

Family Impact Seminar 2010

Connecting Business to Innovative Strategies for Poverty Reduction

Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments



“Change the First Five Years and you Change Everything”

Conducted by:
Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	2
Abstract.....	3
The Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council	4
2009 Implementation Plan – Council Priority Recommendations.....	5
October 2009 Strategic Planning Session – Summary of Recommendations.....	7
2010 Family Impact Seminar – Building on the Work of the Council	8
Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: A Macroeconomic Perspective	9
The Science of Early Childhood Development	9
The Long-term Benefits of Investments in Young Children	11
Early Childhood Programs: Overview and Analysis	15
Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: A Microeconomic and Business Leader Perspective	24
Business Leadership in Early Childhood Development.....	24
Strategies to Engage the Business Community	27
The Louisiana Landscape	30
Louisiana – The State We Are In	30
Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: Statistical Data for Louisiana Initiatives.....	33
Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: Building Early Childhood Systems for Policy & Finance ..	38
References	40
Contributor Biographies	44
Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council Members.....	46

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Abstract

This policy brief highlights the 2010 Family Impact Seminar, “Connecting Business to Innovative Strategies for Poverty Reduction: Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments,” which was held in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on February 25, 2010. The Seminar was sponsored by Pew Charitable Trusts and the LSU School of Social Work and was conducted for the benefit of Louisiana Legislators and state policy makers, by the **Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council**. Several nationally recognized leaders from the business and philanthropic communities discussed the economic impact of investing in early childhood programs and innovative strategies in which business leaders can contribute to economic development and poverty reduction through investments in young children.

Featured speakers for the Seminar included Timothy Bartik, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research; Rob Grunewald, The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis; Melanie Bronfin and Geoffrey Nagle, Tulane Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health; Ralph Stacy, Business Council of Alabama; Eric Lewis, Baton Rouge Black Chamber of Commerce; Rebecca Vizard, B.Viz Design; and Alma Thornton, Southern University Center for Social Research. This policy brief summarizes presentations made by the featured speakers and panelists and provides a thorough literature review of the benefits of investment in early childhood programs.

There is an abundance of evidence from economics, neuroscience, and early education research that illustrates the importance of investing in early childhood development. The research demonstrates that early years matter and establishes the framework for making investments in early childhood education. Early investments yield high economic returns. A child with a solid intellectual, social and emotional foundation becomes part of a strong community and contributes to society. This policy brief provides a summary of the research presented and discussed during the Family Impact Seminar, describes the economic benefits of making investments in early childhood programs and provides innovative strategies to engage the business community in the conversation. Additionally, the Louisiana landscape is presented as well as an overview of the policy recommendations made by the Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council.

Investments in early childhood programs and poverty prevention create a win-win situation for businesses, social services, health care and education. These investments also create short-term gains for our children, families and communities while building a healthy, productive workforce for the next generation. The children of Louisiana deserve a chance to thrive and succeed and it is our collective responsibility to ensure all children have this chance.

[Note: For ease of use by a broad audience, we avoid academic citation styles and provide all references at the end of the document. We acknowledge here that much of what is contained herein is based on research, evaluation, and professional literature on these topics. Fully cited, academic style document available upon request.]

Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council

In 2008, the Louisiana Legislature passed Act 559 to create the Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council. The mission of the Council is to pursue strategies to reduce child poverty in Louisiana by 50 percent over the next ten years. The Council submitted a Final Implementation Plan with detailed recommendations to the Joint Legislative Committee on Health and Welfare in March 2009, and then held a day-long Strategic Planning Session in October 2009 to prioritize these recommendations. The Family Impact Seminar, which was held on February 25, 2010, helped legislators and policymakers further strategize their work to successfully accomplish their ultimate goal of reducing poverty in Louisiana.

As stated in Act 559, the Council is charged with the following:

- To have as its purpose the goal of pursuing programs which reduce child poverty in the state by 50 percent over the next ten years;
- Work to establish public-private partnerships and seek private-sector funding to be used with public funds to support solutions to poverty initiatives with the greatest potential for reducing child poverty;
- Seek funding for grant programs targeted at local government entities, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, and other qualified community-based organizations directly serving people in Louisiana; and
- Make, or cause to be made, all such studies, reviews, or analysis which it finds necessary to effect its purpose;
- Council membership, as mandated in Act 559, includes 19 members from various state agencies, non-profit organizations, business and labor organizations, children’s advocacy groups, and Louisiana universities. The current roster of council members may be found at the end of this document.

“As states are under pressure to improve the efficient use of ever dwindling financial resources, any investment away from young children can be viewed as a diversion of resources from the most efficient use of these funds.”

James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics, University of Chicago

2009 Implementation Plan – Council Priority Recommendations

The Council developed the following priority recommendations for reducing child poverty in Louisiana by 50 percent over the next ten years. The recommendations are organized under four major strategies:

Improve Birth Outcomes;

Be a National Model for Comprehensive, Evidence-Based, Early Childhood Education Initiatives;

Strengthen Disadvantaged Youth Connections to School and Work; and

Raise the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Each strategy includes one or more specific recommendations. While a summary description of each recommendation is provided here, please refer to the Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Plan Implementation Plan for a more detailed description and fiscal impact of each recommendation (www.socialwork.lsu.edu/html/researchinitiatives/lpi.html).

Improve Birth Outcomes

As part of Louisiana’s proposed health care reform initiative (Louisiana Health First), include health coverage for high-risk women before their pregnancy. The following high-risk women, with incomes up to 300 percent of the poverty level, should be the target group for increased eligibility for health coverage:

- Women who have had a previous adverse pregnancy outcome (e.g., prematurity, stillbirth, low birth weight, fetal death, or an infant with birth defects).
- Women with a chronic health condition (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, hypothyroidism, seizure disorders).

Be a National Model for Comprehensive, Evidence-Based, Early Childhood Education Initiatives

- Expand the Early Childhood Supports and Services (ECSS) program, a model program for addressing the social-emotional needs of children. The program currently provides services in 13 of the 64 Louisiana parishes. Expansion into each region of the state will allow Medicaid reimbursement for covered services.
- Expand the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), a nationally-recognized best practice program designed to serve first-time mothers who are below 200 percent of the poverty level, beginning in pregnancy and continuing until the baby reaches two years of age. The program currently serves 15 percent of Louisiana’s eligible women. Specifically, we recommend the expansion plan submitted by the Department of Health and Hospitals to the Senate and House Health and Welfare Committees. This plan, in response to Senate Concurrent Resolution 70 of the 2008 Regular Legislative Session, calls for a phased-in expansion of NFP to serve 50 percent of eligible women in Louisiana by 2014-15.

- Improve the quality of parenting education in Louisiana by enhancing training, resources, and technical assistance for parenting educators through strengthening the newly-formed Louisiana Parenting Education Network (LAPEN).
- Expand income eligibility for Louisiana's Child Care Assistance Program from 200 percent of the poverty level (twice the poverty level) to 300 percent of the poverty level (three times the poverty level).
- Create a strong system of early education by integrating the successes of LA 4 pre-K and Louisiana's child care rating system. Specifically, we recommend state funding of the expansion and integration plan articulated in Act 876 of the 2008 Legislature that calls for a phased-in expansion of LA 4 – extending to all four-year-olds by fiscal year 2013-14 through an integrated and collaborative delivery model that includes public schools systems, Head Start, and private child care providers.

Strengthen Disadvantaged Youth Connections to School and Work

- Successfully pilot then implement a statewide build out of Louisiana's new EMPLOY (Educational Mission to Prepare Louisiana's Youth) Program. The goal is to totally replace Louisiana's current high school dropout program – the PreGED/Skills Options Program.
- Expand Louisiana's Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Program to all local school districts statewide.
- Successfully pilot then implement a statewide build out of job training and placement referral programs currently under development by Louisiana's Shared Youth Vision Team for two specific populations: youth aging out of foster care and older incarcerated/court supervised youth.

Raise the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

- Raise the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 3.5 percent of the federal EITC amount to seven percent of the federal EITC amount. The EITC is a major benefit to low-income families who earn income from employment and is widely praised for reducing poverty among working families.

October 2009 Strategic Planning Session – Summary of Recommendations

The Child Poverty Prevention Council, in conjunction with the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus, held a one-day Strategic Planning Meeting on October 9, 2009. The primary purpose of this meeting was to convene key anti-poverty stakeholders and policy-makers to advance the mission and policy agenda of the Child Poverty Prevention Council. Senator Sharon Weston Broome facilitated the discussion session to brainstorm potential policy recommendations.

As a result of this discussion, the following policy recommendations emerged to clarify and enhance the original recommendations of the Council:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of current anti-poverty programs; require and document accountability and stewardship of public funds. Analyze programs and policies against the backdrop of fiscal issues. Insist that the measurements and accountability system is equitable across all programs and departments.
- Require a poverty impact statement on all legislation. Show how the legislation impacts, eradicates, or unintentionally worsens poverty.
- Establish public/private partnerships; seek private sector funding to be used with public funds to support solutions to end poverty.
- Engage the business community. Convince business leaders that they have a stake in the conversation.
- Establish a clearinghouse of information on all anti-poverty initiatives in the state.
- Create, support and strengthen partnerships across all sectors, including the faith-based community and the non-profit sector, to develop and sustain solutions to poverty.
- Clarify a vision and mission for the state of Louisiana as it relates to poverty reduction. Craft a consistent message that is evidence driven.
- Address the issue of predatory lending. Fund the Financial Literacy Education Commission. Consider placing a cap on the amount of interest that could be charged to low to moderate income individuals.
- Invest in family strengthening programs, especially parenting and responsible fatherhood.
- Promote compliance with the federal mandate that schools have a wellness policy to bring attention to the issue of school nutrition and improving food in our schools.
- Address issues of teen pregnancy and pre-term births.
- Offer comprehensive support structures for positive youth development.

2010 Family Impact Seminar – Building on the Work of the Council

With support and technical assistance from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the LSU School of Social Work, the Council embraced the opportunity to focus on several key recommendations of their report and strategic planning session through a dedicated **Family Impact Seminar**. The Family Impact Seminars are professional presentations, discussion sessions, and briefing reports designed to provide state policymakers with nonpartisan, solution-oriented research on important issues. The seminars began in the 1970s and were offered to the US Congress, then later moved to the state level. Currently 27 states and the District of Columbia are part of the Family Impact Seminars network, administered by policy professionals at the University of Wisconsin.

The day-long Family Impact Seminar was held on February 25, 2010 and included two presentation sessions by national policy experts with response from local professionals as well as participant discussion and interaction led by moderators. Over 75 participants and assembled experts focused on the Council's stated priority of linking business leaders to early childhood education as a strategy for reducing poverty in Louisiana. The seminar closed with an hour long debriefing and strategic planning session aimed primarily at members/ representatives of the Legislature and the Child Poverty Prevention Council. The following is a summary of the key points that surfaced:

- Promote the benefits of partnerships among all stakeholders – business, philanthropic, non-profit, faith-based, education, social service and health care.
- Engage, support, and leverage the business voice. Educate the business community on the benefits of making investments in early childhood.
- Involve LABI and Chambers of Commerce. Make the business case – show the business community that investments in early childhood can yield high returns.
- Host a Legislative Day at the capital to advocate for investments in early childhood and poverty reduction strategies. Meet with Legislators one on one; craft a message that illustrates how investments in early childhood benefit their constituents and local economy.
- Create a strategic public awareness campaign. Create a powerful message, e.g., “CEOs are made between 18 months and three years.” Identify Legislators who will champion the cause. Write op-ed pieces and letters to the editor. Partner with LPB to create a documentary on poverty reduction and investments in early childhood.
- Create a state budget report card detailing where poverty reduction initiatives stand in the budget. Advocate for the implementation of a poverty impact statement on all legislation.

Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: A Macroeconomic Perspective

The Science of Early Childhood Development

“The science of early brain development can inform investments in early childhood.”

Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University

The Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University published a series of brief summaries that outline the scientific research of early childhood development. In his presentation to the Family Impact Seminar, highlighted below, Mr. Rob Grunewald utilized this research to illustrate that early childhood development is the foundation for a “prosperous and sustainable society.”

- **Brains are built over time, from the bottom up.** The basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Early experiences affect the quality of that architecture by establishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the learning, health and behavior that follow. In the first few years of life, 700 new neural connections are formed every second. After this period of rapid proliferation, connections are reduced through a process called pruning, so brain circuits can become more efficient. Sensory pathways like those for basic vision and hearing are the first to develop, followed by early language skills and higher cognitive functions. Connections proliferate and prune in a prescribed order, with later, more complex brain circuits built upon earlier, simpler circuits.
- **The interactive influences of genes and experience shape the developing brain.** Scientists now know a major ingredient in this developmental process is the “serve and return” relationship between children and their parents and other caregivers in the family or community. Young children naturally reach out for interaction through babbling, facial expressions, and gestures and adults respond with the same kind of vocalizing and gesturing back at them. In the absence of such responses—or if the responses are unreliable or inappropriate—the brain’s architecture does not form as expected, which can lead to disparities in learning and behavior.
- **The brain’s capacity for change decreases with age.** The brain is most flexible, or “plastic,” early in life to accommodate a wide range of environments and interactions, but as the maturing brain becomes more specialized to assume more complex functions, it is less capable of reorganizing and adapting to new or

unexpected challenges. Early plasticity means it's easier and more effective to influence a baby's developing brain architecture than to rewire parts of its circuitry in the adult years.

- **Cognitive, emotional, and social capacities are inextricably intertwined throughout the life course.** The brain is a highly interrelated organ, and its multiple functions operate in a richly coordinated fashion. Emotional well-being and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities, and together they are the bricks and mortar that comprise the foundation of human development. The emotional and physical health, social skills, and cognitive-linguistic capacities that emerge in the early years are all important prerequisites for success in school and later in the workplace and community.
- **Toxic stress damages developing brain architecture, which can lead to life-long problems in learning, behavior, and physical and mental health.** Scientists now know that chronic, unrelenting stress in early childhood, caused by extreme poverty, repeated abuse, or severe maternal depression, for example, can be toxic to the developing brain. While positive stress (moderate, short-lived physiological responses to uncomfortable experiences) is an important and necessary aspect of healthy development, toxic stress is the strong, unrelieved activation of the body's stress management system. In the absence of the buffering protection of adult support, toxic stress becomes built into the body by processes that shape the architecture of the developing brain.

Policy Implications

- The basic principles of neuroscience indicate that early preventive intervention will be more efficient and produce more favorable outcomes than remediation later in life.
- A balanced approach to emotional, social, cognitive, and language development will best prepare all children for success in school and later in the workplace and community.
- Supportive relationships and positive learning experiences begin at home but can also be provided through a range of services with proven effectiveness factors. Babies' brains require stable, caring, interactive relationships with adults — any way or any place they can be provided will benefit healthy brain development.
- Science clearly demonstrates that, in situations where toxic stress is likely, intervening as early as possible is critical to achieving the best outcomes. For children experiencing toxic stress, specialized early interventions are needed to target the cause of the stress and protect the child from its consequences.

The Long-term Benefits of Investments In Young Children

“Policymakers must identify the educational investments that yield the highest public returns. Here the literature is clear: Dollars invested in early childhood development programs yield extraordinary public returns.”

Art Rolnick and Rob Grunewald, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

With the help of graduate students from the LSU School of Social Work, we now examine the extensive research literature on the economic case for making investments in early child development (ECD) programs. We also draw upon the presentation of Dr. Timothy Bartik during the Family Impact Seminar. The goal of this chapter is to highlight the overwhelming evidence suggesting that early childhood education programs are a great investment in the future of Louisiana so that these programs become a policy and budgetary priority for our state. The children of Louisiana deserve a chance to thrive and succeed no matter the socioeconomic class into which they are born, and early childhood education is a way to ensure their success.

Introduction

Many of Louisiana’s children grow up in poverty. For the thirteenth year in a row the state has been ranked 49th or 50th for the overall outcomes of our children by Annie E. Casey Kids Count, and 49th for the percentage of children in poverty. While this fact does not create a child’s destiny, it does, unfortunately, predict a dire life trajectory. Typically, this life trajectory is riddled with challenges such as increased school dropout rates, teen pregnancy, criminal activity, poor health and short life expectancy, and a continuation of the cycle of poverty. Poverty is the primary factor interfering with an individual’s ability to attain advanced education, obtain future gainful employment, and provide a satisfactory quality of life for themselves and their children.

There is little debate among scholars and experts on this point: Strong, evidence-based early childhood educational programs are beneficial to the development of young children, and are critical to the future success of at-risk children. ECD programs provide education, preparation and growth for all individuals in an effort to produce a healthy foundation of progress and productivity which will aid in the development and self-sufficiency of human beings. Implementing such programs provides great benefit to families, the economy, and the success of all individuals involved. Investing in early childhood development programs provides short-term and long-term benefits for society and the individual.

ECD programs help to produce positive long-term effects, including reduced need for special education programs, reduction in high school dropout rates, higher educational attainment, higher employment and earnings, and increased individual and family self-sufficiency. According to Dr. Timothy Bartik in his presentation to the Family

Impact Seminar, ECD programs can reduce the need for special education resources by as much as one-third, a positive impact on the state budget. Research further demonstrates that individuals who receive quality early childhood education are more likely to finish school. Reducing the number of school dropouts also has a positive impact on the state budget as well as personal economic benefits for individuals better prepared for the workforce. Advanced education and training are more easily attained when children are introduced to positive learning environments early in their lives. Dr. Bartik notes that early exposure to positive and creative learning environments instills the “soft skills” like motivation, discipline, and determination needed to successfully pursue long-term academic studies in a college or university setting. Experts presenting at the Family Impact Seminar noted that students who participate in quality early childhood education are more likely to progress through school without having to repeat a grade or course. Finally, the long-term benefits of early childhood education include increased employment opportunities and earnings over the course of a lifetime. Research shows that there is about a 14 percent increase in employment and as much as a 60 percent increase in adult employment earnings for individuals who participate in quality early education programs.

Examples of successful ECD programs currently in place in Louisiana include home visitation, child care, and Pre-K education. Home visitation programs provide in-home visits, support for families, and parent training. Quality child care gives parents the opportunity to work while their children are kept in a safe, stable and educational environment. Pre-K programs provide educational and learning environments for children as a transition to elementary education. These programs are beneficial not only to the children they serve but to their parents as well, launching families into a life-long commitment to their children’s education. More will be said about these programs in the next chapter.

“When we invest wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship.”

Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University

Investing in Jobs vs. Early Childhood Education: Must We Choose?

In the name of economic development and creating new jobs, nearly every state in the union has tried to lure new companies with public subsidies. Unfortunately, many economic development schemes using public dollars are a zero-sum game. Studies have shown that the case for these so-called bidding wars may be shortsighted and fundamentally flawed. From a national perspective, jobs are not created—they are only relocated. And the economic gains that seem apparent at state and local levels are also suspect because they would likely have been realized without the subsidies. In other words, what often passes for economic development and sound public investment is neither. Dr. Bartik noted that while the return on investments in ECD programs is at least 2:1, the return on investment in business tax incentives is about .50:3. Clearly, there are more promising ways to promote economic development, grow jobs, invest public dollars and support the families and children of our state – we do not have to choose one over the other!

- **Persuasive economic research indicates that there is a far more promising approach to economic development with government assistance.** It rests not on the externally oriented strategy of offering subsidies to attract private companies but rather on government support of those much closer to home, quite literally our youngest children. By investing in early childhood education, governments—in partnership with private firms and non-profit foundations—can reap high economic returns that are low-risk and long-lived. Investing in early childhood education is more likely to create a vibrant economy than using public funds to lure a sports team by building a new stadium or to attract an automaker by providing tax breaks.
- **As Louisiana continues its efforts to stimulate economic development and create a climate of prosperity, it is important to recognize what the experts say about how to achieve these economic goals. Today, there is a convergence of evidence from economics, neuroscience, and child development establishing the high economic return of investing in early childhood programs.** Since a child's most important brain development occurs before age five, his or her early experiences are critical to learning throughout life. Children who begin school behind typically remain behind, and research demonstrates that as many as half of school failures may be due to gaps in learning and development before school entry. The conclusion is that the benefits of prevention efforts targeting early childhood are less costly and more effective than later remediation. Louisiana's focus must be on a comprehensive effort to promote children's health and development in their early years to ensure that they become successful adults. This approach is far more affordable than the cost of failing to act.
- **Careful academic research demonstrates that tax dollars spent on early childhood development provide extraordinary returns compared with investments in the public and even private sector.** Some of these benefits are private gains for the children involved, in the form of higher wages later in life. But the broader

economy also benefits because individuals who participate in high-quality early childhood development programs have greater skills than they otherwise would, and they are thus able to contribute productively to their local economies. Dr. Timothy Bartik asked this question during the Family Impact Seminar: *“Why should the state invest in early childhood programs if the kids are only going to leave in adulthood?”* He answered that based on the most up-to-date census data the reason is simple: LA residents do not leave. It is important to invest in children and families because they are, in fact, the future of Louisiana.

- **Several longitudinal evaluations all reach essentially the same conclusion: The return on early childhood development programs that focus on at-risk families far exceeds the return on other projects that are funded as economic development.** Cost-benefit analyses of the nation’s longest-running evidenced-based programs such as the Perry Preschool program, the Abecedarian Project, the Chicago Child-Parent Centers (CPC), and the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy Project showed returns ranging from \$3 to \$17 for every dollar invested. This suggests an annual rate of return, adjusted for inflation, of between seven and 18 percent. Dr. Bartik noted during his Family Impact Seminar presentation that there are short-run benefits as well in the form of increased job opportunities for child development workers. These jobs are particularly attractive in helping families making the transition away from welfare program reliance to self-sufficiency.

Art Rolnick, Senior Vice President and Director of Research at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and Rob Grunewald, Regional Economic Analyst with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and a Family Impact Seminar presenter, concluded that “the return on investment from early childhood development is extraordinary, resulting in better working public schools, more educated workers, and less crime.” While program participants directly benefited from their increase in after-tax earnings and fringe benefits, these individual benefits were small by comparison to the benefits gained by the general public. Rolnick and Grunewald found that about 80 percent of the benefits went to the general public (e.g., students were less disruptive in class and went on to commit fewer crimes), yielding over a 12 percent internal rate of return for society in general. Compared with other public investments, and even those in the private sector, Rolnick and Grunewald concluded that high-quality early childhood education is a good buy!

“A balanced economic development strategy includes attention to labor supply and demand policies. High quality early childhood programs increase the quality of a state’s labor supply by a large amount compared to costs.”

Dr. Timothy Bartik, Senior Economist and Family Impact Seminar Presenter

Early Childhood Programs: Overview and Analysis

“Louisiana’s future is dependent on its investment in the lives of children. Interventions must begin prenatally and be an ongoing process.”

In this chapter we build on the presentations offered at the Family Impact Seminar and reviews of research literature conducted by graduate students in the LSU School of Social Work to offer an overview and analysis of effective, evidence-based Early Childhood Programs. It is not enough to promote early childhood education as some “abstract” or theoretical benefit in the development of young children. Here we turn to the evaluation research on programs vetted on a national and international scale. While no one program “does it all,” there are effective programs to which the State of Louisiana, and its partners, schools, communities and families can turn. Many of these programs are already in place, often on a small scale or as a pilot program. We know the programs work across the nation and in our own state; they need only to be prioritized as a matter of state policy and fiscal priority. Many of the programs reviewed below are endorsed by the Louisiana Child Poverty Prevention Council as effective in the fight against child poverty. The programs to be discussed include Positive Parenting programs (such as LAPEN and Triple P), the Nurse-Family Partnership Home Visiting Program, and Pre-K programs. We will conclude with a brief review of other successful programs that Louisiana policymakers might consider piloting for the children of our state, including those modeled after the North Carolina Abecedarian program, the Perry Pre-School Program, and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers. Finally, we will examine the fiscal impact and improved outcomes of such programs if they were fully funded for the children and families of Louisiana.

Positive Parenting Initiatives

A positive parenting program presents a model - an instruction manual of sorts - for parents struggling with the obstacles of raising children. In some cases, families have fallen into cycles of abuse: some scholars believe that the abuse and neglect of America’s children is a direct perpetuation of an abuse cycle by parents who were themselves abused as children. Such parents may be court-ordered to receive instruction and support for child-rearing as a condition of maintaining a relationship with their children. In other instances, parents are interested or even desperate to obtain parenting instruction to help with the many challenges faced by families in today’s society. Such parents want to do their very best and want to equip their children with as many tools as possible for thriving in a sometimes toxic world. Positive parenting programs are a key element in these contexts.

Melanie Bronfin of Tulane University discussed the BrightStart initiative at the Family Impact Seminar. BrightStart is Louisiana’s official Early Childhood Advisory Council, and is made up of a wide variety of

representatives from agencies and organizations who serve young children in Louisiana. Taking the position that intervention begins before birth, BrightStart is the expansion of the Nurse-Family Partnership program in Louisiana. Finding a lack of infrastructure and support for parent educators in our state, BrightStart also formed the Louisiana Parenting Education Network (LAPEN) an association of parent education professionals. Another priority for BrightStart has been the expansion of the evidence-based model Early Childhood Supports and Service (ECSS), a prevention and intervention program that serves children from birth to five years of age who have been identified as at risk for developing social, emotional and/or developmental problems. ECSS is a program of the Office of Mental Health in the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH), and the model is currently serving 13 of Louisiana's 64 parishes. BrightStart has brought together different state agencies and private funders to meet with representatives from Triple P – Positive Parenting Program – a comprehensive system of parenting and family support. Triple P offers an effective, systematic approach for preventing and treating problems faced by a number of state offices and agencies, including the Office of Public Health, the Office of Mental Health, the Office of Community Services, the Office of Family Support and the Children's Trust Fund. It is BrightStart's vision that a pilot Triple P project will be implemented in two or three regions in FY 2011.

The Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families is a relatively new organization for the State of Louisiana. The mission of the Partnership is to promote ONE vision and voice for Louisiana's children, and to improve the well-being of children and their families through public policy advocacy, education and awareness, and data-driven efforts. It is the umbrella agency for LAPEN, and has been the advocacy partner for BrightStart's legislative campaigns. LAPEN is driven by the central goal of providing quality, effective education for parents. The network has developed core competencies for parent educators and has developed a voluntary registry for parent educators throughout the state. Along with these initiatives, the Partnership advocates for children and families within the Louisiana legislature, has created policy briefs to inform lawmakers, and conducted public opinion surveys on topics involving early childhood.

The application of positive parenting programs throughout the state has been consistently cost effective and successful. Using proven and effective programs such as ECSS (currently offered in 13 parishes), the Nurse-Family Partnership, LAPEN, and BrightStart (now the official advisory council on early childhood programs) will benefit Louisiana's children. The Child Poverty Prevention Council supports expansion of these proven programs into all parishes and for all eligible families.

The Nurse-Family Partnership

There are an estimated 600,000 children born in the United States yearly to low income, single mothers who are at risk for experiencing limited education, health and economic outcomes. The Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program empowers these expectant mothers to improve their lives and the lives of their unborn children. It is therefore important that funding on the state and federal levels be available for those who qualify. In Louisiana, NFP

is funded by a number of different funding streams, including state general funds, TANF, Medicaid, the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, and a small amount from private sources. The program provides in-home visits from registered nurses. The nurses visit families from birth until the time the child reaches the age of two years. These visits create an opportunity to establish rapport as well as a therapeutic relationship which yields trusting relationships between first time mothers and their nurse. Visits are generally held in the home of the client and take place on a weekly basis during the first month of enrollment. Mothers are visited for the first time no later than the 28th week of pregnancy. This is followed by every other week visits until birth, then every two weeks post birth. Expectant mothers are encouraged to enroll for services immediately after learning of their pregnancy. Support from family members, as well as, partners, is always encouraged.

The Nurse-Family Partnership is an evidence based model that has worked to change the outcomes of individual lives, families and communities as a whole. It is a free, voluntary program geared toward breaking the cycle of poverty. The NFP employs a strengths-based approach and provides information to expectant mothers regarding the changes to expect during pregnancy, the importance of good nutrition, the importance of not smoking and the need for physical fitness. Mothers are given information on family planning as well as planning for their own future (i.e., education, training, work, etc.) following the birth of their baby. Research shows that the NFP continues to be effective by promoting increased spacing between births, better prenatal health outcomes, a decreased number of childhood injuries, a decrease in multiple pregnancies, an increase in the number of mothers who are employed as well as those who are prepared for school.

Louisiana has benefited significantly from the NFP program, as follows (reported on the program website):

- 94 percent of children were fully immunized at 24 months of age
- 48 percent reduction in marijuana use during pregnancy
- 70 percent of participants who entered the program without a high school diploma/GED have since completed their high school diploma/GED; were continuing their education beyond high school or were working toward their diploma/GED
- 93 percent of 21 month olds scored at or above normal on language development
- A cost benefit analysis by the Rand Corporation found that nationally the NFP recoups cost savings by the time the child reaches age 15 that are estimated to be four times the original investment.

The Nurse-Family Partnership is now in 52 of Louisiana's 64 parishes, but is only serving 15 percent of the eligible mothers. The Child Poverty Prevention Council supports the incremental expansion of the Nurse-Family Partnership – Home Visiting Program into all parishes and to be able to serve 50 percent of the eligible mothers. {This is a voluntary program, and there would never be 100 percent participation. The report written by DHH recommends expansion over five years to be able to serve 50 percent of the eligible populations.}

Pre-K Programs in Louisiana

Louisiana serves young children through a number of state funded Pre-K programs including: Starting Points, the Student Enhancement Block Grant Program, LA 4, and the Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development

Program (NSECD). These state funded Pre-K programs differ in eligibility requirements, funding levels, and funding sources with a combined total budget of nearly \$106M in state money. LA 4 is the largest program.

LA 4 Pre-K program

The LA 4 prekindergarten program began in 2001 with the passage of Senate Bill 776, designed to serve four year old children not currently enrolled in publicly funded prekindergarten classes. The LA 4 program was modeled after the Starting Points prekindergarten program, which began in the 1992-1993 school year. The LA 4 program also provides transportation for its participating students.

The Department of Education staff provides technical assistance, promotes collaborative efforts, and conducts on-site monitoring and evaluation of LA 4 programs at school sites using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS-R). LA 4 also provides full day pre-k. The program is provided by school districts choosing to offer the program at no cost to children eligible for free or reduced price meals or through tuition on a sliding fee scale to those who do not qualify for no-cost services. A national team of researchers led by Dr. Craig Ramey of the Georgetown University Center on Health and Education Results annually evaluates the LA 4 program.

The Child Poverty Prevention Council supports state funding of a phased-in expansion of LA 4 – extending to all four-year-olds by fiscal year 2013-14 through an integrated and collaborative delivery model that includes public schools systems, Head Start, and private child care providers.

Other Model Programs for Consideration by Louisiana Policymakers

Abecedarian Project

The Carolina Abecedarian program was a groundbreaking intervention that drastically improved the life trajectory of low socio-economic status (SES) children in the early 1970s, in the Chapel Hill, NC area. The program was designed to give children who statistically fall behind in regards to cognition the same early education chances as if they were born into middle or high SES families. The project website states that the participants included children from low-income families who received full-time, high quality educational intervention in a childcare setting from infancy through age five. The project curricula incorporated activities involving social, emotional, and cognitive areas of development but emphasized language development. The activities were individualized to meet the needs of each child and were more skills-based and group oriented for older pre-school children. The program also offers home visits by home-school resource teachers who could tutor the children and encourage their parents to work with them on specialized curriculum during the children's first three years of elementary school. Home visits and parent-child curriculum activities strengthen the child's education and offer the opportunity to develop healthy bonds with their parents through shared educational activities.

When the participants were studied at age eight, 50 percent of the children who received no intervention

(control group) had failed at least one grade, compared to 38 percent of children who received school-aged intervention only, 29 percent who received pre-school intervention only, and 16 percent who received both pre-school and school-aged interventions. At age 21, 105 of the original 111 infants were living and eligible for follow-up. Data were collected from the young adults using standardized tests, questionnaires, and an interview. Children who were a part of the intervention project completed more years of education and were more likely to attend a four-year college than those in the control group. Enhanced language development, delayed first births, reduced rates of marijuana usage, and increased skilled employment and/or higher education are just a few improvements that occurred because of the project. A cost benefit analysis of the project indicated a return of \$3.23 for every dollar spent.

The Carolina Abecedarian program has been replicated multiple times and newer versions of the program focus more on the family unit as a whole. The Carolina Abecedarian Program was a success due to the program's ability to support and supplement parents' and families' ability to carry out their daily responsibilities while still serving the parents' children. If the Abecedarian Project was implemented in Louisiana various organizations agencies, businesses, and elected officials would need to unite all available resources. Child care centers and elementary schools would be ideal locations to begin implementing the project. Subjects could begin the project upon entering child care around infancy and once enrolled in elementary school, the children would move on to the next phase of the project. There would be a great need for skilled teachers, nurses, physicians, etc. In the Carolina study, the resource teachers were graduate level teachers with backgrounds in primary education and only worked with about twelve children per year. The Carolina Abecedarian Project hired persons who had a great deal of experience working with children. Research nurses, pediatricians, and social workers were also available when needed by the teachers, parents, and children.

Perry Preschool Project

The Perry Preschool Project studied at-risk children from 1962 through 1996. Researchers found that by age 19, those students who were in quality preschools fared better those who were not. The students fared better not only in schools, but in their health, social adjustment, and economic prospects. More long-term benefits were also found which demonstrate that the returns available to an investment in a high-quality early childhood development program are significant. By the time participants were about 27 years of age; these benefits were confirmed by high school completion rates, higher income levels, and lower arrest rates. Over 65 percent of program participants graduated from regular high school compared with 45 percent of non-participants. Four times as many program participants as non-participants earned \$2,000 or more per month. And only one-fifth as many program participants as non-participants were arrested five or more times by age 27. The researchers estimated that every dollar invested in the preschool program returned \$7.00 that otherwise would have gone for remediation such as welfare, unemployment costs, or other compensatory services.

In the study's most recent phase, 97 percent of the study participants still living were interviewed at age 40.

Additional data was gathered from the subjects' school, social services, and arrest records. The study group had committed fewer crimes and was more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool. Overall, the study documented a return to society of more than \$17 for every tax dollar invested in the early care and education program.

Child-Parent Centers

The Child-Parent Centers (CPC) in Chicago's Title I schools are a government funded and publicly administered program that serves thousands of inner-city children and spends about the same amount of money per child as Head Start. A longitudinal study of participants in the CPC program indicates that it generates powerful benefits that stay with the children at least until age 20. Specifically:

- CPC's preschool program returned \$7.14 for every \$1 invested.
- The average participant spent 1.5 years in the CPC preschool program at a cost of \$6,692.
- The total benefit from CPC amounted to nearly \$48,000 per participant.
- Of that amount, the participants themselves gained over \$20,000 from increased earnings due to better jobs and almost \$1,700 in reduced child care cost.
- The public at large gained even more, about \$25,800, including an additional \$7,200 in taxes on the higher earnings.
- Savings of \$7,100 in criminal justice costs due to lower arrest rates were realized.
- Approximately \$6,100 in savings to potential crime victims were realized; and
- \$4,900 saved by school systems in reduced placements in remedial and special education.

Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Programs

Programs such as those described in this chapter do cost money, although the investment in early childhood programs will yield savings in the long run. So far, the case has been made for these programs primarily by referring to the more modest costs of early childhood programs vs. the greater costs of remedial programs such as welfare or criminal justice interventions. In this final section, we will examine the evidence suggesting spending reductions in other programmatic areas that might be achieved if quality early childhood programs were made available to all children and families in the State of Louisiana.

Low Birthweight

In 2006, Louisiana reported over 7,200 low-birth weight babies. This number is 11.4 percent of the total of all births that year, ranking Louisiana 49th in the nation in low-birth weight births. The cost of healthcare for a low-birth weight infant is approximately \$28,000 to \$40,000, resulting in an annual cost of low-birth weight in Louisiana of \$202M to \$289M. Research suggests that ECD programs can decrease the incidents of low-birth weight by half, which could save Louisiana an average of \$101M to \$144M per year.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Louisiana investigates approximately 24,000 cases of child abuse and neglect per year. Of the total investigated, 7,600 are found to be valid. The average cost of a child abuse and neglect investigation is

calculated to be \$2,900 - \$3,900. When the average cost of an investigation is multiplied by the number of investigations, the average cost per year of investigating child abuse is \$69M - \$93M. The average cost of hospitalization for a child abuse and neglect case was approximated at \$19,299 in 1999. Multiply this number by the inflation of health care costs of 7.4 percent over ten years and the average cost of hospitalization for abused and neglected children is almost \$40,000. If half of the substantiated abuse cases in Louisiana were hospitalized as a result of maltreatment, the cost of healthcare for mistreated children is close to \$150M. Nurse-Family Partnerships reported that nationally, a randomized control trial saw a 48 percent reduction in child abuse and neglect cases.

Education

A major predictor of high school dropout is grade retention in earlier years. However, the cost of grade retention is not only for the child: holding a student back a grade costs the state money. One study reported almost one-third fewer retentions in the first grade for young children who completed their early childhood education program. High quality early childhood programs may contribute to improved rates of student progress through school grades and fewer children being held back, thereby saving the community and the state tens of thousands of dollars spent in holding children back in school.

Teachers quit less often if students are ready to learn. According to a battery of studies by the nation's top researchers, well-funded ECD programs like Harlem Children's Zone increase educational achievement for impoverished children. After completing ECD programs, children are better prepared for the school setting in later years. Teachers often get frustrated in at-risk communities where students tend to be more disruptive when they do not understand the concepts being taught or do not believe that the information and skills being taught to them are relevant to their lives. If these same students are taught from birth that learning is crucial to survival, they will be more apt to respect education and their teachers. The National Commission of Teaching and America's Future estimates the cost of one teacher leaving a school at \$8,400. In 2007, almost a quarter (22 percent) of the teachers in Louisiana quit or moved. If teachers are comfortable with their students, they are less likely to change career paths or seek out employment at schools in which children are more receptive to education.

Adult Criminality

The average cost of arresting an individual is \$6,245. Although men commit the majority of crime, women are arrested every day. Women who have children will cost the state a considerable amount more as a result of child protection, foster care, and even prenatal care in the event of incarceration. According to the United States Office of Justice Department data, almost 200,000 arrests were made in 2008. Recent estimates are that women constitute approximately 20 percent of arrests. Therefore, based on these estimates,

approximately 40,000 arrests in Louisiana are women. If half of the women arrested have children it costs almost \$125M just to arrest these women. NFP claims to have reduced arrests by mothers in their program by 61 percent. If the program was implemented universally and the same effects found in this state, Louisiana would save almost \$50M in the cost of arrests alone. This dollar amount could possibly be doubled or more when considering average costs of foster and group home care, investigations, and counseling services for the children.

Parent Labor Force Participation and Welfare Use

Parents who have reliable child care work more and rely less on public assistance. In a study by the National Women's Law Center, researchers concluded that women were 82 percent more likely to be employed after two years when they received child care assistance from the state. Work is the best economic stimulus. If these women are working they are going to rely less on government assistance. They also are spending their wages so that some proportion of every dollar earned by these mothers will be circulated into the economy. They are providing for their families. Even if these families continue to need a combination of government assistance with wage-based income to provide for a family, they will experience reduced financial stress in the household.

Recommendations

The above estimates are by no means an exhaustive list of the costs of child poverty or the benefits of ECD programs. However, the evidence above establishes that investing in ECD programs has a rich payout for the individual, the community, and the economy. Long-term effects of ECD programs bring an even greater reward to the state. The recommendations of this section follow:

- **Create an ECD program which blends the best of the evidence based practices that are currently offered and include all the elements of such programs in one central location.** Each family should be placed with a case manager who links the child with an ECD classroom modeled after, for example, the Abecedarian Project. Each prospective mother should be placed into a child care workshop based on, for example, the Harlem Children Zone's Baby College and linked with a home health nurse (based on NFP) who can assess the child's environment and offer hands-on assistance and education on healthy child rearing. These programs combined will offer the most effective opportunities to the children who are currently caught in the cycle of poverty and would offer generous financial and social returns to the community.
- **Investing in the children of Louisiana is the best investment this state can make. Early childhood developmental programs are vital and essential to the success, and future, of our state's children.** ECD programs provide education, preparation and growth for all who typically would not have these

opportunities. This is in an effort to produce a healthy foundation of progress and productivity which will aid in the development and self-sufficiency of human beings. Implementing and investing in ECD programs provides substantial benefit to families, the economy, and the success of the children involved. Investing in high quality early childhood developmental programs will provide stability and an increased level of cognitive functioning for children into adulthood.

- **By investing in early childhood education or development programs, governments—in partnership with private firms and non-profit foundations—can create high economic returns that are low-risk and long-lived.** Investing in early-childhood development programs is more likely to reinforce a strong economy than using public funds in other less effective means.
- **Such programs as the Perry Preschool Project, the Nurse-Family Partnership, the Carolina Abecedarian program, and Child-Parent Centers have all borne fruit as successful ECD programs.** The state has a number of excellent models to choose from that have been empirically tested and time weathered. Each program listed above has their specific strengths and they each emphasize different services and different levels of intervention. What they have in common is a commitment to children and the child’s family in the early development stages of their life.
- **ECD programs have the ability to lower the future costs that the state has to bear as a matter of cause.** Childhood abuse and neglect, low birth weight, school dropout, and adult criminality all cost the state a significant amount of money as has been evidenced in previous sections. Additionally, the amount of money spent on education that is ineffective or on special education is astronomical compared to the amount that ECD programs would cost to mitigate the need for such remedial and special education. ECD programs can directly and indirectly lower these occurrences, thus saving the state millions of dollars per year.
- **Evidence shows that parents who have reliable childcare rely less on public assistance.** Parents that have reliable childcare will also have the ability to stay actively and continually employed. This fact has a large positive implication on the state’s workforce and the workforce’s ability to stay consistent and productive.
- **Pass legislation that helps to create an ECD program which combines the best of the evidence based practices that have been described and include all the effective variables of the programs in one, central location.** These programs combined will offer the most effective opportunities to the children who are currently caught in the cycle of poverty and would offer generous financial and social returns to the community. Inclusive in such legislation should be funding for rigorous program evaluation with special emphasis on program fidelity.

Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: A Microeconomic and Business Leader Perspective

Business Leadership in Early Childhood Development

Investments in early childhood development programs and education have short term benefits as well as the long term benefits that have been emphasized thus far in this report. State and local business leaders invited to the Family Impact Seminar addressed the more immediate impact of such investments during the afternoon session. In this section, we share information presented by speakers on programs in Alabama and Minnesota. The section concludes with an overview of the work being done by Pew in its Partnership for America's Economic Success.

Alabama Smart Start Initiative

Mr. Ralph Stacy, Business Council of Alabama, provided a business perspective on the economic benefits of early childhood investments. Throughout his presentation at the Family Impact Seminar, he stressed the importance of partnerships among all stakeholders – business, non-profit, faith-based, education, social service, health care, public, private, corporate, and philanthropic sectors.

Vision

Every Alabama Child Will Have the Opportunity to Succeed in Life

Mission

To work in partnership with other public and private entities to maintain an effective state and local system of resources and support that enables parents, families, and others who care for young children to ensure that they are healthy, protected, nurtured, and offered every opportunity to succeed in life.

Who is the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC)?

The Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization created to develop, design and implement a unified approach for improving outcomes of children from birth to age five in Alabama. This public/private partnership is a distinct initiative to develop and strengthen systems, forge strategies and increase public awareness for all early childhood programs in Alabama. The APC is guided by prominent business leaders committed to enhancing the quality of life and quality of learning for children birth to five years in Alabama. The APC is governed by a 26 member board of directors.

Why "Smart Start"?

Smart Start® is the all-encompassing identity and trademark for all projects of the Alabama Partnership for

Children. One of the questions often asked is, "if your name is the Alabama Partnership for Children, why the Smart Start logo?" The answer is simple. Because the future of our state, nation, and world lies in the hands of these very children, our desire is to create awareness and partnerships that will give all children in Alabama a "Smart Start" in life. That said, the goal is simple yet huge - and the Smart Start logo is a never-ending reminder of that goal.

How was the Alabama Partnership for Children Developed?

In 2000, government officials, service providers, advocates and business leaders came together to discuss and share ideas regarding the enormous needs of Alabama's children. Perhaps the most significant outcome of these meetings was recognition of the need for improving services, streamlining coordination and maximizing available resources. The need for a better synchronized structure for public/private partnerships led to the creation of the APC. In seeking to meet these challenges, the APC implements the following program areas:

- **Early Care & Education** - Improving the quality and availability of early learning opportunities for young children and developing and retaining a trained and well-educated early childhood workforce through T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®.
- **Parent Resources**- Ensuring broad access to and distribution of information to parents through delivery of the Smart Start Parenting Kit.
- **Smart Start Partnerships** - Creating a state and local coordinated structure surrounding the needs of young children (zero to five)
- **Public Awareness** - Working with all stakeholders to develop a unified message and effective delivery system regarding the importance of the first years of life.
- **System Planning and Development** – Encouraging coordination that will result in a well-developed comprehensive system and effective use of federal, state, local, and private funding through local partnerships and with partners at the state level.

Minnesota Early Learning Foundation

During his presentation to the Family Impact Seminar, Mr. Rob Grunewald provided a brief overview of the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation (MELF) as an example of involving the business community in the early childhood dialogue. The Minnesota Early Learning Foundation's mission is to recommend cost-effective strategies for preparing children to succeed in school. Thoughtfully implemented, early investments reap dividends: child development now translates into economic development later on. A child with a winning start becomes part of a solid community, contributes to our competitiveness and enriches our society.

MELF is currently focused on the implementation of pilot programs and their evaluations. As interim evaluation reports are completed, MELF will make their findings available to support improvement of the pilot programs and to share results as they become available. MELF is also working on developing a framework for sharing our evaluation findings and related recommendations for policy and program changes. Final results and recommendations will be issued in late 2011 and early 2012.

The Minnesota Early Learning Foundation is focused on evaluating non-traditional, market-driven approaches to

improving both the quality of early learning programs, and access to those programs. MELF works to create a more effective market for early learning programs, exploring various approaches to empower parents with the information and resources necessary to participate in that market.

- **Community Initiatives** - Each of the four pilot projects involve Parent Aware and some form of scholarship or allowance to help families access quality early care and education programs. Each community has multiple early childhood interventions in place involving a number of community partners. The four communities include North Minneapolis, Saint Paul, Wayzata and Blue Earth and Nicollet counties.
- **Innovation Grants** -MELF supports ten diverse projects across Minnesota designed to contribute to the body of knowledge about what works best, and most cost-effectively, in program operations and in the larger early childhood infrastructure. Many of the projects focus on serving a particular group such as English Language Learners, immigrants, children with special needs, or children in rural communities.
- **Parent Aware Ratings** -Parent Aware is a pilot quality rating system that uses standardized, evidence-based measures to rate the quality early childhood education providers. Parent Aware is unique among quality rating systems with its clear focus on parents and a strong evaluation exploring the correlation between ratings and child outcomes.
- **Research and Evaluation** -MELF has developed a model for measuring the school readiness of children at various stages and across a variety of domains. MELF has identified a battery of reliable and valid measures for each of these domains, and created a shared database where assessment results from across projects can be aggregated, shared and analyzed. This measurement model and database will be used over time to evaluate other projects, both in Minnesota and nationwide.

By exploring how MELF-funded initiatives improve the ability of communities to sustain quality early care and education programs, MELF hopes to provide direction for Minnesota and other states to create early childhood systems that improve children’s school readiness and maximize resources. Our goal is a system that works for parents and children rather than dividing funding and service delivery systems into artificial silos.

Pew Charitable Trusts: Partnership for America's Economic Success

During the Family Impact Seminar, Mr. Grunewald also cited Pew’s Partnership for America’s Economic Success as an example and resource to involve and engage business leaders in making the case for investments in early childhood. The Partnership for America's Economic Success is a coalition of economists, policy experts and advocates mobilizing business leaders to improve tomorrow's economy through smart policy investments in young children today. From 2006 to 2009, the Partnership assembled solid economic evidence on the societal benefits of a broad range of investments in children, and assessed the communications and coalition building efforts needed to advance these policies. Now, this information is the foundation of a national campaign to make the success of every child the nation's top economic priority. The Partnership is managed by the Pew Center on the States in Washington, D.C.

“Investing in young children is a U.S. economic imperative. And we can prove it.”

Robert Dugger

The George Gund Foundation, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation,
The Ohio Children’s Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Scholastic, Inc.

Strategies to Engage the Business Community

“Quality early education for at-risk children can produce an annual rate of return as high as 16 percent—higher than most stock portfolios. It should be at the top of any state’s economic development agenda.”

Art Rolnick, Senior Vice President, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Participants in the Family Impact Seminar discussed a variety of strategies for getting business leaders on board as advocates for early childhood development programs. The tips that follow are adapted for use from success stories in other states.

Ways for Business Leaders to Get Involved

Sharing Knowledge

- Meet with preschool advocates to learn more about the early learning issue
- Sign up for email updates from child advocacy organizations

Building Support

- Visit a preschool to see high-quality early childhood education in action
- Post information about early childhood education on your company’s/organization’s website or in newsletter
- Talk about importance of early childhood education to colleagues and friends.
- Provide quote for website, newsletter, other outreach materials
- Sign letter to the editor
- Attend Advocacy Days sponsored by child and family organizations and participate in legislative visits
- Provide feedback on early childhood education messaging

Becoming a Champion

- Be featured on a dedicated website or in a newsletter as a champion
- Participate in preschool visit/briefing with a legislator, make the case for early learning
- Be interviewed by media
- Participate in editorial board meetings
- Candidate education. Attend and speak at town halls/forums, i.e. for electoral candidates
- Submit letters to legislators supporting legislation, policy positions.
- Call legislators asking them to support particular policies, legislation
- Testify at hearings in Baton Rouge for particular policy proposals
- Speak to professional and community organizations – host breakfast, lunch, roundtable, briefing
- Host community engagement breakfast or brown bag lunch at organization
- Participate in media events

Make your voice heard on the issue

- Write an Op-Ed or letter to the editor; call into talk radio; post on a blog. As a business leader, your voice can be a powerful one in advocating for sound investments in your community.
- Consider all types of publications, starting with the ones you use most faithfully

- Generally, keep letters to about 250 words and opinion pieces to about 700 words
- If writing an opinion piece, contact the publication first to discuss the topic
- Tie your piece to a specific current issue, problem or success in your community

Contact your local children’s group to offer to participate in events to represent the business voice.

- Find out if there is an upcoming conference, press event, or other chance for you to bring in the business community’s voice.
- This is also a great opportunity to engage your peers. See if a fellow business leader would like to join you in speaking, present at a different event, or just come to listen to you speak and hear the economic message.

Encourage providers of early childhood services to join community/civic organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce, Kiwanis, or Rotary. This will give them an opportunity to share information about the importance of early childhood programs to the economy and to network with new, influential voices for children’s programs.

Encourage other national or local business or service groups to learn about and advocate for a range of early childhood investments. You can play an authoritative role as a source of information and thus help other business groups become involved. Advocate “up” – ask your national association to take a position – or “laterally”, by encouraging local peers to push for early childhood investments.

- Talk with other business groups about the issues they believe are most pressing in your state or community.
- Potential partners include the National Association of Manufacturers, Kiwanis, Rotary, and United Way.
- Ask your association to feature a workshop on the economic benefits of early childhood investment at their national or regional conferences.
- Develop a limited list of specific policies –city, parish, or state – that could be changed to address early childhood investments.
- Identify ways in which advocating for these policy changes fits into the service mission of the organization you are targeting.
- Be specific in your ask and follow-up with the organization.

Encourage other business peers to get involved. Small groups of committed individuals can serve as powerful advocates both in addressing short-term needs and establishing long-term change.

- Use existing networking opportunities to talk about this issue.
- Host a lunch at your office or local restaurant for an informal roundtable discussion.
- Identify common concerns, and the policy solutions that will help address them.
- Agree to specific, discrete next steps, whether it’s writing a joint letter to the mayor or simply agreeing to meet again to further discuss the issue.

Host a forum to share research on the benefits of early childhood investments. This might be a business gathering, conference, or networking event. Your voice is a unique and formidable one, so linking early childhood programs to your community’s immediate, and sustained well-being helps to build a strong case for those investments.

Consider things that your business is already doing that could be targeted toward promoting sensible policies on early childhood development.

- If you are a publisher for instance, perhaps your publication could examine this issue; if you own an ad agency perhaps you can develop pro bono materials to run as PSAs; food service companies can provide information on nutrition and food security.
- **Ask your lobbyist to take on the issue** – at the local, state or federal level –even a small amount of attention to crucial children’s policy topics could be very helpful.
- **Adopt the Telluride Principles (available on the website of the Pew Center on the States);** call on state and local government to make funding decisions based on return on investment. The principles provide a general framework for policy making based on return on investment and hard evidence.

Join a commission. Many states have senior level advisory bodies to advise the governor and others on early childhood policy. This can be a major time commitment, but adding business members can help contribute your expertise and distinctive voice to this issue.

Contact policy makers, leveraging your relationships. As a business leader, you have access to resources and connections that can be leveraged to help build the case for investing in children, and, by extension, your entire community. Directly contact your elected officials to ask them to support increased investments in children – this is perhaps the most important and powerful step you can take.

- Think through your personal and professional contacts and identify people who have some direct role in setting policy, either as an elected or appointed official or a staff member.
- Whether it’s a school board representative you work out next to at the gym, or the policy director in the local Social Services department who attends your house of worship, direct connections can help move agendas.
- Peers are power. Pediatricians can network with one another and other doctors to promote good childhood health policy; construction companies can advocate for affordable housing and policies that give families with small children stable homes.
- Ask your local children’s advocate what are the pressing issues, and when is the right time to make your positions known. If they have the capacity, they can give you essential background and prepare you to communicate with policy makers.

The Louisiana Landscape

Louisiana – The State We Are In

Louisiana State Profile: Demographic Data

Children Under the Age of Five (2007)

298,157

Children in Poverty – Under the Age of 18 (2007)

285,425 27 percent

Low Birthweight Babies (2006)

11.4 percent

Federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) (2006)

28 percent

Publicly Insured Children (Medicaid and LaCHIP) (2008)

660,388

Youth Under the Supervision of the Office of Juvenile Justice (2007)

4,661

Children in Foster Care (2007)

5,140

Pre-Kindergarten Enrollment in Public Schools (2008)

33,438

Pre-K Enrollment in Public Schools: LA 4 (2007)

13,212

Head Start and Early Head Start Slots (2006)

19,462

Louisiana's Poverty Profile

Children in Poverty (%) Showing most recent 5 years; [Show All Years](#)

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
27%	27%	29%	28%	27%
1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
26%	24%	26%	27%	

Children in extreme poverty (%) Showing most recent 5 years; [Show All Years](#)

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
15%	13%	13%	12%	11%
2000	2001	2002	2003	
11%	14%	11%	15%	

Children under age 5 in poverty (%) Showing most recent 5 years; [Show All Years](#)

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
31%	31%	32%	30%	30%
2000	2001	2002	2003	
31%	31%	30%	34%	

Preterm Births (%) Showing most recent 5 years; [Show All Years](#)

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
12.3%	12.8%	13.3%	13.7%	13.8%
2001				
12.3%				

Infant Mortality (Rate per 1,000)

2001 - 2003	2002 - 2004	2004 - 2006
9.8	10.0	10.2

Louisiana's Early Childhood Profile

State policies that promote health, education, and strong families can help the early development and school readiness of America's youngest citizens. This profile highlights Louisiana's policy choices alongside other data related to the well-being of young children.

Health and Nutrition

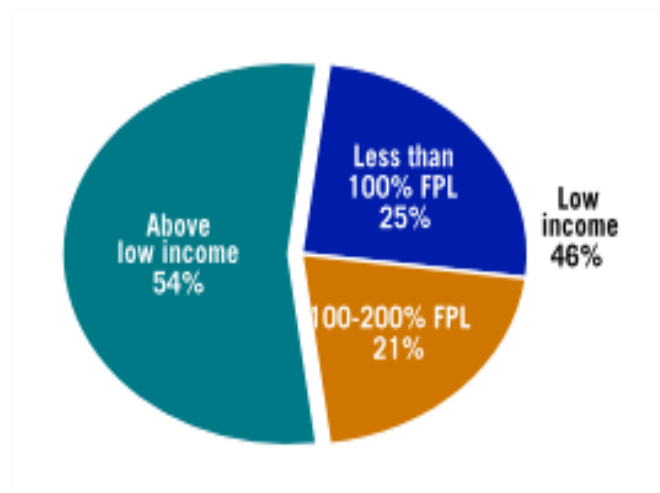
Louisiana raised public health insurance eligibility levels for children birth to age five from 200 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL), in 2008 to 250 percent FPL in 2009. The public health insurance eligibility level for pregnant women remained at 200 percent FPL. Louisiana was allocated over \$6.9M in 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) federal funding for statewide IDEA Part C initiatives for infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays.

Early Care and Education

Louisiana was allocated \$40M in ARRA funds to supplement child care for low-income families, with \$3.3M to increase overall child care quality, and \$1.9M for use in infant/toddler care quality initiatives. Louisiana does not have an infant/toddler credential for child care providers.

Parenting and Economic Supports

Louisiana was allocated \$81.9M in ARRA funds for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) through FY 2010, and \$461M for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through FY 2013. Louisiana does not offer exemptions or extensions from the 60-month TANF time limit to pregnant women or parents of young children.



Young Children in Louisiana, by Income Level, 2008

Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: Statistical Data for Louisiana Initiatives

Home Visiting Programs

Nurse-Family Partnership Home Visiting Program

NFP began in 1999 in Louisiana and is now in 52 of 64 parishes, but only serves 15 percent of the eligible population. Its current funding is as follows:

July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010 Louisiana NFP Budget

Program	Dollars in Millions	% of Total
State General Funds	\$2.60	21.00%
TANF	\$3.70	29.88%
Medicaid	\$1	8.08%
MCH Block Grant	\$5	40.38%
United Way of Greater New Orleans	\$0.08	0.65%
TOTAL	\$12.38	100.00%

The Louisiana Home Visiting Campaign seeks to increase funding over 5 years to be able to serve 50 percent of eligible women. The only other home visiting models that are funded to any extent are the **Nurturing Parenting Program** and **Intensive Home Based Services**. These programs are only funded for families who are already part of the child welfare system, not for primary prevention. All state funding for **HIPPY** was cut in 2009, with only four remaining programs funded locally through Title I funds. There are four **Healthy Start** programs and eleven **Even Start** programs—all funded with federal funds.

“If communities are truly interested in making sound investments that will yield high public and private gains in both the long and short run, they would fare far better by investing in evidence-based, early child development initiatives, like Nurse-Family Partnership, than in professional sports stadiums or office towers.”

Rob Grunewald, Senior Vice President, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

Child Care Rating System

The Department of Social Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education launched a child care rating system in October, 2007, called Quality Start. It is voluntary; however, the number of centers moving up in star rating continues to increase at rapid pace. As of January 8, 2010, 732 centers (over 47 percent of all Class A licensed centers) were participating in Quality Start, with 512 centers achieving their first star, and 220 centers (30 percent) achieving two or more stars. The number of centers that now have two or more stars has increased by almost 300 percent since January 1, 2009. Incentives for participation include tiered reimbursement bonuses for centers with two or more stars that serve child care assistance children, the School Readiness Tax Credits and the Child Care Mental Health Consultation program.

School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC)

SRTC is a package of tax credits, launched in 2008 and unique to Louisiana, which is available to families, child care providers, child care teachers and directors, and businesses that support and/or participate in Quality Start. Data provided from the Louisiana Department of Revenue shows that for the 2008 calendar year, 4455 families claimed a total of \$950,000 in SRTC tax credits, which is based on their income and the star level of the center their child attended. In addition, 102 child care providers claimed a total of \$1.3M based on their star level and the number of low income children they serve, 761 child care directors and teachers claimed another \$1.3M based on their educational background, and 150 businesses claimed \$120,000 based on their support of the quality system.

Child Care Mental Health Consultation Program

As part of Quality Start, the Department of Social Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education launched the only statewide Mental Health Consultation for Child Care programs in the country. In this program, a mental health consultant works with a child care center for six months, spending one day in the center every other week. Each six month consultation also includes five didactic sessions. Since the program's inception in August of 2007, over 265 centers have been served.

Early Childhood Supports and Services (ECSS)

This program provides community based, family focused intervention for TANF-eligible families who have children under six at risk of developing cognitive, behavioral and relationship difficulties. It provides an infant mental health intervention to reduce child and family mental health problems and address risk factors for ongoing mental health issues. Each family is enrolled in a case management program that evaluates its risk and engages a multi-agency network to provide family support. Services include clinical assessment of children and child-caregiver relationships and intervention to address behavioral, developmental or mental health concerns. A child psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, and master's level clinician with specialized training in infant mental health serve

as the clinical team. The clinicians employ evidence-supported therapies including Parent Child Interaction Therapy, Child Parent Psychotherapy, and Preschool Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. ECSS services are limited to 13 parishes. Many of the existing sites have extensive waiting lists. An external evaluation was completed in 2007 demonstrating positive outcomes for the families. The program is administered by the Office of Mental Health with significant financial support from the Department of Social Services through TANF funding.

Pre-K Programs

The state funds pre-k programs described by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), with the largest being the Cecil J. Picard LA 4 Early Childhood program (LA 4). In the 2008-09 school year funding was \$83.5M, all from the State General Fund. For the 2009-10 school year, the funding was reduced to \$49.5M from the State General Fund and \$28.3M from TANF funds. Due to the reduced overall funding, the school system allocations were reduced from \$5,000 per student to approximately \$4,600 per student. Furthermore, no expansion within existing programs was funded and no expansion of eligibility (as provided by the 2008 legislation) was funded. In the Governor's Press Release about the Executive Budget he referred to LA 4 funding as follows: "\$75.9M in total funding, including \$15.4M in general fund and \$60.5M in TANF for the LA 4 Pre-K Program" suggesting a slight decrease, but a greater shift to TANF funding. Despite the statute passed in 2008, there is still essentially no diverse delivery of public pre-k in Louisiana—with all LA 4 programs only in public school sites, which weakens our child care system and threatens the availability of quality child care for 0 - 3 year olds.

BrightStart

BrightStart is a federally funded initiative to design and implement a comprehensive early childhood system that will coordinate and integrate services for children ages zero to five, to ensure that young children and their families have opportunities for optimal emotional, social, physical and cognitive development. The two primary goals of BrightStart are:

- To develop, maintain and strengthen systems integration and partnerships to enhance children's ability to enter school healthy and ready to learn
- To continue to build an early childhood system that addresses the following priority areas:
 - Access to Health Care and Medical Homes
 - Mental Health and Social-Emotional Development
 - Early Care and Education/Child care
 - Parenting Education/Family Support
 - Child Safety

BrightStart has been designated by the Governor to be Louisiana's Early Childhood Advisory Council, and is governed by a Steering Committee composed of representatives from state government, non-profit agencies, universities, and parents. BrightStart will coordinate the state's application for stimulus funding designed to support the improved quality, availability and coordination of services for children from birth to school entry. One

of the focus areas for the future is the creation of a statewide unified data collection system, something Louisiana does not have now.

Many goals and strategies set forth in the BrightStart Strategic Plan have been realized through either legislation or policies. Successes to date include:

- The design and implementation of the Quality Rating and Improvement System for Child Care, called **Quality Start**
- The design and implementation of **School Readiness Tax Credits**
- The development of a statewide network for parenting education known as the **Louisiana Parenting Education Network (LAPEN)**
- The design and implementation of the **Mental Health Consultation Program** for child care centers
- The passage of enabling legislation for the **phased-in expansion of LA 4** pre-k eligibility to all four-year-olds by 2014
- The establishment of an **Early Childhood Systems Integration Budget**
- **Triple P (Positive Parenting Program)** - BrightStart seeks to implement a pilot program with participation from multiple state and private agencies

Parenting Education

Parents Preparing for Success Program (PPSP)

By statute the state must provide “a program to provide parenting skills education for public assistance recipients who are pregnant or have a child under age one and shall require participation as a primary work activity under a Family Success Agreement.” The goal of the program is to provide “family strengthening, parenting information, and money management information. The lessons provide key parenting practices for parents to learn child nurturance that includes care, safety, and understanding child development” according to the Department of Social Services’ policy. The Department of Social Services, Office of Family Support, contracts with Southern University Agricultural Center and Louisiana State University Agricultural Center to provide these parenting skills education classes. They offer 18 hours of group instruction in six, three-hour classes.

Triple P – Positive Parenting Program

BrightStart has brought together different state agencies and private funders to meet with representatives from Triple P to seek collaboration and support to launch a pilot program in Louisiana. Triple P offers an effective, systemic approach for preventing and treating problems faced by a number of state offices and agencies, including the Office of Public Health, the Office of Mental Health, the Office of Community Services, the Office of Family Support and the Children’s Trust Fund. It is BrightStart’s vision that a pilot project in 2 or 3 regions will be implemented in FY 2011.

Louisiana Parenting Education Network (LAPEN)

Because of the lack of infrastructure and support for parent educators in Louisiana, BrightStart established a statewide association for parenting educators in 2008. Although its only funding has been a small Children's Trust Fund grant and one-time small grants from private foundations, through the work of many volunteers from the field, LAPEN has been able to create a set of core competencies for Louisiana parent educators, adopt a code of ethics, offer regional trainings with national speakers, create a website with resources and other information, hold three Summits and offer a parenting education track as part of the Prevent Child Abuse Louisiana Conferences for the past three years.



Economic Benefits of Early Childhood Investments: Building Early Childhood Systems for Policy and Finance

In 2008, the Louisiana Legislature created the Early Childhood Integration Budget (ECSIB). The legislation provided that this budget would be organized by the components of BrightStart (i.e., access to health care, social-emotional development and mental health, early care and education, family support and parenting education) rather than by department, thus detailing the state's allocation of resources for children ages zero to five in these areas. Although the first ECSIB has yet to be completed, BrightStart continues to work with the Children's Cabinet and the Division of Administration to make ECSIB a reality and a budget tool that will be available to state policy makers and advocates year in and year out. During the Family Impact Seminar, Dr. Geoffrey Nagle, Tulane University Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, discussed the ECSIB in the context of his presentation, "Building Early Childhood Systems for Policy and Finance."

The Goals of a Common Early Childhood System Funding are to create an early childhood systems budget that will:

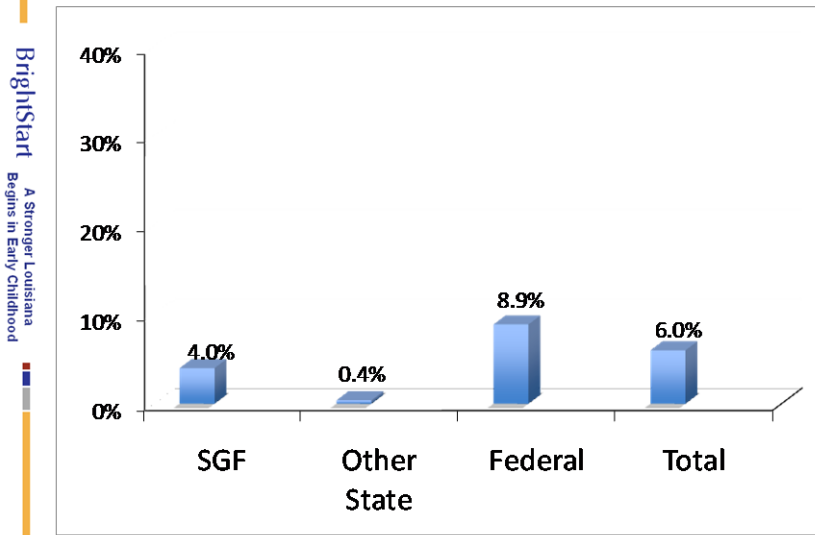
- Improve service coordination
- Support promising practices
- Eliminate duplicative spending
- Show how dollars have been allocated
- Advance results-based accountability

Dr. Nagle stated the need for the ECSIB in these terms: "a cross-system plan without a cross-system budget is hard to plan." The purpose of having a system integration budget is to help policy makers and legislators:

- Make informed decisions
- Maximize available funds
- Address barriers to collaboration and flexibility

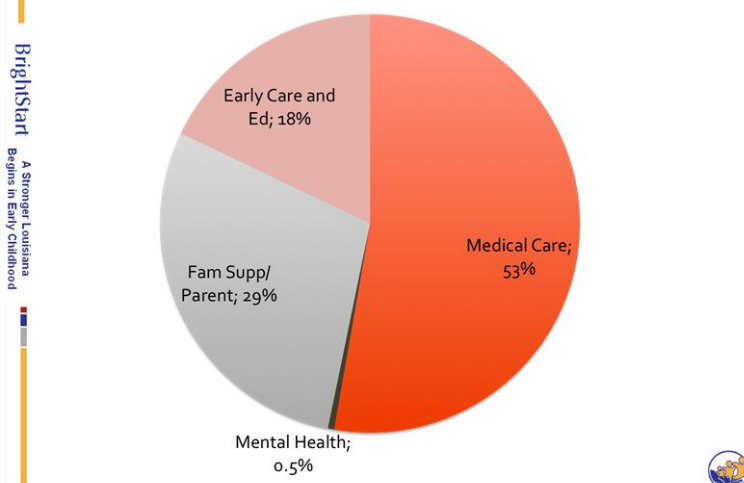
The diagrams below are from a preliminary analysis of the budget, and show approximately how federal and state dollars are being used to support young children in Louisiana. The first diagram shows the ECSIB as a percentage of the total State Budget. As can be seen, approximately six percent of Total State Budget is directed toward Early Childhood Programs.

ECSIB as a Percentage of Total State Budget



The second diagram shows a preliminary analysis of the percentage amount of funds Louisiana spent on young children by target area. Approximately 53 percent of the Early Childhood budget is spent on Medical Care; 18 percent is spent on Early Care and Education; and 29 percent is being spent on Family Support and Parent Education initiatives. With Louisiana’s poor health and educational outcomes, it is critical that we continue to take the essential steps improve these and other outcomes for our most vulnerable citizens – our children! Federal and state investments in early childhood must be coordinated to ensure that our children become successful adults.

Distribution by Target Area



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Contributor Biographies

Rachel Bourgeois graduated from LSU in May of 2010. She returned to school after having been out for 30+ years. Rachel has a BS from ULL (which was USL at the time) in Business and Petroleum Technology and worked for Marathon Oil Company in Lafayette, LA, from 1981 to 1990 as an Engineering Technician. Rachel is interested in working with ECSS (Early Childhood Supports and Services). She would like to work with parents of infants and young children in the area of early childhood prevention.

William Dabney is a learning strategies consultant at LSU's Center for Academic Success. Bill has a BS in psychology and a Masters in Social Work. Bill's research interests center around effective learning and teaching strategies. Early childhood education is not only a professional interest for Bill, but also a personal passion.

LaTonia Dunbar received a B.A in Social Work from Southern University-Baton Rouge during 1994 and is presently working toward receiving a Master's Degree from Louisiana State University School of Social Work. As a professional, she is a member of the National Association of Black Social Workers, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Alpha Delta Mu Social Work Honor Society, she is a Board member with Helping Hands, a United Way sponsored social service agency in West Baton Rouge Parish and is a member of the Advisory Board for Family Roads. LaTonia has worked in the social service field for 15 years and is currently employed with the Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center.

Kimberly Gallien graduated with an MSW from LSU in May 2010. Kimberly received her undergraduate degree in Social Work from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, La. Her population interests include: adjudicated youth, mental health, and gerontology.

Brandy George graduated from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and a minor concentration in criminal justice. Brandy went on to pursue graduate studies in social work and received a Master of Social Work degree from LSU in May 2010. Brandy is a recipient of the McNair Scholar Program as well as the Paul C. Phelps Scholarship Award. After graduation, Brandy will reside in Lafayette, LA where she plans to practice social work in the area of corrections as well as pursue a law degree in the near future.

Traci Gremillion was born in San Louis Obispo, CA and raised in Jackson, Louisiana. Tracey received her undergraduate degree in social work from Southeastern Louisiana University in December 2008, and her Masters Degree in Social Work on May 21, 2010 from Louisiana State University. Traci plans to utilize her Masters Degree in the field of mental health.

Janie Ward Martin is a freelance policy consultant. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Recreation Administration and Leisure Studies and her Masters Degree in Therapeutic Recreation from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Much of her early professional experience was working in non-profit organizations where she was responsible for coordinating programs and services for people with disabilities. From 1992 to 2008, she served as the Executive Director of the State Interagency Coordinating Council, a gubernatorial appointed board responsible for providing advice and assistance to the Department of Health and Hospitals in implementing Louisiana's Early Intervention Program for Infants and toddlers with Disabilities and their Families. Most recently, she coordinated statewide public policy initiatives for the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations (LANO). Her work with LANO focused on community solutions designed to end generational poverty and its impact on Louisiana's citizens. Janie actively participated on several state boards and commissions including the BrightStart Steering Committee, the Louisiana Partnership for Children and Families, the Child Poverty Prevention Council, the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board, and the National Infant Toddler Child Care State Team. Janie lives in Baton Rouge with her three teenage children and enjoys cooking, gardening, and spending time with her children and Labrador retriever, RootBeer.

Ashley Michaud-Campbell received a B.A. in Sociology from Southeastern Louisiana University in 2005 and is currently working towards a Master's Degree from Louisiana State University School of Social Work. Ashley also works full-time for the Louisiana Department of Social Services - Office of Community Services (OCS) as a Child Welfare Specialist III. Ashley started with OCS 5 years ago, working first in the Foster Care Program before switching to the Family Services Program about 3 years ago. She currently manages all of the sexual abuse cases in St. Tammany parish, and is very passionate about her work. Ashley hopes to continue working with sexually abused children, perpetrators and non-offending caretakers once she completes her MSW program.

Alan Nicholson received his Masters of Social Work and Bachelors of Arts in Sociology from Louisiana State University (LSU). He served 10 years as a medic in the United States Army and Louisiana Army National Guard with tours in Korea and Operation Iraqi Freedom where he received an Army Achievement Medal, the Expert Field Medic Badge, and the Combat Medic Badge. He also worked as a General Education Diploma (G.E.D.) teacher in Opelousas, LA teaching math, English, science, and social studies. Alan is a member of the National Association of Social Workers. Additionally, he has served as a volunteer with Kids' Hope USA as a child mentor and with Court Appointed Special Advocates as an advocate for abused and neglected youth.

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