

The State of Pre-K

2014-2015

ANALYSIS

BACKGROUND

Mississippi First has been an advocate for early childhood education in Mississippi—specifically the expansion of high-quality, state-funded pre-Kindergarten—since our founding in 2008. In January 2012, Mississippi First published *Leaving Last in Line*, an issue brief advocating for a state-funded pre-K program using collaborative delivery. *Leaving Last in Line* served as the basis for the *Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013*.

In February of 2014, Mississippi First published *The State of Public Pre-Kindergarten in Mississippi (2011-2012)*. This groundbreaking report was the first attempting to quantify publicly funded pre-K access in every Mississippi community. Additionally, the report included detailed programmatic and contextual information about public pre-K programs and the communities they serve. The most important findings of this report included the following:

- The provision of classroom-based pre-K was widespread in Mississippi in 2011-2012. A total of 70 school districts provided school-year, classroom-based pre-K free of charge. 3,441 four-year-old children were served in district pre-K programs in 2011-2012.
- Access to publicly funded pre-K at the school district level ranged from 0% to 100%, with the average access rate being 49%.
- On average, access to publicly funded pre-K increased as the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch increased in a community, due primarily to the availability of Head Start.

This report, *The State of Pre-K in Mississippi (2014-2015)*, provides updated data about the state's public pre-K programs as well as detailed programmatic information about private licensed childcare centers serving four-year-old children. The report also offers information about the quality of pre-K programs in school districts. Lastly, we have updated and expanded the pre-K access data in each Mississippi community to account for four-year-old children who may have been served in licensed childcare centers in addition to Head Start programs and school district pre-K programs.

WHY RESEARCH CURRENT PROGRAMS?

Mississippi First believes that a high-quality pre-K education can be transformational for any student in Mississippi. Our goal is to ensure every child in Mississippi has access to high-quality, low- or no-cost pre-K. We believe that fostering collaboration among existing programs will enable Mississippi to reach to this goal. The state-funded pre-K program, which is based on our work in *Leaving Last in Line*, enables existing programs not only to collaborate but to address the needs of their community through a comprehensive, community-level pre-K plan. It also requires programs to offer services based on the quality standards recommended by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER). Each year from 2013 to 2015, the Legislature appropriated \$3 million to the state pre-K program. With this small investment, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) could only fund 11 communities. These communities, in turn, only annually serve about 4% of all the four-year-olds in Mississippi. In 2016, the Legislature chose to expand the state-funded program by appropriating an additional \$1 million; MDE added 4 new communities after a competitive application process with these funds. While we were ecstatic about this expansion, state investment in pre-K is still too small. To continue to build the case to expand the state program, advocates need good data about how pre-K currently operates in Mississippi. To this end, this research project has four purposes.

1. Present a clear picture of the number, types, and characteristics of pre-K providers in each Mississippi community.

Prior to our previous *State of Public Pre-K* report, there was a disappointing lack of detailed programmatic data for many of Mississippi's pre-K programs, whether public or private. This reality made it hard to provide a precise answer to the question, "Who is doing what to

Why Research Current Programs, continued

provide pre-K to four-year-olds in Mississippi?” Our first report sought to answer this question for public pre-K. Similarly, this report, *The State of Pre-K (2014-2015)*, includes programmatic information about public school pre-K programs including their cost; funding sources; the length of their school day; the qualifications required for teachers and assistants; maximum class sizes; their early learning standards; and the screening and food services they provide. This report also expands upon our previous research to present information about licensed childcare providers in each community. It includes detailed information about licensed childcare centers including operating hours; tuition costs; financial assistance provided; curricula and assessments used; and whether the center has acquired a nationally recognized accreditation.

2. Identify where the need is greatest for access to pre-K.

Prior to our previous *State of Public Pre-K* report, no research had attempted to quantify access to pre-K in Mississippi at the community level. This report includes pre-K enrollment data from public schools and Head Start programs and compares it to Kindergarten enrollment data to begin to reveal the school districts in which more pre-K seats are needed. Additionally, the report uses enrollment capacity data from public schools, Head Start programs, and licensed childcare centers and compares it to population estimates of four-year-olds from the United States Census to get a greater understanding of the counties in which access to pre-K programs is low. This report also features county and school district demographic data such as poverty rates, per capita income, school funding, and school accountability grades to measure the urgency of need in many communities.

3. Identify where the need is greatest for *high-quality* pre-K.

No research has attempted to assess the quality of pre-K programs in Mississippi. NIEER¹ defines a high-quality pre-K program as one that meets the ten research-based quality benchmarks below:ⁱ

- ✓ The pre-K program uses comprehensive early learning standards.ⁱⁱ
- ✓ The pre-K program requires teachers to have a Bachelor’s degree or higher.
- ✓ The pre-K program requires teachers to specialize in early childhood education.
- ✓ The pre-K program requires assistant teachers to hold a Child Development Associate’s degree, the equivalent, or greater.
- ✓ The pre-K program requires teachers to obtain at least 15 service hours annually.
- ✓ The pre-K program institutes maximum class sizes of no more than 20 children.
- ✓ The pre-K program institutes teacher to student ratios of 1 to 10 or lower.
- ✓ The pre-K program offers vision and health screenings to students served and at least one support service.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ✓ The pre-K program provides at least one meal each day for the students it serves.
- ✓ The pre-K program is monitored by site visits at least once every five years.

Mississippi First surveyed all school districts who operated a pre-K program in 2014-2015 about their pre-K programs. This report presents a measure of quality for each school district pre-K program by evaluating how many of the NIEER quality benchmarks each program met.

i NIEER states that these benchmarks are consistent with what research suggests as minimums for highly effective programs. They do not ensure quality.

ii The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) defines comprehensive early learning standards as those encompassing five dimensions: (1) physical well-being and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches toward learning; (4) language development; and (5) cognition and general knowledge.

iii Some examples of support services include home visits, parent conferences, and/or parent education.

4. Monitor the state's early education progress through the creation of an on-going database that becomes more comprehensive over time.

In addition to a lack of data about access to quality pre-K, Mississippi has historically lacked a consistent way to track its progress in early education. We believe that the data we have gathered for the *State of Pre-K* reports can help the public understand how early childhood in Mississippi strengthens over time. As we show progress, we can make a more compelling case for both state and federal investment in early childhood.

FORMAT & METHODOLOGY

This report provides county- and school district-level data for every community in Mississippi. The pages are organized alphabetically by county with a childcare data page immediately following the relevant county page. Each county's childcare page is followed by pre-K data for each school district in the county.

On the county pages of this report, we include countywide demographic data as well as pre-K access information, which is captured by comparing enrollment capacity data from public schools, Head Start programs, and licensed childcare centers to population estimates of four-year-olds from the United States Census. The demographic data included in this report is drawn from reputable, publicly available data sources such as the Census. Definitions and sources for all data can be found in the section of the same name at the end of the report.

On the childcare pages, we rely on data reported from the Mississippi Department of Human Services and from the Early Years Network, a program of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Much of the data presented on the childcare pages was provided by the Market Rate Survey. The Market Rate Survey was administered to all licensed childcare centers on a regular basis by the Early Years Network in 2014-2015, the dates of this report.

On the district pre-K data pages, we report districtwide demographic data, public pre-K access information including data from public schools and Head Start programs, district parent survey data, and district pre-K data. The district demographic data was obtained from the Office of Reporting at the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE). For the district access data, we rely on data reported from Head Start and the school districts. With the support of the State Head Start Collaboration Office, Head Start affiliates used their data systems to report the districts that Head Start children transitioned to for Kindergarten. For the parent survey data, we used school registration data entered into the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS) that school districts collected from Kindergarten parents about their entering Kindergarteners. For the school district data, we employed a multi-step process to collect, clean, and verify data. This process is described below:

- **Paper Review:** We compiled characteristics of Title I pre-K programs described in school districts' FY2015 Consolidated Federal Programs Applications (CFPAs) and FY2015 CFPA Budgets on file with the MDE's Office of Federal Programs.
- **Survey:** We contacted federal programs directors in each school district. In addition, we contacted pre-K directors provided by the Office of Early Childhood at the MDE. We made this initial contact via email and requested that the district's pre-K program expert complete a survey that included the following categories: Type of Program; Selection of Students; Tuition; Summer Program; Program Duration; Program Enrollment; Staff Qualifications; Student:Staff Ratio; Location of Classrooms; Standards and Curriculum; Assessments; Student Services; Funding; and Existing Collaboration. We had a response rate of 78% (113 of 144) for this online survey. In an attempt to gather more responses from districts, we released a shorter form of the survey. We gained an additional 6 responses on the shortened form of the survey, which gave us a total response rate of 83% (119 of 144). According to enrollment data from the MDE, all but 2 of the districts not responding to the survey had no full-year, classroom-based, regular education pre-K program. We were able to verify this by calling and speaking to district personnel in each of the districts not responding to our survey.

- **Data Comparison:** We compared each district's survey responses to their CFP data to check for consistency and flagged answers that did not match between the two sources. We also looked for missing data.
- **Data Cleaning:** When answers were inconsistent or data were missing, we contacted the respondent via phone or email to resolve the issue. Often, respondents sent corrected information in writing.
- **Data Verification:** After cleaning all inconsistent and/or missing data, we sent proofs to each respondent to verify that all data were accurate.
- **Final Fact Check:** We engaged in several final fact checks prior to the publication of this report. Readers can report any outstanding errors or omissions to contact@mississippifirst.org.

Limitations & Caveats

As with any research, this report has limitations.

1. Changes in pre-K since 2014-2015.

Pre-Kindergarten in Mississippi is not static from year to year. As the level of available resources changes in school districts, pre-K classes are added or removed on an annual basis. Head Start grantees who fail to comply with national performance standards sometimes have their grants suspended or terminated and transferred to another grantee. The childcare market is especially fluid, with childcare centers opening and closing frequently and with regular changes in four-year-old enrollment even at long-standing centers.

Mississippi First acknowledges the need to continuously update and expand this report in order to accurately assess the state of pre-K in Mississippi. Though this report reflects data that is nearly one year old, it generally features the characteristics and needs of public school pre-K programs in the state. We plan to publish updated pre-K data in a new version of this report on a three-year basis.

2. Assessing quality via program policy versus measures of implementation and effectiveness.

In this report, Mississippi First presents a measurement of quality for each school district pre-K program by evaluating how many of the NIEER quality benchmarks^{iv} each program met. Our evaluation of each program reflects the policies in place to govern the program and not necessarily what the program is actually implementing. For example, a program's policy for teacher qualifications may be only an elementary education degree (which does not meet the benchmark), but, in actuality, classes are staffed with teachers with early childhood specialization. The opposite may be true as well: a program may have a policy that meets the benchmark but may be ignoring that policy in practice. Presenting the quality of a program in this way has its limitations; however, good program policies are foundational for effective programs.

As our state early childhood system becomes more robust, we hope to provide information on the implementation quality and effectiveness of each program. Unfortunately, the data simply are not available at this time. Although many programs use quality measures, this information is not currently tracked statewide for all programs. Furthermore, a variety of quality measures are in use across the state, and these measures assess slightly different aspects of pre-K programs. For example, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System for childcare uses an environmental measure, whereas many of the state's Head Start programs use an adult-child

^{iv} See page 2 for a list of the NIEER benchmarks.

interaction measure. Mississippi First will examine how best to include any available quality data in future reports. Only the state-funded pre-K program uses consistent child outcome measures at this time.

3. Self-reported data.

The information on the school district and childcare data pages is self-reported, as we explain in the methodology section. We made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this data and verified it against external sources when possible. However, the reader should be aware that Mississippi First did not independently collect this data through site visits, for example, in the 2014-2015 school year. We have included a list of survey respondents from the school districts in Appendix A.

Additionally, many school district personnel left questions unanswered on our online survey. For missing information we needed to complete this report, we made calls to the districts to collect this information. However, there are gaps in the online datasets for aspects of district pre-K beyond the scope of our report.

4. District pre-K data tables represent only school-year, classroom-based pre-K open to all public school students.

23 school districts (16%) provided pre-K services exclusively to students with special needs. Additionally, some school districts offered itinerant services to four-year-olds outside of a regular classroom setting. In this report, we have only included programmatic information for school district programs offering school-year, classroom-based services accessible to all students, whether regular or special education students.

FINDINGS: ACCESS

The pre-K program access data we obtained from the *State of Pre-K 2014-2015* survey and from Head Start partners, taken together with enrollment data reported from the MDE and MDHS and capacity data from the Early Years Network Market Rate Survey, provide a rich data source about where families access pre-K programs in the state. In the sections below, we present our access findings. We have specifically examined access to public pre-K programs at the school district level (e.g., state-funded collaboratives, local school district pre-K classrooms, and Head Start) and access to licensed childcare programs serving or having the capacity to serve four-year-old-children at the county level (data for childcare programs is not available by district). Lastly, we analyzed the total access to pre-K programs for four-year-olds (including all providers) at the county level in Mississippi.

75

75 school districts operated a full-year, full-day pre-K program accessible to all students.

72

72 school districts provided a full-year, full-day pre-K services accessible to all students free of charge.

23

23 additional school districts operated full-year, full-day pre-K programs exclusively for students with special needs.

Public Access to Pre-K Programs in 2014-2015

75 school districts offered a full-year, classroom-based pre-K program for both regular and special education students in 2014-2015. Together, these programs had the capacity to serve approximately 10% (4,126 of 40,260) of four-year-olds in the state. (An additional 372 students were served in pre-K programs exclusively for children with specials needs.) School districts and Head Starts, jointly, served an additional 1,127 four-year-old children (2.8%) in blended pre-K seats in school districts. Aside from the children served in blended pre-K seats, Head Start served 27% (10,943 of 40,260) of four-year-old children in Mississippi. In total, publicly funded programs had the capacity to serve 41% of four-year-olds in Mississippi. 4.3% (1,748 of 40,260) of these children were served in state-funded collaboratives, including less than 1% (289 of 40,260) of four-year-olds who were served in publicly funded licensed childcare seats and less than 1% of children (14 of 40,260) who were served in a parochial school. A list of all districts with full-year, classroom-based, pre-K programs available to all students with their enrollments can be found in Appendix B. A list showing the number of children in each school district attending Head Start can be found in Appendix C.

For 2014-2015 four-year-olds who entered public Kindergarten in 2015-2016, 44% had access to public pre-K. Below, we have calculated the percentage who had access to public pre-K for every school district in the state.^v We grouped the school districts by whether their access rate is above average, average, or below average. We used one standard deviation above and below the mean to classify school districts as “above average,” “average,” and “below average.” Therefore, “above average” is one standard deviation above the mean, “average” is within one standard deviation above and below the mean, and “below average” is one standard deviation below the mean. We split districts with average access rates into two groups: districts with an average access rate above the mean and districts with an average access rate below the mean.

Districts with Above-Average Access to Publicly Funded Pre-K

Attala County School District (100%)	Clarksdale Municipal School District (96%)	Cleveland School District (90%)
Benton County School District (100%)	McComb School District (96%)	Coffeetown School District (89%)
East Jasper School District (100%)	South Delta School District (96%)	Claiborne County School District (89%)
Hollandale School District (100%)	Humphreys County School District (96%)	Carroll County School District (88%)
Jefferson County School District (100%)	Quitman County School District (94%)	Holly Springs School District (87%)
Kemper County School District (100%)	Leland School District (93%)	Meridian Public School District (83%)
Marion County School District (100%)	West Bolivar Consolidated School District (93%)	Tunica County School District (83%)
Montgomery County School District (100%)	Choctaw County School District (91%)	
North Bolivar Consolidated School District (100%)	Chickasaw County School District (91%)	
Philadelphia Public School District (100%)	Holmes County School District (90%)	
Wilkinson County School District (100%)	Greenville Public School District (90%)	
Durant Public School District (97%)		

^v In calculating access rates, we used the number of children attending Kindergarten in each school district for the 2015-2016 school year as a denominator and NOT the estimated number of four-year-olds in each district from the United States Census. As a result, these rates represent the rates at which public school children could access public pre-K and not necessarily the rates for all children in the community.

Districts with Average Access to Publicly Funded Pre-K (Above the Mean)

Jefferson Davis County School District (81%)
Natchez-Adams School District (80%)
Quitman School District (79%)
Lawrence County School District (76%)
Sunflower County Consolidated School District (76%)
Hattiesburg Public School District (76%)
West Point Consolidated School District (75%)
Hazlehurst City School District (75%)
North Panola School District (75%)
Greenwood Public School District (74%)
Yazoo City Municipal School District (73%)
West Tallahatchie School District (73%)

Amite County School District (72%)
Marshall County School District (69%)
Franklin County School District (68%)
Moss Point School District (67%)
Calhoun County School District (67%)
Jackson Public School District (66%)
Enterprise School District (66%)
Leflore County School District (65%)
Tupelo Public School District (65%)
Forest Municipal School District (64%)
Canton Public School District (63%)
Winona Separate School District (63%)

Prentiss County School District (62%)
East Tallahatchie School District (62%)
Noxubee County School District (62%)
Western Line School District (61%)
West Jasper School District (60%)
South Tippah School District (60%)
Bay St. Louis School District (60%)
Laurel School District (59%)
Louisville Municipal School District (58%)
Oxford School District (54%)

Districts with Average Access to Publicly Funded Pre-K (Below the Mean)

Vicksburg Warren School District (53%)
Walthall County School District (53%)
Pascagoula Separate School District (52%)
Union County School District (52%)
Aberdeen School District (51%)
Picayune School District (51%)
Yazoo County School District (51%)
Tishomingo County School District (49%)
Covington County School District (49%)
Amory School District (49%)
Coahoma County School District (49%)
Newton Municipal School District (49%)
Greene County School District (48%)
Corinth School District (48%)
Richton School District (47%)
Starkville Consolidated School District (47%)
South Pike School District (47%)
Perry County School District (46%)
Columbus Municipal School District (46%)

Water Valley School District (45%)
Lincoln County School District (45%)
Booneville School District (44%)
South Panola School District (43%)
Petal School District (43%)
Itawamba County School District (43%)
Leake County School District (43%)
Wayne County School District (42%)
Monroe School District (41%)
Lumberton Public School District (40%)
Tate County School District (39%)
Grenada School District (38%)
Okolona Separate School District (37%)
Biloxi Public School District (37%)
Copiah County School District (37%)
Hinds County School District (37%)
Kosciusko School District (37%)
Simpson County School District (36%)
Pass Christian Public School District (35%)

Columbia School District (35%)
Union Public School District (35%)
Alcorn School District (34%)
Scott County School District (33%)
Smith County School District (33%)
New Albany Public Schools (33%)
Neshoba County School District (33%)
Pontotoc County School District (30%)
Senatobia Municipal School District (29%)
Webster County School District (28%)
Harrison County School District (28%)
Gulfport School District (28%)
Baldwyn School District (28%)
Houston School District (28%)
Newton County School District (26%)
Poplarville Separate School District (26%)
Pearl Public School District (25%)

Districts with Below-Average Access to Publicly Funded Pre-K

Lowndes County School District (25%)
George County School District (24%)
Lee County School District (22%)
Stone County School District (20%)
Ocean Springs School District (19%)
Pontotoc City School District (19%)
Forrest County School District (18%)
DeSoto County School District (16%)

Lamar County School District (14%)
Lauderdale County School District (14%)
Clinton Public School District (13%)
Long Beach School District (11%)
Jones County School District (11%)
Jackson County School District (11%)
Lafayette County School District (9%)
Rankin County School District (5%)

Madison County School District (5%)
Hancock County School District (4%)
North Pike School District (3%)
North Tippah School District (1%)
Brookhaven School District (0%)
Nettleton School District (0%)
Pearl River County School District (0%)

Changes in Public Pre-K Access Since 2011-2012

Since our last report on public pre-K programs, the state pre-K access rate for entering Kindergarteners has remained the same. In our first report, we estimated that at least 44% of public school Kindergarteners in 2012-2013 had access to public pre-K in the previous year, 2011-2012.² For this report, our estimate is also 44%. However, this does not mean that pre-K access remained unchanged on the local level. In our first report, Mississippi school districts and Head Starts were able to offer 49% of the entering public school Kindergarteners in their communities a seat in a publicly funded pre-K classroom the previous year, on average.³ For this report, our data shows that public pre-K providers served approximately 53.6% of entering public school Kindergarteners in each of their respective communities the previous year. This means that, on average, public pre-K programs increased access density. In other words, even though the number of pre-K programs in school districts decreased from 77 to 75 (counting all school district programs including those that charge tuition), those that kept their programs served a higher percentage future public school children. This local increase was due in part to new seats created by the state-funded program or school districts as well as a decline in total public school Kindergarteners. The total number of seats available in district programs increased from 3,481 to 5,253 (including blended Head Start seats).⁴ These local increases offset dramatic declines in Head Start services for four-year-olds in this time period. In our first report, over 16,000 public Kindergarten entrants were previously served in Head Start programs.⁵ In this report, the number of public Kindergarten entrants served in Head Start was only 11,000. This reduction is due to a variety of factors including programs requesting enrollment deductions to invest some of their budget in meeting quality standards, programs requesting to convert seats for four-year-olds into seats for Early Head Start, and programs experiencing declines in enrollment. No one factor was responsible for the majority of the reduction.

As explained above, the public pre-K access rates in most school districts changed due to the addition or loss of pre-K seats. However, some access rates changed due to a reduction in the number of Kindergarteners in the public system. Below, we have listed the public pre-K access change by school district. In the following tables, we have used data from our *State of Public Pre-K (2011-2012)* report in addition to the survey data we collected from school districts and Head Start programs for this report. We have data available for 132 of 143 school districts.^{vi} We have classified districts into 3 categories: School Districts Where Public Access Increased, School Districts Where Public Access Stayed the Same, and School Districts Where Public Access Decreased.

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Increased

The following school districts experienced an increase in public pre-K access. There are three reasons why districts experienced an increase in access. The first reason is because more students in the district accessed Head Start seats. This may be due to the addition of new Head Start seats, an increase in the number children eligible to attend Head Start, or a combination of these factors. The second reason is due to an increase in the number of district seats available. District seat increases happen as a result of district administrators allocating resources to create new or expand existing pre-K programs. The last reason is due to a significant reduction in the size of the entering Kindergarten class in a district. There were a number of school districts who did not increase the number of pre-K seats, but their pre-K access rates increased due to having a decrease in the number of entering Kindergarteners served. In several districts, a combination of these three factors contributed to the access increase.

vi The consolidation of school districts and missing data in the 2011-2012 report impacted our ability to calculate an access change for 12 school districts. These school districts are Union County, South Pike, Jefferson County, Natchez-Adams, Wilkinson County, Amite County, Hattiesburg, Petal, Forrest County, Sunflower County Consolidated, West Point, and Starkville Consolidated.

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Increased, continued

Additionally, in many school districts, one or more factors may contribute to an increase in pre-K access rates that mask a decrease in pre-K seats.

Below, we have listed each district that showed an increase in access rates from our first report. We have provided the primary reason(s) for each district's increase. Districts are ranked from high to low according to their change in access rates. Districts highlighted in grey increased access solely due to a drop in Kindergarten enrollment.

District	2011-2012 Access Rate (%)	2014-2015 Access Rate (%)	Change in Access Rates (in percentage points)	Significant Changes in District
Hollandale School District	18	100	+82	60 Head Start seats added
Leland School District	22	93	+71	25 Head Start seats added
Enterprise School District	0	66	+66	40 district seats added
Carroll County School District	23	88	+65	40 district seats added
Lawrence County School District	18	76	+58	94 Head Start seats added
Durant Public School District	42	97	+55	10 Head Start seats added
Leflore County School District	16	65	+50	39 Head Start and 40 district seats added
McComb School District	57	96	+39	48 public childcare seats added through state-funded collaborative program
Philadelphia Public School District	61	100	+39	28 Head Start seats added
Louisville Municipal School District	21	58	+37	69 Head Start seats added
Covington County School District	14	49	+35	86 Head Start seats added
Marion County School District	66	100	+34	27% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 22 Head Start seats added
Scott County School District	0	33	+33	122 Head Start seats added
Jefferson Davis County School District	49	81	+32	39 Head Start seats added
Coffeeville School District	58	89	+32	36% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
North Panola School District	45	75	+30	42% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Prentiss County School District	33	62	+29	28 Head Start seats and 20 district seats added
Houston School District	0	36	+27	41 Head Start seats added
Lincoln County School District	18	45	+27	60 Head Start seats added
Monroe School District	15	41	+26	63 public childcare seats added through state-funded collaborative program
Simpson County School District	10	35	+25	71 Head Start seats added
Clarksdale Municipal School District	71	96	+25	22 Head Start and 40 district seats added

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Increased, continued

District	2011-2012 Access Rate (%)	2014-2015 Access Rate (%)	Change in Access Rates (in percentage points)	Significant Changes in District
Alcorn School District	11	34	+23	20% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 60 district seats added
South Tippah School District	37	60	+23	60 district seats added
Montgomery County School District	78	100	+22	41% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 20 district seats added
Newton Municipal School District	27	49	+22	17 Head Start seats added
Winona Separate School District	41	63	+21	31% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Pascagoula Separate School District	32	52	+20	96 district seats added
West Jasper School District	42	60	+18	19% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 10 Head Start seats added
Jackson Public School District	49	66	+17	18% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Picayune School District	34	51	+17	40 district seats added
Greenwood Public School District	57	74	+17	32 Head Start seats added
Western Line School District	45	61	+16	9 blended seats added
Choctaw County School District	76	91	+15	16% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Ocean Springs School District	5	19	+15	58 Head Start seats added
Benton County School District	86	100	+14	19% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 11 Head Start seats added
Union Public School District	21	35	+14	16% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 8 Head Start seats added
Chickasaw County School District	78	91	+13	20 Head Start and 13 district seats added
Tishomingo County Schools	36	49	+13	19% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Biloxi Public School District	24	37	+13	56 Head Start seats added
Tate County School District	27	39	+13	22% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Quitman County School District	82	94	+13	35 blended seats added
Quitman School District	67	79	+12	16% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Perry County Schools	34	46	+12	30 district seats added
Neshoba County School District	20	33	+12	25 Head Start seats added
Meridian Public School District	72	83	+11	26% drop in Kindergarten enrollment

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Increased, continued

District	2011-2012 Access Rate (%)	2014-2015 Access Rate (%)	Change in Access Rates (in percentage points)	Significant Changes in District
Vicksburg-Warren School District	42	53	+11	18% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 40 district seats added
Canton Public School District	53	63	+11	26% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Columbia School District	25	35	+10	12 district seats added
Kemper County School District	90	100	+10	41% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Lamar County School District	5	14	+9	50 district and 20 blended seats added
Humphreys County School District	88	96	+8	31% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Bay St. Louis School District	52	60	+8	19 Head Start seats added
Harrison County School District	21	28	+8	74 Head Start seats added
Oxford School District	46	54	+8	27 blended and 2 Head Start seats added
Holly Springs School District	79	86	+7	25% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Noxubee County School District	55	62	+7	21% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Kosciusko School District	31	37	+6	16 Head Start seats added
Water Valley School District	39	45	+6	9% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Cleveland School District	84	90	+6	8% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Itawamba County School District	38	43	+5	15% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Smith County School District	28	33	+5	6% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 7 Head Start seats added
Jackson County School District	6	11	+5	13% drop in Kindergarten enrollment; 23 Head Start seats added
East Tallahatchie School District	58	62	+4	22% drop in Kindergarten enrollment
Lowndes County School District	21	25	+4	12 blended seats added

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Stayed the Same

The following school districts had access rates that only slightly changed due to fluctuating Kindergarten enrollments from our first report.

District	2011-2012 Access Rate (%)	2014-2015 Access Rate (%)	Change in Access Rates (in percentage points)
Grenada School District	35	38	+3
Walthall County School District	49	53	+3
Yazoo County School District	48	51	+3
Greene County School District	45	48	+3
Webster County School District	26	29	+3
Amory School District	46	49	+3
Lauderdale County School District	11	14	+3
Jones County School District	9	11	+2
Hazlehurst City School District	73	75	+2
DeSoto County School District	15	16	+2
Long Beach School District	10	11	+2
Copiah County School District	35	37	+2
Greenville Public School District	89	90	+1
Corinth School District	46	48	+1
Calhoun County School District	66	67	+1
Poplarville Separate School District	26	26	0
Rankin County School District	5	5	0
Attala County School District	100	100	0
East Jasper School District	100	100	0
North Bolivar Consolidated School District	100	100	0
Tunica County School District	84	83	-1
Tupelo Public School District	66	65	-1
Hancock County School District	5	4	-1
Marshall County School District	70	69	-1
New Albany Public Schools	34	33	-2

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Decreased

The following school districts experienced a decrease in public pre-K access from the 2011-2012 school year to the 2014-2015 school year. Most of the decreases experienced by school districts can be attributed to a reduction in the number of students accessing Head Start seats. Only four school districts—Franklin County, South Delta, Holmes County and Yazoo City—experienced a decrease in pre-K access due to a loss of district seats. Three school districts—Madison County, South Delta, and West Bolivar Consolidated—had a significant increase in the number of Kindergarten students they served, which caused their access rates to decrease. Additionally, two school districts—Pontotoc County and Forest Municipal—added pre-K seats but experienced an overall decrease in pre-K access due to the loss of Head Start seats.

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Decreased, continued

Below, we have listed each district that showed a decrease in access rates from our first report. We have provided the primary reason for each district's decrease. Districts are ranked from high to low according to their change in access rates. Districts that experienced a decrease in access due solely to an increase in Kindergarteners served are highlighted in grey.

District	2011-2012 Access Rate (%)	2014-2015 Access Rate (%)	Change in Access Rates (in percentage points)	Significant Changes in District
North Pike School District	5	3	-3	Lost 6 Head Start seats
West Tallahatchie School District	76	73	-3	Lost 42 Head Start seats
Pontotoc County Schools	34	30	-3	Lost 29 Head Start seats; 20 district seats added
Leake County School District	47	43	-4	Lost 40 district seats
Wayne County School District	47	42	-4	Lost 58 Head Start seats
South Delta School District	100	96	-4	Lost 4 Head Start and 3 district seats; 17% increase in Kindergarten enrollment
Claiborne County School District	95	89	-5	Lost 26 Head Start seats
Pontotoc City Schools	25	19	-6	Lost 15 Head Start seats
Senatobia Municipal School District	35	29	-6	Lost 20 Head Start seats
Coahoma County School District	55	49	-6	Lost 66 Head Start seats
Franklin County School District	74	68	-7	Lost 18 districts and 10 Head Start seats
West Bolivar Consolidated School District	100	93	-7	24% increase in Kindergarten enrollment
Pearl Public School District	33	25	-8	Lost 41 Head Start seats
Stone County School District	28	20	-8	Lost 21 Head Start seats
Lee County School District	30	22	-8	Lost 56 Head Start seats
Lafayette County School District	18	9	-9	Lost 23 Head Start seats
Holmes County School District	100	90	-10	Lost 58 Head Start and 8 district seats
Madison County School District	15	5	-10	Lost 85 Head Start seats; 12% increase in Kindergarten enrollment

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Decreased, continued

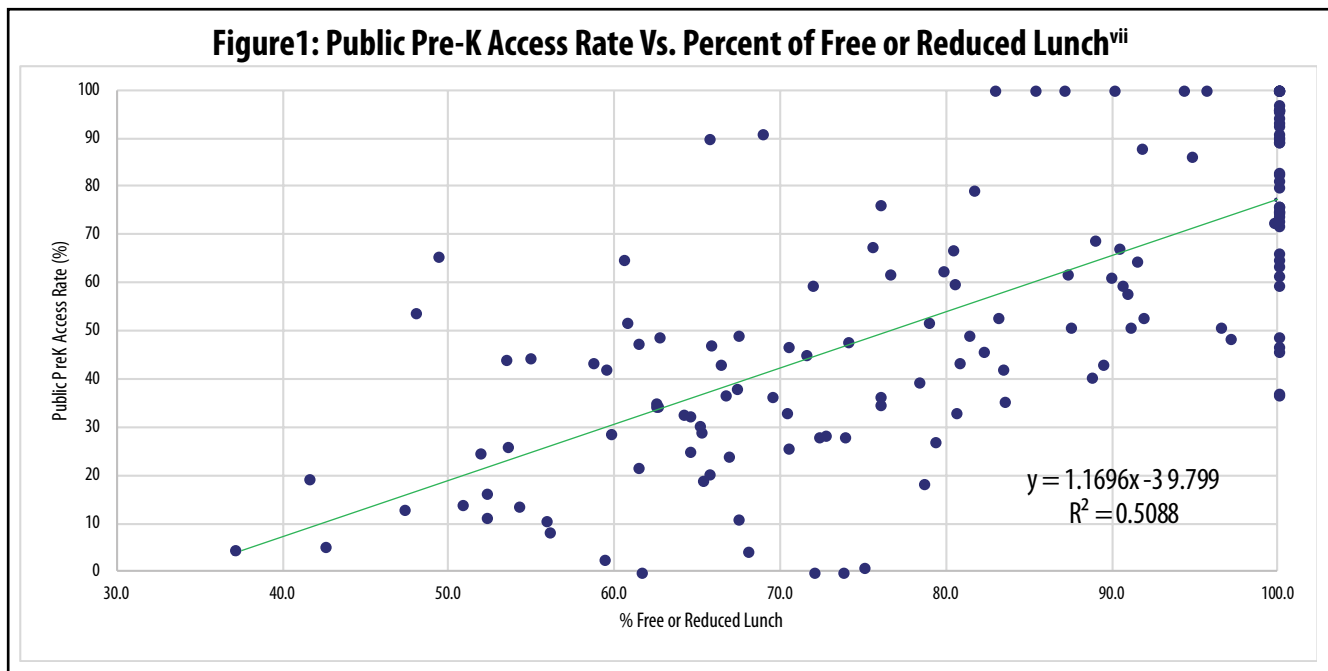
District	2011-2012 Access Rate (%)	2014-2015 Access Rate (%)	Change in Access Rates (in percentage points)	Significant Changes in District
George County School District	35	24	-11	Lost 47 Head Start seats
Laurel School District	71	59	-12	Lost 33 Head Start seats
Forest Municipal School District	79	64	-14	Lost 50 Head Start seats; 20 district seats added
Newton County School District	41	26	-15	Lost 25 Head Start seats
Hinds County School District	54	37	-17	Lost 149 Head Start seats
Columbus Municipal School District	64	46	-18	Lost 130 Head Start seats
Richton School District	66	47	-19	Lost 16 Head Start seats
Moss Point School District	89	67	-22	Lost 76 Head Start seats
South Panola School District	66	43	-23	Lost 99 Head Start seats
Clinton Public School District	37	13	-24	Lost 88 Head Start seats
Lumberton Public School District	65	40	-24	Lost 21 Head Start seats
Booneville School District	68	44	-24	Lost 33 Head Start seats
Gulfport School District	54	28	-26	Lost 176 Head Start seats
Yazoo City Municipal School District	100	73	-27	Lost 66 Head Start and 46 district seats
Brookhaven School District	29	0	-29	Lost 81 Head Start seats
Baldwyn School District	58	28	-30	Lost 20 Head Start seats
Aberdeen School District	85	51	-34	Lost 59 Head Start seats and 40 district seats; 27 public childcare seats added
Okolona Separate School District	71	37	-34	Lost 21 Head Start seats
Pass Christian Public School District	71	35	-36	Lost 30 Head Start seats and 26 district seats

School Districts Where Public Pre-K Access Decreased, continued

District	2011-2012 Access Rate (%)	2014-2015 Access Rate (%)	Change in Access Rates (in percentage points)	Significant Changes in District
North Tippah School District	54	1	-53	Lost 57 Head Start seats
Nettleton School District	54	0	-54	Lost 57 Head Start seats
Pearl River County School District	79	0	-79	Lost 189 Head Start seats

The Relationship between Public Pre-K Access and Poverty

The access data we collected shows that a child's access to public pre-K is greatly dependent on where in the state the child resides. In our sample, we find that access to publicly funded pre-K is positively associated with high-poverty school districts: the higher the poverty in a district, the higher the access to publicly funded pre-K, on average. More precisely, for every percentage point increase in the number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch, access to publicly funded pre-K increases by 1.2 percentage points, on average ($R^2 = .51$). This relationship is shown in Figure 1. There are likely two factors contributing to this: 1) school districts with more low-income students have access to more federal Title I funding to establish and/or supplement district pre-K programs and 2) Head Start programs, with federal requirements to serve at least 90% of children from low-income households, may have greater enrollment capacity in high-poverty areas. The latter factor had the greatest impact on access to publicly funded pre-K in Mississippi in 2014-2015.



vii Here, we represent the relationship between publicly funded pre-K access and the percentage of K-12 students receiving free or reduced lunch (FRL) in each school district. 40 school districts had a free lunch rate of 100%; these districts all received the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a provision from the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* that allows schools and school districts with over 40% of students in poverty or at risk of hunger to serve the entire student population two meals free of charge. These FRL rates represent the most accurate data available to us pertaining to the concentration of poverty in school districts. An alternative way to represent the relationship between poverty and public pre-K access is to use countywide poverty estimates from the U.S. Census for people under the age of 18 and compare it to countywide public pre-K access. In this report, we have chosen to use FRL and district access rates to avoid masking the concentration of poverty existing in school districts. However, we have analyzed the data both ways and found similar relationships.

The Relationship between Public Pre-K Access and Poverty, continued

In an attempt to help readers better understand the differences in access, we have grouped school districts into five different categories based on poverty and access to publicly funded pre-K. These categories are

- 1) average or above-average poverty, below-average access (red or black on the access map);
- 2) below-average poverty, below-average access (red or black on the access map);
- 3) average or above-average poverty, average access (light or dark blue on the access map);
- 4) below-average poverty, average access (light or dark blue on the access map);
- 5) any level poverty, above-average access (green on the access map).

Important Caveats

First, we used one standard deviation above and below the mean to classify school districts as “above average,” “average,” and “below average.” Therefore, “above average” is one standard deviation above the mean, “average” is within one standard deviation above and below the mean, and “below average” is one standard deviation below the mean.

Secondly, when we say “average poverty,” we mean a district’s poverty level relative to the average poverty level of school districts in Mississippi in our sample of 142 (of 144) school districts.^{viii} The average poverty level of districts in our sample was 79.9%. This is an average of districtwide poverty levels, not an average of student-level poverty statewide. One standard deviation above the mean was 97.2%, and one standard deviation below was 62.5%. Nearly all districts in Mississippi have a poverty level that is higher than the national average poverty level. Therefore, a district with a “lower-than-average” poverty level is not necessarily a district that does not have a significant number of children in poverty (districts could still have a poverty level as high as 62.4%); it is simply a district that has fewer children in poverty relative to other Mississippi districts. Finally, this data only applies to the 2014-2015 school year.

Average or Above-Average Poverty, Below-Average Access—*FOCUS COMMUNITIES*

Nine school districts had average or above-average poverty levels and yet had below-average access to publicly funded pre-K. We call these districts “focus communities” because the data indicate that the children in these districts are in greatest need for pre-K options that are low- or no-cost for families.

Though the school districts in this category have average or above-average poverty rates, most students in each district did not access Head Start pre-K services. The Nettleton and Brookhaven School Districts had no children attending Head Start in the year prior to Kindergarten, and only 1 Kindergartener in the North Tippah School District attended Head Start. In the remaining six districts, an average of only 16% of children attended Head Start. This may be because the county Head Start provider is primarily serving children who transition to another school district in the county or because the Head Start provider has a very limited number of classrooms. The Brookhaven School District, for example, had no Kindergarteners who attended Head Start in the previous year. However, 45% (110) of the Kindergarteners in the Lincoln County School District, located in the same county, attended Head Start. No school districts in this category operated a district pre-K program.

Of the school districts in this category, nearly all lost ground from the 2011-2012 report, primarily due to a loss of Head Start seats, and are newly designated focus communities. (No data from 2011-2012 was available for Forrest County due to a transition in Head Start grantees causing a data gap.) Two districts—Hancock County and Jones County—are the only remaining focus communities from the 2011-2012 report. These districts experienced no change in the number of pre-K seats available to their students since 2011-2012, whereas the other 9 2011-2012 focus communities all added enough pre-K seats to climb into the average access category.

^{viii} Due to the consolidation of Clay County, West Point, Oktibbeha County, and Starkville in 2015-2016, we could not calculate an access percentage for these districts. Instead, we have calculated an access percentage for the newly consolidated districts.

Average or Above-Average Poverty, Below-Average Access—*FOCUS COMMUNITIES, continued*

The 9 districts in this category are listed below and ranked in order first by access from lowest to highest and then by poverty rate from largest to smallest.

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1) Nettleton School District | 4) Hancock County School District | 7) Pontotoc City School District |
| 2) Brookhaven School District | 5) Jones County School District | 8) Stone County School District |
| 3) North Tippah School District | 6) Forrest County School District | 9) George County School District |

Below-Average Poverty, Below-Average Access

Fourteen districts had below-average poverty and below-average access. Only six (26%) of these districts had district pre-K programs (either district operated or blended Head Start). The average percentage of Kindergarteners who attended Head Start (not including blended Head Start) was 9% among these districts. The Lowndes County School District, Lamar County School District, and the Madison County School District partner with Head Start programs to offer blended Head Start seats. DeSoto County and Lamar County had state-funded pre-K programs in their school districts in 2014-2015; however, these programs only provided space for 2% of the Kindergarteners entering DeSoto and 14% of the Kindergarteners entering Lamar, leaving an overwhelming percentage of children with no access to public pre-K options. Still, the addition of state-funded seats allowed DeSoto County to increase pre-K seats by 8% in the district and Lamar County to increase pre-K seats by 175% from 2011 to 2015.

These school districts ranked in order first by access from lowest to highest and then by poverty rate from largest to smallest are

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) Pearl River County School District | 6) Jackson County School District | 11) DeSoto County School District |
| 2) North Pike School District | 7) Long Beach School District | 12) Ocean Springs School District |
| 3) Madison County School District | 8) Clinton Public School District | 13) Lee County School District |
| 4) Rankin County School District | 9) Lauderdale County School District | 14) Lowndes County School District |
| 5) Lafayette County School District | 10) Lamar County School District | |

Average or Above-Average Poverty, Average Access

This category includes school districts that had average poverty and average access in addition to districts having above-average poverty and average access. Of the seventy-eight districts in this category, thirty-six (46%) had district pre-K programs (either district operated or blended Head Start). The average percentage of Kindergarteners who attended Head Start (not including blended Head Start) was 38% among these districts. Nine school districts—Picayune, Coahoma, East Tallahatchie, West Tallahatchie, Aberdeen, Amory, Alcorn, Prentiss, and Sunflower—operate state-funded pre-K programs. The addition of state-funded pre-K programs allowed for an average increase of 15% in pre-K seats in these districts. Alcorn School District had an increase of approximately 94% in pre-K seats and Prentiss had an increase of 62%.

These school districts ranked in order first by access from lowest to highest and then by poverty rate from largest to smallest are

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1) Pearl Public School District | 8) Pontotoc County Schools | 15) Columbia School District |
| 2) Poplarville Separate School District | 9) Neshoba County School District | 16) Pass Christian Public School District |
| 3) Houston School District | 10) New Albany Public Schools | 17) Simpson County School District |
| 4) Baldwin School District | 11) Smith County School District | 18) Kosciusko School District |
| 5) Gulfport School District | 12) Scott County School District | 19) Hinds County School District |
| 6) Harrison County School District | 13) Alcorn School District | 20) Copiah County School District |
| 7) Senatobia Municipal School District | 14) Union Public School District | 21) Biloxi Public School District |

Average or Above-Average Poverty, Average Access, continued

22)	Okolona Separate School District	42)	Yazoo County School District	62)	Calhoun County School District
23)	Grenada School District	43)	Aberdeen School District	63)	Moss Point School District
24)	Tate County School District	44)	Picayune School District	64)	Franklin County School District
25)	Lumberton Public School District	45)	Pascagoula Separate School District	65)	Marshall County School District
26)	Wayne County School District	46)	Walthall County School District	66)	Amite County School District
27)	Leake County School District	47)	Vicksburg Warren School District	67)	West Tallahatchie School District
28)	Itawamba County School District	48)	Louisville Municipal School District	68)	Yazoo City Municipal School District
29)	South Panola School District	49)	Laurel School District	69)	Greenwood Public School District
30)	Water Valley School District	50)	Bay St. Louis School District	70)	North Panola School District
31)	Columbus Municipal School District	51)	South Tippah School District	71)	Hazlehurst City School District
32)	Perry County Schools	52)	West Jasper School District	72)	West Point Consolidated School District
33)	South Pike School District	53)	Western Line School District	73)	Hattiesburg Public School District
34)	Starkville Consolidated School District	54)	Noxubee County School District	74)	Sunflower County Consolidated School District
35)	Richton School District	55)	East Tallahatchie School District	75)	Lawrence County School District
36)	Greene County School District	56)	Prentiss County School District	76)	Quitman School District
37)	Newton Municipal School District	57)	Winona Separate School District	77)	Natchez-Adams School District
38)	Coahoma County School District	58)	Canton Public School District	78)	Jefferson Davis School District
39)	Amory School District	59)	Forest Municipal School District		
40)	Covington County School District	60)	Leflore County School District		
41)	Tishomingo County Schools	61)	Jackson Public School District		

Below-Average Poverty, Average Access

The eleven school districts in this category had below-average poverty levels but average pre-K access. Seven (64%) of these districts had district pre-K programs (either district operated or blended Head Start). On average, each district had 21% of Kindergarteners who transitioned from Head Start. Two school districts—Petal and Corinth—had state-funded pre-K programs. The presence of a state-funded program in Corinth allowed for a 20% increase in pre-K seats from 2011–2015.^{ix}

These school districts ranked in order first by access from lowest to highest and then by poverty rate from largest to smallest are

1)	Newton County School District	5)	Booneville School District	9)	Oxford School District
2)	Webster County School District	6)	Lincoln County School District	10)	Tupelo Public School District
3)	Monroe School District	7)	Corinth School District	11)	Enterprise School District
4)	Petal School District	8)	Union County School District		

Any Poverty Level, Above-Average Access

Children and families living in the 30 school districts in this category had strong access to publicly funded pre-K. (There were no school districts that had a below-average poverty level and above-average access, meaning those districts with the strongest access had average or above-average poverty levels.) Only six (20%) of the districts in this category—Humphreys, Durant, Hollandale, Benton, West Bolivar, and Marion—did not have a district pre-K program, whether district operated or blended Head Start. Nearly all of these districts had strong Head Start participation. On average, Head Start served 57% of the Kindergarteners entering each of these districts. Two school districts—McComb and Clarksdale—had state-funded pre-K programs which allowed them to increase pre-K access in their district by 46% and 232% respectively.

These school districts ranked in order first by access from lowest to highest and then by poverty rate from largest to smallest are

1) Tunica County School District	12) West Bolivar Consolidated School District	22) Jefferson County School District
2) Meridian Public School District	13) Leland School District	23) North Bolivar Consolidated School District
3) Holly Springs School District	14) Quitman County School District	24) Wilkinson County School District
4) Carroll County School District	15) Humphreys County School District	25) Montgomery County School District
5) Claiborne County School District	16) South Delta School District	26) Kemper County School District
6) Coffeeville School District	17) McComb School District	27) Benton County School District
7) Cleveland School District	18) Clarksdale Municipal School District	28) Marion County School District
8) Greenville Public School District	19) Durant Public School District	29) Attala County School District
9) Holmes County School District	20) East Jasper School District	30) Philadelphia Public School District
10) Chickasaw County School District	21) Hollandale School District	
11) Choctaw County School District		

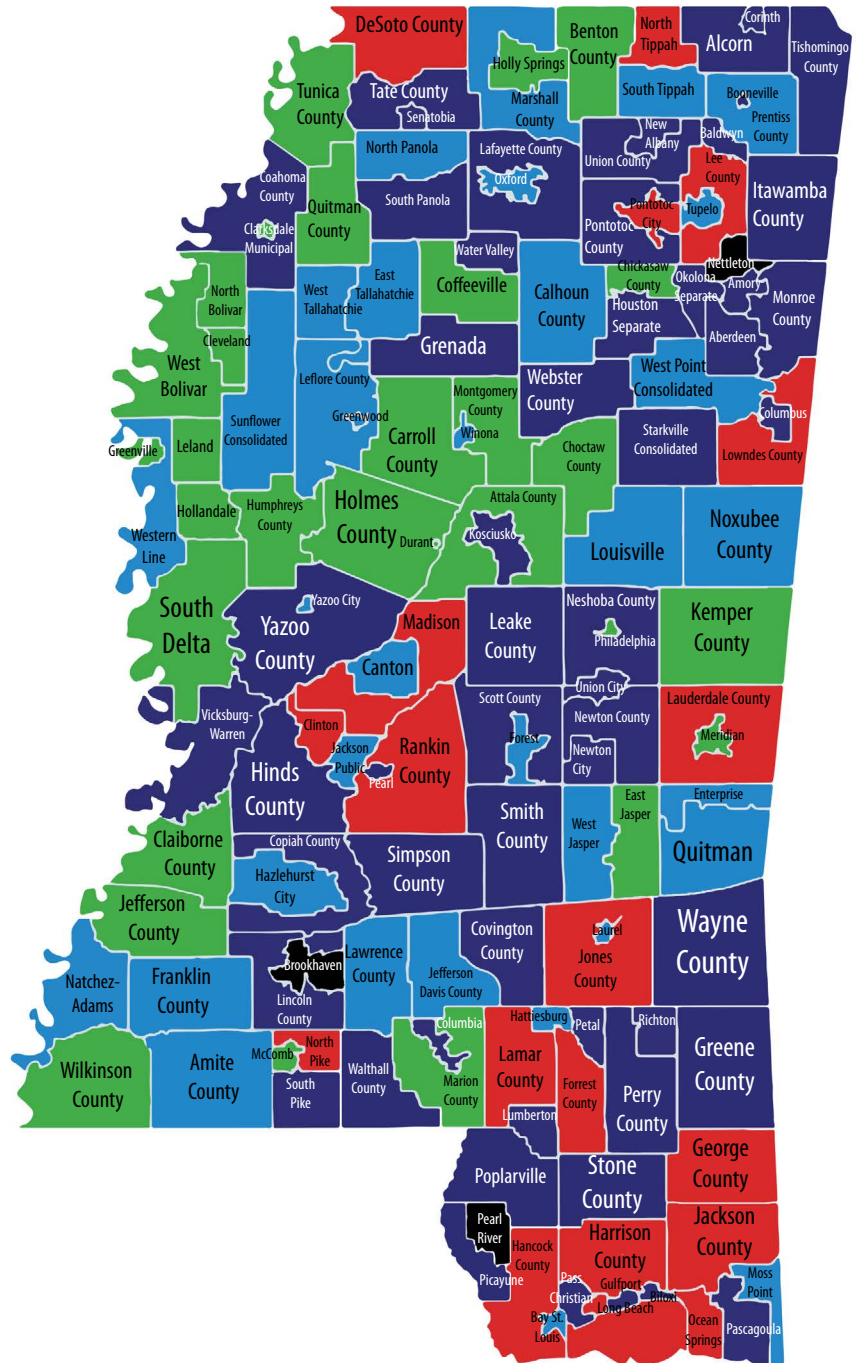
ix We were unable to calculate the impact made in the Petal School District by the state-funded pre-K program due to a lack of Head Start data in 2011.

The Relationship between Public Pre-K Access and Geography

At least 44% of Mississippi's public school Kindergarteners had access to publicly funded pre-K in 2014-2015.^x On average, Mississippi school districts and Head Starts were able to offer 53.6% of the four-year-old entrants to their public school system a seat in a publicly funded, full-year, classroom-based, regular education pre-K classroom. However, we found that a child's access to pre-K is greatly dependent on where in the state the child resides. In Figure 2, we illustrate where public pre-K access is above average, average, and below average. We used one standard deviation above and below the mean to classify a region as "above average," "average," and "below average." Therefore, "above average" is one standard deviation above the mean, "average" is within one standard deviation above and below the mean, and "below average" is one standard deviation below the mean.

This map shows % access in Mississippi during the 2014-2015 school year.

- **Above Average**
(84.1%-100%)
- **Average, Above the Mean**
(55.1%-84%)
- **Average, Below the Mean**
(26%-55%)
- **Below Average**
(1%-25.9%)
- **No Access**



^x This estimate is based on the self-reported pre-K capacity numbers from Head Starts and school districts who operated full-year, classroom-based programs for four-year-old children. It is not inclusive of children served in classrooms exclusively for students with developmental delays.

Average-to-Above-Average Regions

Access to publicly funded pre-K was greater in the northern half of the state, with 67% (45 of 67) of the districts having access rates at or above the state average located north of Interstate 20. The greatest density of average-to-above-average access districts is the Mississippi Delta region, with 86% of the school districts located there having access rates at or above the state average. Another high-density, high-access area existed in the north central region of the state encompassing Carroll, Montgomery, Attala, and Choctaw counties. Of the seven school districts in this area, only one (Kosciusko) had an access rate below the state average. There is also a cluster of counties with average-to-above-average access districts in the southwest region of the state which includes Wilkinson, Amite, Franklin, Adams, Jefferson, and Warren counties. A final cluster of average-to-above-average access districts stretches north to south from Aberdeen to Kemper County.

While several above-average districts adjoin each other, there are a few above-average districts that are surrounded by average-to-below-average access districts. Among these are Moss Point, Bay St. Louis, Picayune, Marion County, Jackson Public, Canton, Forest Municipal, Tupelo, South Tippah, Baldwin, Booneville, and Prentiss County.

Average-to-Below-Average Access Regions

58% (15 of 26) of the districts with below-average access (1 standard deviation below the mean) are located in the southern half of the state, below Interstate 20. The greatest density of low-access districts occurred in the Gulf Coast region. Of the 17 school districts in this region, 8 have access rates which are at least one standard deviation below the state average, and all but three districts had access rates below the state average. In addition, there was a dearth of publicly funded pre-K access in the central region of the state in the districts surrounding the Jackson Public School District. Three school districts—Pearl River, Nettleton, and Brookhaven—had access rates of 0%.

Access to Licensed Childcare for Four-Year-Olds

The licensed childcare sector in Mississippi had the capacity to serve over 14,000 (36%) four-year-old children in July 2015.^{xi} Childcare licensure data from the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) shows that approximately 28% (11,349 of 40,260) of four-year-olds were enrolled in one of 1,039 licensed childcare facilities in July 2015. Twenty-six licensed childcare centers were a part of state-funded early learning collaboratives, and they provided access to 289 public seats in a childcare setting.

Similar to access to public pre-K programs, access to licensed childcare is dependent on where in the state a child resides. Additionally, access to licensed childcare is greatly dependent on a family's ability to pay for licensed childcare services. The average tuition cost to attend a licensed childcare center in Mississippi was \$86.13 per week. Tuition ranged from \$16/week to \$260/week.

While any picture of pre-K without licensed childcare centers is incomplete, we must consider a few caveats. First, the educational services that licensed childcare centers provide vary. Some licensed childcare centers provide a comprehensive learning experience for four-year-old children; other centers may not. Whereas most school district pre-K programs, Head Start centers, and participants in the state-funded early learning collaboratives are required to use thorough and comprehensive state early learning standards^{xii} to guide the learning experiences of four-year-old children, childcare licensure regulations do not mandate the use of early learning standards though they do require centers to create an environment for children with educational components. Licensure regulations represent the minimum requirements that childcare centers must meet to keep their licenses. Focusing primarily on health and safety, the regulations are less prescriptive than the early learning standards. They require childcare centers to provide "developmentally [sic] age-appropriate" toys, equipment, and materials to preschoolers, to give opportunities to children to do "quiet and active" activities (e.g., "block play, art activities, puzzles, books, and learning games"), and to read and discuss books with children each day. Additionally, they require centers to provide preschoolers with at least 60 minutes of "structured moderate to vigorous physical activity per day." These requirements serve as the only programmatic conditions that licensed childcare centers must fulfill, so the educational programming that each center provides four-year-olds can differ widely. Many licensed childcare centers exceed these requirements to prepare students for Kindergarten, while others simply meet the minimum requirements. This wide variation in services provided must be considered when determining whether access to a licensed childcare provider constitutes pre-K access.

Secondly, at any given time in the year, a four-year-old child may be doubly enrolled in a licensed childcare program in addition to a district or Head Start program.^{xiii} This is especially relevant to the data in this report because the licensed childcare data were captured in July 2015, while the Head Start and school district data represent enrollment figures during the 2014-2015 school year. The access data in this report were based on the capacity of childcare centers and therefore not impacted by double enrollments, but readers should analyze enrollment data carefully. When enrollment figures are reported for licensed childcare centers, they may represent duplicate, rather than additional, enrollments.

Total Early Childhood Program Access for Four-Year-Olds by School District

With the addition of licensed childcare data in this report, we approach a more comprehensive understanding of what early childhood education in the state looks like on statewide, regional, and local levels. Childcare access data together with public pre-K access figures (school district and Head Start) reveal a relationship between public access rates in school districts and the childcare enrollment rates in the county where the district is located. On average, the greater a school district's public pre-K access, the smaller its four-year-old licensed childcare enrollment.^{xiv} There are a few reasons for this. First, in areas with high public pre-K capacity, there may be little demand for licensed childcare options. Secondly, districts

^{xi} This data was provided by the Market Rate Survey conducted by the Early Years Network, a program of the Mississippi State Extension Service. The capacity rate calculated here includes data from every licensed childcare center in the state (excluding Head Start centers) that reported serving or having the capacity to serve four-year-old students.

^{xii} Comprehensive early learning standards focus on the development of children in five domains: physical well-being and development, social and emotional development, language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, and approaches to learning.

^{xiii} The childcare enrollment data does not differentiate between four-year-old children who are enrolled in after-care programs and those who are enrolled as full-day participants. Because of this, enrollment figures may reflect children who are doubly enrolled in childcare as well as Head Start or district pre-K programs.

^{xiv} We used licensed childcare enrollment here instead of licensed childcare capacity because it captures parents who have the financial resources to afford tuition, and it represents a measure of childcare access.

Total Early Childhood Program Access for Four-Year-Olds by School District, continued

with high public pre-K capacity are likely to have high poverty rates as well, and tuition-based licensed childcare options may be less accessible to consumers in these areas. Lastly, school districts with a large licensed childcare sector may face more political barriers to expanding public pre-K programs. Please note that while we report the figures for this analysis, readers should not add together district public pre-K access and county childcare access rates to find a “total” pre-K access rate for the district because county childcare access figures includes access for children in all districts in that county. Furthermore, the district public pre-K access rate is based on access for public school children whereas the county childcare access rate likely includes both public and private school children. As a result, adding together the figures could give a skewed impression of access in the district in cases in which most of the children accessing childcare in a county are from one particular district or who may not go to public school for Kindergarten.

Below, we have grouped school districts into four categories based on their public pre-K access rates and county licensed childcare enrollment rates for four-year-olds.

Low Public Access, Low Licensed Childcare Enrollment

The following districts had a public pre-K access rate below the state average of 53.6% and were located in a county with a licensed childcare enrollment rate lower than the state average of 21%. They are ranked first by their public pre-K access rate and then by their countywide licensed childcare four-year-old enrollment rate.

These districts are priority districts due to fact that a large percentage of four-year-olds are unable to access any four-year-old services whether in a public setting or licensed childcare facility. Many of these districts are largely rural with very small populations.

School District	Public Pre-K Access Rate in District Boundaries	County Licensed Childcare Four-Year-Old Enrollment Rate
1. North Tippah	1%	14%
2. Jones County	11%	17%
3. Pontotoc City	19%	20%
4. Webster County	29%	13%
5. Pontotoc County	30%	20%
6. New Albany	33%	11%
7. Scott County	33%	16%
8. Neshoba County	33%	17%
9. Kosciusko	37%	16%
10. Copiah County	37%	17%
11. South Panola	43%	11%
12. Perry County	46%	17%
13. Richton	47%	17%
14. Greene County	48%	2%
15. Coahoma County	49%	11%
16. Covington County	49%	18%
17. Yazoo County	51%	6%
18. Union County	52%	11%
19. Walthall County	53%	20%

Low Public Access, High Licensed Childcare Enrollment

The following districts had a public pre-K access rate below the state average of 53.6%, but they were located in counties with a licensed childcare enrollment rate equal to or greater than the state average of 21%. They are ranked first by their public pre-K access rate and then by their countywide licensed childcare four-year-old enrollment rate.

School District	District Public Pre-K Access Rate	County Licensed Childcare Enrollment Rate
1. Pearl River County	0%	33%
2. Nettleton	0%	32%
3. Brookhaven	0%	31%
4. North Pike	3%	26%
5. Hancock County	4%	23%
6. Rankin County	5%	44%
7. Madison County	5%	40%
8. Lafayette County	9%	40%
9. Jackson County	11%	34%
10. Long Beach	11%	27%
11. Clinton	13%	39%
12. Lamar County	14%	38%
13. Lauderdale County	14%	26%
14. DeSoto County	16%	30%
15. Forrest County	18%	28%
16. Ocean Springs	19%	34%
17. Stone County	20%	36%
18. Lee County	22%	50%
19. George County	24%	39%
20. Pearl	25%	44%
21. Lowndes County	25%	32%
22. Poplarville	26%	33%
23. Newton County	26%	31%
24. Houston Separate	27%	32%
25. Gulfport	28%	27%
26. Harrison County	28%	27%
27. Baldwin	28%	24%
28. Senatobia	29%	23%
29. Smith County	33%	29%
30. Alcorn County	34%	24%
31. Union Public	35%	31%
32. Pass Christian	35%	27%
33. Columbia	35%	26%
34. Simpson County	35%	22%

Low Public Access, High Licensed Childcare Enrollment, continued

School District	District Public Pre-K Access Rate	County Licensed Childcare Enrollment Rate
35. Hinds County	37%	39%
36. Grenada	38%	39%
37. Okolona	37%	32%
38. Biloxi	37%	27%
39. Tate County	39%	23%
40. Lumberton	40%	38%
41. Monroe County	42%	32%
42. Wayne County	42%	24%
43. Petal	43%	28%
44. Itawamba County	43%	28%
45. Leake County	43%	16%
46. Booneville	44%	24%
47. Water Valley	45%	35%
48. Lincoln County	45%	31%
49. Columbus Municipal	46%	32%
50. Starkville Consolidated	47%	30%
51. South Pike	47%	26%
52. Corinth	48%	24%
53. Amory	49%	32%
54. Newton Municipal	49%	31%
55. Tishomingo County	49%	23%
56. Picayune	51%	33%
57. Aberdeen	51%	32%
58. Pascagoula	52%	34%
59. Vicksburg-Warren	53%	34%
60. Oxford	54%	40%

High Public Access, Low Licensed Childcare Enrollment

The following districts had a public pre-K access rate equal to or above the state average of 53.6%, but they were located in a county with a licensed childcare enrollment rate lower than the state average of 21%. They are ranked first by their public pre-K access rate and then by their countywide licensed childcare four-year-old enrollment rate.

School District	District Public Pre-K Access Rate	County Licensed Childcare Enrollment Rate
1. Benton County	100%	0%
2. Kemper County	100%	3%
3. North Bolivar Consolidated	100%	8%
4. Montgomery County	100%	9%
5. Wilkinson County	100%	9%
6. East Jasper	100%	12%
7. Jefferson County	100%	13%
8. Philadelphia	100%	14%
9. Attala County	100%	16%
10. Durant	97%	15%
11. Clarksdale Municipal	96%	11%
12. South Delta	96%	7%
13. Quitman County	94%	6%
14. West Bolivar Consolidated	93%	8%
15. Choctaw County	91%	3%
16. Cleveland	90%	8%
17. Holmes County	90%	15%
18. Carroll County	88%	0%
19. Holly Springs	86%	8%
20. Tunica County	83%	5%
21. Jefferson Davis County	81%	5%
22. Quitman	79%	17%
23. Sunflower Consolidated	76%	8%
24. Lawrence County	76%	12%
25. Hazlehurst City	75%	17%
26. West Point Consolidated	75%	17%
27. North Panola	75%	11%
28. West Tallahatchie	73%	5%
29. Yazoo City	73%	6%
30. Amite County	72%	0%
31. Marshall County	69%	8%
32. Franklin County	68%	0%
33. Calhoun County	67%	18%
34. Enterprise	66%	17%
35. Forest Municipal	64%	16%

High Public Access, Low Licensed Childcare Enrollment, continued

School District	District Public Pre-K Access Rate	County Licensed Childcare Enrollment Rate
36. Winona Separate	63%	9%
37. East Tallahatchie	62%	5%
38. West Jasper	60%	12%
39. South Tippah	60%	14%
40. Laurel	59%	17%
41. Louisville	58%	16%

High Public Access, High Licensed Childcare Enrollment

The following districts had a public pre-K access rate equal to or greater than the state average of 53.6%, and they were located in counties with a licensed childcare enrollment rate equal to or greater than the state average of 21%. They are ranked first by their countywide licensed childcare four-year-old enrollment rate and then by their public pre-K access rate.

School District	District Public Pre-K Access Rate	County Licensed Childcare Enrollment Rate
1. Hollandale	100%	27%
2. Marion County	100%	26%
3. Humphreys County	96%	29%
4. McComb	96%	26%
5. Leland	93%	27%
6. Chickasaw County	91%	32%
7. Coffeeville	90%	35%
8. Greenville	90%	27%
9. Claiborne County	89%	23%
10. Meridian	83%	26%
11. Natchez-Adams	80%	21%
12. Hattiesburg	76%	28%
13. Greenwood	74%	32%
14. Moss Point	67%	34%
15. Jackson Public	66%	39%
16. Tupelo	65%	50%
17. Leflore County	65%	32%
18. Canton	63%	40%
19. Noxubee County	62%	29%
20. Prentiss County	62%	24%
21. Western Line	61%	27%
22. Bay St. Louis	60%	23%

Total Early Childhood Program Access for Four-Year-Olds by County

On each county page of this report, we calculate an estimate of the countywide early childhood program access for four-year-old children. At the countywide level, we can determine the approximate percentage of children without access to an early childhood seat (public or licensed childcare). However, there are some important caveats. For these charts, we have calculated early childhood access using self-reported licensed childcare capacity figures, not actual enrollment. These figures, therefore, reflect the capacity of pre-K providers to serve children in available seats, without considering whether the seats are truly accessible to children. Children may be unable to access seats in a community due to costs and/or lack of transportation. This is especially true for licensed childcare access, but it is relevant to public pre-K access as well. Secondly, unlike school districts, licensed childcare centers have no geographical limitations on the students they serve. They may draw four-year-old children from across county lines. Additionally, at least three school districts—Hattiesburg, Union Municipal, and South Delta—encompass children who live across county lines. Other school districts may provide services for children from other counties living in close proximity to the program. In our access rate calculations, we have included the number of seats that are physically located in each county; however, these seats can be occupied by children from another county. Readers should also note that these figures do not include pre-K students who are served in private or parochial school programs that are not licensed childcare centers. To estimate the number of four-year-old children in a county, we rely on population estimates from the Census. As a result of these caveats, readers should not interpret the access rates as exact figures; they are estimates to the extent that the underlying data are estimates. Finally, some counties have capacity to serve more four-year-olds than are estimated to live in the county. For these counties, we have noted their access rate is greater than 100%.

Below, we rank the counties by their total early childhood program access rate from smallest to largest.

County	Countywide Public Access Rate	Licensed Childcare Capacity Rate	Total Early Childhood Program Access Rate
1. Amite	33%	0%	33%
2. Webster	31%	13%	43%
3. Carroll	44%	0%	44%
4. Leake	30%	19%	49%
5. Jones	28%	23%	51%
6. Greene	46%	6%	53%
7. Simpson	29%	24%	53%
8. Copiah	36%	17%	54%
9. Walthall	34%	20%	54%
10. DeSoto	18%	37%	55%
11. Hancock	22%	35%	56%
12. Stone	19%	40%	59%
13. Harrison	27%	33%	59%
14. Rankin	8%	52%	60%
15. Tate	34%	26%	60%
16. Pontotoc	30%	32%	61%
17. Lincoln	24%	38%	62%
18. Union	47%	16%	63%
19. Panola	45%	18%	65%
20. Yazoo	55%	11%	66%
21. Marshall	57%	10%	66%

Total Early Childhood Program Access for Four-Year-Olds by County, continued

County	Countywide Public Access Rate	Licensed Childcare Capacity Rate	Total Early Childhood Program Access Rate
22. George	25%	41%	67%
23. Neshoba	39%	28%	67%
24. Madison	19%	49%	67%
25. Pearl River	26%	42%	68%
26. Wayne	40%	28%	68%
27. Scott	50%	19%	68%
28. Jefferson Davis	64%	5%	69%
29. Covington	51%	18%	70%
30. Lamar	16%	54%	71%
31. Perry	49%	21%	71%
32. Tippah	47%	25%	71%
33. Noxubee	43%	29%	72%
34. Newton	35%	38%	72%
35. Jackson	32%	41%	73%
36. Sunflower	61%	29%	73%
37. Tunica	64%	10%	74%
38. Winston	48%	26%	74%
39. Tallahatchie	62%	12%	75%
40. Marion	51%	29%	80%
41. Franklin	82%	0%	82%
42. Lowndes	29%	53%	83%
43. Smith	48%	35%	83%
44. Lawrence	71%	13%	84%
45. Adams	57%	27%	84%
46. Alcorn	46%	45%	85%
47. Kemper	67%	20%	87%
48. Oktibbeha	40%	47%	87%
49. Tishomingo	62%	26%	88%
50. Itawamba	54%	35%	88%
51. Pike	48%	48%	88%
52. Attala	69%	20%	88%
53. Sharkey/Issaquena	83%	7%	90%
54. Prentiss	61%	29%	90%
55. Forrest	44%	45%	90%
56. Choctaw	88%	3%	91%

Total Early Childhood Program Access for Four-Year-Olds by County, continued

County	Countywide Public Access Rate	Licensed Childcare Capacity Rate	Total Early Childhood Program Access Rate
57. Benton	92%	0%	92%
58. Hinds	46%	46%	93%
59. Coahoma	78%	21%	94%
60. Warren	52%	43%	95%
61. Lauderdale	44%	51%	95%
62. Quitman	74%	21%	96%
63. Yalobusha	48%	50%	99%
64. Clay	76%	24%	100%
65. Holmes	74%	26%	100%
66. Monroe	44%	86%	>100%
67. Leflore	60%	42%	>100%
68. Chickasaw	50%	53%	>100%
69. Jasper	87%	16%	>100%
70. Montgomery	66%	41%	>100%
71. Wilkinson	91%	16%	>100%
72. Bolivar	93%	14%	>100%
73. Calhoun	80%	29%	>100%
74. Lee	43%	68%	>100%
75. Grenada	62%	53%	>100%
76. Lafayette	68%	48%	>100%
77. Clarke	85%	35%	>100%
78. Washington	84%	40%	>100%
79. Claiborne	95%	40%	>100%
80. Humphreys	88%	48%	>100%
81. Jefferson	>100%	14%	>100%

FINDINGS: PRE-K SPENDING

The costs for pre-K vary across types of providers in Mississippi. School districts with full-year pre-K programs spent between \$1,400 and \$11,000 per child on pre-K programs in 2014-2015 with an average of approximately \$4,400, while parents paid an annual average of \$4,400 in tuition costs to licensed childcare centers for four-year-old services. Head Start centers spent \$7,400 per pupil. Mississippi calls for an investment of \$4,300 per pre-K child in the state-funded pre-K program. It is important to note that most school district and state collaborative funding figures included in this report reflect only instructional costs (teacher salaries, curricula, classroom materials, etc.), while Head Start and licensed childcare funding figures additionally reflect costs for operations (facilities, maintenance, transportation), comprehensive health services, and administration.

Among early education experts, there is no general consensus for an adequate amount of spending to achieve high-quality programs. In 2014-2015, all states funding pre-K programs spent an average of \$4,489 per four-year-old child enrolled.⁶ This does not include funding from other sources, which support many of the states' programs. While funding does not necessarily determine the quality of programs, adequate resources must be provided to ensure effective pre-K programs. A national cost estimation model developed by the Institute for Women's Policy Research⁷ suggests that 6-hour, high-quality pre-K programs have a total price tag of approximately \$7,500 per pupil.^{xv} The national estimate for instructional and other program costs amounts to \$5,600 per child, including costs for teacher salaries, supplies, student support services, professional development, child transportation, and nutrition.⁸

In this section, we have included information about the resources available to pre-K providers in Mississippi.

School District Spending

In the 2014-2015 school year, Mississippi school districts spent over \$20.6 million in state, federal, and local funds on pre-K instruction.⁹ According to the *2014-2015 Superintendent's Annual Report*, Mississippi's total pre-K instructional costs^{xvi} were less than 1% of the total amount of expenditures for instruction. This is due to the nature of pre-K in Mississippi: only half of districts implemented a full-year program, and district investments and the resulting programs' capacity tend to be small. On average, districts with full-year pre-K programs have 300 Kindergarten students, while the average size of a district pre-K program is 67 students. School districts with full-year pre-K programs spent an average of \$6,700 per pupil in grades K-12, but they spent only an average of \$4,400 per pupil on pre-K students.

Data from our *State of Pre-K* survey reveals that school districts made varying investments in pre-K services using a variety of sources. Most school districts with pre-K expenditures invested in full-year pre-K programs, while some invested in summer programs, Head Start partnerships, or Kindergarten transition services. Below, we have listed spending information for every school district that reported pre-K expenditures in 2014-2015. We have ranked districts from high to low by the percentage of their instructional expenditures they spent on pre-K.

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- xv This model accounts for all state-funded pre-K programs in the United States in 2007. It defines a high-quality program as a program having a lead teacher with a Bachelor's degree, regulating guidelines and proper monitoring, safe facilities, high-quality educational and developmental materials for children, parent support staff, and in-service staff training. This figure is intended to represent the cost nationally, not in a given state, such as Mississippi. Costs may be higher or lower for an individual state.
- xvi Pre-K instructional costs include expenditures related to the classroom (i.e., teacher salaries, instructional materials, assistant teacher salaries). Instructional costs are not inclusive of administrative and operational expenses (i.e., transportation, food, facilities).

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending						
Rank	District	Total Pre-K Expenditures	Pre-K Expenditures as % of Total Instructional Expenditures	Pre-K Costs per Child	Funding Sources	Pre-K Services Offered
1.	Chickasaw County School District	\$ 150,000.00	5.4	\$ 3,571.43	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
2.	Coahoma County School District	\$ 177,264.00	4.6	\$ 3,693.00	Title I, Head Start, State Funds, & IDEA Part B	Operates school-year pre-K program
3.	Greenville Public School District	\$ 1,336,903.98	4.2	\$ 7,427.24	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
4.	Attala County School District	\$ 302,680.00	4.1	\$ 4,146.30	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
5.	Carroll County School District	\$ 195,770.00	3.8	\$ 5,019.74	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
6.	West Tallahatchie School District	\$ 168,950.00	3.6	\$ 9,386.11	State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
7.	Philadelphia Public School District	\$ 232,391.00	3.4	\$ 3,873.18	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
8.	Tunica County School District	\$ 518,097.89	3.2	\$ 4,709.98	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
9.	Choctaw County School District	\$ 309,795.00	3.2	\$ 4,425.64	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
10.	McComb School District	\$ 505,000.00	3.1	\$ 2,988.17	Parent Tuition, State Funds, & IDEA Part B	Operates school-year pre-K program
11.	Western Line School District	\$ 323,570.00	2.9	\$ 4,829.40	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
13.	Corinth School District	\$ 379,132.00	2.6	\$ 3,791.32	Title I & State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
13.	Montgomery County School District	\$ 70,217.00	2.6	\$ 8,777.13	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
14.	Quitman School District	\$ 298,931.00	2.5	\$ 2,693.07	Title I and State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
15.	East Tallahatchie School District	\$ 174,372.00	2.5	\$ 11,624.80	State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
16.	Hazlehurst City School District	\$ 163,472.00	2.5	\$ 4,086.80	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
17.	Tupelo Public School District	\$ 1,110,474.55	2.4	\$ 4,828.15	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
18.	Meridian Public School District	\$ 919,667.00	2.4	\$ 4,180.30	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending, continued

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending						
Rank	District	Total Pre-K Expenditures	Pre-K Expenditures as % of Total Instructional Expenditures	Pre-K Costs per Child	Funding Sources	Pre-K Services Offered
19.	Sunflower County Consolidated School District	\$ 571,900.00	2.4	\$ 4,300.00	State Funds, Head Start, and Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
20.	Enterprise School District	\$ 122,500.00	2.3	\$ 3,141.03	Title I & IDEA Part A	Operates school-year pre-K program
21.	Calhoun County School District	\$ 300,000.00	2.2	\$ 2,727.27	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
22.	Hollandale School District	\$ 116,126.00	2.2	N/A	Title I	Operates summer pre-K program
23.	Greenwood Public School District	\$ 360,749.00	2.1	\$ 5,636.70	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
24.	Franklin County School District	\$ 185,396.58	2.1	\$ 4,521.87	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
25.	Amory School District	\$ 172,000.00	2.0	\$ 5,058.82	State Funds, Philanthropic Dollars, & Parent Tuition	Hosts on-site pre-K classrooms operated by non-profit organization
26.	Quitman County School District	\$ 150,068.00	2.0	\$ 4,840.90	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
27.	Oxford School District	\$ 499,835.00	1.9	\$ 4,462.81	Title I, Local District Funds, and Head Start	Operates school-year pre-K program
38.	Forest Municipal School District	\$ 151,150.00	1.8	\$ 3,778.75	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
29.	Oktibbeha County School District	\$ 100,500.00	1.8	\$ 2,512.50	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
30.	Jackson Public School District	\$ 2,765,240.00	1.7	\$ 4,671.01	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
31.	Claiborne County School District	\$ 162,749.47	1.6	\$ 4,068.74	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
32.	South Delta School District	\$ 92,000.00	1.6	\$ 5,111.11	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
33.	Hattiesburg Public School District	\$ 478,097.00	1.5	\$ 3,984.14	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
34.	Columbus Municipal School District	\$ 400,000.00	1.5	\$ 2,857.14	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
35.	Monroe School District	\$ 200,000.00	1.5	\$ 3,333.33	State Funds, Philanthropic Dollars, and Parent Tuition	Hosts on-site pre-K classrooms operated by non-profit organization
36.	Union Public School District	\$ 75,281.09	1.5	\$ 3,764.05	Title I, Local District Funds, & Title IV	Operates school-year pre-K program

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending, continued

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending						
Rank	District	Total Pre-K Expenditures	Pre-K Expenditures as % of Total Instructional Expenditures	Pre-K Costs per Child	Funding Sources	Pre-K Services Offered
37.	South Panola School District	\$ 350,894.00	1.4	\$ 3,855.98	Title I, Local District Funds, Head Start, & Other	Operates school-year pre-K program
38.	Laurel School District	\$ 301,358.00	1.4	\$ 3,766.98	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
39.	West Point School District	\$ 243,285.00	1.4	\$ 3,119.04	Title I & Parent Tuition	Operates school-year pre-K program
40.	Pascagoula Separate School District	\$ 754,520.00	1.3	\$ 5,894.69	Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
41.	Clarksdale Municipal School District	\$ 280,682.60	1.3	\$ 3,508.53	Title I, Local District Funds, & State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
42.	Jefferson County School District	\$ 98,893.00	1.3	\$ 4,944.65	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
43.	Kemper County School District	\$ 103,000.00	1.2	\$ 3,961.54	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
44.	Leland School District	\$ 71,786.00	1.2	\$ 4,785.73	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
45.	Union County School District	\$ 158,000.00	1.1	\$ 1,858.82	Local District Funds & Parent Tuition	Operates school-year pre-K program
46.	Aberdeen School District	\$ 93,501.00	1.1	\$ 3,463.00	Title I, State Funds, & Parent Tuition	Hosts on-site pre-K classrooms operated by non-profit organization
47.	Wilkinson County School District	\$ 80,141.29	1.1	\$ 1,457.11	Title I, Local District Funds, & IDEA Part B	Operates school-year pre-K program
48.	East Jasper School District	\$ 56,613.04	1.1	\$ 2,830.65	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
49.	Coffeetown School District	\$ 42,516.66	1.1	\$ 2,657.29	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
50.	Pontotoc County Schools	\$ 130,970.00	1.0	\$ 2,182.83	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
51.	Holly Springs School District	\$ 89,983.00	1.0	\$ 4,499.15	Title I, Local District Funds, & Head Start	Operates school-year pre-K program
52.	North Bolivar Consolidated School District	\$ 74,000.00	1.0	\$ 4,111.11	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
53.	Vicksburg Warren School District	\$ 470,339.00	0.9	\$ 3,919.49	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
54.	Lowndes County School District	\$ 275,000.00	0.9	\$ 3,437.50	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending, continued

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending						
Rank	District	Total Pre-K Expenditures	Pre-K Expenditures as % of Total Instructional Expenditures	Pre-K Costs per Child	Funding Sources	Pre-K Services Offered
55.	Grenada School District	\$ 198,861.00	0.9	\$ 6,414.87	IDEA funds	Operates pre-K program exclusively for students with special needs
56.	Natchez-Adams School District	\$ 174,570.70	0.9	\$ 8,728.54	IDEA, Parent Tuition, & Local District Dollars	Operates school-year pre-K program
57.	Neshoba County School District	\$ 149,397.03	0.9	\$ 3,734.93	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
58.	Leflore County School District	\$ 148,000.00	0.9	\$ 4,228.57	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
59.	Louisville Municipal School District	\$ 142,628.79	0.9	\$ 4,322.08	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
60.	Cleveland School District	\$ 472,619.00	0.8	\$ 5,251.32	Title I & Local District Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
61.	Alcorn School District	\$ 149,866.00	0.8	\$ 2,140.94	Title I, State Funds, & IDEA Part B	Operates school-year pre-K program
62.	Prentiss County School District	\$ 125,000.00	0.8	\$ 6,250.00	Title I, Local District Funds, and State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
63.	Noxubee County School District	\$ 90,000.00	0.8	\$ 4,500.00	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
64.	Hinds County School District	\$ 229,809.57	0.7	\$ 6,383.60	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
65.	Petal School District	\$ 157,000.00	0.7	\$ 1,744.44	State Funds & Philanthropic Dollars	Operates school-year pre-K program
66.	Wayne County School District	\$ 129,537.00	0.6	\$ 6,476.85	Title I, Local District Funds, & IDEA Part B	Operates school-year pre-K program
67.	Picayune School District	\$ 123,000.00	0.6	\$ 3,075.00	State Funds & Head Start	Operates school-year pre-K program
68.	Itawamba County School District	\$ 120,000.00	0.6	\$ 10,909.09	Local District Funds & IDEA Part B	Operates school-year pre-K program
69.	Columbia School District	\$ 62,137.00	0.6	\$ 6,213.70	Local District Funds, IDEA Part B, & Other	Operates school-year pre-K program
70.	Lamar County School District	\$ 293,573.00	0.5	\$ 3,123.12	Title I, Head Start, and State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
71.	Holmes County School District	\$ 66,611.00	0.4	\$ 4,757.93	Title I, SIG Funds, & Philanthropic Dollars	Operates school-year pre-K program
72.	Humphreys County School District	\$ 45,000.00	0.4	N/A	Not reported	Operates summer pre-K program

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending, continued

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending						
Rank	District	Total Pre-K Expenditures	Pre-K Expenditures as % of Total Instructional Expenditures	Pre-K Costs per Child	Funding Sources	Pre-K Services Offered
73.	North Panola School District	\$ 34,198.98	0.4	\$ 4,274.87	Local District Funds & IDEA Part B	Operates pre-K program exclusively for students with special needs
74.	Canton Public School District	\$ 60,000.00	0.3	\$ 3,333.33	Local District Funds & IDEA Part B	Operates school-year pre-K program
75.	Madison County School District	\$ 130,176.78	0.2	\$ 5,207.07	Title I, Local District Funds, & Head Start	Operates school-year pre-K program
76.	Rankin County School District	\$ 150,832.69	0.1	\$ 3,770.82	Title I	Operates school-year pre-K program
77.	DeSoto County School District	\$ 124,000.00	0.1	\$ 3,100.00	Local & State Funds	Operates school-year pre-K program
78.	Forrest County Schools	\$ 20,000.00	0.1	N/A	Title I	Provides Kindergarten transition services; operates summer pre-K program
79.	Poplarville Separate School District	\$ 13,888.00	0.1	\$ 1,984.00	Title I, Local District Funds, & IDEA Part B	Operates pre-K program exclusively for students with special needs
80.	Booneville School District	\$ 10,000.00	0.1	N/A	Title I	Provides resources to Head Start program; hosts on-site Head Start program
81.	Amite County School District	\$ 8,000.00	0.1	N/A	Not reported	Provides Kindergarten transition services and summer program
82.	Nettleton School District	\$ 8,000.00	0.1	N/A	Local District Funds	Provides resources for Head Start and Kindergarten transition services
83.	Perry County Schools	\$ 4,500.00	0.1	N/A	Parent Tuition	Operates school-year pre-K program
84.	Long Beach School District	\$ 5,000.00	0.0	N/A	Title I	Operates summer pre-K program
85.	Baldwyn School District	\$ 1,250.00	0.0	N/A	Title I	Provides Kindergarten transition services
86.	Clay County School District	\$ 179.00	0.0	N/A	Title I	Provides instructional materials to non-district pre-K programs
87.	Lafayette County School District	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Operates school-year pre-K program

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending, continued

Figure 3: 2014 – 2015 District Pre-K Spending						
Rank	District	Total Pre-K Expenditures	Pre-K Expenditures as % of Total Instructional Expenditures	Pre-K Costs per Child	Funding Sources	Pre-K Services Offered
88.	South Tippah School District	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Operates school-year pre-K program
STATE AVERAGE		\$248,411.60	1.5	\$4,460.33		

Licensed Childcare Spending

On average, Mississippi families spent \$86.13 each week on childcare services for four-year-old children in July 2015. With over 11,000 four-year-old children enrolled in licensed childcare programs, families spent an estimated \$49.3 million^{xvii} on services. At most, 13% (1,471 of 11,349) of four-year-old children enrolled in licensed childcare centers were recipients of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers (also referred to as certificates). CCDF certificates are funds given to states from the federal government to assist working families in obtaining childcare so that caretakers can go to work and/or school. To qualify, families must earn less than 85% of the state median income. Families are able to use their funds in licensed or unlicensed childcare centers where they are accepted. The value of each CCDF certificate is determined based on a sliding scale which accounts for a family's size, income, and eligibility for other social services such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Division of Family and Child Services (DFCS), and Healthy Homes Mississippi (HHM).^{xviii}

Head Start Spending

Mississippi received over \$195 million in Head Start funding in 2015. The Head Start program, which primarily serves children living in poverty, allocates to programs a per-pupil amount of approximately \$7,400.^{xix} With a four-year-old enrollment of nearly 11,000 children,^{xx} Head Start centers, in total, received over \$80 million to serve children in pre-K.

Some Head Start programs leveraged their funds in collaboration with school districts. Fifteen Head Start centers reported having blended pre-K programs with school districts. In such arrangements, school districts and Head Start centers share the costs for jointly operating a program. An additional thirteen Head Start centers participated in state-funded early learning collaboratives. In an early learning collaborative, participating Head Start centers receive state resources to jointly operate a pre-K program with school districts, licensed childcare centers, or both. The state provides a per-pupil allocation of \$2,150 for full-day programs, and Head Start centers must provide equal matching funds for each child.

xvii This estimate was calculated using the average tuition costs for childcare and the July 2015 four-year-old enrollment rates.

xviii Families who are referred for CCDF certificates by TANF pay a \$0 co-payment; families referred by DFCS and HHM pay a reduced co-payment.

xix This estimate was calculated by the dividing the amount of federal funds the state received for Head Start by the total cumulative Head Start enrollment reported in the Office of Head Start Program Information Report.

xx The Office of Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) provides a 4-year-old enrollment figure of 14,213; however, this figure is conflated by instances where multiple children may have been enrolled for one seat. These instances occur when a child leaves a program, and another child fills the vacant spot. Our estimate of 11,000 is a more accurate depiction of the number of Head Start seats available to 4-year-old children.

State-Funded Pre-K Spending

In 2013, Mississippi passed the *Early Learning Collaborative Act* and established the first state-funded pre-K program in the state. Under the law, state-funded pre-K programs, also called early learning collaboratives, are designed as collaborative delivery programs in which private or parochial schools, licensed child care centers, and/or Head Start centers may join with a local public school district and compete for state funds in order to provide pre-K services to a specific community. In 2014-2015, there were 11 early learning collaboratives. All collaboratives must adhere to state regulations requiring that they meet nationally recognized standards of quality.

For the 2014-2015 school year, the Legislature appropriated \$3 million to the state-funded pre-K program. Under the *Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013*, the state determined the cost for pre-K services would be \$4,300 per child in full-day programs and \$2,150 in half-day programs. The state provides half of these costs (\$2,150 per child enrolled in full-day pre-K and \$1,075 per child enrolled in half-day pre-K). The other half of costs must be provided by local matching funds, which may include local tax dollars from school districts, federal dollars (as allowed), parent tuition, philanthropic contributions, or in-kind donations of facilities, equipment, and services required as part of the program, such as food service or health screenings. With nearly 2,000 children enrolled in 2014-2015, over \$8 million dollars in state and local matching funds supported the early learning collaboratives.^{xxi}

FINDINGS: QUALITY

In this report, we provide insight into the quality of Mississippi's public pre-K providers and licensed childcare centers. We have surveyed school districts and used publicly available data about Head Start programs and licensed childcare centers to examine aspects of each program that might indicate quality. Our most comprehensive analyses are of school districts because of the rich data we were able to obtain from districts and the MDE about pre-K programs in schools.

School District Pre-K Program Quality

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has defined ten quality benchmarks for pre-K programs. The benchmarks represent minimum policy requirements for highly effective programs,¹⁰ and they are regarded as the gold standard for assessing program quality in early education. These benchmarks require

- comprehensive early learning standards,
- teachers with a Bachelor's degree,
- teachers with a specialization in early childhood education,
- assistant teachers with a Child Development Associate's degree or equivalent,
- 15 or more hours of in-service training,
- maximum class sizes of 20,
- staff-child ratios of 10:1 or fewer,
- vision, hearing, and health screenings and one additional student support service,
- at least one meal per day, and
- site visits to monitor program quality.

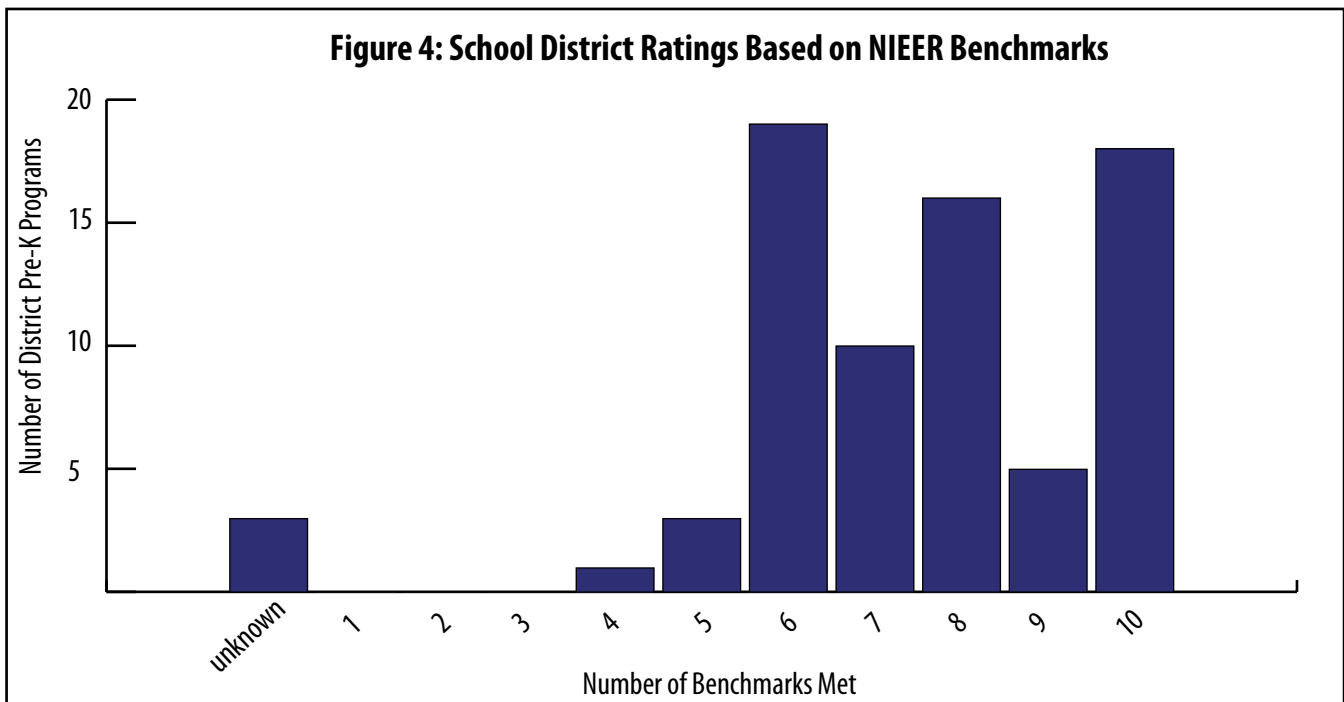
In this report, Mississippi First measures quality for each school district pre-K program by evaluating how many of the NIEER quality standards benchmarks each program met. Our evaluation of each program reflects the policies in place to govern the program and not necessarily what the program is actually implementing. For example, a program's policy for teacher qualifications may only require an elementary education degree (which does not meet the benchmark), but, in actuality, most classes are staffed with teachers with early childhood specialization. The opposite

xxi The state contributed \$2,850,000 (\$3 million minus a 5% administrative cost allocation to MDE). Local communities over-matched the state-funds to provide services to more children.

School District Pre-K Program Quality, continued

may be true as well: a program may have a policy that meets the benchmark but may be ignoring that policy in practice. Presenting the quality of a program in this way has its limitations; however, good program policies are foundational for effective programs.

Of the 144 school districts in 2014-2015, 75 operated full-year, classroom-based, regular education pre-K.^{xxii} 72 of those districts completed our survey providing information about the quality of their pre-K programs. A complete list of survey respondents can be found in Appendix A. In this report, we assigned a rating of 1-10 to each district program in our sample that is based the number of the NIEER benchmarks each program met. Below is a chart depicting the number of districts that received each rating.



Most rated school districts received a score of 6 or higher. Only 4 school districts in our sample scored 5 or below. Two school districts—Lafayette County and South Tippah—did not respond to our survey requests, and we were unable to collect data from the Oktibbeha County School District due to its consolidation into the Starkville Consolidated School District. We have indicated that the ratings of these districts are unknown in Figure 4. All school districts receiving Title I and/or state funds to operate pre-K programs automatically met the NIEER benchmark that requires programs to be monitored via site visits. This is due to the state policy mandating that such programs receive a site visit at least once every three years.

^{xxii} An additional 23 districts operated full-year, classroom-based pre-K classrooms exclusively for students with special needs.

Figure 5: Summary of School District Quality Data

Policy	Benchmark	Of the 72 Districts Surveyed, Number Meeting Benchmarks ^{xxiii}
Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive	72
Teacher Degree	BA	69
Teacher Specialized Training	Specializing in Pre-K	32
Assistant Teacher Degree	CDA or Equivalent	18
Teacher In-Service	At Least 15 Hours/Year	49
Maximum Class Size	20 or Lower	67
Staff-Child Ratio	1:10 or Better	65
Screening/Referral and Support Services	Vision, Hearing, Health, and At Least 1 Support Service	43
Meals	At Least 1 per Day	72
Monitoring	Site Visits At Least Every 5 Years	68

According to the data collected through our district surveys, most district pre-K programs met the NIEER benchmarks requiring comprehensive early learning standards, Bachelor’s degrees for teachers, student meals, class sizes of 20 or lower, and staff:child ratios of 1:10 or below.

However, there are other benchmarks that only a small percentage of districts met:

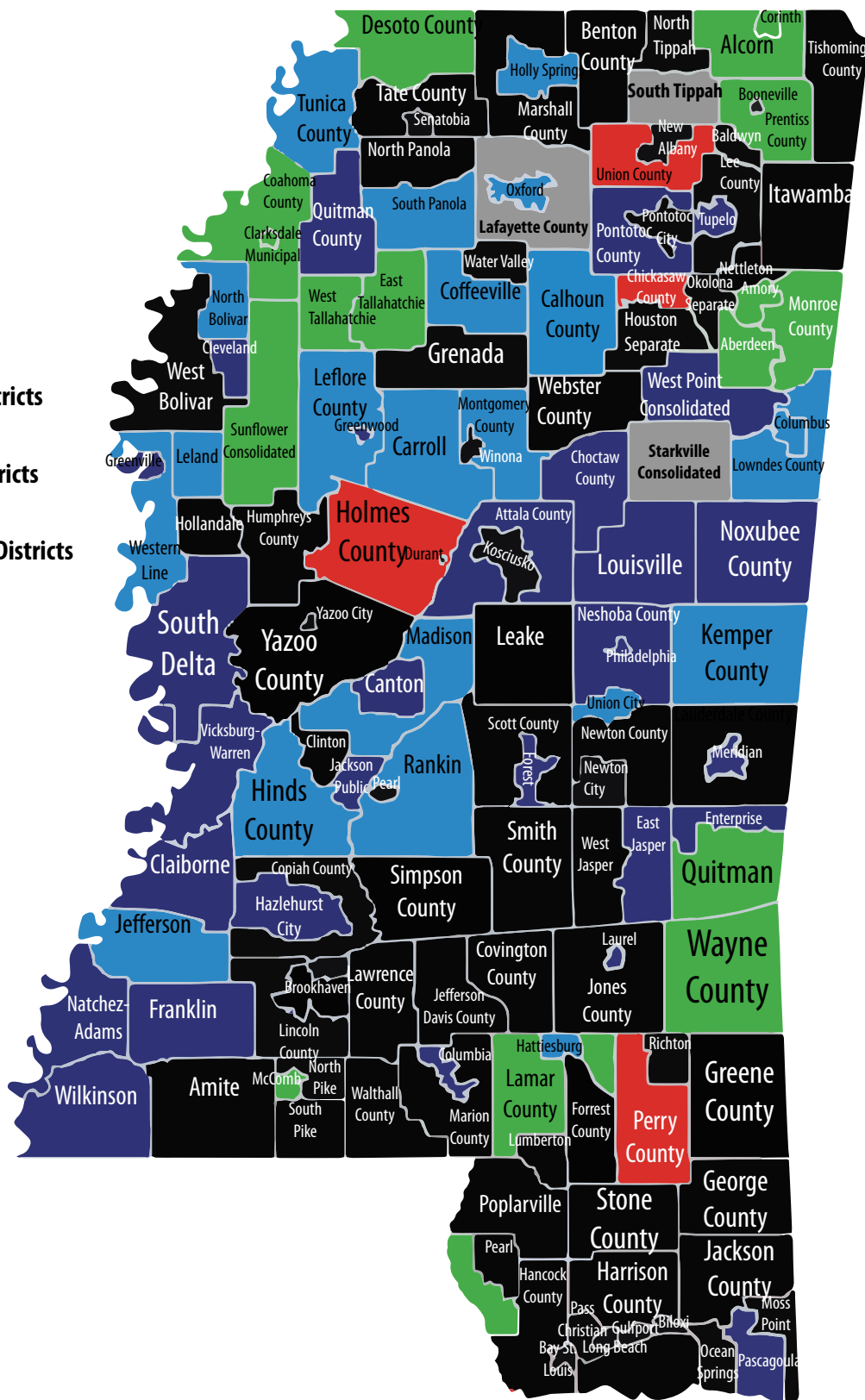
- Only 18 districts reported requiring assistant teachers to have a Child Development Associate’s degree (CDA) or equivalent. Most district pre-K programs simply required assistant teachers to meet the qualifications of a highly qualified paraprofessional. The requirements for highly qualified paraprofessionals were set by the United States Department of Education under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Highly qualified paraprofessionals in Mississippi must have a high school diploma and have an associate’s degree (or higher), 2 years of college, or demonstrated knowledge of reading, writing, and math on the ACT WorkKeys assessment; they are not required to have any specialized training in working with four-year-old children. Mississippi community colleges offer an associate’s degree in early childhood education that would meet the NIEER benchmark for an assistant teacher’s credentials. The early childhood education associate’s degree requires students to complete two practicums in childcare settings and uses a curriculum focused on child development, health and safety, and social and emotional development.
- Only 33 districts require teachers to specialize in pre-K. In Mississippi, teachers must have a license in early childhood education, the pre-K endorsement, or a nursery-to-first-grade (N-1) endorsement in order to meet the early childhood specialization requirement. Most district pre-K programs allowed teachers with only a license or endorsement in elementary education to be pre-K teachers. The elementary education license is designed for Kindergarten through fourth grade teachers. A teacher with an elementary education specialization may not be exposed to the training necessary for facilitating four-year-old classrooms. Licensed early childhood educators in Mississippi take a unique curriculum focusing on child development, early language and literacy, early childhood methods, and early interventions for young children with developmental delays, disabilities, or exceptionalities.
- Only 43 districts met the NIEER benchmarks requiring districts to provide health, hearing, and vision screenings in addition to one support service. NIEER recommends these three student services as minimum requirements for an effective pre-K program based on evaluations of other successful programs.

xxiii This data includes information from the 72 (of 75) school districts with full-year, classroom-based, regular education pre-K programs that participated in our survey. All school districts with such programs responded to our survey except for the Lafayette County School District and the South Tippah School District. The Oktibbeha County School District was consolidated into the Starkville Consolidated School District in 2015, and we were only able to attain information about certain aspects of the district’s program from its CFPA.

The Relationship between Public Pre-K Quality and Geography

This map shows quality ratings in Mississippi during the 2014-2015 school year.

- **Quality-Ready School Districts**
(Rating of 10)
- **Approaching-Quality Districts**
(Rating of 8 or 9)
- **In Need of Improvement Districts**
(Rating 6 or 7)
- **At-Risk Districts**
(Rating 5 or Below)
- **No School District Pre-K**
- **Quality Unknown**



Quality Ratings for School Districts

Below, we have classified each district according to its rating. Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, all districts operating a pre-K program will be required to meet each of the 10 benchmarks, regardless of their program's funding source. The data we present below suggests which districts may be better prepared to comply with state regulations.

Quality-Ready Districts (Rating of 10)

18 districts met all ten benchmarks in 2014-2015. We have termed these districts "quality ready" because they have all of the recommended policies in place to operate an effective program. Program quality as measured by effectiveness will depend on program implementation. With the exception of the Wayne County School District, all of these districts receive state funds to operate a pre-K program.

Aberdeen School District	DeSoto County School District	Picayune School District
Alcorn School District	East Tallahatchie School District	Prentiss County School District
Amory School District	Lamar County School District	Quitman School District
Clarksdale Municipal School District	McComb School District	Sunflower County Consolidated School District
Coahoma County School District	Monroe School District	Wayne County School District
Corinth School District	Petal School District	West Tallahatchie School District

Approaching-Quality Districts (Rating of 8 or 9)

The 21 districts in this category have a rating of 8 or 9. With just 1-2 policy changes to make, these districts are the second-most prepared to meet all 10 benchmarks. Most districts in this category fall short of meeting 10 of 10 benchmarks due to lead teacher and assistant teacher qualifications. None of the districts below met the NIEER benchmark which calls for assistant teachers to have a Child Development Associate's degree or other specialization in early childhood education. These districts, instead, required teachers only to be a highly qualified paraprofessional. 43% (9 of 21) of these districts failed to meet the NIEER benchmark which calls for teachers to have a specialization in early childhood education. Instead, their policies allow for pre-K teachers to hold an elementary education licensure endorsement, which does not denote a specialization in early childhood education.

Calhoun County School District	Jefferson County School District	North Bolivar Consolidated School District
Carroll County School District	Kemper County School District	Oxford School District
Coffeeville School District	Leflore County School District	Rankin County School District
Columbus Municipal School District	Leland School District	South Panola School District
Hattiesburg Public School District	Lowndes County School District	Tunica County School District
Hinds County School District	Madison County School District	Union Public School District
Holly Springs School District	Montgomery County School District	Western Line School District

In Need of Improvement Districts (Rating of 6 or 7)

29 school districts offering pre-K programs earned a rating of 6 or 7. These districts will need substantial support to meet all 10 NIEER benchmarks. In addition to failing to meet the NIEER benchmarks pertaining to staff qualifications, many of these districts failed to require the appropriate number of in-service hours for teachers and/or to provide hearing, health, and vision screenings and a support service for students.

Attala County School District
Canton Public School District
Choctaw County School District
Claiborne County School District
Cleveland School District
Columbia School District
East Jasper School District
Enterprise School District
Forest Municipal School District
Franklin County School District

Greenville Public School District
Greenwood Public School District
Hazlehurst City School District
Jackson Public School District
Laurel School District
Louisville Municipal School District
Meridian Public School District
Natchez-Adams School District
Neshoba County School District
Noxubee County School District

Pascagoula Separate School District
Philadelphia Public School District
Pontotoc County School District
Quitman County School District
South Delta School District
Tupelo Public School District
Vicksburg Warren School District
West Point School District
Wilkinson County School District

At-Risk Districts (Rating of 5 or below)

Four districts (5%) met 5 or fewer of the NIEER benchmarks, and they run a great risk of operating ineffective pre-K programs. These districts are least prepared to meet all ten benchmarks and comply with future state pre-K regulations. In addition to failing to meet the NIEER benchmarks pertaining to staff qualifications, in-service hours, and student services requirements, many of these districts failed to meet class size and/or staff-child ratio requirements.

Chickasaw County School District
Holmes County School District

Perry County School District
Union County School District

Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results

The 2014-2015 school year was the first year that all district pre-K programs in the state were required to administer the Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. The Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is an early literacy exam administered to gauge how well each district providing pre-K is preparing students to master literacy skills in Kindergarten. The Mississippi Department of Education established a raw score of 498 as the minimum rate of readiness on the exam. A score of 498 roughly means that a four-year-old child has mastered 70% of the early literacy skills needed to be “ready” by Kindergarten entry. Four-year-old students scoring 498 or above are projected to be proficient readers by third grade.

All districts with pre-K programs as well as all of the state-funded collaboratives were required to administer the Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment at the beginning and end of the 2014-2015 school year. By looking at end-of-year scale score averages and average score changes from the beginning to end of the year, we can learn about the quality of each district’s pre-K program. Below, we have listed the beginning-of-the-year and end-of-the-year results on the Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment from each of the 75 school districts operating full-year, classroom-based, regular education pre-K programs. These districts are ranked from high to low according to the average gains their students achieved and then by their average spring scale scores. The state average scale score gain was 124, with a standard deviation of 41.

Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results, continued

District	Scale Score Average (Fall)	Scale Score Average (Spring)	Scale Score Gain
West Tallahatchie School District*	410	620	210
Perry County Schools	462	665	203
Corinth School District*	423	622	199
South Panola School District	415	597	182
Attala County School District	403	585	182
East Jasper School District	434	614	180
Quitman School District*	415	590	176
Holmes County School District	437	604	167
Oxford School District	457	623	166
East Tallahatchie School District*	439	605	166
Meridian Public School District	407	573	166
Neshoba County School District	427	592	165
Lowndes County School District	428	586	158
Pascagoula Separate School District	426	584	158
Western Line School District	411	569	158
Greenville Public School District	448	605	157
Choctaw County School District	435	589	154
Monroe County School District*#			Average: 150
- Hamilton Elementary	424	570	146
- Hatley Elementary	422	600	178
- Smithville Elementary	437	564	127
Jefferson County School District	425	574	149
Clarksdale Municipal School District*	451	594	143
Carroll County School District	408	551	143
Noxubee County School District	445	586	141
Canton Public School District	403	542	139
Cleveland School District	448	584	136
Philadelphia Public School District	430	566	136
Claiborne County School District	429	565	136
Coffeeville School District	423	565	136
Petal School District*	423	559	136
Vicksburg Warren School District	433	565	132
Louisville Municipal School District	446	577	131
Columbus Municipal School District	436	567	131
Amory School District*#	440	570	130

Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results, continued

District	Scale Score Average (Fall)	Scale Score Average (Spring)	Scale Score Gain
South Delta School District	431	560	129
Union Public School District	419	548	129
Enterprise School District	416	544	128
Calhoun County School District	411	539	128
Wayne County School District	410	537	127
Franklin County School District	443	567	124
Leland School District	427	551	124
Kemper County School District	426	550	124
Wilkinson County School District	415	539	124
Forest Municipal School District	391	514	123
Hinds County School District	434	556	122
Greenwood Public School District	424	545	121
Lafayette County School District	468	586	118
Jackson Public School District	425	543	118
Holly Springs School District	425	542	117
Pontotoc County Schools	391	507	116
Tunica County School District	408	521	113
West Point School District	434	546	112
Chickasaw County School District	393	505	112
Rankin County School District	408	512	104
North Bolivar Consolidated School District	383	487	104
Sunflower County Consolidated School District**†	417	517	100
Madison County School District	413	512	99
Hattiesburg Public School District	435	532	97
South Tippah School District	440	536	96
McComb School District*	496	590	94
Tupelo Public School District	453	546	93
Aberdeen School District**	404	495	91
Quitman County School District	459	550	91
Laurel School District	438	524	86
Montgomery County School District	423	505	82
Columbia School District	408	484	76
Leflore County School District	430	503	73
Hazlehurst City School District	403	476	73
DeSoto County School District**†	429	500	71

Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Results, continued

District	Scale Score Average (Fall)	Scale Score Average (Spring)	Scale Score Gain
Natchez-Adams School District	449	505	56
Coahoma County School District**†	408	455	47
Lamar County School District**†	394	437	43
Picayune School District**†	416	445	29
Alcorn School District*	418	393	-25
Starkville Consolidated School District	No data reported	No data reported	No data reported
Prentiss County School District	No data reported	No data reported	No data reported
Union County School District	No data reported	No data reported	No data reported
Mississippi Average	426	550	124

*The scores are a reflection of the district pre-K sites that were a part of a state-funded early learning collaborative. The scores of pre-K providers outside of the district (Head Start centers, licensed childcare centers, parochial schools) in the collaborative were not averaged with the scores of the district.

†Only a percentage of the seats in this district are a part of a state-funded collaborative.

#This school district's pre-K program was operated by an external organization at a district location. Scale scores for these districts were reported publicly by elementary school instead of by district. Where more than one elementary school was a site for a program, we have listed each individual school's score.

Licensed Childcare Program Quality

In July 2015, there were 1,039 licensed childcare centers across the state serving or having the capacity to serve four-year-old children. All licensed childcare centers must operate according to state regulations or risk having their license suspended. Childcare centers must pass an annual inspection conducted by the Mississippi State Department of Health to ensure that they are in compliance with all state regulations in order to maintain their license. Childcare regulations govern the way centers operate in areas such as staffing; daily programming; equipment, toys, and materials; facilities and grounds; health, hygiene, and safety; nutrition and meals; discipline and guidance; transportation; rest periods; and children with special needs.

Below, we have compared the NIEER benchmarks to Mississippi licensure requirements pertaining to four-year-old classrooms. The list below is not inclusive of all childcare regulations. We have only captured the regulations that are comparable to NIEER benchmarks. As is clear below, licensure regulations do not mandate the minimum requirements necessary to operate an effective pre-K program.

Figure 6: Comparison of NIEER Benchmarks and Mississippi Child Care Licensure Regulations

Policy	NIEER Benchmark	Child Care Licensure Regulation for Four-Year-Old Children	Meets Benchmark?
Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive	<p>Licensed childcare centers are not required to implement comprehensive early learning standards. However, in lieu of standards, they must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "... provide a basic program of activities geared to the age levels and developmental needs of the children served." (Rule 1.9.1(1)) • "... provide for the reading of age-appropriate materials to children." (Rule 1.9.1(2)) • provide "a minimum of 60 minutes of structured moderate to vigorous physical activity per day." (Rule 1.9.7(3)) • provide age-appropriate toys that must include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ active play equipment for climbing and balancing, ○ unit blocks and accessories, ○ puzzles and manipulative toys, ○ art materials, ○ dramatic play materials, and ○ sand and water toys. (Rule 1.10.1(3)) • provide age-appropriate books for children to look at, read, and discuss. (Rule 1.10.1(6)) • provide a daily activity schedule demonstrating "that preschoolers are given opportunities to do a variety of activities, including both quiet and active, such as block play, art activities, puzzles, books, and learning games..." (Rule 1.10.1(8)) 	No

Licensed Childcare Program Quality, continued

Figure 6: Comparison of NIEER Benchmarks and Mississippi Child Care Licensure Regulations

Policy	NIEER Benchmark	Child Care Licensure Regulation for Four-Year-Old Children	Meets Benchmark?
Teacher Degree and Specialized Training	BA, Specializing in Pre-K	Caregivers must be at least 18 years of age with <u>one</u> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a high school diploma (or equivalent), a Child Development Associate (CDA) or a MDHS Child Care Director's credential, or three years' prior documented experience caring for children who are under 13 years of age and who are not related to the caregiver. (Rule 1.5.4) All caregivers must pass a criminal history records check (fingerprint), child abuse registry check, and a sex offender registry check. (Rule 1.5.2)	No
Assistant Teacher Degree	CDA or Equivalent	Caregiver assistants must be at least 16 years of age, and they must work under the direct on-site supervision of a director or caregiver at all times. (Rule 1.5.5) All caregiver assistants must pass a criminal history records check (fingerprint), child abuse registry check, and a sex offender registry check. (Rule 1.5.5)	No
Teacher In-Service	At Least 15 Hours/Year	At least 15 hours/year (Rule 1.5.8(2))	Yes
Maximum Class Size	20 or Lower	20 or lower (Rule 1.8.3)	Yes
Staff-Child Ratio	1:10 or Better	1:10 or better (Rule 1.8.3)	Yes
Screening/Referral and Support Services	Vision, Hearing, Health, and At Least 1 Support Service	No screening or support services required.	No
Meals	At Least 1 per Day	"A child care facility shall provide adequate and nutritious meals prepared in a safe and sanitary manner." (Rule 1.13.1(1))	Yes
Monitoring	Site Visits At Least Every 5 Years	Annual site visits (Rule 1.2.6)	Yes

The licensure requirements presented in Figure 6 represent some of the minimum requirements that all licensed childcare providers must meet to maintain their license. In 2014–2015, MDHS also implemented the Mississippi Child Care Quality Stars System to measure the quality of licensed childcare centers and to incentivize improvement. Quality Stars was Mississippi's voluntary, tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS).^{xxiv} QRIS assigned a rating of 1 star to 5 stars to each participating program that met a set of defined program standards. In July 2015, 36% (376 of 1039) of the licensed childcare centers serving or with the capacity to serve four-year-old children participated in the Quality

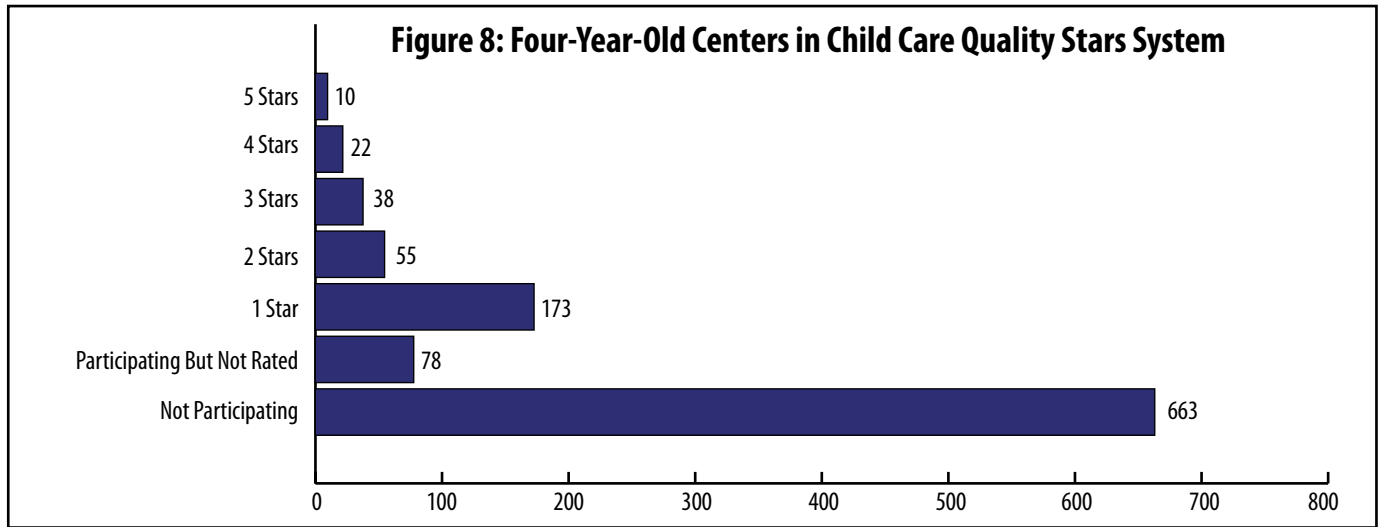
^{xxiv} As of publication, MDHS, through the State Early Childhood Advisory Committee, has indicated that it plans to end the QRIS program as of December 31, 2016. MDHS has signaled QRIS will not be replaced with a comparable rating system.

Licensed Childcare Program Quality, continued

Stars Program. Because of the low participation in the program, Quality Stars data are limited in the amount of general information that they can provide about licensed childcare centers. The data are useful in providing information about individual participants. Figure 7 shows the criteria for a one-star, two-star, three-star, four-star, and five-star program. Figure 8 shows how many centers serving four-year-olds across the state have achieved each star level.

Figure 7: Criteria for Quality Stars¹¹

1 Star	2 Stars	3 Stars	4 Stars	5 Stars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center holds a current Mississippi Child Care License 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center meets the 1-star requirements Center has an employee handbook Director receives 20 hours of annual staff development training 15 hours annually of staff development for full time teaching staff by approved training entities Review and file weekly lesson plans by each teacher Learning Centers are being utilized in the classrooms for all children Minimum total scores of 3.00 on the ERS-R Scales A designated bulletin board for parent communication Quarterly communication to parents through a newsletter Monthly calendar distribution to parents highlighting classroom activities and home learning activities Annual documented parent-teacher conference Director's self-evaluation indicating actions to address deficient areas is on file Annual staff evaluations for each staff member with the director/supervisor, signed and dated by both parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center meets the 2-star requirements Director completed "Child Care as a Business" course Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) completed, on file and signed by the child care director and the designated service agency. Documentation of one appropriate referral and/or assessment is on file for a child or staff member Director holds a current DECCD Director's Credential, or a credential approved by MDHS/DECCD, or an associate or higher degree in child development, early childhood education or a related field Center conducts and documents monthly staff development meetings 18 hours of annual staff development training with ten 10 hours of training specific to the age of children in their care At least one staff member holds a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher degree in child development, early childhood education or related field Director trained in Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines Minimum total scores of 3.6 on the ERS-R Scales Weekly notes to parents describing the activities of the week with copies maintained on file Parent education trainings offered and documented annually Facility provides a parent/family lending library for parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center meets the 3-star requirements Documentation of implementation of a Professional Development Plan Director holds an Associate's Degree (or higher) in Child Development, Early Childhood Education, or a related field with 18 credit hours of Early Childhood courses 15% of staff has a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or higher degree 20 hours of annual staff development training with ten 10 hours of training specific to the age of children in their care All teaching staff of infants, toddlers, three- and four-year-old children trained specific to the age of children in their care to use the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines including the use of on-going child assessment as described in the Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines Minimum total scores of 4.1 on the ERS-R Scales Family volunteer program is implemented and proof of participation is documented Family resource center is part of the facility's services Family survey to rate performance of staff completed and on file 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Center meets the 4-star requirements Developmental checklist for each child is implemented and documented A transition plan with Local Education Agency for children entering Kindergarten is implemented and documented Established and documented director to peer mentoring occurs at a minimum of 2 hours per month Director holds a Bachelor's Degree or higher in Early Childhood Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Child Development, Elementary Education or related field with 18 credit hours of Early Childhood courses 25% of full-time teachers have a current CDA credential or higher degree 25 hours of annual staff development training with 10 hours of training specific to the age of children in their care Mississippi Early Learning Guidelines fully implemented in all classrooms On-going child assessments documented and implemented in all classrooms Minimum total scores of 5.1 on the ERS-R Scales Documentation showing that parent/teacher conferences are held at least twice a year Monthly newsletter distributed to parents



Though licensure regulations and Quality Stars provide some information about the quality of childcare centers in Mississippi, there is no existing system to accurately measure the quality of most childcare centers in the state. In this report, we present more detailed programmatic data about each licensed childcare center in Mississippi that reported serving or having the capacity to serve four-year-old children. These data were captured through the Early Years Network Market Rate Survey, and they include information about the additional accreditations childcare centers may have (e.g., NAEYC, Montessori, NECPA, etc.), the curricula and assessments used at each center, and the philosophy that each center has. This information is organized by county and available after each county page in this report. These additional data do not assess the quality of a childcare center (unless it is specifically a quality rating such as NAEYC accreditation); it is simply presented to provide some understanding of the childcare services offered in each county.

Head Start Program Quality

All Head Start programs are governed by the Head Start Performance Standards set by the Office of Head Start at the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The Head Start Performance Standards include mandates for Head Start programs in the following areas: program governance, student eligibility, program structure, education and child development program services, health program services, family and community engagement program services, services for children with disabilities, facilities, transportation, financial requirements, and student transition services. The Office of Head Start has recently revised the performance standards to align with early education research and best practices. The standards, which became effective in November 2016, require all Head Start programs to comply with 9 of the 10 NIEER benchmarks.

In Figure 9, we have compared the Head Start Performance Standards to the NIEER benchmarks. The list below is not inclusive of all performance standards. We have only captured the standards that are comparable to the NIEER benchmarks. As is clear below, the new Head Start Performance Standards mandate nearly all of the minimum requirements necessary to operate an effective pre-K program.

Figure 9: Comparison of Head Start Performance Standards and NIEER Benchmarks

Policy	NIEER Benchmark	Head Start Performance Standard	Meets Benchmark?
Early Learning Standards	Comprehensive	Centers must implement the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework. ¹² (§1302.31) The framework presents a comprehensive set of skills that children should know and be able to do in each of the five early learning domains: approaches to learning; social and emotional development; language and literacy; cognition; and perceptual, motor, and physical development.	Yes
Teacher Degree and Specialized Training	BA, Specializing in Pre-K	At least 50% of teachers nationwide must have a B.A. in early childhood education, child development, or the equivalent. (§1302.91) All teachers must have either a Bachelor's or Associate's Degree in early childhood education, child development, or the equivalent. (§1302.91)	Partially
Assistant Teacher Degree	CDA or Equivalent	CDA or equivalent (§1302.91)	Yes
Teacher In-Service	At Least 15 Hours/Year	At least 15 hours/year (§1302.92)	Yes
Maximum Class Size	20 or Lower	20 (§1302.21(b))	Yes
Staff-Child Ratio	1:10 or Better	1:10 (§1302.21)	Yes
Screening/Referral and Support Services	Vision, Hearing, Health, and At Least 1 Support Service	Centers must provide health, vision, hearing, and oral screenings in addition to several parent support services. (§1302.40 - §1302.47)	Yes
Meals	At Least 1 per Day	Nutritious meals and snacks must be provided each day. (§1302.44)	Yes
Monitoring	Site Visits At Least Once Every 5 Years	Site visits at least once every 5 years (§1304)	Yes

The Office of Head Start monitors the quality of Head Start programs across the country using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CLASS is an observation instrument that measures the quality of teacher-child interactions in pre-K settings. While we have not included the CLASS scores of Mississippi Head Start centers in this report, they are publicly available by request for all stakeholders seeking additional information about the quality of Head Start centers.

State-Funded Pre-K Program Quality

According to state law, all pre-K providers in Mississippi's state-funded pre-K program, established by the *Early Learning Collaborative Act of 2013*, must meet each of the 10 NIEER benchmarks for an effective pre-K program. Additionally, as a part of monitoring, the state evaluates the success of each collaborative provider by looking at each site's CLASS scores and student performance on the Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment.^{xxv} Each pre-K provider in a collaborative must meet the monitoring requirements set by the MDE in order to remain eligible for state funds. In 2014-2015, all but 2 collaborative sites averaged a scale score above 498 on the Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment at the end of the year. Students scoring 498 or above are projected to be proficient readers by third grade.

In 2014-2015, early learning collaboratives were also required to administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), a set of developmental screeners that measure the physical and socio-emotional developmental progress of young children. These screeners are important for identifying students who have developmental delays. When developmental delays are discovered during the early stages of a child's development, the child is more likely to receive early intervention that can lead to improved educational outcomes in later years. A study conducted by Mississippi State University revealed that 172 students in collaboratives were identified to receive services that would likely not have been identified if they did not attend a collaborative. In future years, the state will require collaboratives to administer a comprehensive set of screeners to evaluate student developmental progress in each of the five early learning domains.

The Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment scores from each provider in a collaborative are listed in Figure 10. These are raw scale scores, and they are not adjusted to reflect differences in student demographics. As such, they are not useful in any type of comparative analysis.

Figure 10: Pre-K Readiness Assessment Scores for Collaborative Providers 2014-2015

Collaborative/Site	Scale Score Avg. (Fall)	Scale Score Avg. (Spring)	Scale Score Gain
Clark County Early Learning Partnership	413	568	156
Manuel Goff Head Start	410	534	123
Quitman Lower Elementary	415	590	176
Coahoma County Pre-K Collaborative	439	552	114
Booker T. Washington Elementary	434	581	146
Coahoma Opportunities (Head Start)	431	529	99
Heidelberg Elementary	501	634	133
Jonestown Elementary	439	554	114
Kirkpatrick Elementary	444	562	118
Lyon Elementary	417	555	138
Myrtle Hall IV Elementary	425	597	172
St. Elizabeth's Catholic School	497	585	88
Corinth-Alcorn-Prentiss Early Learning Collaborative	434	597	163
Alcorn Central Elementary	452	560	108
Corinth Elementary	423	622	199
Corinth Head Start	434	476	42

xxv The Pre-Kindergarten Readiness Assessment is an early literacy exam administered in the fall and spring of each school year to gauge how well each pre-K provider is preparing students to master literacy skills in Kindergarten. The Mississippi Department of Education established a raw score of 498 as the minimum rate of readiness on the exam. A score of 498 roughly means that a child has mastered 70% of the early literacy skills needed at Kindergarten entry. Students scoring 498 or above are projected to be proficient readers by third grade.

State-Funded Pre-K Program Quality, continued

Figure 10: Pre-K Readiness Assessment Scores for Collaborative Providers 2014-2015

Collaborative/Site	Scale Score Avg. (Fall)	Scale Score Avg. (Spring)	Scale Score Gain
Glendale Elementary	461	570	109
Just Kids 1	407	N/A ^{xxvi}	-
Kendrick Head Start	451	562	111
Kid Kountry	429	663	234
Kidzville	454	N/A ^{xxvii}	-
Little Blessings	466	559	93
Rienzi Elementary	431	648	217
The Giving Tree	475	N/A ^{xxviii}	-
Thrasher Elementary	446	583	137
DeSoto Early Learning Collaborative	429	500	71
Lake Cormorant Elementary	429	500	71
Lamar County Early Collaborative	412	523	111
Baxterville Pre-K	409	521	112
Head Start	414	524	110
McComb Community Collaborative for Early Learning Success	416	537	121
Kennedy Head Start	412	527	115
Christian Community Learning Center	435	567	132
Kennedy Early Childhood Center	496	590	94
Mother Goose Christian CCC	424	N/A ^{xxix}	-
Pleasant Grove East McComb	458	610	152
Utopian Homes Head Start	369	531	162
Westbrook Head Start	401	515	114
Monroe Early Learning Collaborative	416	537	121
Hamilton Elementary	424	570	146
Hatley Elementary	422	600	178
Calvert's ABC Pre-School and Nursery	418	541	123
Lil Blessings Child Care and Learning Center	426	576	150
MAP Inc. Head Start	398	490	92
MAP Inc. Head Start – Hwy 145 N.	397	475	78
Smithville Elementary	437	564	127
West Amory Elementary	440	570	130

xxvi Classrooms did not meet the minimum student enrollment requirement for public reporting.

xxvii Classrooms did not meet the minimum student enrollment requirement for public reporting.

xxviii Classrooms did not meet the minimum student enrollment requirement for public reporting.

xxix Classrooms did not meet the minimum student enrollment requirement for public reporting.

State-Funded Pre-K Program Quality, continued

Figure 10: Pre-K Readiness Assessment Scores for Collaborative Providers 2014-2015

Collaborative/Site	Scale Score Avg. (Fall)	Scale Score Avg. (Spring)	Scale Score Gain
Petal Early Learning Collaborative	431	560	129
Charles H. Johnson PACE Head Start	424	530	106
Petal Primary School	451	637	186
Picayune School District	436	535	99
Pearl River Community College	460	N/A ^{xxx}	-
Southside Elementary	434	535	101
Sunflower County Early Learning Collaborative	419	519	100
A. W. James Elementary	416	576	160
Connected Branches Organization	428	537	109
Inverness Elementary	418	474	56
James C. Rosser Elementary	420	504	84
Ruleville Central Elementary	414	514	100
Tallahatchie Early Learning Alliance	409	595	186
Charleston Elementary	439	605	166
Elohim Childcare and Learning Center	455	727	272
Jerusalem Outreach	370	602	232
R.H. Bearden Elementary School	410	620	210
West Tallahatchie Head Start	398	589	191

^{xxx} Classrooms did not meet the minimum student enrollment requirement for public reporting.

FINDINGS: IMPACT OF STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

Since we published our last *State of Public Pre-K* report, one of the greatest developments in Mississippi pre-K has been the establishment of a state-funded pre-K program. In 2013, the Legislature passed the *Early Learning Collaborative Act*, which enabled pre-K providers in a community to come together and apply for funds to expand the number of available pre-K seats or enhance the quality of existing pre-K seats. Community providers who apply, referred to as collaboratives, must be led by a public school district, a Head Start program, or a non-profit organization. In addition to these types of providers, a collaborative may include licensed childcare centers, private schools, and parochial schools. Each provider in a collaborative must meet the ten NIEER quality benchmarks. In 2013, eleven communities were awarded state funds to operate pre-K programs. These eleven collaboratives included 27 elementary schools in 17 districts, 14 Head Start centers, 13 licensed childcare centers, and one parochial school in 2014-2015.

In Figure 11, we compare the 2011-2012 and 2014-2015 public pre-K access rates in the communities where collaboratives are located. The 2011-2012 public pre-K access figures include school district and Head Start seats in the geographical confines of the district. The 2014-2015 public pre-K figures include seats from providers participating in the collaborative and seats in the community that are not a part of the collaborative. Our data shows that, on average, the seats provided through state-funded collaboratives increased pre-K access in a community by 37%. Only two collaborative communities—Clarke and Sunflower—did not experience an overall increase in pre-K seats due to the addition of state-funded seats. All collaboratives, however, impacted their communities by increasing the number of high-quality seats—those meeting 100% of the NIEER benchmarks for effective early childhood programs—available to four-year-old children.

Figure 11: Impact of State-Funded Collaboratives on Pre-K Access

Clarke County Early Learning Partnership			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Quitman School District	120	Quitman School District Lower Elementary (60) Manuel Goff Head Start Center (60)	120
			No Impact on Access
Coahoma County Pre-K Collaborative			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Coahoma County School District (81) Clarksdale Municipal School District (207)	289	Tots for Time Child Care Center (8) St. Elizabeth's Catholic School (14) Booker T. Washington Elementary (20) George H. Oliver Elementary (20) Heidelberg Elementary (18) Kirkpatrick Elementary (20) Myrtle Hall IV Elementary (20) Coahoma Opportunities Head Start (219) Covenant House Child Care Center (2) Lyon Elementary School (20) Jonestown Elementary (20)	381
			32% Increase in Pre-K Seats

Figure 11: Impact of State-Funded Collaboratives on Pre-K Access, continued

Corinth-Alcorn-Prentiss Early Learning Collaborative			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Corinth School District (124) Alcorn School District (31) Prentiss County School District (78)	233	Corinth Elementary (100) Corinth Head Start (29) Kendrick Head Start (34) Alcorn Central Elementary (20) Glendale Elementary (20) Rienzi Elementary (20) The Giving Tree Child Care Center (7) Just Kids-1 Child Care Center (5) Kid Kountry Child Care Center (5) Kidzville Child Care Center (6) Little Blessings Child Care Center (7) Thrasher Elementary (20)	255
		Non-Collaborative Public Seats in Community	124
			63% Increase in Pre-K Seats
DeSoto Early Learning Collaborative			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
DeSoto County School District	365	Lake Cormorant Elementary (40)	40
		Non-Collaborative Public Seats in Community	356
			8% Increase in Pre-K Seats
McComb Community Collaborative for Early Learning Success			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
McComb School District	147	Bright Minds Learning Center (8) Christian Community Learning Center (12) Mother Goose Christian Child Care Center (11) Pleasant Grove East McComb (11) Sankofa Academy (6) Westbrook Head Start (95) Westbrook Head Start – Kennedy (54) Kennedy Early Childhood Center (18)	215
			46% Increase in Pre-K Seats

Figure 11: Impact of State-Funded Collaboratives on Pre-K Access, continued

Gilmore Early Learning Initiative - Collaborative			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Monroe County School District (30) Amory School District (75) Aberdeen School District (115)	220	Amory Early Learning Academy (10) Calvert's ABC Preschool and Nursery (6) Lil' Blessings Child Care and Learning Center (10) MAP Inc. Head Start (30) GELI Promise School – West Amory (34) GELI Promise School – Hamilton (22) GELI Promise School – Hatley (22) GELI Promise School – Smithville (19) Aberdeen Elementary (27)	180
		Non-Collaborative Public Seats in Community	42
			1% Increase in Pre-K Seats
Petal Early Learning Collaborative			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Petal School District	Unknown ^{xxxi}	Petal Primary School (20) Charles H. Johnson – PACE Head Start (60)	80
			Unknown impact
Picayune School District Pre-K			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Picayune School District	104	South Side Elementary (20)	20
		Non-Collaborative Public Seats in Community	115
			30% Increase in Pre-K Seats

xxxi During the data collection period for our 2011-2012 *State of Public Pre-K* report, the Head Start partner servicing Petal was replaced, and data pertaining to the 2011-2012 school year was unavailable. There were no district seats offered to 4-year-old children at this time.

Figure 11: Impact of State-Funded Collaboratives on Pre-K Access, continued

Sunflower County Early Learning Collaborative			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Drew School District (60) Indianola School District (150) Sunflower County School District (140)	350	Cassie Penning Head Start Center (40) James C. Rosser Elementary (10) Inverness Elementary (10) A.W. James Elementary (10) Indianola Kids University (10) Connected Branches Organization (10) Pooh Bear Child Care (16) Color Me a Rainbow Child Care Center (8) Sponge Bob Child Care Center (8) Buck-A-Roo Child Care Center (12) BeBe Kids Learning Center (13)	147
		Non-Collaborative Public Seats in Community	143
			17% Decrease in Pre-K Seats
Tallahatchie Early Learning Alliance			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
East Tallahatchie School District (80) West Tallahatchie School District (70)	150	Charleston Elementary (20) Eva Covington Head Start Center (80) R.H. Bearden Elementary (20) West Tallahatchie Head Start (80)	200
			33% Increase in Pre-K Seats
The Lamar County Early Learning Collaborative			
2011 – 2012 Public Pre-K Access by District		2014 – 2015 Public Pre-K Access in Collaborative Communities	
District (# of public seats in district and Head Start)	Total capacity	Collaborative Providers (# of seats)	Total capacity
Lamar County School District	40	USM Early Connections (30) PRVO First Head Start (60) Baxterville Pre-K (20)	110
			175% Increase in Pre-K Seats

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mississippi has made great strides in providing opportunities for pre-Kindergarten children in the state, but access to early education is still very limited in some places. On average, 46% of children in 2014-2015 in each community had no access to a public pre-K seat. Moreover, the quality of programs—both public programs and licensed childcare centers—is difficult to assess, and it varies. Moving forward, Mississippi must expand pre-K access while working to build an infrastructure across all four-year-old pre-K providers that defines what quality looks like, identifies high- and low-quality providers, and improves quality when needed. Further, Mississippi should ensure that the assessment of quality of pre-K programs (public and licensed childcare) is aligned to the factors that lead to meaningful outcomes for children.

Below, we have made recommendations for early education stakeholders based on the data we have collected and reviewed for this report.

Expand the State-Funded Pre-K Program

One of the most important priorities for Mississippi early education stakeholders should be to expand access to pre-K programs. In 2013, before the existence of the state-funded pre-K program, a study conducted by the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University found that children who attended Title I- and locally funded-school district pre-K programs were more likely to succeed in school than their peers who did not attend such programs.¹³ According to the study, children who attended district pre-K programs in 2008 were 1.5 times more likely to score proficient on the third grade state language assessment (MCT2) than students who did not attend district pre-K programs. In addition, the study reports that third grade proficiency is associated with positive outcomes occurring later in a student's life. Third graders scoring proficient on the language MCT2 were 9 times more likely to be proficient on the eighth grade language MCT2 than students who were not proficient, and proficient eighth graders were 3.5 times more likely to graduate high school in four years than students who were not.

In 2008, the pre-K program year that the study evaluates, district pre-K programs were loosely regulated. However, in light of the findings, we know that the pre-K services that Mississippi districts are providing make a difference. A greater body of research indicates that requiring district pre-K programs to meet high-quality benchmarks may yield an even more positive impact on student outcomes for Mississippi students. The expansion of the state-funded pre-K collaboratives puts higher-quality standards in place for pre-K programs, and our data shows that it also allows communities to leverage the resources in their communities to expand access at a faster rate. On average, communities with state-funded collaboratives increased the number of pre-K seats they offered by 37%, while all other districts experiencing an increase in pre-K seats only increased by 24%.

At the time of the initial application cycle for state pre-K funds in 2013, thirty communities submitted a plan to implement a pre-K collaborative. The Legislature appropriated \$3 million, which funded eleven communities. The eleven^{xxxii} communities have continued to receive funding since 2014, and in 2016, the Legislature appropriated an additional \$1 million to expand the program. Due to this expansion, the Mississippi Department of Education was able to distribute state funds to four more communities—Canton, Greenwood, Grenada, and Starkville—to operate a pre-K collaborative. We commend the Mississippi Legislature for making an investment in early childhood education, and **we strongly recommend the continued expansion of the state-funded pre-K program.**

^{xxxii} DeSoto declined to renew their collaborative agreement in 2016-2017.

Support Existing District Programs in Meeting the 10 National Benchmarks

Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, all school districts operating a pre-K program will be held accountable to meeting each of the 10 NIEER benchmarks. While this is a great step in increasing the quality of district pre-K programs, our data shows that some districts are better positioned to comply with the new requirements than others. Eighteen districts are currently meeting all ten NIEER benchmarks. At least 28% (21 of 75) of districts offering classroom-based, regular education pre-K programs meet eight or nine of the benchmarks. 39% (29 of 75 districts) met 6 or 7 of the benchmarks, and 4 district programs met 5 or less benchmarks. Considering this information, existing programs will need differentiated support to successfully implement programs that meet each of the 10 benchmarks. **We recommend that the Mississippi Department of Education create and execute a strategic plan to provide individualized support to districts so that they can build quality in their programs and meet the 10 NIEER benchmarks.**

Implement a Quality Assessment System for Licensed Childcare Centers

In general, the public has no way to measure the quality of licensed childcare centers. In 2015, only 36% of licensed childcare centers serving 4-year-old children participated in the Quality Stars Program, the state's quality rating system for licensed childcare. The Mississippi Department of Human Services recently announced that the Quality Stars Program will be cut entirely. The licensed childcare sector can be a key lever in preparing Mississippi children to be ready for school, but more information must be provided on how well centers are serving children to ensure that parents can make decisions about childcare that will benefit their children. **We recommend that the state re-design, rather than eliminate, the Quality Stars program. Any new rating system should include both program quality standards as well as child outcome measures. The state should execute a strategic plan to enroll at least 80% of childcare centers into the system.**

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