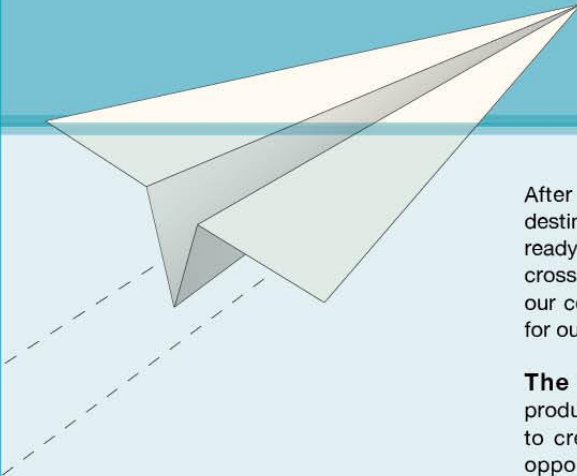


The Status of Early Learning in Greater Kansas City • 2010
FULL REPORT & COMPREHENSIVE FINDINGS



SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS



After **two decades** of hard work we are closer to our destination — a region where all children will enter school ready to succeed. And while there are still many bridges to cross before we get there, with the continued dedication of our community partners, leaders and staff, a better place for our children will not be much further ahead.

The Metropolitan Council on Early Learning produces this report to measure the progress of efforts to create a quality early learning system that provides opportunities to all families in the Kansas City region. Information is based on data collected in 2009.



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Introduction: Soaring to New Heights

Greater Kansas City reached a milestone this last year. Two decades have passed since the Mid-America Regional Council formed the Metropolitan Council on Child Care (MARC) with insight, vision, and a firm belief that metropolitan Kansas City could improve access to and the quality of early learning.

Working with strong dedicated community partners, significant progress has been made over the past twenty years. Now called the Metropolitan Council on Early Learning much has been accomplished toward reaching the vision that all children will enter school prepared for success. Some highlights include:

- Partners in Quality – Partners who helped design and implement an early learning strategic plan.
- Accreditation Project – A significant number of family home and center early learning programs achieved national accreditation.
- Quality Rating System – A pilot initiative to improve the quality of early learning programs.
- Scholarships – Many providers were able to return to school and receive further education and training to improve their professional skills.
- Compensation – Helped many providers earn additional wages to better compensate them for their professional accomplishments.

The gains our community has made over the past two decades have only been possible because of so many. The philanthropic community has been generous with their fiscal support; the business and civic leadership with their careful deliberation, leadership, guidance, and probing in-depth questions; the many community organizations with their selfless commitment to our



children and families; parents and ordinary citizens who want better for the children of our community; our public schools who have worked to include early learning within their structure, and our early learning colleagues in metropolitan Kansas City, in Missouri and Kansas, and across the nation who helped shape the thinking, challenged the assumptions, and committed to the hard work of making Kansas City’s vision for our young children move closer to fruition.

As is illustrated by the title and design of this new report, MCEL’s vision for early learning in greater Kansas City is working to reach new heights to take the thoughtful work of the past two decades to scale in both Kansas and Missouri, and more recent accomplishments are demonstrating how our community’s earlier work is now bearing fruit.

Public Support for Early Learning

Through the efforts of our partners, more people and policy makers recognize the important role quality early education plays in helping to prepare children to enter school ready to succeed. One example of this is a poll conducted in late 2008 that showed strong support exists among voters in Missouri for quality early learning and Pre-K programs. The poll was conducted on behalf of the developing Missouri Coalition for School Readiness; key findings from the poll included: 1) Despite the impact of the national recession, voters were surprisingly receptive to maintaining investments in important state programs, including early childhood education; 2) Voters across the political spectrum had extremely favorable attitudes toward early childhood education, and this issue ranked high in Missourians’ priority list (including being tied with K-12 public education in importance). What is most notable is that a significant majority of Missourians are predisposed to supporting early childhood education.



Missouri Quality Rating Child Outcome Study

Efforts to improve and increase access to quality early learning programs are also reaching new heights as the results of a recent study of children enrolled in higher quality programs revealed promising results. Commissioned by MCEL in the fall of 2008 with support from the George K. Baum, the Kansas Health and the Bank of America Foundations, the Missouri Quality Rating System (MO QRS) Child Outcome Study was undertaken by the Center for Family Policy and Research at the University of Missouri – Columbia and the Institute for Human Development at the University of Missouri – Kansas City to find out if children who attended higher quality programs in the MO QRS had better school readiness related outcomes.

The study assessed pre-kindergarten entry children in the Fall of 2008 and again in Spring 2009 in early learning programs ranging from low quality 1 Star to high quality 5 Star programs. The study found that medium and high quality programs made substantial impacts on vocabulary development particularly for children in poverty, whereas low quality programs seemed to negatively impact these children’s vocabulary. The study also showed that children attending higher quality programs made greater gains in social and emotional development than their peers in lower quality programs. In fact, the study showed that children in lower quality programs lose social and behavioral skills over time. Children attending high quality programs were most positively impacted by the ability to self-regulate, which is crucial for children’s school readiness. (Results of the MO QRS Child Outcome Study are available at the following link: <http://www.marc.org/mcel/assets/QRSSummary.PDF>)

The results of this study show the positive impact quality early learning can have on the development of young children. Although improving the classroom environment is critical, we know that environments in and of themselves are not sufficient achieving quality. Positive sustained interactions between well trained and educated teachers and children are where the real magic of early learning takes place.



Teacher / Child Interactions

Moving forward MCEL continues to seek out new and innovative approaches to improving quality that will serve as models for improving the early learning system in Greater Kansas. MCEL, in partnership with MAHS and the University of Virginia's Center for Advance Study of Teaching and Learning, have engaged in a multi-year project to improve curriculum fidelity and teacher child interactions in classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System© (CLASS). CLASS is a research-based approach to defining and measuring effective interactions in early childhood and elementary classrooms. The CLASS provides professional development supports to give targeted feedback to programs and teachers, with the overarching goal of improving outcomes for children in Pre-K - 3rd classrooms. Through a generous grant from the H&R Block Foundation, MCEL and MAHS began piloting CLASS in 10 Head Start classrooms. Preliminary results from the pilot have been promising and with additional funding the project has doubled in size.

As we look to the future to ensure more children receive the teacher child interactions that are so critical to providing quality early learning environments, MCEL is pursuing opportunities to expand this promising program to many more classrooms across the region over the next three years.



Access to Quality

Research shows that investments in comprehensive, high-quality early learning programs are cost-effective by promoting substantial economic and social benefits, while reducing the need for more expensive, less productive interventions for older children and adults.

Nobel Laureate Economist Dr. James Heckman urges investing in early education to help children do better in school and save money down the road. Heckman argues that early interventions for disadvantaged children "raise the quality of the workforce, enhance the productivity of schools and reduce crime, teenage pregnancy, and welfare dependency. They raise earnings and promote social attachment. Focusing solely on earnings gains, returns to dollars invested are as high as 15-17 percent (per year)".

Invest + Develop + Sustain = Gain

- Invest in educational and development resources for disadvantaged families to provide equal access to successful early human development.
- Develop and nurture early development of cognitive and social skills in children from birth to age five.
- Sustain early development with effective education through to adulthood.
- Gain a more capable, productive and valuable workforce that pays dividends to America for generations to come.

(Information on the Heckman Equation is available at the following link:
<http://www.heckmanequation.org/about-professor-heckman>)

In 2007, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) released a study titled "Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation." According to this study, providing voluntary, high-quality, publicly funded pre-kindergarten education for the poorest twenty-five percent of three- and four-year-old children



would have an enormous impact on everything from the annual budget to crime prevention. EPI estimates that these annual benefits would surpass the costs of the program within a six-year timeframe. According to the EPI, by 2050, the overall benefits of such a program would total \$315 billion. The breakdown for this total includes \$83 billion in budgetary benefits for the government; \$156 billion for increased employment compensation; and \$77 billion resulting from savings associated with the reduction of crime and child abuse. These annual benefits - as projected for the year 2050 - would exceed the costs of the program by a ratio of 12.1 to 1.

Measuring Quality

The quality of early learning programs in Greater Kansas City ranges widely from programs that meet the minimum state and local health and safety requirements to programs that are actively engaged in national or state recognized quality improvement initiatives and assessment efforts. In Greater Kansas City a network of quality early learning initiatives has emerged that includes Head Start and Early Head Start programs, nationally and state accredited programs and programs participating in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). This network plays a critical role in providing opportunities for children to learn grow and gain skills they need to be successful in school and life, particularly for children at risk of school failure. Each of these initiatives provides additional quality standards and that go far above and beyond state licensing minimum safety standards.

State Licensing

Kansas and Missouri state health departments require early learning programs to meet basic health and safety standards such as fire, sanitation and health inspections, staff training and staff-to-child ratio requirements, staff and volunteer background screenings. Licensing standards apply to most early learning programs with exemptions for public school programs in both Kansas and Missouri and for church-affiliated programs in Missouri. Church-affiliated licensed exempt centers in Missouri are required to meet the same basic health and safety



standards as licensed programs, but staff education and staff-to-child ratios are not required. There are nearly 500 licensed early learning centers and over 100 licensed exempt centers in the Greater Kansas City area.

State Licensed Centers in Greater Kansas City	
KS Licensed Centers	252
MO Licensed Centers	241
MO Licensed Exempt Centers	111

Family child care providers are required to be licensed in Kansas if they care for 3 or more non-related children and in Missouri family child care providers must be licensed if they care for five or more non-related children.

There are nearly 1,600 licensed family child care homes in the Greater Kansas City area.

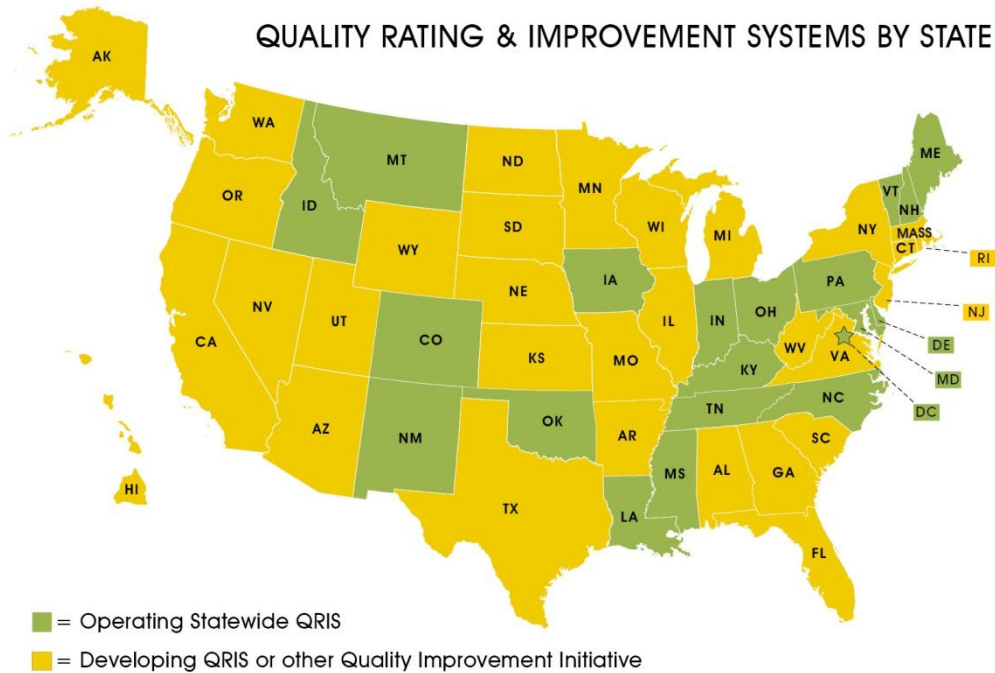
State Licensed Family Child Care Homes in Greater Kansas City	
KS Licensed Family Child Care Homes	1,332
MO Licensed Family Child Care Homes	295

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) provide early learning programs with a quality rating as well as the information and supports needed to improve and maintain higher quality services for children and families. All fifty states are engaged at some level in the development of QRIS programs. Twenty states are operating a QRIS statewide while 30 others are at some stage of developing them.



States and Communities Operating, Piloting, or Exploring
or Designing a Quality Rating and Improvement System



SOURCE: Data compiled by the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, March 2010.

Since 2004 MCEL has been working with its state and local partners to develop QRIS programs in Kansas and Missouri. MCEL started a local QRIS pilot in 2004. In 2008 MCEL transitioned programs from this local pilot into the new Kansas and Missouri Demonstration Projects (known as KQRIS in Kansas and MO QRS in Missouri). Programs participating in the Demonstration Projects receive reliable and valid assessments of quality that provide a rating from 1 to 5 stars and a detailed feedback report that summarizes the program’s strengths and opportunities is used to develop a detailed road map to improve quality. All programs are assigned a Quality Improvement Coach who is trained to work with the program to develop a quality improvement plan and goals. In addition to coaching support, programs can also access a variety of quality improvement resources such as: Quality Improvement Mini-Grants for professional development training, learning materials or small facility improvements;



scholarships for directors and teaching staff to take courses toward a degree or certification in child development.

The QRIS is a proven approach that institutionalizes continuous quality improvement methods into early learning programs and has demonstrated substantial increases in quality levels and the number of programs achieving accreditation standards for participating programs over multiple years. After the second year of assessments for programs participating in the QRS Demonstration Project, programs continue to maintain high levels of quality or to make significant gains toward improving quality. Over 80% of participating programs achieved a 3 Star or higher and nearly 50% achieved a 4 Star or higher. Currently there are 96 programs (68 centers and 28 family child care homes) in Greater Kansas City currently participating in the QRS Demonstration Project.

The ultimate goal of the QRS is to provide high quality early learning environments for children and families throughout Greater Kansas City, and to provide parents with needed and easy to understand information about the quality of those programs. Providing parents and families with detailed information on program quality clearly has the potential to help inform consumer choice and put parents in the position of demanding – and policy makers in the position of funding – high-quality early learning programs. MCEL works with a large network of community partners to implement the QRS in early learning programs in Greater Kansas City. Partners include: the Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies; The Tri-County Smart Start Coalition; The University of Missouri Center for Family Policy and Research; the University of Missouri, Kansas City – Institute for Human Development; The Family Conservancy; and the Francis Institute.

Accreditation

Accreditation is a process many different industries use to identify exemplary practices in that particular field. Accreditation is both a status and a process. As a status, accreditation provides public notification that an institution or program has met standards of quality set forth by an accrediting agency. As a process, accreditation reflects the fact that in achieving recognition by the accrediting agency, the institution or program is committed to self-study and external review by one's peers in seeking not only to meet standards but to continuously seek ways in which to enhance the quality of the services provided. Although there are others, three primary accreditation standards are recognized as the leading accreditation programs for early learning programs in Greater Kansas City. These are: National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) and Missouri Accreditation.

NAEYC Accreditation

Since 1985, The NAEYC has provided a national, voluntary accreditation system and set professional standards for early childhood education programs, and helped families identify high-quality programs for their young children. These standards were developed to identify environments that enhance and nurture children's development in the early years, while preparing them for continued success in school. The NAEYC program standards and accreditation criteria were updated in 2006 to include (1) explicit program standards for early childhood programs serving children birth through kindergarten and (2) making the standards more evidence-based and aligned with the profession's knowledge of best practice.

There are ten program standards, with specific criteria attached to each that programs must meet in order to achieve NAEYC Accreditation. The framework of the standards and criteria focus on best practices in the field and the benefits to stakeholders in early childhood education. There are four groups of early childhood education stakeholders: children, teachers,



families and community partners, and the program administrators. Over 7,000 child care programs, preschools, early learning centers, and other center- or school-based early childhood education programs are currently NAEYC-Accredited.

NAEYC Accreditation numbers have declined over the last few years, due in part to the increased standards and associated costs resulting from the 2006 standards revision. As of October 2010 there were 53 NAEYC accredited programs in the Greater KC area. This number could increase in the future as approximately 60 centers are currently working to achieve accreditation for the first time.

NAFCC Accreditation

NAFCC sponsors the only nationally recognized accreditation system designed specifically for family child care providers. NAFCC Accreditation is awarded to family child care providers who meet the eligibility requirements and the Quality Standards for NAFCC Accreditation.

Accreditation reflects a high level of quality through a process that examines all aspects of the family child care program, i.e. relationships, the environment, developmental learning activities, safety and health, and professional and business practices. Once family child care providers become accredited, they agree to abide by the standards set forth and to be measured against those standards, with periodic integrity and compliance reviews. There are over 2,100 NAFCC Accredited providers throughout the United States and in other locations worldwide where military family child care professionals operate. Currently, 50 family child care programs are nationally accredited in the Greater Kansas City area and an additional 44 family child care programs are engaged in the NAFCC Accreditation process for the first time.



Missouri Accreditation

Missouri Accreditation provides quality standards for child care programs serving children from birth through school age within the state of Missouri. Missouri Accreditation functions in areas beyond the scope of state licensing requirement for child care facilities. Those regulations exist mainly to ensure the basic health and safety of the children in those programs. To be awarded Missouri Accreditation, a program has to exceed those standards.

Missouri Accreditation involves a thorough evaluation of aspects of program quality. Areas that accreditation covers include: Children's Relationships and Interactions, Physical Environment, Programming/Curriculum, Program/Family Connections, Administration, Health, Safety and Nutrition. Nearly 300 programs have achieved MO accreditation across the state. Currently there are 25 Missouri-accredited programs in Greater Kansas City area.

Accreditation Facilitation Project: The Accreditation Project, started by the Family Conservancy in 1997, is designed to improve the quality of early learning programs in Greater Kansas City by increasing the number of accredited early learning centers and family child care homes. The project works to provide grants and technical assistance to programs to help them achieve and maintain accreditation standards. For more information contact The Family Conservancy Quality Initiatives office at 913-342-1110.

Head Start and Early Head Start Performance Standards

Head Start is the federal program that has pioneered efforts to promote school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children. Now in its 45th year this successful program works to ensure quality through the establishment and enforcement of Head Start Performance Standards that assure high quality educational, health, nutritional, social and other services to low-income children and families are offered and maintained. Head Start has

served more than 24 million children since its inception in 1965, and has a proven track record in improving the skills of infants and toddlers and preschoolers.

Affordability and Access for Low Income Families

Although early learning is not a high paying field, the costs of providing early learning programs especially programs that are higher quality can be expensive for many average working family budgets. The average cost of center-based care for a preschool child in the region is nearly \$7,000 per year. This is as much as a full year of tuition at a four year state public college or university. Weekly fees for infant care in the region average over \$10,000 per year. This means that for a family of four with an infant and a preschooler in a center-based early learning program spends on average \$17,000 a year on fees. This represents over a quarter of the median family household income of \$66,816 in the metro area. For many moderate to low income families these costs can consume 40 to 50 percent of the family budget making child care simply unaffordable.

Average Weekly Fees of Early Learning Programs		
Age Group	Center-Based	Family Home Providers
Infants	\$ 193	\$ 152
Toddlers	\$ 168	\$ 140
Preschool	\$ 134	\$ 131
School Age	\$ 110	\$ 81

Child Care Assistance for Low-Income Families

There are several publicly funded programs that are helping low income and working poor families gain greater access to much needed early learning services. These are: child care



subsidies, Head Start and Early Head Start, state supported PreK and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

When parents have access to affordable child care, they are more likely to enter and remain in the workforce. For low-income parents, in particular, the cost of child care can mean choosing between their children and their job.

Child Care Subsidies

Child care subsidies help offset costs and provide access to early learning programs for more low-income and working poor families. The primary source of funding for child care subsidies is the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program. Another important source of child care funding is the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. States may transfer up to 30 percent of their TANF block grant funds to the CCDBG. Kansas and Missouri transfer 21 percent and 11 percent respectively of their TANF funds to the CCDBG program. Combined with some state funding CCDBG child care subsidies help to serve an average of 12,852 children each month and nearly invest approximately \$48,500,000 in early learning services in Greater Kansas City each year.

According to the National Women’s Law Center there are four critical components of child care subsidy policies that impact whether families who most need it can access support, these are: income eligibility levels, waiting lists, copayments and reimbursement rates. Although Kansas fares better than Missouri with regard to these polices, both states have work to do to ensure child care subsidies are most effective and adequately funded.

Income Eligibility

Income eligibility limits provide accessibility to child care for low income families, the higher the rate the more families can access support through child care subsidies.



- The Department of Social Services (DSS) provides subsidies in Missouri. The eligibility limit for low-income families is currently at 127% of the federal poverty level with transitional assistance up to 139%. This translates into annual earnings of \$18,885 for a family of three with the family remaining eligible up to \$20,063 a year. Missouri is 48th in the nation for child care subsidy eligibility.
- The Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services (SRS) provides subsidies in Kansas. The current eligibility level for low-income families is 185 percent of the federal poverty levels. This translates into earning of \$33,873 annually for a family of three. Kansas is 30th in the nation for child care subsidy eligibility.

Waiting Lists

Waiting lists show whether families who qualify for assistance actually can access help.

- Currently neither Kansas nor Missouri have waiting lists for child care subsidy assistance.

Copayments

- Both Kansas and Missouri require copayments. For example Kansas has a copayment of up to 4% of a family's income for a family of three at 100 percent of the poverty while Missouri has a copayment of up to 7% of a family's income for a family of three at 100 percent of the poverty level. In addition, both states allow child care providers to ask parents receiving child care assistance to cover the difference (beyond any required copayment). Parent copayments can help child care providers avoid losing income; however it places an additional financial burden on already financially strapped families.

Reimbursement Rates

Reimbursement rates affect the ability for child care providers to pay salaries to attract and retain quality staff and maintain a quality program that can promote children's learning.



Federal regulations recommend, but do not mandate, rates be set at the 75th percentile of current market rate.

- Kansas’s reimbursement rate is set at the 65th percentile of market rates and were last updated in 2002.
- Missouri’s reimbursement rate is set at the much lower rate of 33rd percentile of the market rate and were last updated in 2008.

Low reimbursement rates deprive child care providers of resources crucial for supporting high-quality care and can discourage high-quality providers from serving families receiving child care assistance. This limits choices of child care providers and the quality of care those providers offer for families receiving child care subsidies.

Programs that Accept Children Whose Fees are Paid by State Subsidies

Despite lower than market level reimbursement rates offer by both states, three fourths of centers and nearly 60 percent of family homes indicated that they accept children who are eligible to receive subsidies in Greater Kansas City.

Programs that Accept Children Whose Fees are Paid by State Subsidies	Centers	Homes
accept subsidies	75%	59%
average number enrolled	17	1 to 5

Although a majority of regulated programs indicate they accept children receiving subsidies, a large proportion of these children remain in unregulated settings.

Average Monthly Percentages of Children Served in Regulated Settings vs. Settings Legally Operating Without Regulation	Licensed /Regulated	Legally Operating Without Regulation/ Kith and Kin Care
Kansas	84%	16%
Missouri	62%	38%

Source NACCRRRA

Head Start and Early Head Start

In addition to state subsidies Head Start and Early Head Start programs play a key role in providing access to the region’s most vulnerable children. Income eligibility for Head Start services is lower than state subsidies (100 percent of the federal poverty level), though each locally operated program includes other eligibility criteria such as disabilities and services to other family members. Since many Head Start programs are half day and only operate during the school year many children in Head Start also utilize state subsidies to provide wraparound support for full day care.

Head Start serves approximately three out of five eligible preschool children and Early Head Start serves only three percent of the eligible babies and toddlers. Approximately 4,366 children and their families are served by Head Start or Early Head Start by seven grantees in Greater Kansas City each year.

Unlike subsidy programs, however, funding for Head Start and Early Head Start is tied to specific performance standards and staff education levels to assure a level of quality is being maintained. Head Start and Early Head Start programs were designed to level the playing field for children in poverty and pioneered efforts to promote school readiness by enhancing the



social and cognitive development of children. Head Start and Early Head Start programs also go beyond the services provided by many early learning programs by providing a full range of family support services including:

- Medical screening, immunizations, and dental services
- Healthy nutritional assistance
- Parent education
- Referral services for a range of individual child and family needs
- Opportunity for parents to participate in school decision-making

Head Start and Early Head Start Grantees In Greater Kansas City

- **Mid-America Head Start:**
In 2009, Mid-America Head Start provided services to more than 2,700 children and their families in the three counties. (exact number is 2,788)
<http://www.marc.org/headstart/>
- **Economic Opportunity Foundation** provides Head Start services to 878 children in Wyandotte County. <http://www.eofkck.org/>
- **Project EAGLE** provides Early Head Start services to an additional 200 children and their families in Wyandotte County annually. <http://www.projecteagle.org/>
- **Head Start of Shawnee Mission, Inc.** provides Head Start and Early Head Start services to more than 200 children (218 exact) and their families.
<http://www.smks-headstart.org/>
- **Olathe School District** provides Head Start services to 149 low income families. The service area includes Olathe, Gardner-Edgerton, Spring Hill, DeSoto and Blue Valley.
- **Northeast Kansas Community Action Program**- Currently serves 52 Head Start preschoolers and 31 Early Head Start children and their families.
<http://www.nekcap.org/>
- **East Central Kansas Community Action Program** provides Head Start and Early Head Start services to 50 children and their families in Miami County, Kansas.
<http://www.eckan.org/>



Pre K

State funded Pre K programs can also increase access to preschool programs for low and moderate income families and typically incorporate curriculum, materials and staff education standards to ensure a levels of quality. Kansas and Missouri are among 38 states that have invested in state funded pre k programs.

Kansas

The Kansas' At-Risk Four-Year-Old Preschool Program was established in 1998 as part of the school funding formula. This half-day program is operated by school districts in collaboration with private community-based programs, and funding is awarded via a competitive grant process. Eligibility is based on a variety of risk factors, including free or reduced lunch eligibility, developmental delay, English language-learner or migrant status, single or teen parent homes, or low parental educational attainment. This initiative serves approximately 16% of 4 year-olds in the state. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Kansas is ranked 21 out of 38 for access for 4-year olds to Pre K programs and 31 out of 38 for state investments in pre K.

Missouri

Since 1998, Missouri has used gaming revenues to fund the Missouri Preschool Project (MPP). With funds distributed through the Early Childhood Development Education and Care Fund, the state-funded program serves 3- and 4-year-olds in programs operating in public schools, private child care centers, and nonprofit agencies. Funds are awarded through a competitive grant process, with priority given to programs serving children with special needs or from low-income families. With the goal of providing access to all families regardless of income, local programs offer sliding payment scales based on criteria such as free or reduced lunch eligibility. Project sites serve approximately two percent of the state's three-year olds and four percent of its four-year olds. Out of the 38 states with pre-k initiatives, Missouri ranks 35th for access for four

year olds and 27th in terms of state expenditures per child enrolled in the program according to NIEER.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program

The CACFP is another source of public funding support for many early learning programs. The CACFP provides funding to early learning programs for meals and snacks to help meet children’s daily nutritional requirements. The program serves children age 12 and under; children of migrant workers age 15 and under; and mentally or physically disabled persons enrolled in a facility serving a majority of people age 18 and under. CACFP provides reimbursement to child care centers and family child care homes for meals served to participating children. The Child and Adult Care Food Program is administered by the Division of Nutritional Health and Services – Bureau of Community Food and Nutrition Assistance. The program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

CACFP reimbursement for centers is based on three categories: free, reduced price and paid. These categories are determined from information about family size and income reported by households on the Income Eligibility Form. Centers earn reimbursement for eligible meals and snacks served in each category.

All eligible child care homes are eligible for regular reimbursement rates. A higher rate is paid to home providers who live in low-income areas, are low-income themselves, or serve low-income children.

Participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)	Centers	Home
Percentage of programs participating in CACFP	39%	74%
Average Number Children Enrolled in CACFP	66	6-10

Access to Services and Supports

Beyond having access to quality early learning that is affordable, another key issue for many parents looking for child care is that it has to meet their own unique family needs. An insufficient supply of specific services such as infant/toddler care, care for children with special needs, extended hour care and care for children who are mildly ill can place an additional burden on families seeking services that are available in their area. In addition, more and more area early learning programs are working with children who are English Language Learners which poses a set of additional challenges and opportunities for providers.

Infants and Toddlers

There is both a high demand for and short supply of early learning programs for infants and toddlers in Greater Kansas City. The Family Conservancy, the regions’ resource and referral network, reports that over 60 percent of all requests from families are infant and toddler programs. Not surprisingly a large percentage of early learning programs report that the demand for services surpasses available supply as reflected in the high percentage of programs with waiting lists for infant and toddler slots.

Availability of Infant Toddler Care	Centers		Homes	
	Infants	Toddlers	Infants	Toddlers
Percent of area programs that accept infants and Toddlers	57%	73%	88%	94%
Average number enrolled in those programs	8	13	1	2
Percent of those programs with waiting lists	51%	34%	27%	13%
Average number on waiting lists	8	5	2	3

In recent years these numbers have improved somewhat as the percentage of center-based programs accepting infants and toddlers has increased from 47% for infants and 61% for toddlers reported in 2007 to 57% accepting infants and 73% accepting toddlers in 2009. The percentage of homes serving infants and toddlers remained relatively unchanged over the same time period. The percentage of centers reporting waiting lists and the average number on waiting lists has declined for centers and homes over this same period as well.

Children with Special Needs

Children who have special needs must be served by staff specially trained to identify and address their individual needs. Because of the low level of staff training and high staff turnover in early learning programs overall, it is hard for families to locate programs and services that meet their specific needs.

Availability of Programs that Serve Children with Special Needs	Centers	Home
Percent of all area programs with the ability to care for special-needs children	63%	46%
Percent of those programs with special-needs children enrolled	49%	46%
Average number enrolled	3	1

Among centers serving children with special needs, programs reported that autism, developmental delays and ADHD were the most common special needs experienced by children in their programs.

Non-Traditional Hour Care and Care for Mildly Ill Children

Parents seeking care outside of the normal working hours of 9 am – 6 pm, care on the weekends or parents who have to work even when their child is sick usually have few or no options. In Greater Kansas City less than 15 percent of centers provide care before 6 am and

after 6:30 pm while 25 percent of family home providers offer extended hours. Thirty percent of centers said they could care for mildly ill children compared with 55 percent of home providers.

Availability of Non-Traditional Hour and Mildly Ill Child Care	Centers	Home
Percent of programs offering extended hours care	14%	25%
Percent of programs offering weekend care	3%	12%
Percent of programs that can serve mildly ill children	30%	55%

English Language Learners

In Kansas City and across the nation an increasing number of area early learning programs are serving more Non-English Speaking (NES) or English Language Learners (ELL) children.

Availability of Programs that Serve NES or ELL Children	Centers	Homes
Percent of programs with NES or ELL children enrolled	75%	34%
Average number of NES or ELL children enrolled	4	1

The majority of these children are from Latino families where Spanish is the primary language spoken at home. Kansas City has experienced a surge in the population of Latino/Hispanic children under the age of 5 in recent years, increasing 63% from 2000 to 2007. Overall, half of Hispanic kindergarteners are classified as language minority students and 30% are non-proficient in oral English.



Latino Early Learning Initiative: A large proportion of Latino children in child care are cared for in family child care homes or child care centers with few resources for English Language Learner (ELL) children. Typically these programs are run by providers that have no or low proficiency in English themselves, lack formal training in early childhood development and/or emerging literacy development in young children, and have environments that lack educational and literacy resources. These realities place many Latino children at a double disadvantage when they enter Kindergarten, not only are they behind their peers academically they are still not proficient in English. MCEL is partnering with the Guadalupe Center, El Centro, and the Greater Kansas City Community Foundation Hispanic Development Fund to implement the Latino Early Learning Initiative. The goal of the initiative is increase access to quality early learning for Latino children under the age of 5. The partners are working to achieve this goal through community mobilization efforts and increased training opportunities for early learning providers in the Latino community.

Support for Families

Parents are their child’s first and most important teachers. Research tells us that the strength of the family is a key predictor of a child’s school success. Research also shows that parent involvement in their child’s early learning program can have a significant positive impact on their child’s school readiness particularly their social emotional development, language development and later literacy. A key component of quality early learning is how programs support families, provide parent education on child development and engage families in the early learning program. Better outcomes for children are achieved when programs regularly communicate with and inform parents about their children’s progress and involve their program.

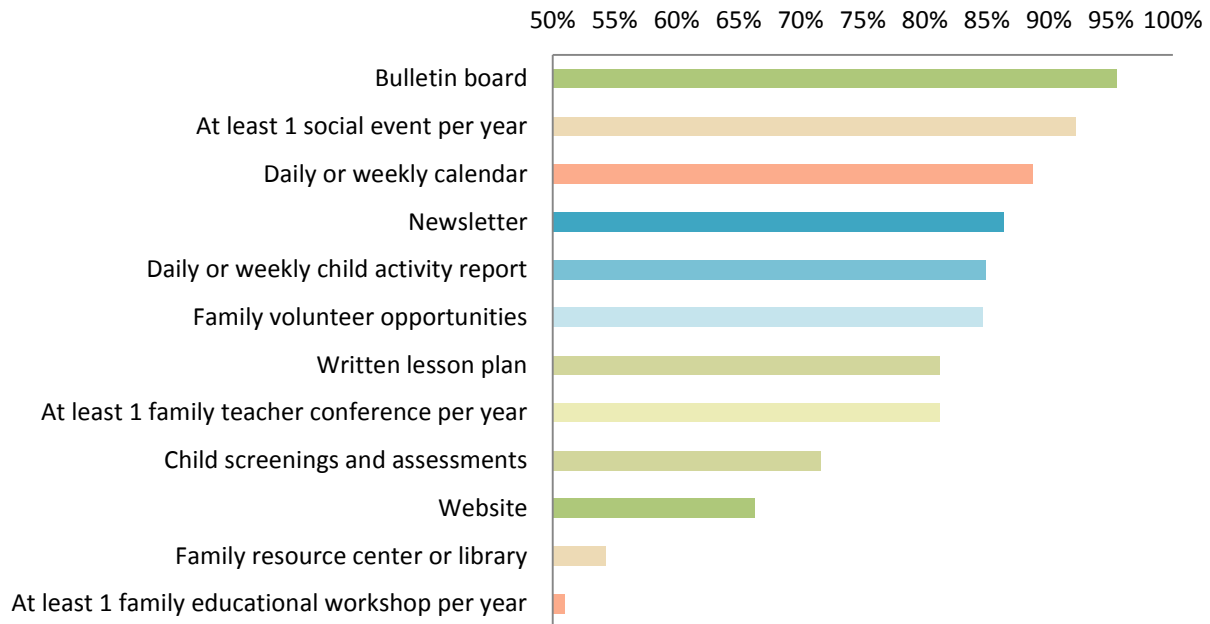
Prepared for Success in Kindergarten and Beyond:

- Socially, by age five a child should cooperate with other children and adults, accept responsibility, and build relationships of mutual trust, understanding and respect for others
- Physically, a child needs to be healthy. This includes up-to-date immunizations and regular dental and medical care. A physically healthy child can focus better on school and is less distracted by ailments.
- Intellectually, a child should be able to apply early reading skills, use writing as a means of expression/communication and seek answers to questions through active investigation.

Engaging and Supporting Families in Early Learning Programs

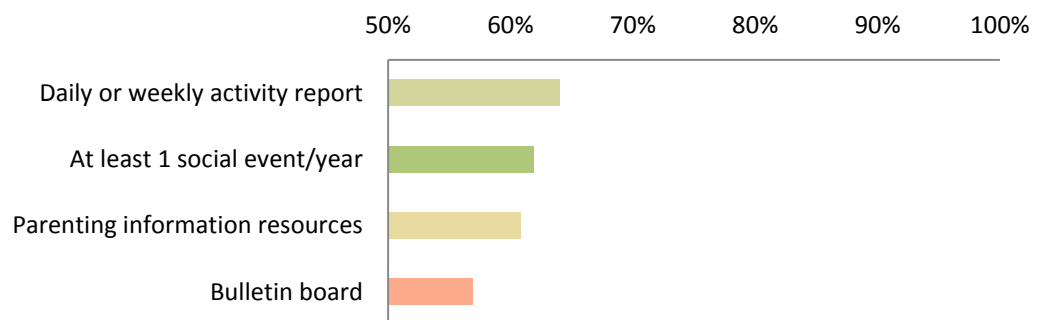
When asked about the parent supports and engagement opportunities early learning programs currently provide for their families, the majority of centers and family home providers indicated they offered a range of supports and resources although centers tended to offer more types of supports than family home providers.

Family Resources Offered by 50% or More of Centers



Family supports least offered by centers included: offering home visits, family support groups, family needs assessments and providing sliding fee scales.

Family Resources Offered by 50% or More of Family Home Providers



Family supports least offered by family home providers included: offering tuition assistance, family needs assessments, child screenings and assessments and home visits.



The Incredible Years: The Incredible Years Program applies research-proven parenting and teaching practices to strengthen young children’s social competence and problem-solving abilities and reduce aggression at home and school. The Incredible Years is a comprehensive program; incorporating both parenting components and teacher- and child-focused intervention strategies. Comprehensive programs like the Incredible Years are likely to be the most effective strategy to promote positive child outcomes. Incredible Years has been tested with 3- to 8-year-old children with conduct problems as well as with 2- to 6-year-old children who are at high risk by virtue of living in poverty. The child program promotes children’s social competence and reduces conduct problems; the parent program helps parents strengthen parenting skills and become more involved in their children’s school activities; and the teachers’ program strengthens classroom management skills, reduces classroom aggression, and improves teachers’ ability to focus on students’ social, emotional, and academic competence. With limited private and state funding The Family Conservancy has been able to offer the Incredible Years training to teachers and parents in limited sites. For more information contact The Family Conservancy at 913-342-1110.

Economic Impacts on Families Served by Early Learning Programs

When asked how the recent economic downturn has impacted the children and families early learning programs serve in the region, most centers and family home provides responded that the recession has made it more difficult for families to afford child care. Fifty-three percent of center directors and over a third of family home providers thought that more of their families needed additional supports or referrals for services due to the recession and nearly half of center directors and nearly 30 percent of family providers thought that their families needed supports and services that currently are not available to them.



Impacts of Recession on Families Served by Early Learning Programs	Centers	Homes
Percentage of providers who said more of the families they serve are having difficulty paying fees/tuition due to the recent downturn in the economy	80%	54%
Percentage of providers who said more of the families they serve need supports and/or referrals for services due to the economic downturn	53%	37%
Percentage of providers who feel the families they serve need additional resources and services that are currently not available	48%	29%

The top five additional resources and supports early learning programs believe families needed as stated by center directors and family home providers included the following:

Center Directors	
#1	scholarships for families to afford child care
#2	emergency assistance – such as utility, food and housing assistance
#3	parenting classes, resources and activities
#4	family counseling
#5	employment assistance

Family Home Providers	
#1	emergency assistance – such as utility, food and housing assistance
#2	scholarships for families to afford child care
#3	parenting classes, resources and activities
#4	employment assistance
#5	family counseling

Supporting Families and Parenting Resources in Greater Kansas City

There are many support services and resources available to help parents and other caregivers in Greater Kansas City prepare their children for success in school and in life. While this list is too large and exhaustive to list here, two key referral programs can provide critical connections families to the community resources and training they need.

United Way 2-1-1

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember telephone number that connects people with community resources and volunteer opportunities. United Way 2-1-1 spans a 23-county area, including seven counties in Kansas and 16 in Missouri. Families who call 2-1-1 are provided information on and referrals to a variety of information, including how to find emergency assistance services, health care, support groups, financial education services, adult education programs, how to apply for child care subsidies and a variety of other resources.

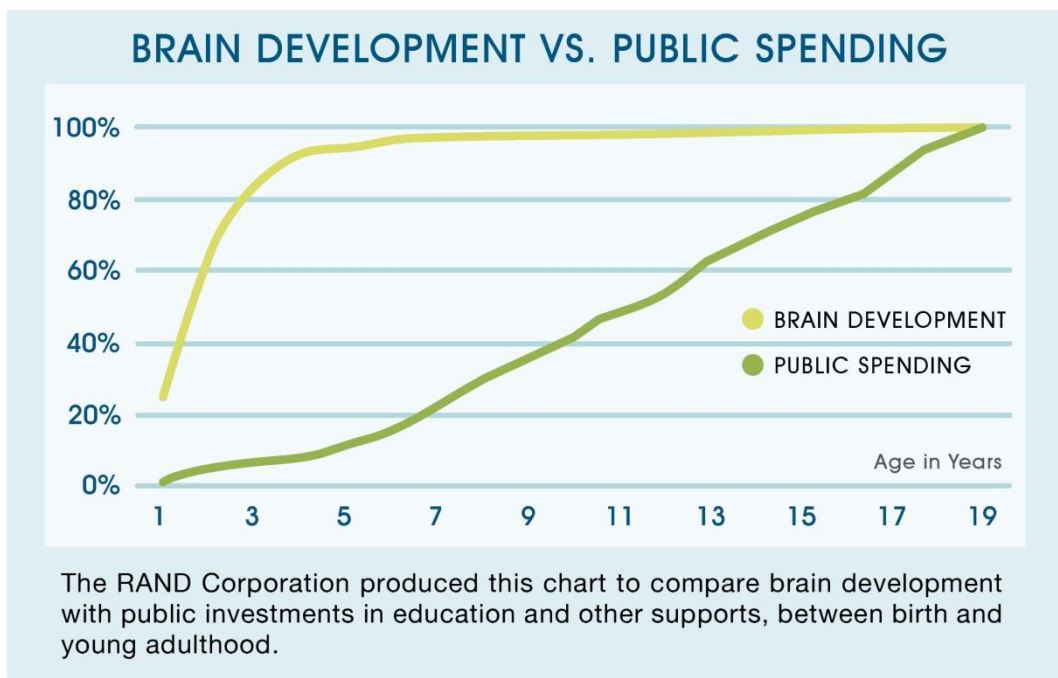
Child Care Source

Child Care Source is the child care resource and referral agency serving the Greater Kansas City area. Child Care Source is operated by The Family Conservancy, and helps connect parents with resources and early learning programs that meet their individual needs. Child Care Source assists parents by providing consumer education on choosing quality child care; individualized child care referrals to families based on cost, location and other program factors; training, and resources to early learning professionals so that families have access to high-quality early learning programs; and helping employers with referral services that make employee searches for early learning programs faster and easier. For more information, you can visit them online at www.childcaresource.org or call 913-573-2273 (CARE) or call the toll-free 800 number, 1-800-775-0838.

Parenting Class Calendar: A new resource available to area families is The Family Conservancy's online Parenting Class Calendar, a one-stop source for finding parenting classes in the greater KC area. The Calendar includes parenting class opportunities for trainings on a wide range of child development topics offered from a variety of agencies/facilitators. Parents can search for a class by date, city, keyword or topic. Registration/fee information is provided for each listing. To access the Parenting Class Calendar, go to: parenting.thefamilyconservancy.org

Public Policy

Given the importance of the earliest years of life and the vast body of research that shows how quality early learning programs improve results for children in the early years that results in lifelong gains, one would assume public and private financing would be focused on these pivotal earliest years of life for young children. Unfortunately, this is not the case.



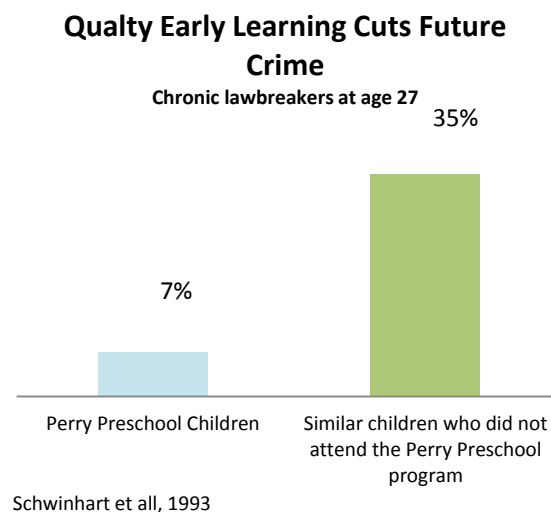
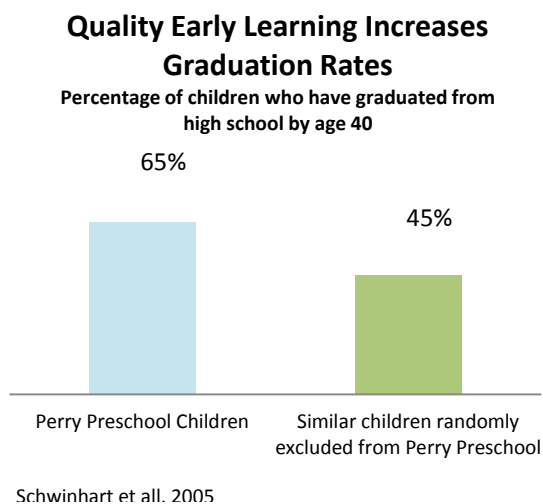
The chart above was produced by the RAND Corporation to compare brain growth with public investments for education and other supports from birth to young adulthood. While 85% of the core structure of the brain develops in the first three years of life, only 5% of public investments in children occur during these years. Just as families and businesses must make tough choices as to how best invest their money, societies and governments must also make smart choices to invest public funding in ways that will provide the most public good.

Invest Now or Pay More Later:

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national anti-crime organization of more than 3,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors and other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors works to educate public policy makers on how investments in quality early learning and Pre K can save billions in future tax payer dollars.

Currently in Missouri for example, over 46,000 adults are behind bars, meaning that one in every 97 Missouri adults are in prison. Incarcerating one of these prisoners costs \$45 per day or over \$16,000 a year. State corrections costs in Missouri alone exceed \$662 million annually. Wise investments in high-quality early learning can help many children get on a path toward college rather than toward prison, enabling tax payers to avoid such high prison costs later. Research suggests that Missouri would save about \$160 million in taxpayer dollars if it cut prison costs by a quarter by investing in early learning.

Quality early learning programs help children learn to get along with others and begin school ready to succeed. Research shows that high-quality early learning programs for at-risk children result in lower drug use, increased high school graduation and college attendance rates, fewer families receiving welfare, and lower crime rates.





MCEL Public Engagement:

Recognizing the importance of public financing for a quality early learning system, MCEL strives to support an inclusive civic participation movement that mobilizes individuals and organizations to collectively engage public policy decision making and advocacy efforts geared to increasing investments in quality early learning programs. To this end, MCEL partners with a network of local and state advocates to use public policy education efforts to support sufficient public financing for early learning at the local, state and federal levels.

Early Learning Leadership Board:

The Early Learning Leadership Board (ELLB) and Partners in Quality for Early Childhood Education (PIQ) help guide MCEL’s system building and public policy education efforts. The ELLB was chartered in 2002 to create a focused and coordinated point of accountability and leadership for the implementation of an early learning system in Greater Kansas City. The Board is made up of fifteen members representing community leaders, local elected officials and members from the philanthropic and business communities. The primary role of the Board is to lead and coordinate community efforts to increase public investment in early learning.

Partners in Quality:

Partners in Quality (PIQ) is the key community collaboration entity for early learning in Greater Kansas City. Developed in 1996, PIQ was chartered with 16 pilot members; the group has grown to 60 members. PIQ is comprised of major business organizations, large philanthropic foundations, and major service providers. To become a Partner, each organization is required to make a “significant new commitment” on behalf of improving the quality and/or availability of early learning programs in the metropolitan area. PIQ is also charged with developing and revising the multi-year Early Learning Strategic Plan which helps guide all funding decisions.



MCEL Public Policy Agenda:

MCEL develops a Public Policy Agenda to provide focus and guidance on each year’s legislative and advocacy priorities. The recent recession has taken its toll on Kansas and Missouri state budgets in 2009 and 2010. MCEL public policy education efforts in 2010 addressed state budget concerns and focused on efforts to maintain current levels of investments for early childhood programs in both states. The annual Public Policy Agenda is approved by the MARC Board and is adopted by the area Chambers of Commerce as part of their legislative agendas each year.

Despite the gloomy budget climate for state budgets during the current economic downturn, new investments provided through federal funding are helping to offset state budget woes and offer new opportunities for increased investments.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act:

In February 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed by Congress. Included in the ARRA was funding to support various programs serving families and children. The ARRA provided increased funding for Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies with an important opportunity to assist those most impacted by the recession through the provision of funds to expand child care services to additional children and families facing difficult economic circumstances. The ARRA also provided supplemental targeted funding for investments to improve the quality of child care to support the health and well-being of children.



MARC Enhancing Childhood Quality: Through a new Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services Enhancing Childhood Quality contract awarded to the Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) awarded in the spring 2010, Kansas American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Child Care Development Fund support will help to improve the learning environments and provide training and professional development to staff in over 100 early childhood classrooms in, Johnson, Leavenworth, Miami and Wyandotte counties in Kansas. Collectively these counties account for approximately 25% of all children and 25% of all child care providers in the State of Kansas. The project is administered by MARC but implemented through its unique partnership with two local agencies, The Family Conservancy and the United Way of Wyandotte County Tri-County Smart Start Project. The project is working to improve the capacity of early learning providers to offer higher quality services to area parents and their children. The project will provide grants , quality improvement coaching support and training aimed at addressing the key goals of the project:

- Improve the quality of care provided to children with special needs.
- Improve the quality of child care centers.
- Increase the knowledge and skills of providers to provide high quality early learning environments.
- Increase the number of providers offering quality after school care.

Moving Voluntary Pre K for All Forward - State Coalitions for School Readiness

MCEL has been an active partner in establishing state Coalitions for School Readiness in Kansas and Missouri. Coalitions of diverse partners including parents, early learning advocates and support agencies, and business and community leaders have helped to advance substantial state policy measures and increase state funding in support of quality pre K programs in many other states across the nation. In Kansas its coalition has successfully transformed and expanded the state voluntary Pre K program while increasing state funding for early learning. Missouri is seeking to replicate this model through its emerging coalition.



Kansas Coalition for School Readiness

Formed in 2006, the Kansas Coalition for School Readiness is a partnership of early learning advocates and practitioners, business leaders, parents, law enforcement, and other interested Kansans who have come together to support investment in early childhood education so that children are better prepared for success in school and beyond. The Coalition's mission is to make sure every child and parent in Kansas has the opportunity to participate in a voluntary, high-quality early childhood education program. The Coalition's success has included expanded access to quality child care for infants and toddlers and increased funding for children to participate in quality programs, specifically Early Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten pilot sites. Private sector funds also were raised to complement the state's investment in the Pre-K pilot sites, thus creating a true public/private partnership.

The Coalition's goals for 2010 are to: 1) Maintain the state's long-standing commitment to early childhood education by protecting the Children's initiatives Fund (CIF) and the Early Childhood Block Grant and 2) Improve the safety and quality of the child care system in Kansas by implementing inspections for all child care facilities.

Missouri Coalition for School Readiness

Missouri advocacy partners have recently established the Missouri Coalition for School Readiness similar to the Kansas Coalition. This emerging Coalition includes early learning advocates and practitioners, business leaders, parents, law enforcement, and other interested Missourians who want to come together to support investment in early childhood education so that children are better prepared for success in school. The mission of the Coalition is to work to ensure that Missouri children under the age of five have access to high-quality early learning programs that prepare them for success in school and in life.

The Status of Early Learning in Greater Kansas City • 2010

SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS



The long term goal of the Coalition is to create a statewide voluntary pre-k program as part of a comprehensive birth to five system that ensures all Missouri children, and especially those most at-risk, have access to high-quality early learning programs. To accomplish this goal the Coalition will work to build grass-tops leadership, build legislative support for investments in pre-k during 2010 legislative session and work to make pre-k a campaign priority for candidates and voters in the upcoming elections. In early 2010, the coalition was successful in securing a one year Pew Charitable Trusts Pre K Now grant to provide funding to support the establishment of the coalition and its agenda.

Workforce Development

Research shows that better educated preschool teachers with specialized training are more effective: the more education teachers have, the more they exemplify positive attitudes and knowledge about early childhood education, translating into more productive and comfortable learning environments for children. Conversely, research shows that low educational qualifications and a lack of specific preparation in preschool limit the educational effectiveness of many preschool teachers. Both formal education and training are important for developing quality teachers.

Education Levels of Early Learning Teachers:

Unfortunately, there is a growing shortage of qualified early childhood teachers with degrees or a certification in early childhood development or a related field. The results of a national study: *Losing Ground in Early Childhood Education* by Herzenberg, Price, and Bradley highlights a growing “talent gap” of quality teachers. Key findings of the study include:

- The percentage of center-based teachers and administrators with at least a four-year college degree averaged 43% from 1983-85, but only 30% from 2002-04.
- The percentage of center-based teachers and administrators with a high school education or less climbed from less than 25% in 1983 and 1984 to around 30% in recent years.
- Education levels are even lower in home-based early childhood education. Since 2000, only about one in nine home-based early childhood educators has a college degree and less than half of home-based early childhood educators have any education beyond high school.

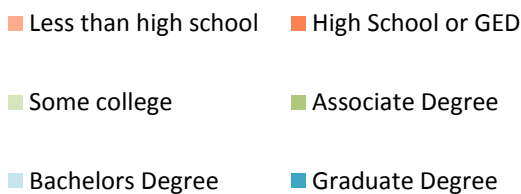
Local data from the 2009 survey mirror this national trend.

- In 2009, 28% of area center staff and 24% of family home providers had only high school, GED or less education. This is roughly the same as reported from the 2006 survey.

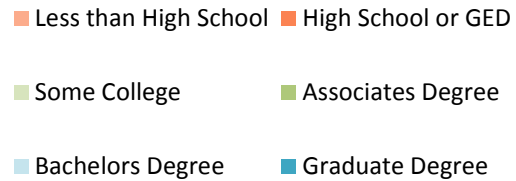
- Twenty-seven percent of area center teaching staff and 17 % of family home providers had a degree or certification in early childhood development in 2009. This is down from the last survey conducted in 2006 where 32% of center teaching staff and 18% of family home providers had a degree or certification in early childhood development.
- In 2009, 38 % of area center teaching staff and over half of all family home providers have no formal education in early childhood development. This is up from the 2006 survey where 25% of center teaching staff and 45% of family home providers had no formal education in early childhood development.
- Thirteen percent of area center staff and 10% of family home providers said they are currently pursuing their degree or certification in early childhood development in 2009. This is roughly the same as reported from the 2006 survey.

General Education Levels of Early Learning Teachers

Centers



Family Providers

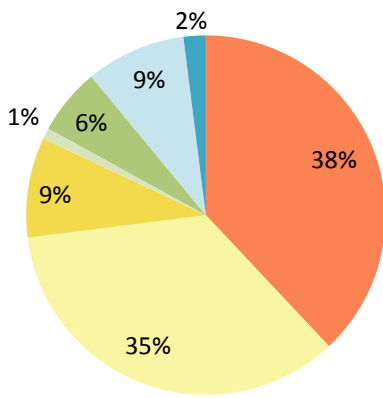




Early Learning Teachers with Degrees or Certification in Early Childhood

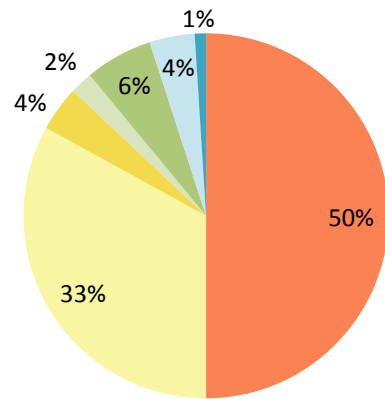
Center Teaching Staff

- None
- Some College in EC
- CDA
- One year certificate in EC
- Associate Degree in EC
- Bachelors Degree in EC
- Graduate Degree in EC



Family Providers

- None
- Some College in EC
- CDA
- One-year certificate in EC
- Associate Degree in EC
- Bachelor Degree in EC
- Graduate Degree in EC



MCEL Professional Development Scholarship Fund: Since 1996, MCEL has administered the MCEL Professional Development Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships for professionals working toward a Child Development Associate Credential or an Associate degree in early childhood education. Since the scholarship program began in 1996, nearly 400 early learning professionals have earned degrees or credentials. More than 800 scholarship recipients have completed nearly 25,000 credit hours of college course work. In addition, MCEL has administered a compensation program since 2001 to provide funds for supplemental wages and flexible benefits to early learning teachers, based on their position and education level. MCEL's efforts to advance the preparation of teachers in this community have helped to move Kansas City to one of the top three cities in the country with nationally accredited child care centers and family child care homes. Accreditation is an indicator of program quality that is directly related to school readiness and improved child outcomes.

Compensation and Retention:

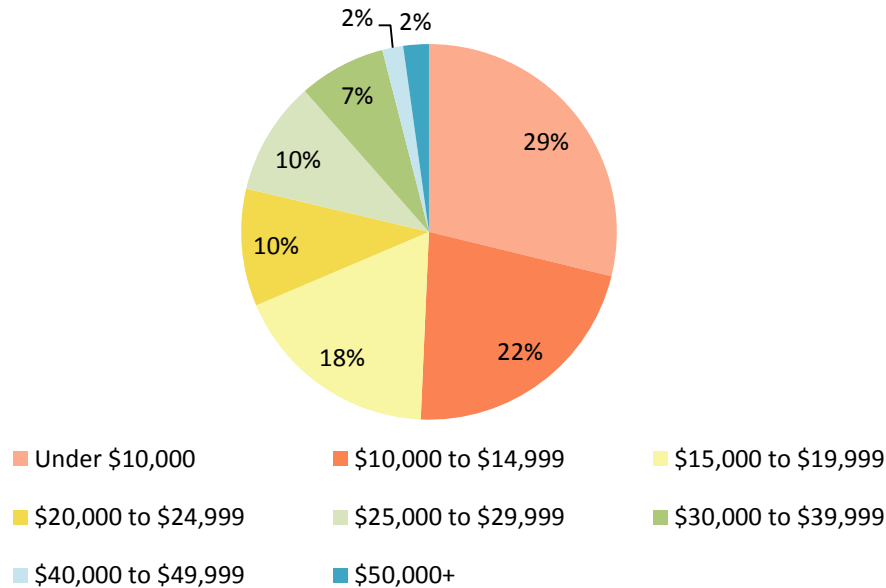
A renewed national focus on the value of quality early learning and Pre-K and its benefits for school readiness, workforce and economic development presents enormous growth opportunities for teachers in this evolving field. These opportunities are tempered however with the persistent challenges of low wages and benefits resulting in an increasing shortage of well qualified teachers.

Most early learning teachers and providers continue to earn near-poverty level wages. Median wages for early learning teachers ranged from \$8.42 to \$11.48 per hour or approximately \$17,500 to \$23,800 per year. Median wages for directors ranged from \$14 to \$16 per hour or approximately \$29,000 to \$33,000 per year. Nearly 80% of family home child care providers indicated that the earnings from their child care program was less than \$25,000 per year after taxes and expenses and nearly a third of family home child care providers said that they are the sole wage earner for their family. In most early learning programs employee benefits are often minimal if benefits are offered at all.

Median Hourly Wages Earned by Center Staff

	Median Low	Median High
Aides	\$ 7.50	\$ 8.50
Assistant Teachers	\$ 8.00	\$ 9.50
Teachers	\$ 8.42	\$ 11.48
Teachers Directors	\$ 10.63	\$ 12.87
Directors	\$ 14.00	\$ 16.00

Family Child Care Provider Earnings in 2009 After Taxes and Expenses



Early learning teachers continue to be compensated at wage levels well below comparable professions with similar education and training requirements. According to the Bureau of Labor Statics, child care workers earn an average wage of \$9.79 per hour (\$20,350 annually) and preschool teachers earn an average of \$12.80 per hour (\$26,610 annually). Pre School teachers with credentials equal to their elementary school counterparts make on average 87% less and earn less than hair stylists and school bus drivers.

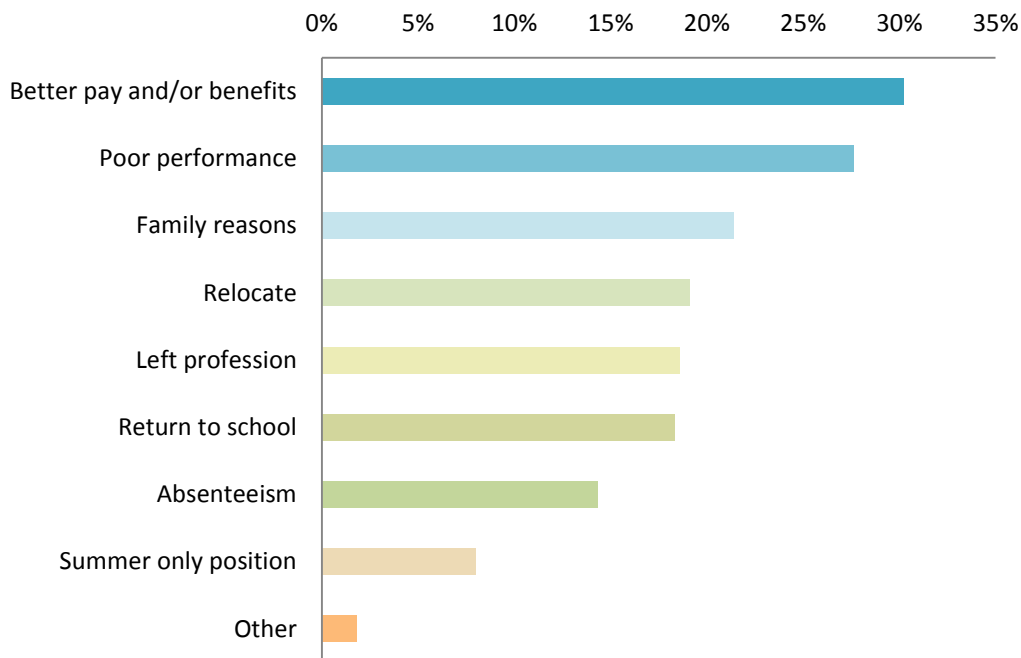
Profession	Average Annual Earnings (Natl Mean Annual as of May 2008)
Kindergarten Teachers	\$49,770
School Bus Drivers	\$27,060
Hair Dressers/Hair Stylists	\$26,660
Preschool Teachers	\$26,610
Nursing Aids/Attendants	\$21,440
Child Care Workers	\$20,350

Source: United States Bureau of Labor Statistics



Because of low wages and benefits, most early learning programs have a difficult time retaining experienced and credentialed teaching staff. Early learning center-based programs reported that 18 percent of full time employees left their jobs in 2009. However, nearly a quarter of early learning centers reported turnover rates for full time employees in excess of 25%. Not surprisingly, the most cited reasons for staff turnover in early learning centers were for better pay and benefits. High turnover rates of teaching staff mean children struggle with inconsistent relationships in the years when establishing trust and learning in a stable environment are most important.

Reasons for Early Learning Center Staff Turnover



Curriculum Training

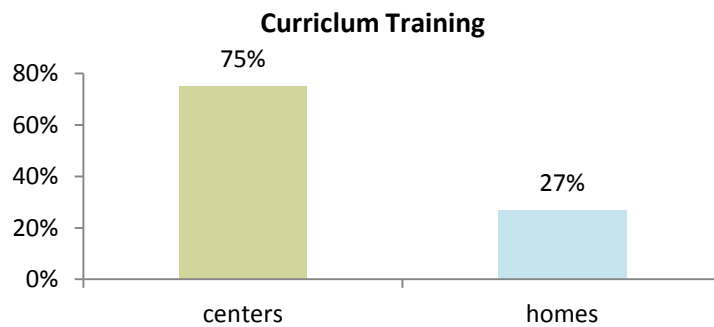
The link between effective Pre-K teacher child interactions and improved social and academic outcomes for children has been replicated in numerous studies. Unfortunately, too few children are exposed to the types of effective interactions in the early grades. In a study of 700



preschool classrooms across 11 states, less than 15% of classrooms were observed to display moderately to highly effective teacher-student interactions.

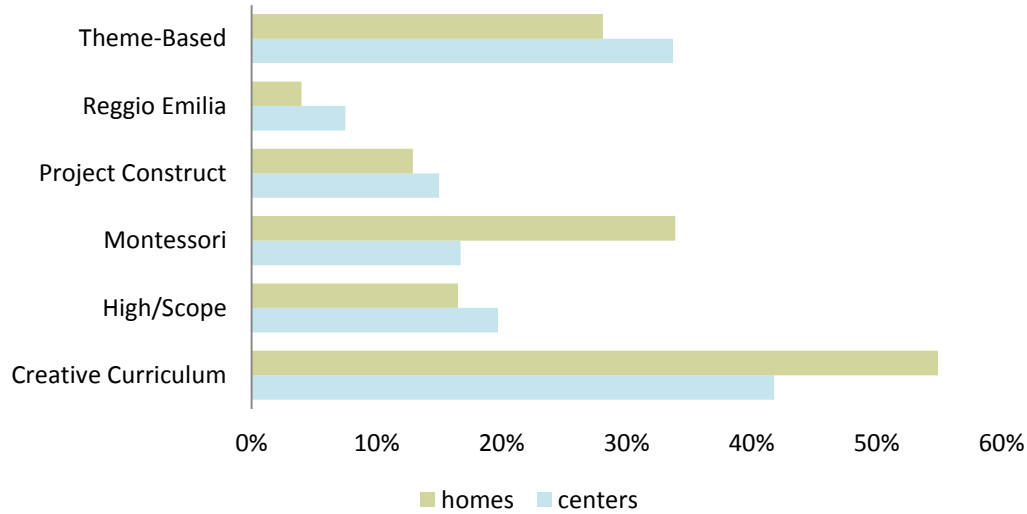
Early learning programs that implement a researched based curriculum and that have staff well trained in that curriculum can improve child teacher interactions, providing a more enriching learning environment for young minds to grow and thrive. This is particularly important for children in poverty and at risk of entering school behind their peers. Research studies have shown that low-income children make gains in early literacy and math skills when high-quality preschool programs include a researched based intentional curriculum and provide teachers with professional development and supports.

While three quarters of area centers indicated that their teaching staff have been trained in a formal curriculum, less than a third of family home providers indicated they had training in a formal curriculum. The majority of centers and family home providers using a curriculum indicated they used Creative Curriculum.





Types of curriculum used by centers and family home providers for programs that indicated they used a formal curriculum



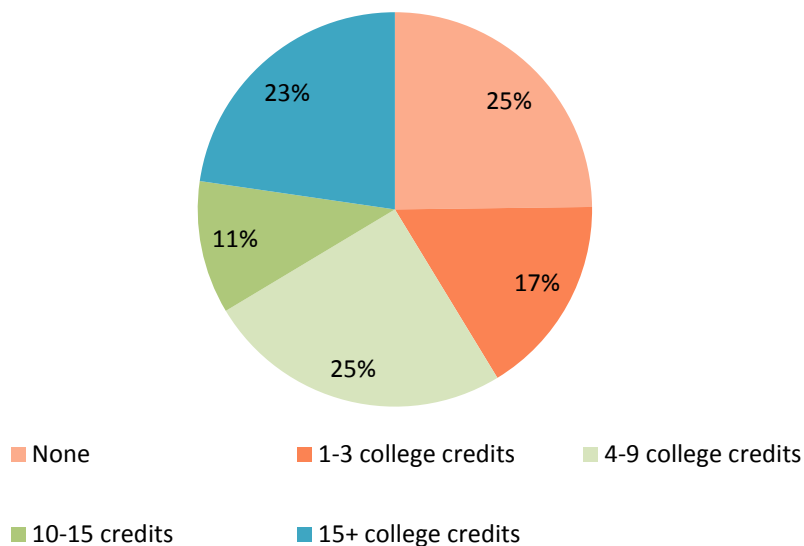
Classroom Assessment Scoring System ©: Investing in research-based tools to help teachers and schools to improve the quality of their interactions with children has the potential to make a difference in our young children’s lives. MCEL, in partnership with MAHS and the University of Virginia’s Center for Advance Study of Teaching and Learning, have engaged in a multi-year project to improve curriculum fidelity and teacher child interactions in classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System© (CLASS). CLASS is a research-based approach to defining and measuring effective interactions in early childhood and elementary classrooms. The CLASS provides professional development supports to give targeted feedback to programs and teachers, with the overarching goal of improving outcomes for children in Pre-K - 3rd classrooms.

Mid-America Head Start is currently involved in a local CLASS research project with 20 teachers in an experimental group and 20 in a control group. The partnership is pursuing opportunities to expand this promising program to an additional 100 classrooms over the next three years.

Professional Development for Program Administrators

Just as quality well trained teachers are critical to running a successful classroom, well trained directors and administrators are essential for programs to achieve and maintain high levels of quality and for programs to remain financially strong. While much progress has been made in the field over the last few decades in the field to develop systems to train high quality early childhood teachers and to develop an early childhood professional development system that supports teachers, there have been fewer professional development opportunities for administrators that are geared toward the unique managerial challenges they face every day. All too often programs promote teachers into the role of the program administrator with little or no management training. This is evident in the number of college credit hours in business or personnel management completed by area center directors. Only 34% of area center directors indicated they had 10 or more college credit hours in business or personnel management.

Percentage of area center directors who have completed college coursework in business or personnel management





Two new efforts have emerged in recent years ensure directors and administrators have the preparation and support they need to succeed in their very demanding roles.

Kansas and Missouri Bi-State Directors Credentials

While most local colleges and universities offer some coursework in early childhood administration, only a few offer a degree in early childhood administration. A coordinated system is now being developed to enhance the management and leadership skills of directors and managers of early learning programs. The cornerstone of this system is the development of the Kansas and Missouri Bi-State Early Childhood Directors Credentials. As a result of funding secured by Mid-America Association for the Education of Young Children (Mid-America AEYC), both the criteria and competencies for the Directors Credential were developed through work and input from key stakeholders throughout both Kansas and Missouri. The criteria and competencies for the Credential can be found at <http://www.mid-americaaeyc.org> under “On-line Resources”.

The credential was launched in 2008. The Missouri Association for the Education of Young Children (AEYC-MO) was designated as the credentialing agency in Missouri. The Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children (KAEYC) was designated as the credentialing agency for Kansas and will work in partnership with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) to review and approve applications in Kansas.

Also as a result of funding secured by Mid-America AEYC, MCEL is currently working with the two credentialing agencies as well as key stakeholders from the two states on implementation of the Credentials. AEYC-MO completed a pilot of the application process for the Early Childhood Credential in June 2009. Eight individuals applied for the credential as part of the pilot process; of these 8, one was awarded a full Credential and another awarded a Provisional Credential. Kansas completed its pilot process in fall 2009 with two directors in Kansas being

awarded a Directors Credential. For more information about the Kansas and Missouri Early Childhood Directors Credentials, contact:

<p>Kansas</p> <p>Administering Agency: Kansas Association for the Education of Young Children (KAEYC): Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.kaeyc.net 785.280.0088 	<p>Missouri</p> <p>Administering Agency: Missouri (AEYC-MO): Contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Abel, Chair, AEYC-MO Credentialing Committee, mikeabelaeyc@yahoo.com, 816.235.6381
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Program Administration Scale Training

While the QRS is a tool that assesses and helps improve the quality of early learning environments, there has been little available to assess and improve the quality of organizational practices in early childhood programs. The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (MCECL) at National Louis University developed the **Program Administration Scale** (PAS) to provide a reliable and easy-to-administer tool for measuring the overall quality of administrative practices of early care and education programs. The PAS assesses quality in ten areas: human resource development, personnel cost and allocation, center operations, child assessment, fiscal management, program planning and evaluation, family partnerships, marketing and public relations, technology, and staff qualifications.

MCEL partnered with MCECL to provide training on the PAS to a group of early learning program directors and technical assistance providers in Greater Kansas City. During the training, participants learned how to assess and improve administrative practices in their programs using the PAS tool.

The Status of Early Learning in Greater Kansas City • 2010

SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS

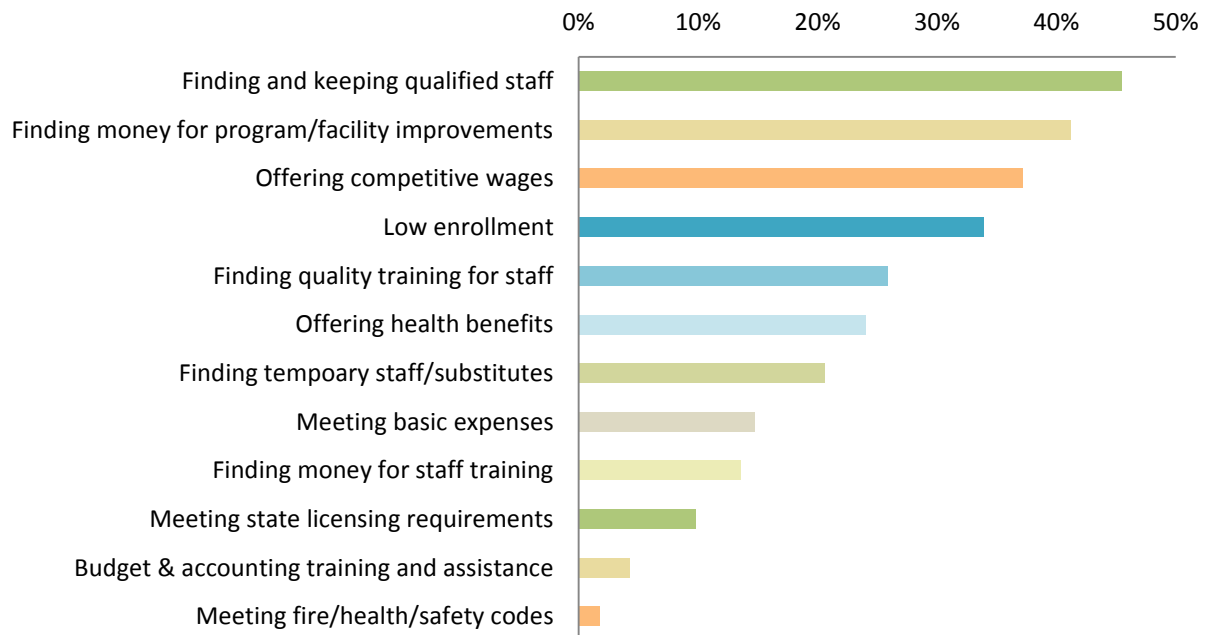


Directors of ten early learning programs in Greater Kansas City are participating in a pilot project using the PAS as an assessment and quality improvement tool. Each of these ten programs was assessed by certified assessors at University of Missouri, Kansas City – Institute for Human Development using the PAS in the spring of 2009. They were assessed again in the summer/fall of 2010. After their initial assessment, each program received a PAS profile that outlined their strengths and areas for improvement. Programs involved in the pilot are receiving technical assistance to support their PAS quality improvement efforts.

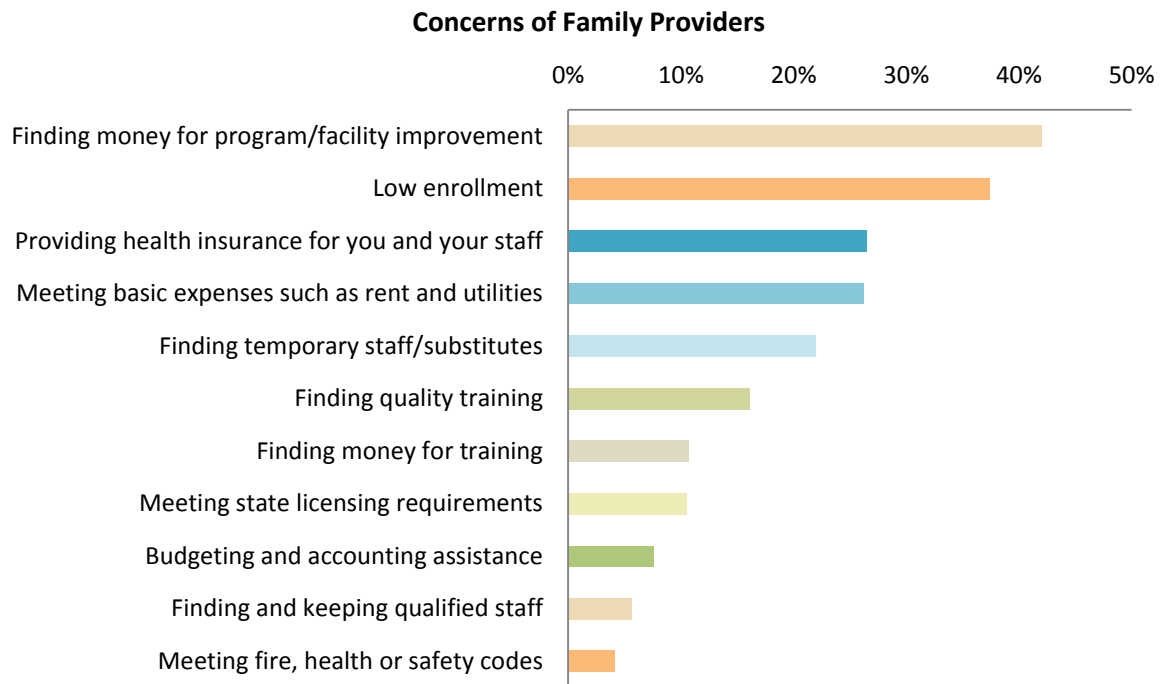
Center Director and Family Providers Major Concerns:

Concerns as identified by program directors and family home providers, from the regional early learning survey, provide a picture of the major issues facing their program, their staff and their outlook for the future. The top concerns for center directors surveyed included: Finding and keeping qualified staff, finding funding for program improvements and offering competitive wages.

Concerns of Center Directors



For family providers, the top concerns identified were: Finding funding for program improvements, low enrollment and being able to afford health insurance.



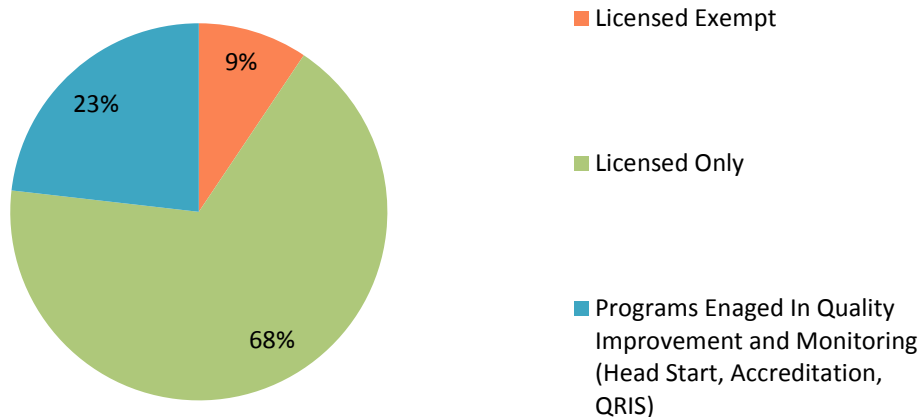
Conclusion: On The Horizon

Research on comprehensive, high-quality early learning shows that quality early learning is a cost-effective investment - promoting substantial economic and social benefits, while reducing the need for more expensive, less productive interventions for older children and adults. There is also a strong correlation between the quality and consistency of staff at an early learning program and child outcomes. Improving the education of the early learning workforce is proven to enhance the quality of early learning programs.

Children Attending Quality Early Learning Programs in Greater Kansas City:

Unfortunately nearly 1/3 of the children in Greater Kansas City begin school without the skills necessary to prepare them for success in school. Currently, of the estimated 50,000 area children that are in some type of early learning program in the region, most are in programs that meet only minimal licensing standards

Range of Quality of Early Learning Programs by Percentage of Children Enrolled*



Sources: MCEL, The Family Conservancy, Accreditation Project, Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Opportunities in a Professional Education Network, and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

Even more concerning is that a large proportion of low income children who receive child care subsidies remain in unregulated settings.

Average number of children receiving state subsidies each month in metro area	12,852
In regulated care	9,043
In unregulated care	3,809

Source: NACCRRRA

A Wise Investment in the Future:

To take full advantage of the benefits of quality early learning, particularly for low income children, more efforts must be made to support programs engaged in formal quality improvement programs such as the Kansas Quality Rating and Improvement System (KQRIS), MO QRS and national and Missouri state accreditation efforts. MCEL and its partners are committed to expanding opportunities for programs to participate in strategic initiatives that encourage gains in quality improvement and providing targeted supports to help programs achieve and maintain higher quality. By encouraging providers to improve the quality of their care and providing them with resources to do so, more of the region’s children will enter school prepared to succeed.

So as we look to the horizon, imagine what Kansas City can accomplish over the next several decades:

- Communities that value and support high-quality early learning programs and parent education training for all families in the region;
- Increased region-wide access to home-based and community-based early learning programs that participate in formal quality improvement systems and/or meet recognized quality standards such as QRIS, Head Start or accreditation;



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Data Gathering Methodology

MCEL gathered data for this report through a regional survey of early learning programs in 2009. MCEL collected over 840 surveys from area licensed and registered family child care homes and over 390 surveys from area licensed and licensed exempt centers. Additional information was provided by The Family Conservancy and collected from state social service and child care licensing agencies, a literature review of national research and regional and national census and economic data.

Acknowledgements

The publication of The Status of Early Learning in Greater Kansas City 2010 and the associated research were made possible through generous support from the Hall Family Foundation. We would also like to express appreciation to the many civic, business and philanthropic leaders in metropolitan Kansas City for their dedication and commitment to helping the efforts to establish a community-wide system of quality early learning for all children. Finally we wish to thank and acknowledge the thousands of professionals in Greater Kansas City who care for and educate our young children every day.