



Early Care and Education in Louisiana 2018

Section I: Issue Overview

The research is now clear: high quality early care and education can have profound long term positive effects on children, including less referrals for special education services, fewer grade retentions, higher test scores and graduation rates, and decreased likelihood of involvement in the juvenile justice system.ⁱ The science of brain development explains the connection between early learning experiences and long-term success. Ninety percent of brain development takes place from birth through age four. Neural circuits formed in the brain in these years lay the groundwork for future learning and behavior. High-quality early learning experiences rich in stimulation nurture the development of robust brain circuitry, while adverse experiences weaken it. A child’s experiences from birth through age four wire a child’s brain for success or failure in school, work and life.ⁱⁱ Meanwhile as more and more children have both parents in the workforce, the need for high quality, affordable, early care and education becomes more critical. In Louisiana, 61% of mothers of infants are in the labor forceⁱⁱⁱ, and 68% of children age 5 and under have both, or their only parent, in the workforce and must spend significant time in child care.^{iv} However, child care costs almost as much as a public college tuition in Louisiana and across the nation.^v

The research is equally clear that public investment in early childhood provides a greater return than any other time of life. Nobel Prize-winning economist James Heckman of the University of Chicago describes investing in the care and education of young children as “the most efficient use” of a state’s financial resources. His most recent research shows a 13% return on investment for high-quality birth-to-five programs for disadvantaged children.^{vi}

However, for states to gain the full benefits of an early learning program — both in terms of educational outcomes for children and financial savings— they must do two things: 1) promote and sustain high-quality standards, and 2) ensure children have access. In short, both quality and quantity are key ingredients of a successful early care and education system.

Given the compelling research, the federal government and states across the country have expanded their early childhood initiatives. Over the past decade, governors from both political parties have pushed for the creation and expansion of publicly funded preschool programs. Since 2003, states have increased their investment in preschool by more than 200 percent. The federal government has undertaken important efforts both to improve the quality of early learning programs and to expand the number of children served. For example, in 2011, for the first time, new rules required Head Start programs that did not meet specific quality benchmarks to re-compete for their grants. Also, since 2008, Congress has increased funding for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs by about 12 percent. Furthermore, to expand Pre-K for 4 year olds, in 2014 Congress created the Preschool Development Grants program, a 4-year, federal-state partnership to expand the number of children

enrolled in high-quality preschool programs in high-need communities. Louisiana was one of only 18 states to win one of these competitive grants in its initial year of implementation.^{vii}

Section II: The State of the State-Louisiana

In Louisiana, more than 40% of our children enter kindergarten already behind.^{viii} Even with the infusion of the federal dollars described above, Louisiana's early care and education system is underfunded and out-of-reach for most children under age 4, and the funding for the 4 year olds is inadequate and unstable. In stark contrast to other states and the federal government, Louisiana has substantially decreased its spending on early care and education in the last eight years—to the point that we now appropriate less than ½ of 1% of our state general funds on early care and education.

Louisiana has a number of high quality, public Pre-K programs for at-risk 4-year-olds, including the Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood Program, the 8(g) Student Enhancement Block Grant Program, and the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program. Combined with the federally funded Head Start 4 year old slots and the Preschool Development Grant described above, 89% of at-risk 4 year olds in Louisiana can access a 4 year old Pre-K slot.^{ix} These Pre-K programs are generally of high quality. LA4, the largest Pre-K program, is ranked 8 out of 10 based on national standards, and a longitudinal study of children who participated in LA4 identified long-term benefits that included significantly fewer special-education placements, significantly higher on-time arrival in 4th grade, and significantly higher test scores in the spring of 3rd grade on the iLEAP test.^x Yet, funding for LA4 has decreased from \$82.5 million in 2008 to \$74 million for the 2017-18 school year. Funding for the smaller 8(g) program and the NSCED Pre-K programs also have been reduced. Pre-K funds in Louisiana are not part of the K-12 school funding formula, and therefore need to be separately appropriated (and protected) each year.

For children under age 4 in Louisiana, especially at-risk children, high quality early care and education is severely underfunded. Overall, only 15% of at-risk children under age four have access to ANY publicly funded program, including only 35% of at-risk three year olds, 13% of at-risk two year olds, 9% of at-risk one year olds, and 5% of at-risk infants.^{xi} This is in spite of the fact that 68% of children birth through age five in Louisiana have both parents – or their single parent – in the workforce.^{xii} Funding for the only state administered early care and education program for children under age 4, the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), has been substantially cut in the last eight years. The number of children served has gone from almost 40,000 to around 15,000 today.^{xiii} Although the state has recently increased the amount of the subsidy per child—to allow programs to actually meet the quality standards the state has set—Louisiana is using reserved federal funds to pay for the increase, which is expected to run out by 2018.^{xiv} Numerous reports continue to show high quality child care is unaffordable for most low-income, working parents in Louisiana.^{xv}

In addition, a recent report made clear the acute economic costs to Louisiana employers and workers caused by child care instability in the state. The report found that one in seven respondents with a child age four or under had turned down a promotion at work due to child care issues, and nearly one in five reporting leaving full-time employment for part-time work due to the same cause. Almost half of both men and women reported missing work regularly due to problems with child care, one in six had quit a job, and one in 13 had been fired because of child care issues. Overall, the cost of inadequate access to child care totaled \$816 million to Louisiana employers due to employee absences and turnover, nearly \$84 million in state tax revenue due to lost workplace productivity, and \$1.1 billion to Louisiana's economy from the spillover effects of inadequate care.^{xvi}

Meanwhile, the Early Childhood Education Act (Act 3) of 2012 created sweeping reforms to early care and education with the goal of improving school-readiness among Louisiana’s children. Act 3 provided for the formation of one early childhood system uniting all publicly funded early care and education programs under the direction of the Department of Education and the state board of education. The Act mandated the development of aligned program standards; a new accountability system that is required for all programs receiving state and/or federal funds; a unified professional development system; birth through-five early learning and development standards^{xvii}; and later legislation mandated a common enrollment system^{xviii}. Much progress has been made in the implementation of Act 3, including the transition of all early care and education programs to the Department of Education under the supervision of the state board of education, the development and adoption of Louisiana’s Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards^{xix}, the development of a new totally unified accountability system based on the CLASS assessment^{xx}, the development of a new Birth to Kindergarten Teaching Certification and a new Early Childhood Ancillary Teaching Certification in Louisiana^{xxi}, tiering of curriculum and a curriculum initiative to ensure programs have access to high quality curriculum, and the continued development of a common enrollment system for all publicly funded early care and education programs statewide for children birth through age 4^{xxii}, including a [website](#) that maps every publicly funded program statewide. Many of these accomplishments position Louisiana to be unique in the nation in building a unified early care and education system across all publicly funded programs statewide—Pre-K, Head Start/Early Head Start and child care. However, progress has been hampered by the fact that Act 3 was essentially an unfunded mandate, providing few dollars for implementation, and no funding for programs to meet the new higher standards.

Section III: What’s Next for Louisiana

After five years of major policy development with Act 3, the next few years are most likely to be focused on implementation and on refining these policies. However, the most critical issue is funding. Without stable, sufficient funding for both early care and education slots and the infrastructure to support the system, it will be difficult for Louisiana to move forward—and not move backwards—in supporting our children at this critical time of life when there is the greatest return on our public investment.

Recommendations for Louisiana include:

Increase investment in early childhood programs in order to increase quality and access:

- 1) Restore funding in order to increase the number of children under age four served by the Child Care Assistance Program, the only state early care and education program for children this age, which and has gone from serving almost 40,000 children to 15,000 today. In addition, since the program was closed to new children July 1, 2017, there are over 5000 children on the waitlist. CCAP provides subsidies for parents who are working, in school or in training for early care and education for their young children.
- 2) Sustain funding for LA4 and the Nonpublic School Early Childhood Development Program for four-year-old Pre-K.
- 3) Sustain and increase the School Readiness Tax Credits.
- 4) Implement the recommendations of the Report to the House and Senate Committees of Education in Response to House Concurrent Resolution 174 of the 2015 Regular Legislative Session and its Appendix A^{xxiii} that set forth the need for additional dollars for early care and education in Louisiana and potential funding streams for those funds, including use of federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds, State General Funds, dedicating specific revenue source(s) to early childhood, exploring other innovative options such

as social impact bonds, and explore adding Pre-K into the Minimum Foundation Program while ensuring the availability of mixed/diverse delivery settings.

Support programs to meet Act 3's higher standards:

- 1) Strengthen and refine the system of targeted supports and incentives that are aligned to the Performance Rating System to more effectively drive quality improvement, especially for child care centers as now exists for LA4 and Head Start.
- 2) Develop representative local governance structures to support the most effective and efficient use of existing public funds to improve access to high quality early care and education for the entire spectrum of children birth through age four, and structure this governance to facilitate local investment in, accountability of, and supports for, early care and education at the parish or regional level.

Promote family choice in early care and education:

- 1) Use private centers as a fundamental part of Louisiana's Pre-K program by expanding the mixed/diverse delivery model.
- 2) Require licensing of small centers to safeguard the health and safety standards of all children in care outside the home.

The Louisiana Policy Institute is a source of non-partisan, independent information on issues concerning children ages birth through four in Louisiana. We also develop policy proposals informed by data, research, best practices and the experiences of other states for improving the outcomes of Louisiana's young children, and then provide educational and outreach activities around these recommendations.

For more information see www.policyinstitutela.org or contact Melanie Bronfin at mbronfin@policyinstitutela.org or 504-228-0988.

Endnotes

ⁱReynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., Robertson, D. L., & Mann, E. A. (2001, May 9). Long-term effects of an early childhood intervention on educational achievement and juvenile arrest: A 15-year follow-up of low-income children in public schools. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 285, 2339-2346; Schweinhart, L.J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W.S., Belfield, C.R., & Nores, M. (2005). *Lifetime effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press; Barnett, W.S., & Masse, L.N. (2007); Gormley Jr., William T., Gayer, T., Phillips, D. and Dawson, B. (2005), *The Effects of Universal Pre-K on Cognitive Development*. *Developmental Psychology*, 41: 872-884.; Weiland, C., and Yoshikawa, H. (2013), *Impacts of a prekindergarten program on children's mathematics, language, literacy, executive function, and emotional skills*. *Child Development*, 84: 2112-2130; Yoshikawa et al. (2013) *Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education*. The Society for Research in Child Development and The Foundation for Child Development. *Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian program and its policy implications*. *Economics of Education Review*, 26, 113 – 125.

ⁱⁱNational Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2000). *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff & Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. Retrieved from <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=0309069882> on March 14, 2016; Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M., Espinosa, L., Gormley, W., ... Zaslow, M. J. (2013).

ⁱⁱⁱZero to Three. (April 2015). *Louisiana State Baby Facts*. Retrieved from <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1147-louisiana-state-baby-facts> on July 11, 2016.

^{iv}Kids Count Data Center. (2017). *Children under age 6 with all available parents in the labor force*. Retrieved from <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=20&loct=2#detailed/2/20/false/870,573,869,36,868/any/11472,11473>

^vEconomic Policy Institute. (2015). *High Quality Child Care Is Out of Reach for Working Families*. Retrieved from <http://www.epi.org/publication/child-care-affordability/#child-care-costs-and-epi's-basic-family-budget> on March 20, 2016.

^{vi}The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program (2016). Retrieved from <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/lifecycle-benefits-influential-early-childhood-program/> on August 2, 2017.

^{vii}A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America. (April 2015). US Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/early-learning/matter-equity-preschool-america.pdf> on March 20, 2016.

^{viii}Data as shown on the Louisiana Kids Dashboard, a project of the Louisiana Children's Cabinet. Retrieved from <http://www.kidsdashboard.la.gov> on October 28, 2016.

-
- ^{ix} Early Childhood Care and Education Annual Report, presented by the Louisiana Department of Education to the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council February 4, 2016, slide 25. Retrieved from <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/2-4-16--ecce-ac--quarterly-and-annual-report-presentation-slides.pdf?sfvrsn=2> on March 20, 2016.
- ^x The State of Preschool 2017, National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Louisiana_YB2017.pdf on June 4, 2018. Picard Center (August 2011). "LA 4 Longitudinal Study: The impact of LA 4 participation on academic achievement in 3rd and 4th grade: iLEAP and LEAP performance for cohorts 1-4."
- ^{xi} Early Childhood Care and Education Annual Report, presented by the Louisiana Department of Education to the Early Childhood Care and Education Advisory Council February 21, 2018, slide 32. Retrieved from <https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/ecce-ac---presentation-slides---2-21-18.pdf?sfvrsn=2> on April 8, 2018.
- ^{xii} Kids Count Data Center. (2015). Children Under Age 6 With All Available Parents In The Labor Force (Louisiana figures). Baltimore, Maryland: Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5057-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force#detailed/2/20/false/870.573.869.36.868/any/11472.11473> on April 8, 2018.
- ^{xiii} Analysis of data on the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services website. Retrieved from http://www.defs.la.gov/assets/docs/searchable/OFS/Statistics/Stats07-08/CCAP/fy0708_CCAP_Totals_F.pdf on January 9, 2018. And analysis of data on the Louisiana Department of Education website. Retrieved from <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/child-care-assistance-program> see "2017 Child Care Program Statistics" retrieved on January 9, 2018.
- ^{xiv} Early Childhood Education Programs- CCAP Provider Payments. Focus on the Fisc. Vol. 4 Issue 7 (February 2016). Retrieved from http://lfo.louisiana.gov/files/publications/FY16_FocusOnTheFisc.pdf on January 10, 2018.
- ^{xv} Louisiana Alice Report (Fall 2015). Louisiana Association of United Ways. Retrieved from <http://www.launitedway.org/united-way-alice-report-louisiana> on March 22, 2016; Too Much for Too Many: What does it cost families to live in Louisiana? (2015). Jesuit Social Research Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.loyno.edu/jsri/sites/loyno.edu.jsri/files/JSRI%20SPECIAL%20REPORT%20Too%20Much%20for%20Too%20Many.pdf> on April 9, 2018.
- ^{xvi} Belinda Davis et al. "Losing Ground: How Child Care Impacts Louisiana's Workforce Productivity and the State Economy," Louisiana Policy Institute for Children (May 2017). Retrieved from http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/20d35d_476f91b779d74b74937ccdd9965d74e3.pdf on August 21, 2017.
- ^{xvii} Act 3 of 2012 Louisiana Legislative Session. Retrieved from <http://www.legis.la.gov/Legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=800894> on April 1, 2016.
- ^{xviii} Act 717 of 2014 Legislative Session. Retrieved from <http://www.legis.la.gov/legis/ViewDocument.aspx?d=915816> on April 2, 2016.
- ^{xix} Louisiana's Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards. Retrieved from <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/academic-standards/early-childhood--birth-to-five-standards.pdf?sfvrsn=7> on April 1, 2016. Also see Louisiana Bulletin 136- - The Louisiana Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education Programs Serving Children Birth-Five Years at <http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents-resources/policies-bulletins>.
- ^{xx} See Louisiana Bulletin 140-Child Care and Education Network at <http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents-resources/policies-bulletins>.
- ^{xxi} See Louisiana Bulletin 140-Child Care and Education Network at <http://bese.louisiana.gov/documents-resources/policies-bulletins>
- ^{xxii} See Coordinated Enrollment Self-Assessment Results: Summer 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/early-childhood/2015-coordinated-enrollment-self-assessment-results.pdf?sfvrsn=2> on April 2, 2016.
- ^{xxiii} Retrieved from [http://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/A5ZPWW66AA56/\\$file/AF_7.2_HCR_174_Report_2015_FINAL.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/la/bese/Board.nsf/files/A5ZPWW66AA56/$file/AF_7.2_HCR_174_Report_2015_FINAL.pdf) on April 28, 2016