $10,870,000 in Head Start funds.
D.C. PUBLIC PRE-KINDERGARTEN (CHARTER)

ACCESS

Total district program enrollment ...........................................5,382
School districts that offer state program ................................100%^{1}
Income requirement...............................................................None
Hours of operation ...............................................................Determined locally
Operating schedule .............................................................Academic year
Special education enrollment ..................................................852
Federal Head Start enrollment, ages 3 & 4 ..............................2,645
District-funded Head Start enrollment .................................0

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY | DISTRICT PRE-K REQUIREMENT | BENCHMARK | DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?
--- | --- | --- | ---
Early learning standards ..................................................Comprehensive | Comprehensive | ✓
Teacher degree ...............................................................None^{3} | BA | √
Teacher specialized training ..............................................None^{3} | Specializing in pre-K | √
Assistant teacher degree ....................................................None^{3} | CDA or equivalent | √
Teacher in-service ............................................................At least 15 hours/year | √
Maximum class size ..........................................................20 or lower | √
3-year-olds .................................................................Determined locally | √
4-year-olds .................................................................Determined locally | √
Staff-child ratio ..............................................................1:10 or better | √
3-year-olds .................................................................Determined locally | √
4-year-olds .................................................................Determined locally | √
Screening/referral ..........................................................Health, dental; Vision, hearing, health; and support services | at least 1 support service | √
Meals .................................................................Lunch^{5} | At least 1/day | ✓
Monitoring ..............................................................Site visits and other monitoring^{4} | Site visits | √

RESOURCES

Total district pre-K spending..............................................$157,440,000^{6}
Local match required? ...........................................................No
District spending per child enrolled ....................................$13,974^{7}
All reported spending per child enrolled^{*} ...........................$14,938^{7}

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

<table>
<thead>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. DC Public Charter Schools that are “chartered” to offer preschool and/or pre-K must have approval by their charters from the DC Public Charter School Board to open a preschool or pre-K classroom.
2. Programs must offer at least 180 days or 900 hours of instruction per year. Most programs are 5 days per week, although some offer a longer school day to accommodate a half day for professional development within a 4.5 day per week school schedule.
3. DCPS can only regulate lead and assistant teacher degree requirements for schools that accept Title 1 funds, which must require lead teachers have a BA and assistant teachers have an AA. All but one charter school in the 2011-2012 year received Title 1 funds. Each LEA can determine specific requirements/specialty of the degree, though child development, early childhood education, and/or child/family studies is preferred. Charter schools that receive additional funds from the Office of the State Superintendent (OSSE) must abide the OSSE policy that any lead teacher without a BA must have it by 2014 and any assistant teacher must have an AA by 2014.

Spending amounts include district-level funding for the D.C. Pre-K Program across all DCPS, Charters, and CBOs, totaling $157,440,000. Spending is based on the per-pupil funding formula of $11,994 per 3-year-old and $11,499 per 4-year-old with adjustments for special education and limited English proficiency students. DCPS also spends $10,870,000 in Head Start funds.

Screens for vision, hearing, and psychological/behavioral are locally determined. Support services include health services for children, referral for social service, and parent handbook outlining school policies.

Most programs also provide breakfast and snack.

Charter school are visited by DCPSCB as per its PDR schedule, but visits are not specifically guaranteed for pre-K classrooms. Based on further clarification, this policy does not meet NIEER’s requirement.

All special education children are in district-funded pre-K.
Kindergarten to College: Local Innovation, National Impact

Designed to promote savings and economic mobility, Children’s Savings Accounts (CSAs) are universal, long-term, asset-building accounts established for children with public seed money and that grow over time with additional deposits and earnings. San Francisco’s Kindergarten to College (K2C) initiative opens a CSA for all children entering kindergarten in the City’s public schools, putting San Francisco at the forefront of efforts to model how a national CSA policy could be implemented in the United States.

K2C is designed to reach four main goals:

1. **Increase likelihood of college attendance.** A child with a college savings account in any amount is seven times more likely to attend college than one without, regardless of income, race or academic achievement. K2C will increase academic aspirations for every child by making college a reality from the first day of school.

2. **Reduce financial exclusion.** Low-income and minority families are overwhelmingly excluded from mainstream financial products that build wealth. One in three San Francisco children are born into families with no savings or assets of any kind, one in two for African American and Latino children. K2C will help parents begin saving by simplifying the process for opening a college savings account and incentivizing deposits.

3. **Increase Financial Literacy.** K2C will be the vehicle that incorporates financial education into our school classrooms, as part of the math curriculum. With K2C, our schools can create a culture of savings, improve financial literacy, increase assets, and bring more children and families into the financial mainstream.

4. **Leverage private investment in San Francisco families.** K2C will leverage private funds for savings matches, create behavioral incentives, and help families earn money for college at significantly higher rates than they can earn by saving on their own.

**The Basics**

- By 2012, **every** child entering a kindergarten class in a San Francisco public school will receive a college savings account with an opening deposit of $50 from the City and County of San Francisco.
- The City incentivizes application for the free and reduced lunch program by providing an additional $50 deposit to the accounts of eligible children in families returning the applications on time.
- Friends and family members, employers and the children themselves are encouraged to make additional deposits into the account.
- The City continues to fundraise to match deposits, helping accounts to grow and encouraging further investment by family and friends. Funds are in place to match the first $100 of family savings.
- Culturally and developmentally appropriate financial education will be provided to parents/caregivers and children.
- A pilot began implementation in spring 2010 with entering kindergarteners enrolling in a subset (18) of the City’s elementary schools. In March 2011, 1132 accounts were opened for students in this cohort.
- Lessons learned from K2C will be widely disseminated and used to inform state and national policy.

**The Partnership**

Kindergarten to College is an initiative of the San Francisco Mayor’s Office, the Office of the Treasurer, the Department of Children, Youth, & Their Families and the San Francisco Unified School District, with support from CFED, EARN, and the New America Foundation and San Francisco Foundation. Accounts are held at Citibank.

K2C, K2C Kids to College (logo), Kids to College, Kids2College, and the Kids 2 College (logo) are registered service marks of The Sallie Mae Fund, a charitable organization sponsored by Sallie Mae, Inc. The Sallie Mae Fund, including its parent, affiliates and subsidiaries, are not affiliated with the City and County of San Francisco’s Kindergarten to College Program. Visit TheSallieMaeFund.org to learn more.
Early childhood ed will be major focus of city's anti-poverty plan

by Sonia Giebel

The report on the mayor's new plan to address poverty noted one especially sobering fact: 39 percent of Philadelphia's children live in poverty.

As a result, a major part of the Shared Prosperity Philadelphia plan is to beef up early childhood education by identifying areas where the need isn’t being met and tracking the readiness of young children to enter kindergarten. The plan defines this initiative as a focus on “learning preparedness.”

"We fully understand the vital role that public education plays in fighting poverty and breaking the intergenerational transfer of poverty," said Eva Gladstein, the executive director of the Mayor’s Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity. "Our plan calls for us to help reduce the impact of poverty on citizens, especially children, by becoming a hub and coordinating services."

Her office hopes to establish greater points of contact with Philadelphia parents in an effort to increase access to quality pre-K options, afterschool and summer enrichment programs, as well as adult and child literacy.

Shared Prosperity Philadelphia is set up to be collaborative, with various organizations working together to address the issue. As part of the announcement, Gladstein said that the goal is to “maximize the impact of every anti-poverty dollar we now have” as well as “inspire more investment and commitment from government and other sources."

But there is no budget or detailed plan of execution for the initiative yet, Gladstein said in an interview. Her office manages a federally funded annual community services block grant of $4.8 million, which will be used to help fund the effort.

On June 25, the city unveiled a $500,000 grant to Philadelphia for Early Childhood Education, an early-childhood-learning advocacy group, in an effort to revamp and expand the city's early-childhood resources and facilities.
Janet Filante, executive director of PECE, is hopeful about Shared Prosperity's ambitions.

"We're very happy to see this as part of the package and vision and we certainly have a lot of ideas as to how to make the vision reality," she said. “Our goals certainly fit with this [plan]."

PECE did not officially work with the mayor's office in the development of Shared Prosperity Philadelphia.

Philadelphia's overall poverty rate -- 28 percent -- is the highest among the nation's 10 largest cities. More than 430,000 of the city's 1.5 million residents live below the federal poverty line. A disproportionate number of those are Black or Latino citizens.

In addition to early childhood education, Shared Prosperity addresses jobs and training, access to benefits, housing security, and economic security.

Sonia Giebel is an intern at the Notebook.


Links:
[1] [http://thenotebook.org/users/thenotebook](http://thenotebook.org/users/thenotebook)
CHICAGO — The preschoolers who arrived at school early for free breakfast on a recent morning quietly ate granola bars and yogurt as middle school students recited part of the rosary over the public address system.

Almost none of the 4- and 5-year-olds attending the Academy of St. Benedict the African, a parochial school here in the poverty-stricken Englewood neighborhood, are Catholic. But virtually all of them pay little or no tuition, which is subsidized by public funds.

Starting this fall, under an expansion led by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the number of Catholic schools in the city receiving taxpayer money for preschool will nearly double. Across the country, states and districts are increasingly funneling public funds to religious schools, private nursery schools and a variety of community-based nonprofit organizations that conduct preschool classes.

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University, about one-third of students enrolled in state-financed preschool programs attend classes conducted outside the public schools. In some states, the proportion is much higher: in New Jersey, close to 60 percent of students in publicly financed preschool are enrolled in private, nonprofit or Head Start centers, and in Florida, about 84 percent of 4-year-olds in state-financed prekindergarten attend classes run by private, faith-based or family centers.

Now, as President Obama pushes a proposal to provide public preschool for all 4-year-olds from families with low or moderate incomes, his administration acknowledges that many children will attend classes outside the public schools.

Advocates say that with standards for the educational credentials of the teachers, class sizes and the quality of curriculum, such arrangements can work.

“High-quality pre-K can happen in church basements, community centers or within the Y.M.C.A., as long as the standards are there,” said Lisa Guernsey, the director of early education at the New America Foundation, a nonprofit policy institute.

At a time when more lawmakers and activist groups are pushing to direct public money to parents through vouchers or tax-credit scholarships, some say the preschool financing structure could set a precedent for the rest of formal public schooling.

“K-12 is heading to where early childhood has always been,” said Harriet Dichter, the executive director of the Delaware Office of Early Learning who helped set up Pennsylvania’s public preschool program when she was an education official there. “It’s always been in this market kind of thing.”

Last fall, Mr. Emanuel invited traditional public schools, charter schools, religious schools, community-based groups and Head Start centers to bid — and in some cases rebid — for public financing for preschool.
In all, more than half of the publicly financed classes in Chicago, serving about 44,600 children, will be run by organizations that are not part of the public school district. Just over one in 10 students will attend preschools operated by faith-based groups.

“I wanted to use competitiveness to reward the best in the class,” Mr. Emanuel said in an interview, “and not just say because you’re a Head Start or a public school, you win by default.”

The patchwork nature of preschool across the country has evolved, driven by private initiatives and a welter of federal, state and local child care financing streams, including Head Start.

Frequently overcrowded public schools do not always have the space to add preschool classrooms. And many preschool classes — particularly those that serve low-income working families — are embedded in broader day care centers that operate longer days than a typical public school.

Experts in early education say that states and school districts need to supervise private preschools regularly. Across the country, practices vary: only four states received top marks from the National Institute for Early Education Research for the quality standards they set for preschools.

Still, even those who oppose using public dollars to pay for private schooling in elementary and high school accept that the logistics of expanding preschool will require help from outside the traditional public schools.

“We recognized the realities of the field,” said Shyrelle Eubanks, an early education specialist for the National Education Association, the country’s largest teachers’ union. “If we were ever going to have universal prekindergarten in the United States, it was likely going to have a mixed delivery system.”

The Obama administration is carefully navigating the politically delicate issue as it promotes the president’s preschool proposal.

Daren Briscoe, a spokesman for the federal Department of Education, said in an e-mail that the public pre-K plan “builds on the diverse delivery system that currently exists,” but that it “is not directly applicable to the K-12 system.”

Here in Chicago, the mayor allocated $36 million over three years, using revenues from traffic cameras installed near schools and parks, to add 5,000 new public pre-K slots for the city’s poorest families.

Including city, federal and state sources, public financing in Chicago amounts to an average of $4,000 per child. To qualify, preschools must follow approved curriculum guidelines and hire teachers with bachelor’s degrees and early childhood certifications. They must also provide health screenings and other social services for parents as well as students.

The Archdiocese of Chicago has provided publicly subsidized preschool classes for seven years in 14 locations. This fall, it will add 13 more.

On a recent morning at Academy of St. Benedict the African, where nearly all the preschoolers are eligible for free and reduced lunch, Amanda Lindsey, a preschool teacher, displayed a YouTube video on a digital whiteboard at the front of the classroom. The children, sitting cross-legged on the carpet, sang along with “Do You Know Your Alphabet?”

Patricia Murphy, the school’s principal for more than two decades, said that before the school received public money, it crammed more than 30 children into one preschool classroom.

Under city standards, the school now has two classes of no more than 20 children, each with a teacher and an assistant. Religious education cannot take place during the 2 1/2 hours paid for with public funds.
Salaries for the school’s preschool teachers are about $30,000 a year, Ms. Murphy said, about two-thirds the starting salary of $49,660 for a public school teacher in the city.

Such pay disparities worry teachers’ unions. “My concern is whether or not these kids get the quality of teacher they should have,” said Lynn Cherkasky-Davis, the director of professional learning for the Chicago Teachers Union.

At the archdiocese, Sister Mary Paul McCaughey, the superintendent of schools, said families should be allowed to use the public money to send their children to Catholic schools beyond preschool, just as college students can use federal loans to attend private universities. Giving parents such choice, she said, “seems just common sense for me.”

Latasha Moore, who grew up in the Englewood neighborhood attending public schools, heard about the Academy of St. Benedict from friends. Her older son, Raji, 4, has been attending since last fall.

“The difference for my son from when he started until now is a drastic change,” she said as she dropped him off at breakfast. “He is actually reading things. He is adding and multiplying two-digit numbers.”

Ms. Moore, who is not Catholic, said she planned to send both Raji and her younger son to the academy through high school graduation.

“If I have to beg, borrow and steal,” said Ms. Moore, who works as a nursing assistant, “I will.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/14/education/private-preschools-see-more-public-funds-as-classes-grow.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR VOTERS, SECOND ONLY TO INCREASING JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

The bipartisan research team of Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research recently completed a survey of 800 voters throughout the United States.\(^1\) It revealed overwhelming support for ensuring that children gain the knowledge and skills necessary to start kindergarten off on the right foot, with a majority of voters saying that we should do more to achieve this goal. When presented with the broad outlines of a federal plan that helps states provide better early childhood education programs to low- and middle-income families without increasing the debt, fully seven-in-ten voice their support—with strong majorities of support among Republicans (60%), Independents (64%) and Democrats (84%).

**American voters rate ensuring children get a good start in life as an important national priority.**

In fact, 86% say this is important, second only to increasing jobs and economic growth.

![Chart showing voter priorities](https://www.ffyf.org)

**Voters say we need to do more to prepare our children for success in school and life.**

- 68% of voters think that half or fewer children begin kindergarten with the knowledge and skills they need to do their best in school.
- 70% of voters say we should be doing more to ensure that children begin kindergarten with the proper knowledge and skills to succeed.

**Voters believe parents need help with early childhood development and government can provide it.**

- 89% say it is important to make early education and child care more affordable for working families to give children a strong start.
- 86% want the federal government to help states and local communities build better preschool services and make them more accessible to children from low- and middle-income families.

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\(^1\) **Methodology:** Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research conducted a telephone survey of N=800 voters throughout the country on both landline and cell phones. The survey was conducted July 9-11, 2013 and has an overall margin of error of ±3.4%. Sampling error for subgroups within the sample will be larger. The sample was distributed proportionally throughout the nation and is demographically representative of the electorate.
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IS A TOP PRIORITY FOR VOTERS, SECOND ONLY TO INCREASING JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

Seven-in-ten American voters support a federal plan to help states and local communities provide better early childhood education. Respondents were presented with a plan put before Congress, which broadly outlined the plan’s features as well as how the $10 billion-per-year-for-ten-year initiative would be financed.

“Congress is considering a plan that helps states and local communities provide better early childhood education programs to parents of children from birth to five. It provides ten billion dollars per year for ten years in grants to states to provide all low and moderate income four year olds with voluntary access to high quality preschool programs. It also makes available voluntary programs in high quality early education and child care for infants and toddlers, as well as home visiting and parent education. The plan would be paid for by a 94-cent per pack increase in the cigarette tax and not add to the federal budget deficit.”

Again, this registers strong support among the electorate, as 70% indicate support and a stunning 50% say they strongly support the proposal.

Support for the proposal goes up when voters understand the proposal does not add to the deficit.
When asked if they would support the proposal if it did not add to the debt or deficit, support for the plan increases to 77%.

Support for this proposal is broad-based and widespread, with large majorities of voters across the political spectrum and all key demographic groups in support:

- Democrats (84%), Independents (64%) and Republicans (60%);
- Parents (74%) and those without children at home (68%);
- Hispanics (83%), African Americans (82%) and white voters (65%);
- Workers (71%), and those not in the workforce currently (67%);
- Voters of every age group (79% of voters under the age of 35 to 65% of seniors);
- Voters in every region of the country (68% or higher); and
- Voters at every education level and income category (65% or higher).

There is a clear desire for Congress to take action now on this issue. Three-in-five (63%) prefer Congress “take action now,” rather than “wait until later to consider this proposal.”