

Title I Pre-K in Mississippi: Preliminary Report



MISSISSIPPI
FIRST

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Introduction

In January 2012, Mississippi First published [Leaving Last in Line](#), an issue brief advocating for a collaborative method of providing pre-K services to four-year-olds using state dollars. After over a year of research, however, we still had a lot of unanswered questions about current pre-K provision in our state's communities. Primarily, we wanted to more precisely answer, "Who is doing what to provide pre-K to four-year-olds in Mississippi?"

[Leaving Last in Line](#) articulated a general answer to the question of *whom*—that school districts, Head Start, and private childcare centers are the three main providers of early learning services in Mississippi. Of these three providers, we estimated that public schools and Head Start were serving 11% and 37.1%, respectively, of Mississippi's four-year-olds in the 2009-2010 school year. Recently, we calculated that an additional 36.5% of children were in licensed childcare centers.¹ All together, at least 84.6% of four-year-olds were in a program outside of the home in 2009-2010.

Having only general knowledge of *whom* was providing services to four-year-olds was nonetheless much more information than we had about *what* characterized these services on a classroom level. For example, which providers offer full-day pre-K for four-year-olds? What qualifications do pre-K teachers hold? What type of curricula or assessments are providers using? What is the average cost-per-child of pre-K in Mississippi? What collaboration do providers engage in, if any?

In the absence of a state program for pre-K, no single agency, person, or group has compiled detailed information about provider practices, yet another consequence of our fragmented early learning system. Mississippi First quickly realized that Mississippi needs better information about what early learning providers—whether publicly or privately funded—are already doing at a classroom level. With this information, we will not only have a clearer picture of the state of current opportunities for four-year-olds, we will also be better able to design a path from the status quo to a state program of collaborative delivery.

Why Title I Pre-K?

We are starting with a report describing how public school districts spend federal Title I dollars² to support pre-K for two key reasons.

First, publicly funded programs are often easier to gather information about. Title I funding is

- 1) monitored from a state level (through the Mississippi Department of Education) and
- 2) granted to a manageable number of easily identifiable entities (school districts).

These factors gave us a clear place to begin our work.

Secondly, Title I pre-K provision is something Mississippians can do something about, both from a state level and in our local communities, without extra investment. On a state level, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) can play a role in connecting Title I pre-K districts together and

¹ Data were provided by the Mississippi Forum on Children and Families from a Mississippi State Department of Health dataset.

² "Title I" refers to federal grant dollars allocated to schools and districts as part of Title I, Part A of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. For more about Title I, see <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>.

providing technical assistance and professional development opportunities for districts with common standards, curricula, or assessments. The Legislature can also support this work by passing laws to grant MDE the ability to regulate pre-K provision in public schools, even if there are no state dollars forthcoming. From a community level, pre-K supporters can encourage districts to shift more of their funds into pre-K or to form or expand partnerships with Head Start and childcare providers as a way to increase access to high-quality pre-K.

Methodology and Caveats

In this report, we have relied solely on school districts' FY2012 [Consolidated Federal Programs Applications \(CFPAs\)](#)³ and FY2012 CFPA Budgets on file with the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Federal Programs. We filed a public records request in June 2012 to gain access to the CFPAs and our review took place in late June and early July 2012. In each district's CFPA file, we reviewed expenses reported under budget function code 1105 "Pre-Kindergarten Services" in the final approved budget spreadsheets for each district as well as items [D\(1\) and H from the CFPA Narrative](#). District-level data drawn from the CFPAs are available as an addendum to this report.

Readers should note a few important caveats. First, because our methodology was solely a review of the CFPA documents, we have not verified this information with school districts (see *Next Steps* for how we plan to build on this analysis). It is possible that some of this information may be incomplete or out of date.

In addition, the detail provided by school districts in their CFPA narratives varied greatly: some school districts provided as little as one or two sentences in explanation while others provided a few paragraphs of information. Jackson Public Schools, for example, which budgeted the most in the state for pre-K at a total of over \$2.8M, gave virtually no information about their pre-K program outside of cost figures. Therefore, to maintain as much accuracy as possible, we only ascribed program characteristics to districts when those traits were clearly stated or reasonably inferred by a district's budget, budget narrative, or application narrative. These circumstances likely led us to underestimate the incidence of specific pre-K activities occurring in districts (such as the precise number of districts that have summer programs or blended Head Start programs), even though we feel confident that our preliminary results accurately identify the number of districts using Title I for pre-K and the amount of dollars involved. Where we have made assumptions, we note those assumptions in the *Results* section.

Thirdly, as we were reviewing the CFPA files, we discovered that districts' methods of reporting budgeted expenses were inconsistent. Even though school districts can only use district-level funds for pre-K, many districts budgeted pre-K services on the school-level forms for the schools where the programs would be housed rather than on district-level forms. A handful of districts reported on their cover sheets that they budgeted no money on district pre-K when in fact their school-level budget sheets indicated they did. We double-checked files when a narrative indicated pre-K activities that budget cover sheets did not note and were able to catch these inconsistencies.

Finally, we want to re-iterate that this report applies only to Title I pre-K activity. School districts may have pre-K classes paid for through philanthropic dollars, district funds, or parent tuition that they did

³ The CFPA is the application that each school district must complete to receive federal Title I and Title II dollars.

not disclose in their Title I applications. Furthermore, communities may offer services outside of the school district that are not referenced here. By classifying a district as a non-Title I pre-K district, we do not imply that the district or its community does not provide pre-K, simply that it does not do so with Title I dollars. We have also refrained from reporting information we know to be true but that districts did not provide in their applications (such as details about pre-K programs paid for through philanthropic dollars) because this preliminary report is intended to faithfully reflect what school districts documented in their CFPAs. As our work on Title I pre-K expands, we will incorporate more sources and further refine this preliminary picture of Title I pre-K.

Results

The following pages contain the results of our preliminary review and analysis of the FY2012 CFPAs documents. We split this section into two subsections: School Districts Using Title I for Pre-K and School Districts Not Using Title I for Pre-K. The table below contains descriptive statistics summarizing these two subsections.

Summary

	Districts Using Title I for Pre-K	Districts Not Using Title I for Pre-K	TOTAL
Number of districts	51	101	152
Program Characteristics*			
Classroom-based Title I programs	48	--	48
School year	45	--	45
Summer	8	--	8
Combination	5	--	5
Blended Head Start	10	--	10
Classroom-based programs not paid for by Title I	6	19	25
School year	6	10	16
Summer	0	9	9
District-level pre-K staff	4	1	5
Transition Services	41	90	131
Extended School Year for entering Kindergarteners	2	2	4
Shared Professional Development	32	67	99
Curriculum Alignment	10	17	27
Head Start Onsite	4	18	22

*Numbers reflect the number of districts with the given program characteristic.

I. School Districts Using Title I for Pre-K

34% (51 of 152) of Mississippi school districts budgeted Title I dollars for pre-K services⁴ in the 2011-2012 school year. We refer to these districts as “Title I pre-K districts.” Title I pre-K districts budgeted a combined \$12,419,196.40 for pre-Kindergarten services. Planned pre-K expenditures included every

⁴ Although both schools and districts receive Title I dollars, only district-level money can be used for pre-K.

Title I budget category, but school districts primarily budgeted for salaries, benefits, and supplies. For a list of these districts, see *Appendix A—List of FY2012 Title I Pre-K Districts*.

A. Title I Pre-K Districts with Classroom-Based Programs

94% (48 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts operated classroom-based programs paid for through Title I in the 2011-2012 school year. There were three types of classroom-based programs offered by districts: school year pre-K, summer pre-K, and blended Head Start.

School Year Program

94% (45 of 48) of Title I pre-K districts operating classroom-based programs had a school year program. We have assumed that districts with a clear classroom-based program were operating a school year program, unless they called it a summer program.

Number of Classes or Available Spaces—38% (17 of 45) of Title I pre-K districts operating classroom-based programs reported the number of classes offered, which totaled to 60 classrooms across the 17 districts reporting. 31% (14 of 45) of districts reported the number of available spaces, which totaled 854 across the 14 districts reporting. Some examples include

- Meridian, the third largest program in terms of expenditures, reported the highest number of classrooms at 11, while Tupelo, the second largest program in term of expenditures, followed with 8 classrooms.
- Meridian reported the highest number of spaces available at 220. Tupelo did not report enrollment for its program.
- Holmes County reported the lowest number of spaces available at 15.
- Jackson Public Schools, the largest pre-K program in terms of overall cost, did not specify either a number of classrooms or spaces available.

Number of Teachers—49% (22 of 45) of districts specified the number of teachers budgeted in their program; the amount totaled 73.5 across the 22 districts reporting. Although some school districts described their teachers as “highly qualified,” no district specified the qualifications the district required for pre-K teachers.

- Jackson Public Schools easily led the pack with 34 teachers in their Title I budget.
- Noxubee County reported the fewest number of teachers at 0.5.

Number of Assistants—42% (19 of 45) of districts noted the budgeted number of assistants for a total of 69 across the 19 districts reporting. Although some school districts described their assistants as “highly qualified,” no district specified the qualifications the district required for pre-K assistants.

- Again, Jackson Public Schools topped the list with 35 assistants in their Title I budget.

Length of Day—Only 6.7% (3 of 45) districts reported the length of their pre-K day.

- Two of these districts—Columbus and Holmes County—reported a “full” day.
- Calhoun County noted that they had cut back to a 60% day due to budget constraints.

Standards & Curriculum—16% (7 of 45) districts listed their standards or curriculum.

- Hazlehurst, Holmes County, Louisville, Oxford, and Neshoba County described their standards or curriculum using some variation of the terms “MDE Guidelines,” “MDE Curriculum,” “state curriculum,” or “Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines.” These districts were likely referring to the 2006 Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines for Four-Year-Olds, a set of learning standards, which preceded the February 2012 adoption of the Common Core-aligned Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Four-Year-Olds. Districts may have used these standards and created their own curriculum or purchased a curriculum that they did not list. However, it is also possible that districts who reported using the MDE or state curriculum were referring to the curriculum aligned to the 2006 Early Learning Guidelines created by the Early Childhood Institute at Mississippi State University.
- Columbus and Tunica reported using the “MDE state curriculum and the Head Start Performance Standards.” Both of these districts reported having blended Head Start classrooms.

Assessment—18% (8 of 45) of districts mentioned an assessment used within the pre-K classes or at Kindergarten-entry.

- Columbus and Forest City both used the Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) to screen pre-K applicants in order to select the neediest children. It is unclear whether these districts also used BDI to track progress through the pre-K program year.
- Both Hollandale and Louisville used Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). While it is not clear how Hollandale used DIBELS, Louisville used DIBELS to screen pre-K applicants in order to select the neediest children. Louisville did not specify whether it also used DIBELS to track progress through the pre-K program year.
- Neshoba County and Union County each used the Early Prevention of School Failure (EPSF) tool to screen pre-K applicants in order to select the neediest children. It is unclear whether these districts also used EPSF to track progress through the pre-K program year.
- Oxford used an assessment created by Brigance, which may have been the Brigance Early Childhood Developmental Inventory, the Early Childhood Screens, or one of the Complete Assessment kits. It is not clear whether Oxford used Brigance only as a screener or also to track progress throughout the pre-K program year.
- Quitman County used AIMSweb as a pre-K assessment. Data in the Quitman County file indicated that AIMSweb is used as a pre- and post-test for pre-K students. Forest City also used AIMSweb as a Kindergarten-entry screener.
- In addition to DIBELS, Hollandale used the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test as a screener at Kindergarten-entry.

Innovative Practices—A few districts noted intriguing practices:

- Meridian reported operating 3 classrooms in public housing projects.
- Tupelo indicated that the district has a single site for pre-K called the Early Childhood Education Center. Clustering pre-K in this way may lead to unique professional learning opportunities, classroom structure, and resource sharing.
- Neshoba County mentioned paying for 2 substitute teachers for pre-K. Although Neshoba County did not provide any further detail, it is possible that the employment of permanent

substitutes can increase the likelihood that students receive quality instruction even when the regular staff is absent or attending professional development. Permanent substitutes can also be used for small group or one-on-one instruction when all regular staff are present.

- Hattiesburg reported hosting a special Head Start class for children of teen parents. This type of program may make it easier for teen parents to avoid dropping out of school.

Summer Program (or Combination)

17% (8 of 48) of Title I pre-K districts operating classroom-based programs hosted a summer program for pre-K students about to enter Kindergarten. Districts referred to these programs as a “Jumpstart” program, a “Promise School” program, or simply as a summer program. We could not determine whether the terms “Jumpstart” or “Promise School” have a specific or uniform meaning or indicate formal affiliation with any state or national pre-K model.

It was difficult to determine which of these eight districts were operating a true pre-K summer program and which districts were actually operating an extended school year program for entering Kindergarteners—starting the Kindergarten year early rather than continuing the pre-K year into the summer.

For the three districts only operating summer programs—Coahoma County, East Jasper, and Greenville—the budgeted amount in the 1105 Pre-Kindergarten Services function code reflects pre-K summer program expenses. In the other five districts reporting both school year and summer programs—Corinth, Greenwood, Hazlehurst, Hollandale, and Laurel—it is unclear what, if any, of the budgeted amount in the 1105 function code reflects summer expenses versus school year expenses. Therefore, although we classify these five districts’ summer programs as part of their Title I pre-K program, it is possible that one or more of these districts’ summer programs were extended school year programs for entering Kindergarteners (paid for through other Title I function codes or local funds). In the information below, we are careful to note program information only if we are confident it reflects a summer program and not a school year program.

Number of Classes or Available Spaces—25% (2 of 8) of Title I pre-K districts operating a summer program reported either the number of classes or available spaces.

- Coahoma County offered space to 40 children, drawn from each of the district’s four elementary schools.
- East Jasper offered 1 class.

Number of Teachers or Assistants—None of these districts reported the number of teachers or assistants staffing their summer programs.

Length of Program—88% (7 of 8) of these districts reported information about the length of their summer program.

- Coahoma County, Corinth, East Jasper, Greenville, Hollandale, and Laurel each had a 4-week summer program. Greenville noted that its program was a half-day program, but none of the other districts specified the length of their summer day.
- Hazlehurst reported a 1-week summer camp.

Standards & Curriculum—38% (2 of 8) of these districts reported their standards.

- East Jasper and Hazlehurst each reported using the MDE “Benchmarks” or “Guidelines.” None of the eight districts specified which curriculum they used.

Assessment—25% (2 of 8) of districts providing summer programs mentioned the use of an assessment.

- Greenville used the Children’s Progress Academic Assessment (CPAA). It is unclear how they used this assessment, but the CPAA is meant to be used 3 times (beginning, middle, and end) over the course of a program.
- Corinth used a screener and post-test with its summer school students but did not name the assessment. The screener was used to determine which children were selected for the summer program.

Blended Head Start

20% (9 of 45) of districts with school year, classroom-based programs indicated that they were operating blended Head Start classrooms. A blended Head Start classroom is one in which Head Start funds and state, local, or other federal funds are blended in order to provide more services to children (either to extend the length of the program day or year or to serve additional children). Blended classrooms adhere to Head Start performance standards as well as state, local, or federal standards. Blended classrooms allow children to experience the unique “whole child” aspects of Head Start as well as the strengths of a traditional pre-K classroom.

- Benoit, Columbus, and Oxford each paid for classroom teachers while Head Start provided the salary for the classroom assistants.
- Holly Springs, Tunica County, and Western Line paid for both classroom teachers and assistants.
- In Benoit, Columbus, South Panola, Tunica County, and Western Line, Head Start provided social or medical services, including special education services and parental involvement activities.

Two additional districts, Franklin County and Tupelo, shared personnel or other classes with Head Start, even though their pre-K classes were not blended Head Start classrooms.

- In Franklin County, Head Start students went to library class and physical education at Franklin Lower Elementary School and the district shared its speech pathologist with Head Start.
- Tupelo also shared its speech therapist with Head Start.

11% (1 of 9) of districts with a summer, classroom-based program indicated that their program was actually a blended Head Start classroom. This program—East Jasper—paid for the summer teachers while Head Start paid for assistants.

B. Title I Pre-K Districts without Classroom-Based Programs

Only 5.8% (3 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts did not have a classroom-based program. These three districts—Baldwyn, Poplarville, and West Tallahatchie—spent \$500, \$5,000, and \$250, respectively, for a total of \$5,750. Of this total, \$1,250 was spent on supplies and \$4,500 was spent on personnel.

- Baldwyn and West Tallahatchie reported spending their funds on **supplies for Head Start**. Baldwyn housed a Head Start classroom on the campus of Baldwyn Elementary School and

budgeted general supplies for this classroom. West Tallahatchie indicated it would purchase Breakthrough to Literacy, a computer-based early literacy program used in Kindergarten in the district, for the local Head Start.

- The Poplarville forms indicated its \$5,000 line item was divided into \$3,800 for salary, \$700 for benefits, and \$500 for supplies. Despite the budget categories, it is **not clear what Poplarville supported with these funds** as the district provided no information in its narrative.

C. Title I Pre-K Districts with Classroom-Based Pre-K Programs Not Paid for by Title I

At least 12% (6 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts indicated that they operated additional classrooms supported totally or in part by non-Title I funding sources. These districts mentioned three sources of additional funds: parent tuition, district funds, and philanthropic grants.

Parent Tuition

One school district (West Point) reported using parent tuition to partially support an additional pre-K classroom in the district. It is likely that more districts than West Point used parent tuition to support additional classrooms, but only West Point reported it in their CFPA.

District Funds

Five school districts mentioned pre-K classrooms supported at least in part by local tax dollars in an effort to expand pre-K provision in the district.

- Franklin County and Tunica County each supported 2 additional classrooms with district dollars.
- Columbus likely supported its program at Sale Elementary School with district dollars.
- Yazoo City supported its program with district dollars but did not specify whether all three of the district's classrooms received some local support or if only one or two did.
- West Point reported that it has 1 additional classroom supported by a combination of parent tuition and district dollars.

Philanthropic Grants

One school district (Quitman County) noted supporting an additional classroom through a grant from the Phil Hardin Foundation.

- Aberdeen mentioned involvement with the Gilmore Early Learning Initiative (GELI), a comprehensive early childhood program in Monroe County operated by the Gilmore Foundation, but Aberdeen did not disclose any financial support from GELI for its pre-K program.

D. District-Level, Non-Instructional Pre-K Staff

7.8% (4 of 51) indicated spending Title I dollars on district-level, non-instructional pre-K positions, such as a Pre-K Coordinator. All of these four districts—Columbus, Meridian, Picayune, and Tupelo—had classroom-based programs. Two districts, Tupelo and Meridian, had the second and third largest Title I pre-K programs in the state, spending \$1,477,249 and \$800,000, respectively.

E. Other Pre-K Related Activities

In addition to the expenditures listed above, districts provided information about pre-K-related activities for which they did not indicate an associated cost within the 1105 Pre-Kindergarten Services function

code. If these activities incurred a cost, it may be associated with a different Title I function code or paid for through district or philanthropic funds.

External Service Providers

18% (9 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts noted working with organizations that provided pre-K related services (not including Head Start).

Parents as Teachers—Parents as Teachers is a training and resource organization which assists direct service providers (such as schools) in better engaging parents to support early childhood development. The Parents as Teachers organization does not provide services directly to children. Many programs employ “parent educators” who are certified by Parents as Teachers to provide direct support to parents or may use the Parents as Teachers home visiting model or other tools. However, these parent educators are not employed by Parents as Teachers.

- 1 district (West Point) noted using a Parents as Teachers resource.

Even Start—Even Start is a federally funded program which supports early literacy, adult basic literacy, and parenting for low-income families. Even Start grants are given by the state department of education to schools who have partnerships with community organizations.

- 3 districts (Benoit, Cleveland, and Forest City) reported the support of Even Start funds.

Excel By 5—Excel By 5 certifies applicant communities as “child-friendly” when they meet standards for early learning and care service provision. Excel By 5 does not provide services directly to children.

- 2 districts (Cleveland and West Point) noted their participation in a local Excel By 5 team.

SPARK—Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids is a Kellogg Foundation-funded initiative that works with childcare centers, Head Start, and public schools to increase alignment and quality among early learning programs.

- 1 district (East Jasper) described involvement with SPARK.

MSU Extension Service—This reference is likely to the Mississippi State University Extension Service’s Child Care Resource & Referral Network, which provides trainings to early childhood professionals.

- 1 district (East Jasper) reported using the MSU Extension service to provide “parent workshops for Head Start and childcare parents.” It is unclear if these workshops took place during the school year or within the context of the East Jasper summer program.

Early Head Start—Early Head Start is a federally funded child development program for pregnant mothers and children birth to age three. It provides childcare, parent education, home visits, and physical and mental health services.

- 1 district (Picayune) had two Early Head Start grants which provided services to 112 children. Early Head Start participants transition to Head Start or the district’s pre-K program.

Gilmore Early Learning Initiative (GELI)—Aberdeen noted its involvement with GELI.

Additional Programs—Cleveland mentioned partnering with the *Delta State University Early Literacy Clinic*, and Hazlehurst reported involvement with a *Mississippi Department of Human Services Quality*

Enhancement Program, but we could not find information about either program. (DSU’s website does not mention an “early literacy clinic” while MDHS has several programs that it refers to as “quality enhancement”).

Transition Services

80% (41 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts noted that they provided services to help four-year-olds transition to Kindergarten. When districts described these services, they typically included school tours, a visit to the cafeteria, and an opportunity for students and parents to meet Kindergarten teachers in the Spring prior to Kindergarten entry. Most districts specified that Head Start centers were the target for these transition activities.

Extended School Year—2 districts reported having an extended school year program for entering Kindergarteners. As discussed in the Title I Pre-K Summer Program (or Combination) section, extended school year programs for Kindergarteners are not pre-K programs, even though they can occur in the summer before Kindergarten because they are an extension of the Kindergarten year, not part of the pre-K year.

- Holmes County reported having an extended school year program for entering Kindergarteners in addition to its school year, classroom-based program.
- West Tallahatchie, which did not have a classroom-based Title I pre-K program, hosted a 4-week extended school year program for entering Kindergarteners. This program was not budgeted as part of the pre-Kindergarten function code.

Orientation—1 district reported hosting a special orientation for Kindergarten students.

- Union City hosted a special Kindergarten orientation. No additional description was provided.

Shared Professional Development

63% (32 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts reported plans to invite area early learning program staffers to participate in district-sponsored professional development. Frequently, these plans referred to local Head Start employees but at least one school district (West Point) also intended to include community daycares in these invitations. From the nature of districts’ responses, it appears that shared professional development took the form of discrete learning opportunities such as workshops or conferences rather than mentoring or coaching.

- Jackson Public Schools reported sponsoring a large, annual Pre-K Symposium for area early educators as well as district staff as a means of providing professional development.

Curriculum Alignment

20% (10 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts indicated plans to work with local Head Start centers to increase curriculum alignment between Head Start and Kindergarten. The nature of this curriculum alignment work as well as its products was not detailed.

Head Start Classrooms Onsite

7.8% (4 of 51) of Title I pre-K districts mentioned hosting Head Start classrooms on school district property, including within district schools.⁵ Of these 4 school districts—Baldwyn, Calhoun County, Greenville, and Hattiesburg—the latter three hosted Head Start classrooms in addition to their own Title I pre-K efforts.

- Baldwyn did not have a classroom-based pre-K program paid for with Title I funds and only spent a small amount of Title I dollars (\$500) to purchase supplies for its Head Start classroom onsite at Baldwyn Elementary School.
- Calhoun County operated year-long pre-K classrooms at each of its elementary schools and hosted a Head Start classroom on the campus of Calhoun City Elementary School.
- Greenville operated a summer pre-K program paid for through Title I. The district additionally housed Head Start classrooms on district property, but it is unclear how many classrooms were on district property as well as where these classrooms were located.
- Hattiesburg appears to have had one of the state’s more extensive Title I pre-K programs with pre-K classrooms and independent Head Start classrooms at each of its six elementary schools, including a special classroom at Hawkins Elementary for children of Hattiesburg School District students.

II. School Districts Not Using Title I for Pre-K

A majority of school districts, 66% (101 of 152), did not allocate Title I dollars for pre-K. We refer to these districts as “districts without Title I pre-K.”

A. Non-Title I Pre-K Districts with Classroom-Based Pre-K Programs

19% (19 of 101) of districts without Title I pre-K offered classroom-based pre-K programs that were not Title I-funded. This is one of the most significant findings of this report: districts without Title I pre-K are nonetheless experimenting with district-run pre-K services through district funds, parent tuition, or philanthropic grants.

School Year Programs

53% (10 of 19) of these districts offered school year pre-K programs.

- Clarksdale operated 2 regular education pre-K classes for “at-risk students who may not be eligible for Head Start services, yet are not able to afford private preschool education.” One class was located at Booker T Washington Elementary School and another at Myrtle Hall. Each class was staffed with 1 teacher and 1 assistant. It is unclear how the district paid for the program, although its description implied that it did not charge tuition.
- Union County offered tuition-based pre-K at each of its four campuses. No other details were provided.
- Clay County offered 2 pre-K classes at West Clay Elementary School. The district provided no details about how the program was financed.

⁵ This figure does not include blended Head Start classrooms, only independently operated Head Start classrooms housed on district property.

- Tate County reported that a 1003g School Improvement Grant would pay for pre-K at Coldwater Elementary. No further details were provided.
- Newton City employed 2 retired teachers as Early Intervention Specialists to provide 3 hours of literacy instruction 3 days a week to 4-year-olds. No other details were provided.
- Amory, Coffeeville, Booneville, and South Pike referred to a district pre-K program but provided no details. Amory, which reported being a Gilmore Early Learning Initiative participant, may have had Gilmore Foundation-supported programs.
- Ocean Springs referenced a pre-K program but it was unclear whether the district was referring to the Head Start classroom at Pecan Park Elementary School or another program, perhaps at Keys Technology Center.

Additionally, Jackson County indicated that it is planning to institute a pre-K program in the 2012-2013 school year.

Summer Programs

47% (9 of 19) of these districts held summer programs for pre-K children. These summer programs could be extended school year Kindergarten programs; however, districts did not provide enough information to allow us to distinguish between stand-alone summer programs or extended school year programs. As a result, we classified a program as an extended school year program only if it was so named. All other summer programs referenced by districts without Title I pre-K are reported here.

- North Bolivar and Quitman hosted 4-week summer programs. North Bolivar's program specifically targeted Head Start graduates.
- Shaw and Starkville hosted 3-week summer programs. Starkville served 75 children who were identified using reading assessment data; Shaw provided no details.
- Leflore County reported hosting a program in June but did not specify if it was a full-month program. In the program, Head Start and district teachers worked together.
- Durant referenced a 2-week "Jumpstart" program paid for through local funds. 80% of incoming Kindergarteners participated. Students were given a Kindergarten readiness assessment as part of the program.
- West Bolivar held a 1-week "Promise School" in partnership with Head Start.
- Pontotoc City reported a summer reading program for three- and four-year-olds. No other details were provided.
- Okolona mentioned a summer program but provided no details.

B. Non-Title I Pre-K Districts without Classroom-Based Pre-K Programs

6% (6 of 101) of districts without Title I pre-K that also did not have classroom-based programs nonetheless offered some type of instructional assistance to Head Start, childcare centers, or other community-based pre-K programs. These services may have been funded through Title I but were not funded using the 1105 Pre-Kindergarten function code.

- Biloxi provided a literacy coach to community-based pre-K programs. Biloxi also employed a "part-time worker for pre-K programs" but did not describe the nature of this person's job.

- Forrest County gave Head Start a literacy program (Waterford) and possibly computers and training.
- Humphreys County also provided software to enhance literacy among Head Start students. The program provided was not specified.
- Jackson County reported that Head Start and preschool centers could use district reading and math labs.
- Marshall County provided results from Children’s Progress and MAP to Head Start classes.
- Petal purchased the district’s Kindergarten reading curriculum for daycare centers.

C. District-Level, Non-Instructional Pre-K Staff

Only 1 district (Indianola) noted having non-instructional staff who primarily worked with pre-K students. Indianola reported employing a counselor who devoted 50% of her time to the needs of pre-K students in the community, even though the district had no pre-K program.

D. Other Pre-K-Related Activities

Several districts mentioned pre-K related services, resources, or activities available to the families served by the district. These are services, resources, or activities that do not constitute a district-run, classroom-based pre-K program. Some activities may be district-run while other activities may be offered by external partners.

External Service Providers

13% (13 of 101) of districts without Title I pre-K noted partnerships with organizations that provide pre-K related services (not including Head Start).

Parents as Teachers—Pearl and Stone County each used Parents as Teachers resources.

Excel By 5—Biloxi, Hancock County, Moss Point, and Petal reported participating in Excel By 5.

SPARK—Pearl and Humphreys County worked with SPARK.

MSU Extension Service—MSU Extension has a regional office onsite at the Pearl Parent Resource Center. It is through this regional office that the Pearl Parent Resource Center could provide trainings to childcare centers.

BabySteps—BabySteps is a parent education program in Okolona, Mississippi, that helps low-income parents of children ages 0-5 prepare their children for success in school. Okolona School District noted its partnership with BabySteps.

Save the Children—Save the Children is a national non-profit serving low-income children. Their state programs provide education and health services. According to their website, they work in several Mississippi counties, but only Marion County reported involvement with them.

Camp Care—Camp Care is a private preschool and after-school program for three- and four-year-olds in Hancock County School District, according to the Hancock County CFPA. South Hancock Elementary School provided the facility for this program.

Gilmore Early Learning Initiative (GELI)—Amory and Monroe County listed their participation in GELI.

Additional Programs—Lamar County reported that it collaborated with University of Southern Mississippi on a program for birth to 4-year-olds, but no details were provided.

Transition Services

89% (90 of 101) of districts without Title I pre-K noted that they provided services to help children transition to Kindergarten. As was the case with Title I pre-K districts, districts did not always describe their transition services in depth. Activities mentioned included school tours (with a cafeteria visit) for four-year-olds and an opportunity for students and parents to meet Kindergarten teachers. Head Start centers were typically the target for transition services.

Extended School Year—2 districts, Pass Christian and Mound Bayou, held an extended school year program for entering Kindergarteners.⁶

Staggered Entry, Orientation, or Transition “Camp”—8 districts operated a staggered entry program, orientation, or transition “camp” for Kindergarteners.

- Houston and Lafayette County operated staggered entry programs. In the first week of school, Houston split its Kindergarten classes into small groups and assigned each group its own first day (no more than 5 children per day). Lafayette County did not provide information about its staggered entry process.
- Indianola, Jackson County, Tishomingo, and West Bolivar each provided a transition period or orientation for entering Kindergarteners. Indianola’s program was 2-3 days; Jackson County’s was 3 days, and West Bolivar’s was 3-5 days. Tishomingo did not provide a time frame for its orientation, but it did note that the program was paid for through federal 21st Century funds and that the program assessed participants’ skills and helped them adjust to the Kindergarten routine.
- Gulfport and Nettleton hosted a “camp” to help transition children to Kindergarten. Nettleton selected as camp participants children with low DIBELS scores during Kindergarten registration. Gulfport provided no information about its program.

Open House—1 district (Monroe County) held a special Open House for entering Kindergarten families.

Transition Staff—1 district (Walthall County) employed a district-funded Kindergarten Coordinator responsible for transition activities for Head Start students.

Shared Professional Development

66% (67 of 101) of districts without Title I pre-K reported plans to invite area early learning program staffers to participate in district-sponsored professional development. Like Title I pre-K districts, it appears that districts without Title I pre-K offered shared professional development in the form of workshops or conferences rather than mentoring or coaching. Typically, Head Start employees were invited to these shared sessions, although some districts may have also invited childcare centers.

⁶ If a school district did not specifically name its summer program an extended school year program, we assumed it was a classroom-based, stand-alone summer program.

Curriculum Alignment

17% (17 of 101) of districts without Title I pre-K indicated plans to work with local Head Start centers to increase curriculum alignment between Head Start and Kindergarten. Most districts did not describe this work in detail, which often took place at a single meeting.

Head Start Centers Onsite

18% (18 of 101) of districts without Title I pre-K mentioned hosting Head Start classrooms on school district property, including within district schools.⁷

- Sunflower County had Head Start at three elementary schools, the most sites reported by any district. It is unclear how many classes Sunflower County hosted, however.
- Canton, Hancock County, Lee County, Lawrence County, Jefferson Davis County, and Yazoo County had Head Start on two campuses. Lee County was negotiating for an additional elementary school site. Jefferson Davis County hosted three classrooms across its two sites. It is unclear how many Head Start classrooms were at the pair of sites in each remaining district.
- Columbia, Covington County, Drew, Forrest County, Marion County, McComb, Moss Point, Ocean Springs, and Quitman had Head Start onsite at one campus. Forrest County hosted three classrooms. Quitman hosted two classrooms. It is unclear how many Head Start classrooms were housed at each of the remaining districts' sites.
- Petal housed Head Start within a district-owned building that is not a school. The building is located on the same campus of Petal's Center for Families and Children.
- Nettleton did not specify how many sites or classrooms of Head Start it had, only that Head Start was onsite in the district.

An additional 6 districts provided resources to Head Start but did not have Head Start onsite:

- East Tallahatchie purchased materials for Head Start using Title I funds.
- Gulfport shared special services with Head Start, as well as other daycare providers.
- Humphreys County provided software to enhance literacy among Head Start students. The program provided was not specified.
- Jackson County allowed Head Start to use the district's reading and math labs.
- Marshall County provided buses for Head Start field trips and gave Head Start the results of its Children's Progress and MAP assessments.
- Newton City provided a "Reading Mastery" program for Head Start. This program may have been the "Reading Mastery" program that is part of the Direct Instruction curriculum, but it was unclear.

Miscellaneous Pre-K-Related Activities

Early Childhood Education Coalition—2 districts, New Albany and Union County, partnered to form an Early Childhood Education Coalition. The coalition's activities were not described.

⁷ This figure only includes independently operated Head Start classrooms housed on district property, not Blended Head Start classrooms.

Services to Parents—2 districts, Gulfport and Humphreys County, provided services directly to parents without having a pre-K program. Gulfport provided parents free screenings for their children. Humphreys County employed “staff to link school, preschool, and parents.”

Preliminary Analysis

This report is primarily intended to relay the information that we gleaned from the FY2012 Consolidated Federal Programs Applications. However, we did perform some very preliminary analysis of this data. We expect to refine our analysis in the second phase of this project, which will provide specific recommendations about how to improve and expand pre-K opportunities in Mississippi through the use of Title I funds.

Widespread Provision of Classroom-based Pre-K

Perhaps our most important finding is the extent to which school districts in Mississippi are providing classroom-based pre-K to four-year-olds. A total of 44% (67 of 152) of school districts provide classroom-based pre-K, whether during the school year or in the summer. 72% (48 of 67) of these districts do so with Title I dollars, while the remaining 28% (19 of 67) do so without Title I. These data show a definite appetite for pre-K from both school districts and the families that they serve.

Existing Collaborative Efforts

We were pleasantly surprised by the extent of collaborative efforts described in the FY2012 CFPAs. Blended Head Start classrooms (10 districts) are a great example of public school-Head Start collaboration that meets the framework of Mississippi First’s collaborative delivery model from [Leaving Last in Line](#). We were also surprised by the number of districts (22) that host independent Head Start classrooms onsite at their elementary schools. This practice increases the opportunity for a collaborative model by establishing important relationships, even if the current collaboration is not programmatic. Finally, the practice of districts engaging with Head Start and childcare centers around shared professional development and curriculum alignment—which the majority of districts in Mississippi do—is also a basis for further collaboration. In the next phase of our study, we will be particularly interested in learning about these and other local collaborations.

Cost-Per-Child and Cost-Per-Classroom

Cost-per-child and cost-per-classroom figures could be calculated only for districts that provided either their number of classes or their number of available spaces. These calculations should be interpreted with extreme caution. First, districts with both school year and summer programs may not have separated these expenses, which would inflate the cost of the districts’ programs. Further, we were not able to separate classroom and administrative or other overhead expenses for this calculation. Finally, since the number of children per classroom varies by district and some districts provided their number of classrooms but not an enrollment figure, the cost-per-classroom will not translate perfectly into the cost-per-child.

To calculate cost-per-child and cost-per-classroom, we took the overall budget figure for each district with a school year, classroom-based program and divided it by the number of classes and/or the number of spaces, depending on the information the district shared.

Cost-per-child: The average cost per child for the 14 districts reporting a number of available spaces was \$4,008.65. The median cost was \$3,636.47.

- Oxford had the lowest cost per child at \$1,456.02 for each of 120 children. Since Oxford's program was a blended Head Start, it is likely that Head Start was picking up a significant share of the expenses.
- Western Line was a clear outlier with the highest cost-per-child at \$8,506.55 for each of 34 children. Like Oxford, Western Line had a blended Head Start program, but we are unsure of the reason for this very high cost. Western Line reported a total program cost of \$289,222.75, with over \$200K of that number being budgeted for salaries. The district, however, stated that it only had 2 pre-K classes. It is possible that the district had additional classes or services it did not disclose.

Cost-per-classroom: The average cost per classroom for the 17 districts reporting a number of classrooms was \$77,216.48. The median cost was \$71,615.23. (Again, without a uniform number of children per classroom across districts, this number will not translate neatly into a cost per child.)

- Wilkinson County reported the least expensive classrooms at only \$16,145.67 for each of 3. It is likely this district was supplementing these classrooms with local or philanthropic funds that they did not disclose in their Title I application, especially as the district only budgeted for 2 assistants and 0 teachers in that application.
- Tupelo had the most expensive classes at \$184,659.88 for each of 8 classes. Tupelo also indicated that it has an entire building solely for pre-K as well as additional administrative personnel for this pre-K school, which may contribute to these costs.

Next Steps

In the next few months, Mississippi First intends to survey districts to give them an opportunity to confirm or clarify the results of this review as well as to provide more information about their programs. This work will commence in Fall 2012, with a tentative deadline of December 31, 2012. Once the survey data are finalized, we will write a new report to analyze our findings and offer recommendations.

Appendix A—List of FY2012 Title I Pre-K Districts

District	Classroom-Based Program	Code 1105 Amount Budgeted
1. Aberdeen	Yes	\$142,843.00
2. Attala County	Yes	\$354,869.00
3. Benoit	Yes	\$45,630.00
4. Calhoun County	Yes	\$245,110.71
5. Chickasaw County	Yes	\$170,248.90
6. Choctaw County	Yes	\$375,803.41
7. Claiborne County	Yes	\$156,458.00
8. Cleveland	Yes	\$70,000.00
9. Coahoma County	Yes	\$55,247.28
10. Columbus	Yes	\$170,000.00
11. Corinth	Yes	\$337,183.00
12. East Jasper	Yes	\$60,113.21
13. Forest City	Yes	\$77,941.00
14. Franklin County	Yes	\$61,815.00
15. Greenville	Yes	\$189,426.00
16. Greenwood	Yes	\$320,831.00
17. Hattiesburg	Yes	\$503,000.00
18. Hazlehurst City	Yes	\$171,353.60
19. Hollandale	Yes	\$84,035.00
20. Holly Springs	Yes	\$78,000.00
21. Holmes County	Yes	\$68,786.00
22. Jackson Public	Yes	\$2,857,470.00
23. Jefferson Co.	Yes	\$69,500.00
24. Kemper County	Yes	\$161,344.00
25. Laurel	Yes	\$322,203.00
26. Louisville	Yes	\$143,000.00
27. Madison	Yes	\$114,904.72
28. Meridian	Yes	\$800,000.00
29. Neshoba County	Yes	\$145,458.67
30. Noxubee County	Yes	\$23,583.00
31. Oktibbeha Co.	Yes	\$185,603.36
32. Oxford	Yes	\$174,721.92
33. Philadelphia	Yes	\$226,559.50
34. Picayune	Yes	\$214,845.68
35. Pontotoc County	Yes	\$137,820.19
36. Quitman County	Yes	\$66,697.00
37. Rankin County	Yes	\$99,382.00
38. South Delta	Yes	\$93,646.25
39. South Panola	Yes	\$45,568.00
40. South Tippah	Yes	\$64,429.07
41. Tunica County	Yes	\$250,000.00
42. Tupelo	Yes	\$1,477,279.00

District	Classroom-Based Program	Code 1105 Amount Budgeted
43. Union City	Yes	\$62,731.00
44. Vicksburg-Warren	Yes	\$291,167.00
45. West Point	Yes	\$203,814.00
46. Western Line	Yes	\$289,222.75
47. Wilkinson Co.	Yes	\$48,437.00
48. Yazoo City	Yes	\$105,365.18
49. Baldwin	No	\$500.00
50. Poplarville	No	\$5,000.00
51. West Tallahatchie	No	\$250.00
Total Title I Pre-K Districts: 51	Classroom-Based Programs: 48	Total Code 1105 Budgeted: \$12,419,196.40