

# *Profiles*

## *Braided Funding Collaborations and Public-Private Partnerships*

A look at a variety of models around the country in which publicly funded Pre-K is offered in community and private settings

- Livingston Parish, LA
- Sabine Parish, LA
- New Jersey
- New York
- Tennessee
- Wisconsin

Provided through BrightStart  
Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council

Compiled by Renee Lamoreau, BrightStart Tisch Summer Fellow, Tufts University

# Livingston Parish, Louisiana

## Livingston Parish LA4 Collaborates with Private Childcare and Head Start



Cajun arts & crafts festival<sup>1</sup>

*2011 Profile of Livingston Parish School Board Pre-K Program*

**Grades:** Pre-K (4 year olds)

**Program Length:** Full-day (6 hours)/5 days per week

**Pre-K Student Enrollment:** 420

**Percentage of Students in a Diverse Delivery Setting:** 9.5%

-20 students enrolled in a Dual-Language LA4/Head Start classroom.

-20 students enrolled in a LA4 funded classroom located in a private child care center.

**Percentage of Students Eligible for Meal Benefits:**

Collaborative classrooms, 90%

Livingston Parish, all grades, 47.2%

Louisiana, 66.1%

### **Funding Snapshot:**

(See full report for more details.)

In Livingston Parish, the funds are distributed as follows in the two collaborative classrooms:

#### **Dual Language LA4/Head Start Collaborative Classroom at Southeastern Louisiana University: Literacy/Tech Center in Walker, Louisiana**

- **Livingston Parish Contribution:** teachers' salary and benefits, classroom materials, afternoon transportation
- **Southeastern Louisiana University Contribution:** facility (partially owned by Livingston Parish), playground, some office supplies
- **Head Start:** family advocate's salary and benefits, meals (breakfast, lunch, and snack), minimal classroom materials (under \$100), field trip fees, morning transportation

#### **LA4/Private Child Care Collaborative Classroom:**

- **Livingston Parish Contribution:** teachers' salary and benefits, morning and afternoon transportation, facility usage rent (10% of the total program costs), all classroom equipment, materials and supplies
- **Fundamentals Early Learning Center:** meals (breakfast, lunch, and snack), facility, playground

## Program Highlights

The state of Louisiana currently offers three publically-funded pre-k programs: the 8(g) Model Early Childhood Program, the Cecil J. Picard LA4 Early Childhood Program, and the Non-Public Schools Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD). As of 2011, LA4 is the largest of the three initiatives, enrolling 15,706 children statewide<sup>2</sup>. The financing of LA4 incorporates federal TANF money, state general funds, and local financial contributions<sup>2</sup>. School administrators, childcare directors, and Head Start representatives must make these funding decisions at the district level to sustain a successful pre-k partnership.

Livingston Parish has successfully implemented this community-based model in two LA4 sites. Both sites utilize a braided funding system to allocate separate funding streams to specific pre-k services. The first site operates out of the Literacy/Technology Center in Walker, Louisiana, and utilizes a dual-language (Spanish/English) curriculum. This program braids Livingston Parish LA 4, Southeastern Louisiana University, and Head Start funding. The second program operates out of Fundamentals Early Learning Center in Walker, LA. Modeled after the Southeastern classroom, this program braids LA4, Livingston Parish, Fundamentals Early Learning Academy, CCAP and private tuition funding.

### **LOCAL PARTNERS IN LIVINGSTON PARISH, LA:**

- **Dual-Language LA4/Head Start Classroom**
  - Louisiana Department of Education, Literacy Goal Office (LA4)
  - Livingston Parish School District: Walker Elementary School
  - Regina Coeli Head Start
  - Southeastern Louisiana University
  
- **LA4/Fundamentals Classroom:**
  - Louisiana Department of Education, Literacy Goal Office (LA4)
  - Livingston Parish School District: North Corbin Elementary School
  - Fundamentals Early Learning Academy, Walker, LA

### **MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE LIVINGSTON PARISH LA4 PROGRAM:**

- **Eligibility Requirements:** The state does not assign universal eligibility requirements for the LA4 program. All age-eligible children in Louisiana may participate in the program. However, children who qualify for free- or reduced-lunch (185% of the FPL) may enroll free of charge.

Children from over-income families may attend using local funds (i.e. school district money) or tuition payments. If the district charges tuition fees, school administrators establish a sliding payment scale for children exceeding the 185% FPL income maximum<sup>2</sup>.

- **Livingston Parish Eligibility:** According to Carla Gongre, pre-k curriculum specialist for Livingston Parish schools, “there is such a demand [for public pre-k] that there is never a lack of children who qualify for free or reduced meals.” Both collaborative LA4 programs only enroll children who meet the 185% FPL income requirement.
  
- **Connection to Local Elementary Schools:** All Livingston pre-K students begin the day at local elementary schools and meet as a group. The students then travel by bus, one teacher and driver per vehicle, to the pre-k classroom. Carla Gongre ensures that both community-based LA4 classrooms do not operate in isolation of the local school districts. Gongre considers both collaborative LA4 classrooms in Livingston Parish to be “satellites” of local elementary schools. Elementary and pre-K administrators actively integrate the two programs to create a more efficient early childhood system.
  
- **Full Day and Enrichment Programming:** LA4 classrooms must operate for 6 hours/day, 5 days/week. LA4 programs may also offer 4 hours of before- and after-school enrichment programs<sup>2</sup>. Children enrolled in the Fundamentals/LA4 collaboration may receive wraparound care directly at the Fundamentals childcare center.
  
- **Early Learning Standards:** *Bulletin 105: Louisiana Content Standards for Programs Serving 4-year-old Children* outlines all LA4 early learning standards. This document summarizes developmentally appropriate practices, general content standards, and alternate approaches to learning. The sections of *Bulletin 105* define each area of early childhood development: social-emotional, creative arts, language, literacy, health, physical, and cognitive development in three subject areas (mathematics, science, social studies).<sup>3</sup>
  - The LA4/Head Start classroom follows these LA 4 guidelines, as well as Head Start guidelines and best practices for dual languages classes.
  - The Fundamentals/LA4 classroom follows all LA4 and child care licensing guidelines.
  
- **Teacher Qualifications:** LA4 teachers must have a bachelor’s degree with specialized pre-k training. Pre-k training may include a certification in nursery, kindergarten, pre-K–3, early intervention, or non-categorical preschool handicapped<sup>2</sup>.
  
- **Assistant Teacher Qualifications:** LA4 assistant teachers must have a high school diploma. Assistants must also pass the Para Pro test, a general aptitude test for teacher aids<sup>2</sup>. Head Start affiliated assistants must have at least a CDA.

- **Teacher In-Service:** 18 hours of professional development are provided through the LA 4 district coordinator, as per program guidelines. Livingston Parish pre-k teachers are encouraged to collaborate across grade levels in professional development sessions. This inter-grade collaboration creates continuity between the pre-k and elementary program. Pre-K teachers feel connected to the larger educational system and to district-level expectations. Therefore, teachers can ensure that pre-k children are fully prepared to enter kindergarten.
- **Maximum Class Size:** Each LA4 classroom may enroll a maximum of 20 children. Each class must have a child-to-lead teacher ratio of 20:1 and a child-to-adult staff member ratio of 10:1<sup>2</sup>.
- **Screening/Referral and Family Support Services:** Students in the LA4/Head Start collaborative class have hearing, vision and dental screening conducted through Head Start personnel.
- **Family engagement programming:** LA4 family programming must include parent-teacher meetings, parent group activities, and workshops relating to child development<sup>4</sup>. Head Start requires that teachers also conduct two annual home visits. In the Hammond LA4/Head Start collaboration, teachers combine home visits with parent-teacher meetings to satisfy both regulations.
- **Monitoring:** The Louisiana Department of Education conducts yearly program monitoring of all LA4 classrooms. Prior to the 2013-14 school year, state educational consultants made structured observations of classroom quality using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), a technical assistance checklist and CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System). An annual ECERS assessment was at that time required for new teachers, teachers scoring below a 5.0 in the previous year, teachers in targeted schools, and districts with outlying DSC assessment scores<sup>2</sup>. There will now be one common quality rating system developed through the Early Childhood ReDesign in Louisiana.
- **Quality Rating System (QRIS):** LA4 classrooms in community-based settings must participate in QRIS, a five star rating system for childcare facilities. These facilities must have at least four stars to receive LA4 funding<sup>4</sup>. Fundamentals Early Learning Academy in Walker, LA is a four-star center, working on its fifth star.
  - Since the LDOE recently adopted this regulation, the state may exempt older collaborations from this rule. The Hammond LA4/Head Start classroom is one of these exceptions. Although the Hammond site is two-star classroom, the program has existed for five years and continues to receive LA4 funding.

## Funding

Livingston has utilized a variety of funding sources for its pre-k program. Both sites currently utilize statewide LA4 money which blends federal, state, and local funds. The following descriptions define the role of each LA4 funding source from the federal to local level:

- **Federal TANF Funds:** Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is a federal cash assistance program and funding source for the Louisiana Department of Children and Families (DCFS). TANF funds provide almost 90% of all LA4 funding. DCFS receives federal TANF funds allocated for the LA4 program, and then transfers this money to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). The LDOE supervises all LA4 services and ensures that the program meets certain TANF guidelines. The services provided in the LA4 program meet the following TANF goals<sup>5</sup>:
  - **TANF Goal 3:** “to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies.”
  - **TANF Goal 4:** “to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families by placing children in learning environments at the pre-school level to foster an interest in learning, increase literacy levels and increase the likelihood of developing responsible behavior.”
  
- **State Control:** The Louisiana Department of Education contributes approximately \$6,027,807 in state general funds to LA4. Of the \$6,027,807 in state money, \$1,000,000 must supplement the before- and after-school enrichment programs. This allocation is from a statutory dedication which dictates the distribution of state LA4 funds. The LDOE distributes per-pupil LA4 funds according to the number of available pre-K slots in each district<sup>2</sup>.
  
- **District Implementation of LA4 in Livingston Parish:** Public and charter schools are the only eligible recipients of LA4 funding. When collaborating with Head Start agencies or private childcare providers, schools subcontract with the organization and provide funding accordingly<sup>2</sup>. All parties sign a MOU which outlines the financial responsibilities of each organization. In Livingston Parish, the funds are distributed as follows in the two LA4 classrooms:
  - **Dual Language LA4/Head Start Classroom: Literacy/Tech Center in Walker, Louisiana:**
    - ✓ **Livingston Parish Contribution:** teachers’ salary and benefits, classroom materials, facility (partially owned by Southeastern Louisiana University), afternoon transportation
    - ✓ **Southeastern Louisiana University Contribution:** facility (partially owned by Livingston Parish), playground, some office supplies

- ✓ **Head Start:** family advocate's salary and benefits, meals (breakfast, lunch, and snack), minimal classroom materials (under 100\$), field trip fees, morning transportation
- **LA4/Fundamentals Classroom:**
  - ✓ **Livingston Parish Contribution:** teachers' salary and benefits, morning and afternoon transportation, facility usage rent (10% of the total program costs), all classroom equipment, materials and supplies
  - ✓ **Fundamentals Early Learning Center:** meals (breakfast, lunch, and snack), facility, playground

## Areas of Improvement

- **Teacher Turnover:** According to Carla Gongre, the success of her collaborative LA4 program is "all about finding the right teacher." High teacher turnover, a common problem in the childcare industry, is one of Gongre's biggest challenges. Teacher turnover weakens the effectiveness of the professional development program and the continuity of high-quality care.
- **Spending on Pre-K:** Spending on state pre-k programs over the past decade was level between 2002-2007 and reached a high point in 2008. While the funding has remained essentially stable, due to increased enrollment, the per child funding has declined 26 percent since 2008<sup>2</sup>.

## Contacts

- **Carla Gongre**, Livingston Parish Pre-K Curriculum Coordinator  
[carla.gongre@lpsb.org](mailto:carla.gongre@lpsb.org)  
(225) 686-4265
- **Wyatt Graves**, Director of Fundamentals Early Learning Academy  
[twgraves@gmail.com](mailto:twgraves@gmail.com)  
(225) 235-7223
- **Maureen Gallagher**, Diverse Delivery Coordinator, BrightStart  
[maureeng406@yahoo.com](mailto:maureeng406@yahoo.com)  
(318) 512-9218

<sup>1</sup> Cajun arts & crafts fest. (2012). *Livingston Parish News, Photo Gallery*. Retrieved from [http://livingstonparishnews.com/gallery/collection\\_68d65588-7fd6-11e0-84d5-001cc4c03286.html](http://livingstonparishnews.com/gallery/collection_68d65588-7fd6-11e0-84d5-001cc4c03286.html)

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, S.W., Carolan, M.E., Fitzgerald, J. & Squires, J.H. (2011). The state of preschool 2011. *The National Institute of Early Education Research*. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/yearbook>.

<sup>3</sup> Bulletin 105: Louisiana content standards for programs serving four-year old children. (2003). *Louisiana Department of Education, Literacy Goal Office*. Retrieved from <http://doe.louisiana.gov/bese/policies.html>

<sup>4</sup> LA4 Guidelines and Implementation Handbook (2010). Louisiana Department of Education. Retrieved from [http://www.doe.state.la.us/offices/literacy/childhood\\_programs.html](http://www.doe.state.la.us/offices/literacy/childhood_programs.html)

<sup>5</sup> TANF state plan. (2011). Department of Children and Family Services. Retrieved from <http://www.dcf.louisiana.gov/assets/docs/searchable/EconomicStability/TANF/TANFStatePlanAmended20112012.pdf>

**Compiled by Renee Lamoreau  
BrightStart Tisch Summer Fellow, Tufts University**



# Sabine Parish, Louisiana

Sabine Parish Schools Collaborate with Head Start



## 2011 State and District-Level Profile of LA4<sup>1</sup>

**Grades:** Pre-K (4 year-olds)

**Statewide LA4 Student Enrollment:** 15,706

Public Schools: 15,580

Head Start: 60

Private Childcare: 66

**Sabine Parish Public Pre-K Student Enrollment:** 350

15 Collaborative LA4/Head Start Classrooms

2 Collaborative 8(g)/Head Start Classrooms

**Total LA4 Funding:** \$76,577,807

State: \$6,027,807

State General Fund: \$5,027,807

State Statutory Dedication: (\$1,000,000)

Federal TANF funds: \$68,550,000

Non-Required Local: \$2,000,000

**Sabine Parish Community Type:** rural

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The state of Louisiana currently offers three publically-funded pre-k programs: the 8(g) Model Early Childhood Program, the Cecil J. Picard LA4 Early Childhood Program, and the Non-Public Schools Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD).

As of 2011, LA4 is the largest of the three initiatives, enrolling 15,706 children statewide<sup>2</sup>. The financing of LA4 incorporates federal TANF money, state general funds, and local financial contributions<sup>2</sup>. In LA4 collaborations with private childcare centers and Head Start agencies, each organization pays a portion of the LA4 local financial contribution. School administrators, childcare directors, and Head Start representatives must make these funding decisions at the district level to sustain a successful pre-k partnership.

Sabine Parish has successfully implemented this community-based model in fifteen LA4/Head Start classrooms and two 8(g)/Head Start classrooms. Sabine Parish is a rural area in northwest Louisiana which enrolls approximately 350 children in the public pre-k program. Despite the regulatory differences between Head Start, LA4, and 8(g), Sabine Parish offers the upper standard of each program to all children. This unified model allows administrators to combine LA4, Head Start, and 8(g) funds.

Within each school district, each pre-k classroom utilizes a braided funding system to evenly distribute money from multiple sources. At each site, LA4/8(g) and Head Start contribute approximately 50% of the total programming costs. School administrators allocate this mixture of funding across the entire pre-k program.

### **Local Partners in Sabine Parish, LA:**

- Louisiana Department of Education, Literacy Goal Office (LA4)
- Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (8g)
- Sabine Parish Schools
- Head Start

### **Major Components of the Sabine Parish LA4/Head Start Program:**

As noted above, the universal pre-k program in Sabine Parish adopts the highest standard of each collaborative program (LA4, Head Start, and 8(g)). The following descriptions combine standards from all three programs.

- **Sabine Parish Eligibility:** According to Melyssa Snelling, preschool and Head Start director for Sabine Parish, the collaborative pre-k program is available to every age-eligible child in the district. Since approximately 71-75% of all children in the region are eligible for

free or reduced lunch, most students qualify for Head Start and/or LA4. The individual eligibility requirements for each individual pre-k partner are as follows:

- **LA4:** All age-eligible children in Louisiana may participate in the LA4 program. However, children who qualify for free- or reduced-lunch (185% of the FPL) may enroll free of charge. Children from over-income families may attend using local funds (i.e. school district money) or tuition payments. If the district charges tuition fees, school administrators establish a sliding payment scale for children exceeding the 185% FPL income maximum.
  - **8(g):** Louisiana does not enforce eligibility qualifications for the 8(g) program, but stipulates that priority be given to children from low-income families<sup>2</sup>.
  - **Head Start:** Under federal regulations, Head Start primarily serves children below the FPL. However, a small percentage of over-income students may receive Head Start support. In Sabine Parish, over-income children represent up to 35% of students receiving Head Start funding.
- **Full Day and Enrichment Programming:** All classrooms must operate for 6 hours/day, 5 days/week. LA4 programs may also offer 4 hours of before- and after-school enrichment programs<sup>2</sup>.
  - **Early Learning Standards:** *Bulletin 105: Louisiana Content Standards for Programs Serving 4-year-old Children* outlines all early learning standards for children in Louisiana. This document summarizes developmentally appropriate practices, general content standards, and alternate approaches to learning. The chapters of *Bulletin 105* define each area of early childhood development: social-emotional, creative arts, language, literacy, health, physical, and cognitive development in three subject areas (mathematics, science, social studies).<sup>3</sup>
    - The collaborative LA4/Head Start and 8(g)/Head Start classrooms follows these LA 4 guidelines, as well as Head Start educational guidelines. Both programs have very similar educational goals.
  - **Teacher Qualifications:** Sabine Parish implements the LA4/8(g) guidelines for lead teacher training. Therefore, all pre-k teachers in Sabine Parish must have a bachelor's degree with specialized pre-k training. Pre-k training may include a certification in nursery, kindergarten, pre-K-3, early intervention, or non-categorical preschool handicapped<sup>2</sup>. These standards are more comprehensive than the Head Start regulations; Head Start requires lead teachers to have an associate's degree.

- **Assistant Teacher Qualifications:** Sabine Parish implements the Head Start guidelines for pre-k assistant training. Therefore, all assistant pre-k teachers in Sabine Parish must have a CDA, District Para Pro Exam, or higher degree in early childhood education. These standards are more comprehensive than the LA4/8(g) standards; LA4/8(g) only requires assistant teachers to have a high school diploma.
- **Teacher In-Service:** All teachers must attend 18 hours of in-service training per year.
- **Maximum Class Size:** Each classroom may enroll a maximum of 20 children. Each class must have a child-to-lead teacher ratio of 20:1 and a child-to-adult staff member ratio of 10:1<sup>2</sup>.
- **Screening/Referral and Family Support Services:** Students must have access to vision, hearing, height/weight/BMI, blood pressure, psychological/behavioral, developmental, and dental screenings<sup>2</sup>.
- **Family engagement programming:** Since Sabine Parish adopts the highest standards of each partner program, all pre-k classrooms use the Head Start standards for family engagement.

In comparison to LA4 and 8(g), Head Start has more extensive requirements for family engagement programming. According to federal regulations, all Head Start classrooms must provide extensive parental support through the employment of a family service worker. As a result, all children in the Sabine Parish Head Start/LA4/8(g) collaborations have access to a family service worker.

- **Monitoring:** The Louisiana Department of Education conducts yearly program monitoring of all LA4 classrooms. Prior to the 2013-14 school year, state educational consultants made structured observations of classroom quality using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS), a technical assistance checklist and CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System). An annual ECERS assessment was at that time required for new teachers, teachers scoring below a 5.0 in the previous year, teachers in targeted schools, and districts with outlying DSC assessment scores<sup>2</sup>. There will now be one common quality rating system developed through the Early Childhood ReDesign in Louisiana.
- **Program Location:** All of the Sabine Parish pre-k classrooms are located in public schools. Two classrooms are housed at the Many Preschool Center, this facility is directly affiliated with the school

system, but is a licensed campus which participates in the statewide QRIS participation requirement. The center has achieved a four-star rating. According to LA4 regulations, only LA4 classrooms in community-based settings must achieve a four-star rating in QRIS, the five-star rating system for childcare facilities.

## FUNDING

The Sabine Parish school district has received federal Head Start funding for approximately 5 years. According to Melyssa Snelling, this partnership has been extremely cost-effective. Prior to Snelling's collaborative efforts, the LA4, 8(g) and Head Start programs were "doubling-up on costs." By contrast, all seventeen Sabine Parish classrooms currently utilize statewide LA4 or 8(g) money with Head Start funds.

The following descriptions define the role of each funding source from the federal to local level:

- **Head Start Funds:** Head Start is a federally funded program which spends approximately \$7,795 per enrolled child in Louisiana.
- **8(g) Student Enhancement Block Grant Program:** The Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education provides approximately \$3,857 per enrolled child with designated 8(g) funds.
- **LA4:** The combination of federal, state, and local contributions amounts to approximately \$4,876 spent per child. LA4 funding consists of the following:
  - **Federal TANF Funds:** Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is a federal cash assistance program and funding source for the Louisiana Department of Children and Families (DCFS). TANF funds provide almost 90% of all LA4 funding. DCFS receives federal TANF funds allocated for the LA4 program, and then transfers this money to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE). The LDOE supervises all LA4 services and ensures that the program meets certain TANF guidelines. The services provided in the LA4 program meet the following TANF goals<sup>5</sup>:
    - **TANF Goal 3:** "to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of wedlock pregnancies."
    - **TANF Goal 4:** "to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families by placing children in learning environments at the pre-school level to foster an interest in learning, increase literacy levels and increase the likelihood of developing responsible behavior."

- **State Contribution:** The Louisiana Department of Education contributes approximately \$6,027,807 in state general funds to LA4. Of the \$6,027,807 in state money, \$1,000,000 must supplement the before- and after-school enrichment programs. This allocation is from a statutory dedication which dictates the distribution of state LA4 funds. The LDOE distributes per-pupil LA4 funds according to the number of available pre-K slots in each district<sup>2</sup>.
- **District Implementation of LA4/8(g) in Sabine Parish:** Public and charter schools are the only eligible recipients of LA4 and 8(g) funding. When collaborating with Head Start agencies, schools subcontract with the organization and provide funding accordingly<sup>2</sup>. All parties sign a MOU which outlines the financial responsibilities of each organization. In Sabine Parish, the funds are distributed as follows in the seventeen LA4/Head Start or 8(g)/Head Start classrooms:
  - **Teachers and Family Support Personnel:** 50% LA4 funds, 50% Head Start funds (with the exception of 2 pre-k teachers who are supported by 50% 8(g) funds and 50% Head Start funds, and 1 classroom supported by EEF funds)
  - **Healthy Snacks/Food:** 50% LA4 funds, 50% Head Start funds
  - **Education Coordinators:** 50% LA4 funds, 50% Head Start funds
  - **Classroom Supplies and Materials:** 50% LA4 funds, 50% Head Start funds (with the exception of 2 classrooms supported by 50% 8(g) funds and 50% Head Start funds)

## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- **Multiple Requirements and Funding Sources:** Melyssa Snelling, preschool and Head Start coordinator for Sabine Parish, can attest to the “mounds of paperwork for each individual program” that she must complete each year. Since the Sabine pre-k program utilizes funding from multiple sources, the school district must comply with three different sets of regulations and grant requirements. However, this act of coordination allows the pre-k program to serve a larger pool of children. Available to all children in Sabine Parish, the program is easily accessible to the entire community. Snelling ensures that “one population of children does not receive more or less than other [populations of] children.”

- **Spending on Pre-K:** Spending on state pre-k programs over the past decade was level between 2002-2007 and reached a high point in 2008. While the funding has remained essentially stable, due to increased enrollment, the per child funding has declined 26 percent since 2008<sup>2</sup>.

## CONTACTS

- **Melyssa Snelling**  
Director of Preschool Programs in Sabine Parish  
melyssa@sabine.k12.la.us  
318-461-7571
- **Maureen Gallagher**  
Diverse Delivery Coordinator, BrightStart  
maureng406@yahoo.com  
(318) 512-9218

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<sup>1</sup> April - Financial Literacy Month Partner Activities. (2011). JumpStart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. Retrieved from <http://jumpstart.org/activities-events-april-financial-literacy-month-partner-activities.html>

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, S.W., Carolan, M.E., Fitzgerald, J. & Squires, J.H. (2011). The state of preschool 2011. *The National Institute of Early Education Research*. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/yearbook>.

<sup>3</sup> Bulletin 105: Louisiana content standards for programs serving four-year old children. (2003). *Louisiana Department of Education, Literacy Goal Office*. Retrieved from <http://doe.louisiana.gov/bese/policies.html>

<sup>4</sup> LA4 Guidelines and Implementation Handbook (2010). Louisiana Department of Education. Retrieved from [http://www.doe.state.la.us/offices/literacy/childhood\\_programs.html](http://www.doe.state.la.us/offices/literacy/childhood_programs.html)

**Compiled by Renee Lamoreau**  
**BrightStart Tisch Summer Fellow, Tufts University**

# New Jersey

## Low-Income Abbott Districts Provide Public Pre-K



*2011 Profile of the Abbott Districts,  
New Jersey*

**Grades:** Pre-K (3 & 4 year olds)

**Program Length:** Full-day (6 hours)/5  
days per week

**Abbott Districts Pre-K Enrollment:**  
39,808

**Percentage of Students in a Diverse  
Delivery Setting:** 58%

**Percentage of Students Eligible for  
Meal Benefits:**

Abbott Districts, 68.3%

New Jersey, all grades 31.7%

### Funding Snapshot:

(See full report for more details.)

- State-funded Pre-K funding: \$597,510,227
- In 1998, the New Jersey Supreme Court ordered the state to provide universal access to high quality, pre-kindergarten to children in 31 of the states poorest districts. These districts are referred to as the “Abbott Districts.”
- The Abbott Districts receive additional state funding to implement a diverse provider system of comprehensive early childhood education. New Jersey spends approximately \$14,000 per Abbott preschool child per year.
- Two state agencies provide funding for the Abbott Districts Pre-K program. The Department of Education funds the 6-hour educational component of the day. The Department of Human Services subsidizes summer programming and “wrap-around” extended care.
- School districts receive all state funding and allocate money to in-district centers, private child care providers, or Head Start agencies.
- Abbott Districts must provide equal compensation and benefits to community-based providers and in-district preschool teachers. The continuity of Abbott funding promotes teacher retention and elevates the status of early childhood educators.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Starting in 1998, the New Jersey Supreme Court ordered the state to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten to children in 31 of the state's poorest districts. Following this mandate, state administrators referred to these 31 districts as the "Abbott districts."

The Abbott districts received additional state funding to implement a diverse provider system of comprehensive early childhood education. Data-driven quality measurements tracked the success of the program. The National Institute for Early Education Research conducted a study in 2007 which measured the longitudinal development of children enrolled in Abbott preschools. Within a randomized group of children who had attended public preschool, researchers witnessed significant intellectual improvement into the elementary grades<sup>1</sup>.

### Local Partners in New Jersey

- New Jersey Department of Education
- New Jersey Department of Human Services
- Abbott districts and public schools
- Community-based, private childcare centers
- Head Start programs

### Major Components of the Abbott Preschool Initiative<sup>1</sup>

- **Universal Access:** The 31 Abbott districts must provide a six-hour day program for all three- and four-year-old children inhabiting the 31 Abbott districts. This program must exist for 182 days of the year.
- **Mandated Quality Standards:** The New Jersey Supreme Court publishes basic quality standards for the Abbott program. These standards include<sup>2</sup>:
  - Access to transportation, health and other necessary services
  - Adequate facilities
    - Each classroom must be at least 950 square feet<sup>5</sup>.
  - Certified teacher and teaching assistant for each class
    - All preschool teachers must have a bachelor's degree and P-3 teaching certification.
  - 15 student class maximum
  - Developmentally appropriate preschool curriculum which corresponds with the *NJDOE's Early Childhood Education Program Expectations Standards of Quality (2002)* and meets the *New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS)*<sup>2</sup>. Teachers may choose from five programs:<sup>1</sup>
    - Bank Street
    - Creative Curriculum

- Curiosity Corner
  - High Scope
  - Tools of the Mind
- State funding for all community providers and in-district programs
- **Collaborations with Community Providers and Head Start:** The Abbott districts can collaborate with community childcare providers and Head Start programs to fulfill the New Jersey Supreme Court quality standards. Each district may choose from a variety of partnerships based on community needs. Examples of this “diverse delivery” model include<sup>2</sup>:
  - Six districts utilizing in-district placements (Long Branch, Keansburg, Gloucester City, Burlington City, Neptune, and Salem).
  - Two districts contracting with private childcare providers and Head Start agencies (Hoboken, Harrison).
  - The remaining 23 districts implementing a combination of settings.
- **Professional Development for Preschool Teachers:** Districts must provide one master teacher for every 20 classrooms. The master teacher assists with both professional development and quality measurement. To incentivize additional professional development, the state provides financial assistance to teachers pursuing a BA, MA, or teacher certification. This scholarship program provides teachers with upwards of \$5,000 in annual tuition assistance<sup>2</sup>.
- **Fair Compensation:** The district must provide equal compensation and benefits to community-based providers and in-district preschool teachers. The continuity of Abbott funding promotes teacher retention and elevates the status of early childhood educators<sup>1</sup>.
- **High Expectations:** The New Jersey Department of Education requires the Abbott districts to serve 90 percent of all preschool children. This requires each district to estimate the number of preschoolers in each region. Beginning in the 2009-10, the Department of Education estimates the total number of preschool children in the Abbott districts by multiplying the number of first graders by two. The Department of Education receives the first grade enrollment data from the Application for State School Aid (ASSA). Since the ASSA does not provide data on private school enrollment, the total number of preschoolers may be slightly higher in areas with elevated levels of private school students<sup>2</sup>.
- **Measurable Results:** The New Jersey Department of Education mandates data collection on all levels of the program. Data collection maintains accountability and drives improvement. These assessments evaluate the child, classroom or provider, district, and state.
  - **New Jersey Early Learning Assessment System (NJELAS):** Teachers create a “portfolio” of observations and documents which evaluate children’s learning. While the NJ Department of Education

has recently phased out this assessment, teachers must submit data-driven assessments consistent with the curriculum they use<sup>1</sup>.

- **The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R):** Master teachers conduct this test to measure preschool classroom quality. This scale is nationally recognized and frequently used in early childhood education. The district or childcare provider must meet specified ECERS-R score requirements to sustain a pre-k program<sup>1</sup>.
- **Self-Assessment and Validation System (SAVS):** Districts complete this annual self-assessment provided by the NJ Department of Education. The checklist measures professional development, staff qualifications, curriculum utilization, parent/community engagement, district implementation, and support for disabled children and English language learners<sup>1</sup>.
- **Independent Research:** The state hires independent researchers to evaluate children’s learning outcomes and pre-k classroom quality.
  - **The Early Learning Improvement Consortium (ELIC):** Researchers from multiple New Jersey universities provide an annual assessment of statewide program quality<sup>1</sup>.
  - **National Institute for Early Education Research:** The state commissions this institution to conduct the *Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES)*, a continuous measurement of children’s learning outcomes<sup>1</sup>.

## FUNDING

- **State Support:** New Jersey spends approximately \$14,000 per Abbott preschool child each year<sup>1</sup>. Two state agencies provide this funding<sup>3</sup>:
  - **Department of Education:** The DOE funds the 6-hour educational component of the day. In the 2006-07 school year, the DOE gave approximately \$501 million to the Abbott preschool program.
  - **Department of Human Services:** The DHS subsidizes summer programming and “wrap-around” extended care. In the 2006-07 school year, the DHS contributed approximately \$199 million towards these services.
- **District Implementation and Seamless Transitions:** The school district receives all state funding and allocates this money to in-district centers, private providers, or Head Start agencies. Since the district has full control over financial resources, the public school system ensures that preschool providers meet the Abbott standards. This district leadership allows for administrators, K-12 teachers, and preschool teachers to create partnerships with one another. These partnerships create a continuous and streamlined PreK-3rd system<sup>1</sup>.

## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- **Shortage of Qualified Teachers:**

During the first five years of the program, less than half of all Abbott teachers had both a bachelor's degree and a P-3 early childhood certification. When the state established two educational grant programs, many teachers received these qualifications. In 2009, virtually all Abbott preschool teachers had both a bachelor's degree and P-3 certification. However, many teaching candidates are still reluctant to pursue the P-3 certification because the K-5 certification is "more marketable<sup>1</sup>." Since the New Jersey P-3 certification is fairly new, New Jersey administrators and educators often question the rigor and quality of this degree.

- **Opposition to State Funding:**

Current New Jersey Governor Chris Christie proposed \$1.1 billion of educational cuts in June 2010. These cuts targeted the 2008 School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). The SFRA provided a "weighted student formula" of state educational funding that supported the 1998 Abbott rulings. The SFRA traditionally delivers extra funding to support low-income students, limited-English proficient students, and students with disabilities<sup>4</sup>

In March 2011, the New Jersey Supreme Court rejected Governor Christie's proposal and upheld the original Abbott rulings. As part of this ruling, the Supreme Court ordered Governor Christie to increase state educational aid for the state's poorest districts by \$500 million. According to a Trenton-based court, "Their right to funding is a constitutional mandate. "Schoolchildren from the Abbott districts cannot be deprived of the full SFRA funding<sup>5</sup>."

### *Abbott District Profile: Elizabeth Public Schools*

- **Student Demographics:** Elizabeth serves a large population of minority and low-income students. Approximately 65% of students are Latino(a), 25% are black, and 10% are white or Asian. In addition, 75% of students qualify for free and reduced price lunch<sup>1</sup>.
- **Intensive Early Literacy (IEL):** Elizabeth embraces New Jersey's approach to Intensive Early Literacy. IEL is a comprehensive curriculum for early literacy which meets the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards. The IEL approach creates partnerships between all classrooms and schools within a district, establishing concrete literacy standards for each grade level. The Department of Education provides Elizabeth preschool teachers with IEL curriculum training and general assistance. The implementation of IEL in 2003 has

drastically enhanced children's learning outcomes. Between 2005 to 2008, the percentage of Elizabeth third-graders reading at grade level rose from 69.5% to 80%. School administrators cite IEL as the catalyst for this improvement<sup>1</sup>.

- **Seamless Transitions:** All providers in Elizabeth use the High Scope preschool curriculum. Despite the blend of in-district and private providers, this standardized curriculum enhances the early education in Elizabeth. Preschool and K-3 teachers coordinate lesson plans and share student data. As a result, children make a seamless transition from preschool to elementary school<sup>1</sup>.

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**Compiled by Renee Lamoreau**

**BrightStart Tisch Summer Fellow, Tufts University**

# New York

## Statewide Diverse Delivery for UPK Program



*2011 Profile of the New York Universal Prekindergarten Program (UPK)*

**Grades:** Pre-K (4 yr olds)

**Program Length:** Half-day (2.5 hours/day minimum)/5 days per week

**State-Funded Pre-K Enrollment:** 103,646

**Percentage of Students in a Diverse Delivery Setting:** Approximately 55%

**Percentage of Students Eligible for Meal Benefits, all grades:** 48.1%

### **Funding Snapshot:**

(See full report for more details.)

- **State-funded UPK funding:** \$381,908,267
- **Average spending per child:** \$3,685
- The state of New York has an allocation grant that provides funding for UPK, and the DOE distributes these funds. There is no required local match.
- The state uses a state aid formula to distribute UPK fund to districts. The state aid formula evaluates the following when allocating UPK funds: foundation cost (the cost of providing the average student with an education that meets state learning standards), pupil need (proportion of students eligible for meal benefits), regional cost index, and expected local contribution. As a result, wealthier districts receive less money than poorer districts.
- Public schools may subcontract with private child care, Head Start, faith-based centers, family child care, libraries and museums to provide UPK. Both parties must sign a MOU and agree to adopt the highest standards in each area to fulfill requirements for multiple funding streams.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In 1997, New York lawmakers created the Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) Program. State policymakers included the UPK program in the LADDER Act, a comprehensive early childhood policy initiative. The inclusion of UPK in the LADDER Act ensured that pre-k was a major component of the New York educational system. Beginning in 1998, policymakers strived for universal accessibility and community involvement. While the state prioritized low-income and larger districts, legislators intended to enroll all four-year-olds by the 2001-02 school year.

More importantly, the state also promoted district-level partnerships with community-based childcare providers. According to the LADDER Act, approximately 10 percent of UPK students had to attend a community-based childcare center<sup>1</sup>. Recognizing the value of a diverse delivery system, many districts surpassed this mandate. Community-based programs enrolled over 60 percent of UPK children in 2011.

## LOCAL PARTNERS IN NEW YORK<sup>2</sup>

- New York Department of Education, Office of Early Education
- Administration for Children and Families (NYC)
- Public Schools
- Private Childcare Centers
- Faith-based Childcare Centers
- Head Start
- Museums/Libraries

## MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

- **Diverse Delivery Mandate:** Starting in 1997, the state mandated that UPK programs create community partnerships with childcare providers. A minimum of 10 percent of UPK programs must now enroll children in community-based settings. This requirement allows school and community providers to learn from each other and integrate their services.<sup>3</sup> The majority of UPK programs now operate in community-based settings, a testament to the success of the collaboration mandate. According to Jennifer Rosenbaum of the Office of Early Education, approximately two-thirds of UPK children in New York City attend community-based sites. A similar pattern exists across the state; community providers enroll approximately 60 percent of UPK children in New York.
- **Universal Eligibility:** On the state level, the UPK program has **no eligibility requirements**. When collaborating with community-based providers, the UPK program must adopt the eligibility requirements of the partnering organization. Although the state enrolls 45% of all 4-year-olds statewide, the state continues to increase access to UPK. New York has not

reached its goal of universal access primarily because of state budgetary restrictions. Due to recent fluctuations in state funding, the remaining districts often decide that the UPK program is unnecessarily and too costly. As a result, only 66% of school districts across the state currently offer UPK<sup>2</sup>.

- **Advanced Lead Teacher Credentials:** New York has the highest standards for teacher credentials in the country. In public school settings, all lead teachers must have a BA and New York State teaching certificate. In non-public settings, teachers must have BA in early childhood or related field, as well as a teaching certificate or 5-year plan to become certified. Of the 5,026 UPK teachers statewide, 3,959 are certified with their MA. The remaining 1,067 have a BA and are working toward their MA and permanent certification<sup>2</sup>.
- **Early Learning Standards:** The Office of Early Childhood Education has recently attempted to integrate statewide learning standards and enforce high expectations across all settings. As a result, all publically-funded programs are able to offer high-quality services to children, regardless of the specific funding stream or type of collaborative partnership. The state recently adopted the *New York State Prekindergarten Learning Standards*, an addition to the state's K-12 Common Core Learning Standards. Many of the objectives in this document correspond with Head Start and childcare guidelines, promoting partnerships between organizations.
- **Program Length:** The official UPK program length is 2.5 hours per day, five days a week. Throughout the state, approximately 77,407 receive these half-day services. However, many programs decide to provide an extended-day program using other funding sources. Approximately 26,2396 UPK children attend a full school-day program with the help of localized funding<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, program length continues to be an issue for childcare providers, policymakers, and families. Due to limited funding, the state struggles with the tradeoff between quality and access. According to Jenn O'Connor of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, "the state would argue that everyone should be doing part day before certain districts do full day."

- **Maximum Class Size:** The UPK student-staff ratio must be 1:9 or lower, and the maximum class size is 20 students<sup>2</sup>.
- **Teacher In-Service:** UPK teachers must complete 175 clock hours of professional development every five years<sup>2</sup>.
- **Meals:** Half-day programs must provide a snack. Programs meeting more than 3 hours must provide a meal and snack. This requirement is NOT comprehensive enough to meet the 2011NIEER quality benchmark for meals<sup>2</sup>.



- **Screening/Referral:** UPK students have access to vision, hearing, health, dental, and social-emotional screenings or referrals<sup>2</sup>.
- **Family Support Services:** Support services include parent conferences and/or home visits, parent education or job training, parenting support or training, parent involvement activities, health services for parents and children, information about nutrition, referral to social services, and transition to kindergarten activities<sup>2</sup>.
- **Monitoring:** District personnel conduct annual site visits of each UPK classroom and report all results to the state. State personnel visit classrooms periodically or as needed, often in coordination with Title I monitoring but not on a regular cycle for all classrooms. This requirement is NOT comprehensive enough to meet the 2011NIEER quality benchmark for monitoring<sup>2</sup>. Pre-K advocates hope to increase the state requirements for monitoring in order to ensure high-quality programming.

The current rating system, QUALITYstarsNY, is voluntary for pre-k classrooms. A small number of UPK sites utilize the rating system, but the state plans to expand participation in the upcoming school year. New York plans to implement a statewide initiative in 2012 for all childcare centers, schools, and family-based programs. Pre-K advocates like Jenn O'Connor are pushing the governor to contribute \$20 million towards this monitoring requirement.

## FUNDING

**State Support:** The state spends approximately \$381,908,267 per year on the UPK program. New York has an allocation grant which provides the funding for the program, and the Department of Education distributes these funds. The Office of Early Learning in the New York Department of Education is the grantee of these funds. There is NO required local match. Therefore, the state spends approximately \$3,685 per UPK child<sup>2</sup>.

**District Implementation:** On the local level, the state uses a state aid formula to distribute all UPK funds to school districts. Public schools can receive direct funding, and then subcontract with community-based providers. The state aid formula evaluates the following district-level characteristics when allocating UPK funds: foundation cost (the cost of providing the average student with an education that meets state learning standards), pupil need (the proportion of pupils eligible for free and reduced-price lunch), regional cost index, and expected local contribution<sup>2</sup>.

As a result, wealthier districts receive less money than poorer districts. Depending on where the child lives, the school district could receive between \$2,500 and \$5,500 per UPK child. Child advocates and state officials agree that New York provides insufficient financial support to school districts. According to Jennifer Rosenbaum and Jocelyn Alter, the growth of UPK in New York City will continue to create a large funding gap.

**Community Partnerships:** Public schools may subcontract with Head Start, private child care, faith-based centers, family child care, libraries, and museums to provide the UPK program. Both parties must sign a MOU and agree to the UPK quality standards. Individual programs must adopt the highest standards in each area to fulfill grant requirements for multiple funding streams.

## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

**Program Standards:** According to Jenn O'Connor of the Schylar Center, the lack of transportation and full-day programming is a huge problem for the UPK program. Transportation is especially problematic in rural areas, decreasing the availability of UPK to many families in upstate New York. The half-day minimum also limits general accessibility. If the program does not offer wraparound care, working families have limited options for full-day care. At the local level, districts may hesitate to invest in a UPK program because state funds only subsidize half-day services.

**Flat Funding and Budget Cuts:** The state has experienced significant changes in state funding since the establishment of UPK in 1997. For the first decade of the UPK program, the state did not adequately finance the initiative. In 2007, the state contributed approximately 40 million dollars to revamp UPK and create a more accessible program. Since 2007, the state established a continued five-year investment that ended in 2012. Within this time period, the number of UPK children increased dramatically, but the state periodically flat-funded the program.

This flat-funding (i.e. the freezing of pre-k funding, regardless of changes in enrollment, cost or need) impacted all involved parties in the UPK program. As enrollment continues to increase, especially in the New York City metro area, the program may need to cut back on additional expenses like professional development and teacher training.

**Gaps in Pre-K Access and Eligibility:** When collaborating with community-based providers, the UPK program must adopt the eligibility requirements of the partnering organization. In New York City, eligibility and access are big issues. Since the cost of living is so high in NYC, the federal and state income guidelines for subsidized childcare programs (i.e. Head Start and childcare assistance) are unrealistically low. According to data from the New York City Office of Early Childhood Education, the UPK program is inaccessible to approximately 8,000 children who receive no other preschool services. These families exceed the FPL (Federal Poverty Level) thresholds for subsidized childcare eligibility, but often cannot afford to send their children to pre-k without financial assistance.

**Salary Disparities and Teacher Retention:** UPK teachers in community-based settings often earn up to \$10,000 less than UPK teachers in public schools<sup>3</sup>. This salary disparity has a huge effect on teacher retention in community-based settings. These teachers often transfer to public school UPK programs when they receive their full New York State teaching certificate. The funding disparity

between childcare and public schools creates additional tension between programs.

## **CONTACTS**

### **Jenn O'Connor**

Senior Policy Associate, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy  
joconnor@scaany.org  
518/463-1896, ext. 131

### **Patricia Persell**

New York State Head Start Collaboration Director  
Patricia.Persell@ccf.ny.gov  
518-474-9352

### **Jocelyn Alter**

Manager of Strategy and Policy, Office of Early Childhood Education  
JAlter@schools.nyc.gov

### **Jennifer Rosenbaum**

Director of Instruction & Performance, Office of Early Childhood Education  
JRosenbaum2@schools.nyc.gov

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# Tennessee

## State Pre-K Programs Utilize Community Resources



Tennessee Governor Bredesen with VPK students<sup>1</sup>

### *2011 Profile of the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K Program (VPK)*

**Grades:** Pre-K (4 year olds)

**Program Length:** Full-day (5.5 hours/day minimum)/5 days per week

**Pre-K Student Enrollment:** 18,341

**Percentage of Students in a Diverse Delivery Setting:** >14%

Head Start:5.8%

Private Childcare:4.9%

Faith-based Centers: >1%

Housing Authorities: >1%

Institutions of Higher Education: >1%

Adult Learning Centers: >1%

**Percentage of Students Eligible for Meal Benefits, all grades:** 55%

### **Funding Snapshot:**

(See full report for more details.)

- Tennessee currently spends \$85,254,000 per year on the VPK.
- The Tennessee DOE distributes funding to school districts and the state spends an average of \$4,620 per child enrolled.
- School districts have a local match requirement. The tax dollar base of the district determines the local match requirement.
- The local match may include in-kind contributions, Title 1 funds and/or local donations.
- The total spending per child amounts to approximately \$5,853.00, reflecting the combination of state AND local funds to the VPK program.
- The total spending per child will increase if the collaboration is between the VPK and Head Start. This increase is due to increased services provided in order to meet Head Start standards and regulations.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In 1998, Tennessee created the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Pilot Project, a competitive pre-k grant program for public schools, Head Start agencies, and community-based childcare providers. The ECE program funded 30 classrooms throughout the state and utilized general state revenue. Governor Phil Bredesen expanded this program in 2005 with the signing of the **Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) for Tennessee Act**.

Since 2005, Tennessee has expanded the VPK program and has utilized multiple funding streams to support the program. The collaborative model of the VPK program has utilized diverse financial resources and has prioritized community involvement. The VPK program currently serves more than 18,453 children in every Tennessee school district<sup>2</sup>.

### **Local Partners in Tennessee:**<sup>2</sup>

- Tennessee Department of Education, Division of School Readiness and Early Learning
- Public schools
- Head Start agencies
- Private childcare providers
- Faith-based centers
- Housing authorities
- Institutions of higher education
- Adult learning centers

### **Major Components of the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K Initiative:**

- **Focus on At-Risk Children:** The VPK program defines pre-K eligibility with a three-tier prioritization system. On the initial level, the program targets 4-year old children who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (185% of the FPL). If space is still available, VPK programs may enroll other at-risk populations of children: children with an IEP, children with a history of abuse/neglect, English Language Learners, or children in state custody. Within the school district, preschool administrators may enroll children with additional risk factors when space is available. This category often includes single-parent families, households with one parent on active military duty, teenage families, and families with limited educational attainment. Depending on the needs of the community, the school district determines which of these risk-factors are most important for VPK eligibility<sup>2</sup>.
- **Mandated Quality Standards:** The Tennessee VPK program consistently receives 9 out of the 10 quality standard benchmarks from

the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). These

standards include<sup>2</sup>:

- **Developmentally-Appropriate Curricula:** The Tennessee Department of Education provides a list of approved curricula for the VPK program<sup>2</sup>. Each curriculum meets the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards (TN-ELDS), a summary of, cognitive, social-emotional, physical, and language development between birth and five-years-old<sup>3</sup>.
  - **Teacher Certification:** Lead teachers must have a bachelor's degree, teaching license, and early childhood education certification. Possible certifications include: Pre K–Grade 3, Pre-K–4, Pre-K–K, Pre-K–1 Special Education, and Pre-K–3 Special Education.
  - **Full-Day Programming:** The program must operate for a minimum of 5.5 hours/day. The provider may not include naptime in these 5.5 hours of service.
  - **Small Class Size:** Each VPK classroom has a maximum of 20 students.
  - **Low Student-Teacher Ratio:** The average student-teacher ratio is 1:10.
  - **Nutritious meals:** The provider must serve lunch, as well as breakfast or snack.
  - **Family engagement programming:** The program must offer parenting support or training, parent involvement activities, referral for social services, transition to kindergarten activities, parent conferences and/or home visits.
  - **Screening and Referral Requirements:** Students have access to vision, hearing, height/weight/BMI, blood pressure, psychological/behavioral, developmental, and dental screenings. Children must also have access to physical exams and immunizations.
  - **Professional Development:** All lead teachers fulfill 30 hours of in-service credit per year. For assistant teachers, the state requires 18 in-service hours in the first year of employment and 12 in-service hours in the following years.
  - **Classroom Monitoring:** Program evaluators conduct two classroom visits per year to assess health and safety compliance. Education consultants also visit VPK classrooms each year and conduct structured observations of classroom quality using the ECERS-R and ELLCO.
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- **Collaborations with Community Providers:** The state allows school districts to collaborate with childcare agencies that have received the highest star rating (three stars) from the Quality Rating System (QRS)<sup>5</sup>.
  
  - **Collaborations with Head Start:** In 2011, approximately 1,092 children received VPK services in Head Start classrooms. According to Janet Coscarelli, Director of the Head Start State Collaboration

Office, most VPK and Head Start standards match up. This overlap promotes effective collaborations and partnerships. In most cases, Head Start collaborations expand existing services and increase pre-K access. Specifically, Head Start often identifies how many children they serve in a district, and the VPK program serves children who exceed the Head Start eligibility requirements.

- **The Community Pre-K Advisory Council:** This group of individuals supports all collaboration efforts within each school district. According to state mandates, each council must include representatives from each of these categories: school board, parents, teachers, nonprofit providers, for-profit providers, Head Start, the business community, and local government funding bodies. The goals of the Advisory Council are as follows<sup>4</sup>:
  - to develop a timeline for pre-K expansion
  - to ensure access to adequate facilities, staff and equipment (including playgrounds)
  - to identify existing community resources that could support the VPK program (local funding resources, materials and supplies, family engagement services, existing programs serving 4-year-olds, and wrap-around and summer childcare services)
  - to help the local school system create collaborative partnerships with community-based providers

## FUNDING

- **Funding History:** The state has utilized multiple funding sources for the VPK program since the 1998 pilot program. The state initially experimented with general revenue and lottery funds, but currently includes the VPK program in the education budget<sup>2</sup>.
  - **General Revenue:** The state government allocated \$10 million in general revenue for the 1998 pre-K pilot program<sup>5</sup>.
  - **State Lottery Money:** Following the 2005 *Voluntary Pre-K (VPK) for Tennessee Act*, Governor Bredesen added \$25 million to the existing pilot program. Governor Bredesen used state lottery money to provide this \$25 million. For the next two school years, the state continued to use state lottery funds to support the VPK program<sup>5</sup>.
  - **VPK in the Education Budget:** With the rapid growth and expansion of the VPK program between 2005 and 2007, the Department of Education quickly phased out the use of lottery funds. In the 2007-2008 school year, the VPK program was funded almost entirely by state dollars, with the exception of \$3 million in state lottery funds. By the 2008-2009 school year, the state contribution to the VPK program only utilized state revenue dollars from the educational budget<sup>5</sup>.
  - **Funding Sustainability:** Tennessee has continued to include the

VPK program in the state educational budget for each fiscal year. According to Connie Casha, director the Tennessee Voluntary Pre-K program, VPK funding has become a “mainstay in the department of education.” Casha asserts that the change in funding stream has ensured “consistency and continuation” of the VPK program.

- **Current State Support:** The state currently spends \$85, 254,000 each year on the VPK program. When the Department of Education distributes this funding to school districts, the state spends an average of \$4,620 per child enrolled<sup>1</sup>.
- **Local Match Requirement:** The Tennessee Department of Education gives all VPK funding directly to school districts. School districts then have a local match requirement to supplement these state funds. The local match may include “in-kind contributions” and often does not represent actual dollars. For example, the match could be a percentage of current costs associated with the operation of a school building (i.e. a portion of administrator salaries, costs for building operations, etc). The local match could also consist of Title 1 funds or local donations.
  - **Basic Education Plan (BEP):** This funding formula determines the state and local share to each VPK classroom. The BEP evaluates the tax dollar base in each school district and generates a percentage value for the local match. The state-local match ratio is often 3:1 (75% state funds, 25% local dollars). However, wealthier school districts may subsidize a larger portion of VPK costs (up to 35% local dollars). Poorer school districts subsidize a much smaller portion of VPK costs (as low as 5% local dollars).
- **Total Costs:** The total spending per child amounts to \$5,853. This approximate value reflects the combination of state AND local funds to the VPK program<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Funding Profile: Nashville, Tennessee<sup>5</sup>**

After signing the 2005 VPK Act, Governor Bredesen encouraged every United Way chapter in Tennessee to provide matching funds for each pre-K classroom in its community. According to Mary Graham, president of United Way in Tennessee, these collaborations have enhanced the VPK program:

“In response to a challenge by Gov. Phil Bredesen, the United Ways of Tennessee have provided matching funds for 47 pre-K classrooms across the state, bringing quality early education to more than 900 4-year-olds. This collaborative approach to early education, which is playing out across the state, is a hallmark of Tennessee's program and serves as a national model for quality pre-K programs.”<sup>5</sup>

Nashville, TN, has embodied this collaborative model. The United Way of



Metropolitan Nashville helped secure the local match funding for three Davidson County pre-K classrooms. Donations from the Caterpillar Financial Services Corporation, a member of the Nashville business community, subsidized this contribution. The corporate and non-profit involvement in this partnership has created a blended funding system.

## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- **Assistant Teacher Qualifications:** The current VPK program does not require assistant teachers to hold a CDA or AA in early childhood education. VPK providers may employ assistant teachers who have relevant teaching experience and a high school diploma. Many state administrators would like to increase these qualifications, but such a requirement would create an “unfunded mandate.” This unfunded mandate would require teachers to earn additional credentials without state support. Tennessee does not have the financial capacity to enroll existing teachers in a CDA program.
- **Clashing Quality Standards:** When collaborating with Head Start agencies, VPK providers must fulfill additional quality standards. These requirements often involve transportation safety, supervision of staff, or playground size. Within these service areas, school districts must adopt Head Start standards. School districts may resist these changes for various reasons.
- **Teacher Compensation:** When school districts partner with private childcare centers, one entity usually manages teacher compensation. Since childcare centers often pay lower wages, problems occur when the community partner is the financial supervisor. In this situation, inadequate teacher compensation may create frequent staff turnover.

## CONTACTS

- **Connie Casha**  
Director of Early Childhood Programs, TN Dept of Education  
(615) 741-9051  
Connie.Casha@tn.gov
- **Janet Coscarelli**  
TN Head Start State Collaboration Office  
(615) 741-4849  
Janet.Coscarelli@tn.gov
- **Judy Stanfill Graham**

President, Tennessee Head Start Association

(423) 837-6724

Judygra423@aol.com

- **John Lovelace**  
Shelby County Head Start  
901 481 5251  
Lovelace-J@scgheadstart.com
- **Carol Idol**  
Knox County Schools, Pre-K Specialist  
(865) 539-3046  
Carol.Idol@knoxschools.org

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<sup>1</sup>Willen, L. (2010). Tennessee pre-k and the third-grade fade: truth or politics? *Early Stories, Teachers College at Columbia University*. Retrieved from [http://earlystories.org/content/tennessee-pre-k-and-the-third-grade-fade-is-this-a-trend\\_1295/](http://earlystories.org/content/tennessee-pre-k-and-the-third-grade-fade-is-this-a-trend_1295/)

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, S.W., Carolan, M.E., Fitzgerald, J. & Squires, J.H. (2011). The state of preschool 2011. *The National Institute of Early Education Research*. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/yearbook>.

<sup>3</sup> Voluntary pre-kindergarten approved curricula 2011-2012. (2011). *Tennessee Department of Education*. Retrieved from [http://www.tn.gov/education/earlylearning/prek/doc/Approved\\_Curricula\\_1112.pdf](http://www.tn.gov/education/earlylearning/prek/doc/Approved_Curricula_1112.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Goldstein, R., Casha, C., Crawford, G. (2011). Tennessee early learning developmental standards (TN-ELDS). *Tennessee Department of Education*. Retrieved from <http://state.tn.us/education/ci/earlychildhood/index.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> Voluntary pre-K in Tennessee: understanding the collaboration model. (2008). *Tennessee Alliance for Early Education*. Retrieved from [http://www.state.tn.us/education/earlylearning/prek/documents/PreK\\_UnderstandingCollab.pdf](http://www.state.tn.us/education/earlylearning/prek/documents/PreK_UnderstandingCollab.pdf)

Compiled by Renee Lamoreau  
BrightStart Tisch Summer Fellow, Tufts University

# Wisconsin

## Highly Successful 4K Program Prioritizes Collaboration

### 2011 State and District-Level Profile of 4K<sup>1</sup>



**Grades:** Pre-K (4 year olds)

**Program Length:** Determined by the school district. Most programs are part day, 4-5 days per week. Some districts offer full-day, 2-3 days per week.

**State Funded Pre-K Enrollment:** 40,963

**Percentage of Students in a Diverse Delivery Setting:**

- Approximately 85% of school districts offer 4K.
- Approximately 28% of participating school districts use models with community sites or partnerships with child care/Head Start.

**Percentage of Students Eligible for Meal Benefits, all grades:** 39.3%

**Funding Snapshot:**  
(See full report for more details.)

- State-funded Pre-K funding: \$146,960,062  
Average State Spending Per Child: \$3,587  
Average Local Contribution Per Child: \$2, 016
- Wisconsin provides 4K funding to participating districts through a “school aid formula.” The school aid formula accounts for the number of children receiving meal benefits, number of at-risk children and transportation aid. This formula then calculates the target ratio of state and local funds.
- The state contribution consists of general revenue funds, and the local education match comes from property taxes. A large percentage of 4K funds consist of state general funds, but the school district **always** contributes toward 4K.
- School districts are allowed to blend state funds with Head Start, Title 1 and special education funds.
- Districts may subcontract with private child care, Head Start, faith-based centers, family child care and other community organizations. However, when collaborating, the district maintains full financial responsibility. This ensures that public school 4K classrooms and “satellite” sites receive equal funding.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

As a national leader in early childhood education, Wisconsin has provided universal pre-K throughout its history. Wisconsin began offering public pre-K in 1848, and formally established its Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) program in 1873. Although the state discontinued 4K funding between 1957 and 1984, the 4K program continues to operate today. The state includes 4K in the K-12 funding formula, ensuring that the program is a mainstay in the public education system. Consequently, school districts are involved in every aspect of the 4K and have almost full control over the 4K program.

This regional flexibility fosters community involvement and district-level collaborations with private childcare centers. Each 4K program is a community effort which unites providers, school administrators, teachers, Head Start agencies, and parents. This unique model allows school districts to create an extensive network of collaborative 4K classrooms across the state.

### Local Partners in Wisconsin:

- **Wisconsin Department of Early Instruction**
- **Public Schools**
- **Private Childcare Providers**
- **Head Start**
- **Faith-Based Childcare Centers**
- **Community-Based Organizations (YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.)**

## MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

- **Universal Eligibility:** The 4K program is available to all children in Wisconsin. State 4K policies enforce universal access, and school districts are unable to turn children away. According to Paula Wainscott, retired 4K Coordinator for the Eau Claire school district, “if you are implementing 4K, you need to be able to offer [the program to] ALL children in the district who turn 4 by September 1.”
- **District Availability:** Approximately 350 out of 414 school districts (85%) offer the 4K program. The state does not require district participation in the program. Districts must evaluate the needs of the community and tailor their 4K program accordingly.
- **Community Involvement:** The Wisconsin 4K program has revolutionized local control and community involvement in the pre-k setting. The state sets minimal program requirements, but school districts and childcare providers work together to provide high-quality services.

Jim McCoy, retired administrator for the Wisconsin Department of Education, calls the 4K program a “we-are-all-in-this-together” model. From the planning to implementation stages of 4K, all decision making is a collective effort. For example, public school administrators and childcare providers must develop a common mission statement for the 4K program in their school district.

McCoy emphasizes that childcare providers and public school administrators must “leave their titles at the door” and “create the program from the bottom up.” This grassroots approach has been extremely successful throughout the state. School districts utilize the following 4K/childcare partnerships, known as the four “community models”<sup>2</sup>:

- **Model 1- Public School Classroom with School District Teacher**
  - **Model 2- Community-Based Center with School District Teacher**
  - **Model 3- Community-Based Center with Certified Pre-K Teacher**
  - **Model 4- At-Home Educational Support**
- **Extensive Planning:** Wisconsin’s community approach requires extensive planning and foresight. In preparation for a new 4K program, school districts organize community forums for parents, teachers, and childcare providers<sup>3</sup>. This open dialogue allows residents to express their concerns and expectations for the program.

School districts also include childcare providers and community members in the technical side of the 4K implementation. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, approximately 100 residents contributed to the planning of 4K. Within this large group, smaller groups worked on individual tasks and issues. One school official and community member co-led each small group.

- **Operating Schedule:** The school district determines the 4K operating schedule for each community. Most programs are part-day, 4-5 days per week. Some districts may also offer full-day programs 2-3 days per week. At minimum, participating districts must provide 437 hours of direct instruction per year, or 349.5 hours of classroom instruction and 87.5 hours of parent outreach.
- **Advanced Teacher Credentials:** Lead teachers must have a BA with a certification in pre-K. Acceptable credentials include ECE birth–age 8, EC birth–age 11, and 4K–grade 3<sup>2</sup>.
- **Assistant Teacher Qualifications:** Assistant teachers in public settings must satisfy one of the following qualifications: at least two years of higher education, an associate (or higher) degree, or a passing score on a state or local academic assessment. Assistant teachers in nonpublic settings must

meet child care licensing regulations. School districts that are Head Start grantees often expect assistant teachers to have an AA and assistant teacher license<sup>2</sup>.

- **Early Learning Standards:** All 4K providers utilize the *Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards* in their classrooms. This document identifies developmental expectations from birth through first grade. The standards include each individual area of early learning and development. The categories include: Health & Physical Development, Social and Emotional Development, Language Development and Communication, and Approaches to Learning: Cognition and General Knowledge<sup>3</sup>.
- **Teacher In-Service:** All teachers must complete 6 credit hours of professional development every 5 years.
- **Maximum Class Size:** Wisconsin does not limit class size and allows school districts to determine acceptable classroom ratios.
- **Screening/Referral:** State law encourages districts to provide vision, hearing, and general health screenings prior to enrollment. When 4K collaborates with Head Start, all screenings are mandatory.
- **Family Support Services:** Family support services include parent involvement activities, health services for children, referral to social services, referral for special education, parent conferences and/or home visits, and access to a school nurse, psychologist, and social worker.
- **Monitoring:** The state conducts 4K site visits as needed. School districts must submit reports yearly and with more frequency for start-up grants.

## FUNDING

**State Support:** Wisconsin provides 4K funding to participating districts through the school aid formula. The school aid formula allocates PK-12 funding to each school district. According to Jill Haglund of the Department of Early Instruction, the aid formula “accounts for [the number of children qualifying for] free/reduced lunch count, [the number of] at-risk kids, and transportation aid.”

After evaluating this data, the formula calculates a target ratio of state and local funds. Wisconsin state funds often constitute approximately 60% of school funding, and the district pays the remaining 40%. The state contribution consists of general revenue funds, and the local educational match comes from property taxes. Since 4K uses the state aid formula, pre-k funding is almost identical to K-12 funding. However, since 4K is a half-day program, 4K classrooms receive approximately 50-60% of the funding amount for other grade levels<sup>2</sup>.

**District Implementation:** School districts are the only eligible recipients of state 4K funds<sup>2</sup>. When collaborating with community-based providers, the district allocates all funding to the partnering organization.

A large percentage of 4K funds consist of state general funds, but the school district always contributes towards the program. In the “community approach,” school districts may blend state funds with Head Start, Title 1 and special education funds. Districts may also utilize local grants, childcare subsidies, and parent fees for services delivered outside of the 4K program<sup>3</sup>. These funds would supplement the district’s overall financial contribution to 4K, a combination of property taxes and other district funds. Regardless of the agreement with the community provider (see community models 1-4), the mixture of district and state funds subsidizes teacher salaries, classroom supplies, and other operating costs.

**Community Partnerships:** Districts may subcontract with Head Start, private childcare, faith-based centers, family childcare, and other community-based organizations. When collaborating with these agencies, the district still maintains its full financial responsibility.

Jill Haglund believes that school districts have a very clear role in financing 4K: “[Since] the district is bringing 4K into community partners, the district needs to pay the full cost of providing the program. [School districts] can’t pass on 4K costs to the providers!” Furthermore, the partnering organization may provide space and general classroom materials, but the school district must fully compensate community-based organizations regardless of the setting. This strategy ensures that public school 4K classrooms and “satellite” sites receive equal funding.

## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

**Budget Cuts:** Although 4K funding is relatively stable, administrators worry about future budget cuts to the educational system. Since the school aid formula includes 4K, any school budget cut would directly impact the pre-k program. According to Jim McCoy, districts would “make do” in the event of state education cuts. The strong community-based approach promotes resiliency and accountability at the local level.

**Higher Standards:** The 4K program only satisfies 5 of the 10 quality benchmarks on the 2011 NIEER pre-k yearbook. The areas of improvement include: assistant teacher guidelines, class size maximums, staff-child ratios, screening/support services, and meals.

On the state level, the Wisconsin Department of Early Instruction allows districts to have considerable flexibility in these areas. Since the NIEER report focuses on

state standards and regulations, 4K does not meet these benchmarks. Haglund recognizes this poor NIEER score and hopes to improve the credibility of 4K with tighter regulations. Specifically, Haglund would like to implement a stronger quality rating system to meet current Race to the Top guidelines.

## CONTACTS

### **Jill Haglund**

Early Childhood Consultant, WI Department of Public Instruction  
608-267-9625  
Jill.Haglund@dpi.wi.gov

### **Jim McCoy**

WI Department of Public Instruction (retired)  
608-558-5355

### **Paula Wainscott**

Eau Claire School District, Head Start and 4K Coordinator (retired)  
paulajwainscott@gmail.com  
715-864-4532

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett, S.W., Carolan, M.E., Fitzgerald, J. & Squires, J.H. (2011). The state of preschool 2011. *The National Institute of Early Education Research*. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/yearbook>.

<sup>2</sup> Landsverk, R.A. (2003). Has a cooperative attitude: Wisconsin communities embrace the community approach to serving 4-year-olds. *Wisconsin School News*. Retrieved from [http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/ec\\_4k\\_article-4-03.pdf](http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/pdf/ec_4k_article-4-03.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Wisconsin Early Learning Standards. (2010). Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners. Retrieved from <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php>

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