

# The Condition of Early Childhood Education and Care in Arizona: 2004

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## ***Background***

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in both Arizona and the nation at large is difficult to describe and evaluate because it is characterized by a diversity of programs and funding streams. Some programs emphasize childcare, others education, but most offer a combination of both. There are infant care programs for infants and toddlers, pre-schools for three- and four-year-olds, and kindergartens for five-year-olds. Some ECEC programs are center-based, others operate out of homes, and still others are in elementary schools. Center-based programs may be public, private non-profit, or private for-profit. Working parents of young children make use not only of center-based programs, but also of certified and non-certified family childcare providers who operate small businesses out of their homes, as well as nannies, baby-sitters, and an informal network of relatives and friends. There are federally funded programs (e.g., Head Start), state-supported programs (e.g., “Block Grant” pre-schools), a robust for-profit private sector dependent on tuition, and programs that combine funding streams. Programs that offer both care and education using public funds are required not only to figure out how

to combine two or more funding streams, but also how to respond to two or more different sets of regulations for accounting, evaluation, and health and safety. There are half-day and full-day kindergartens located within public and private schools, as well as connected to child-centers.

The number of young children in Arizona enrolled in ECEC programs is growing rapidly. Twenty years ago, about one-quarter of four-year-olds in Arizona were cared for outside the home; now the figure is closer to three-quarters.<sup>1</sup> In general, the history of ECEC in Arizona, as in the nation, is a story of increasing support for and acceptance of young children being educated and cared for, at least part of the day, by someone other than a parent. The story of ECEC is also the story of the struggle for the supply of quality programs to keep pace with the demand.

What follows is background on several key ECEC programs.

## Head Start

Launched in 1965, this federal program provides early education to three and four year old children whose families' annual income is either at or below the federal poverty level. Head Start programs are mandated to provide three hours per day of education, but many Head Starts offer a full day of care or partner with other childcare entities to provide it.<sup>2</sup> The overall goal of Head Start is to improve the social competence in pre-school children from low-income families. To achieve this goal, Head Start offers comprehensive services including early childhood development, child health services, and family and community partnerships.<sup>3</sup>

## Early Head Start

The purpose of Early Head Start (EHS) is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, to enhance the development of very young children, and to promote healthy families.<sup>4</sup>

## Kindergarten

Kindergarten programs are defined as school-based programs for children who are five-years-old at or soon after the beginning of the school year. The history of

kindergartens in the U.S. reveals a process of states and school districts adding first half-day and then full-day programs. Arizona requires school districts to provide half-day kindergarten. Enrollment is not compulsory, but the great majority of five-year-olds attend. State funding for half-day kindergarten is available for all Arizona public schools. School districts offering full-day kindergarten draw on various sources of funds.<sup>5</sup>

### Center-Based Programs

Center-based ECEC programs have a split history, having developed out of what were once called nursery schools (which were half-day programs for the children of middle-class parents with at-home mothers) and daycare centers (which were full-day programs for the children of working parents). In the 1970s, the historical differences between the two systems began to merge, and both changed their names to “childcare centers” or “pre-school.”<sup>6</sup> In addition to the school-based “Block Grant” pre-school program discussed below, Arizona has non-profit and for-profit center-based programs.

### Non-Center-Based Care

Many of Arizona’s children under age five are cared for during the day by someone other than a parent.<sup>7</sup> This “non-center-based care” category includes proprietary family childcare homes, nannies, and “kith and kin” care by family friends or relatives other than the parents. The category of family childcare/small group homes (programs in which parents leave their children during the day with a provider who runs a business out of her home) includes Department of Economic Security (DES) certified programs; Department of Health Services (DHS) certified programs; licensed but unregulated programs; registered (lawful) but unlicensed programs; and alternate approval homes.

### The Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) Program

Approximately 4,100 children in Arizona are enrolled in pre-schools run by school districts under the ECBG Program. School districts provide early childhood education programs on site or subcontract with private pre-school providers. Block grant

pre-schools serve three- to five-year-old children who are statistically at risk of failing in school. In practice the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) defines “at-risk children” to mean children of low-income families. A complication of this program is that the ECBG funds may be used by school districts not just for at-risk pre-schools, but also for supporting full-day kindergarten and class-size reduction in elementary K-3 classrooms.<sup>8</sup>

## ***Recent Developments***

Developments at both the national and state levels during the past few years hold significant implications for ECEC in Arizona.

### **Brain Research**

Research on early brain development suggests that the structure of the brain and therefore its capacity for learning and for positive social development are influenced significantly by the environment and experiences of the first few years of life. This research has served as a focal point to rally support from business leaders, school superintendents, and politicians for more investment in ECEC.<sup>9</sup>

### **Good Start, Grow Smart**

*Good Start, Grow Smart* is an early childhood initiative proposed by the Bush Administration to help states and local communities strengthen early learning for young children. This initiative focuses on introducing a new accountability system for Head Start that addresses standards-based early childhood curricula, personnel training, and assessment of children.<sup>10</sup>

### **No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act**

NCLB calls for increased accountability for states, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low performing schools; more flexibility for states and local education agencies in the use of federal

education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for younger children. Many state political leaders argue that NCLB is an under-funded federal mandate.<sup>11</sup>

### The Arizona School Readiness Task Force

In 2001, Children's Action Alliance convened the Arizona School Readiness Task Force. The Task Force researched the issue of ECEC in Arizona and released a report entitled *Growing Arizona*. The recommendations derived from this report focused on improving quality and governance structure, and on appropriate financing to create a comprehensive ECEC system.<sup>12</sup>

### The School Readiness Board

The School Readiness Board (SRB) was established by Executive Order in 2002, and the first meeting of the State Board on School Readiness (SRB) was convened by Governor Napolitano in March 2003. Over the course of the next nine months, members of the community and the SRB met to develop policy recommendations to improve the delivery, quality, and funding of ECEC services. This process led to policy initiatives, approved by Governor Napolitano, to include a Quality Rating System (QRS), a scholarship program for the professional development of early childhood teachers, health screening and consultation, the establishment of an early childhood fund with the ability to accept private and public funds, and the phase-in of voluntary full-day kindergarten programs.<sup>13</sup>

### Full-Day Kindergarten

Governor Napolitano recently announced that the centerpiece of her legislative agenda for the year is the phase-in of voluntary full-day kindergarten in public schools throughout the state, beginning next year with those schools with at least 90 percent of children enrolled in the free or reduced-price lunch program.

### S\*CCEEDS

Growing out of the Head Start Collaboration of the Child Care Advisory Committee of the Department of Economic Security (DES), the Statewide Child Care and

Early Education Development System (S\*CCEEDS) was created to address the lack of a career development system for ECEC workers. S\*CCEEDS created a career ladder system, a mechanism for recording the completion of professional development activities, a database identifying the education levels of ECEC staff, and a registry of trainers qualified to provide that education.<sup>14</sup>

### School Readiness Indicator Project

This project is a multi-state initiative to improve school readiness. Participating states have been asked to develop a set of child outcomes and well-being indicators to use to assess children from birth through third-grade. The goal is for states to adopt an indicators-based definition of school readiness that can be tracked over time. The indicators will focus on monitoring the capacity of child and family programs to prepare children to read by the end of grade three.<sup>15</sup>

### *Available Data*

To plan and monitor a system of ECEC, data are needed on a variety of dimensions, including demographic information on the birth through age five population, enrollments in the various types of programs, the professional development levels and needs of the staff in these programs, funding levels, and quality outcome indicators. There are a variety of agencies in Arizona that collect pieces of this set of data. The Department of Economic Security (DES) collects data on the family childcare homes it certifies, and monitors the funds it provides for childcare subsidies. The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) collects data on the Block Grant pre-schools it runs, as well as on kindergartens. The Department of Health Services (DHS) collects data on childcare centers and childcare small group homes. Head Start collects data on its programs. Non-profit agencies, including the Association for Supportive Child Care, Child & Family Resources, and Children's Action Alliance, also collect and analyze data on aspects of ECEC, as does the Arizona Child Care Association. We have pulled data from reports by these organizations, the U.S. Census, and from recent reports produced by the Arizona School Readiness Taskforce, the Center for Business Research of the

W. P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University, the Child & Family Policy Center, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC), and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). Finally, we obtained information from key staff members of the above-referenced state and community organizations.

## Demographics of ECEC in Arizona

Table 1: Number of Children by Age in Arizona

0-5	459,141
Under 1 year	77,421
1 year	77,174
2 years	75,241
3 years	75,990
4 years	76,560
5 years	76,755

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000). *American Fact Finder*. Retrieved March 6, 2004, from <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/home>

Table 2: Projections of the Arizona Population Under Age 6, 2000–20

Year	Population	Percent increase from 2000
2000	459,141	
2005	531,100	16%
2010	605,800	32%
2015	693,000	50%
2020	790,200	72%

Source: Center for Business Research, L. William Seidman Research Institute, W. P. Carey School of Business, Arizona State University (2004). *The Economics of Early Care and Education in Arizona*. Tempe, AZ: Arizona State University.

**Table 3: Working Parents of Children Under Age 6**

Children 0-5	459,151	
With Primary Caregiver(s) in Workforce	270,900	59%

Source: Arizona School Readiness Task Force (2002). *Growing Arizona*. Phoenix, AZ: Children’s Action Alliance.

**Table 4: Risk Factors for Arizona’s Children Under Age 5**

Children Under 5 in Poverty	21%
New Babies At Risk*	29%

Source: School Readiness Indicator Project (2003). *Measuring School Readiness: How Do We Know When We’re on Track?* Phoenix, AZ: Children’s Action Alliance.

\*2 of 4 risk factors: mother is 19 years or younger, mother is unmarried, mother has less than 12 years of education, birth is paid for by Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS).

## Early Childhood Program Enrollments

**Table 5: Enrollments in ECEC Programs**

Nursery Schools and Pre-schools	81,923
Kindergarten	77,930

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2000). *American Fact Finder*. Retrieved March 6, 2004, from <http://www.factfinder.census.gov/home>

Table 6: Enrollments and Capacity by Program Type

	Programs	Enrollment	Capacity
Childcare Centers	1,561 <sup>1</sup>	96,695 <sup>2</sup>	166,151
Block Grant Pre-schools (School Districts)	591 <sup>3</sup>	4,162 <sup>4</sup>	
Head Start	864 <sup>5</sup>	21,473	
DHS Certified Small Group Homes	361 <sup>6</sup>		3,003 <sup>7</sup>
DES Certified Childcare Homes	1,512 <sup>8</sup>		6,048 <sup>9</sup>
DES Relative Childcare Homes	3,425 <sup>10</sup>		N/A <sup>11</sup>
Unregulated Registered <sup>5</sup> Childcare Homes	790 <sup>12</sup>		
ADE Alternate Approval Childcare Homes	2,560 <sup>13</sup>		
Early Head Start		988 <sup>14</sup>	

<sup>1</sup> Center-based care as defined by DHS, excluding Block Grant Pre-schools and Head Start Programs.

<sup>2</sup> On an average day.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Health Services, Office of Child Care Licensure.

<sup>4</sup> Arizona Department of Education.

<sup>5</sup> Head Start reports numbers of classrooms, not programs or sites (Nagle, A. *Head Start in Arizona Annual Report*, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Department of Health Services, Office of Child Care Licensure.

<sup>7</sup> Per personal communication with staff of DHS Office of Child Care Licensure.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Economic Security, Child Care Administration.

<sup>9</sup> Based on certification limit of 4 children for compensation per home.

<sup>10</sup> Department of Economic Security, Child Care Administration.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Economic Security only pays for care for care by relatives for children who are eligible for child care assistance. This figure does not capture the larger population of people who provide care for children to whom they are related.

<sup>12</sup> Association for Supportive Childcare, Child Care Resource and Referral; Child & Family Resources, Child Care Resource and Referral.

<sup>13</sup> Arizona Department of Education.

<sup>14</sup> Nagle, A. *Head Start in Arizona Annual Report*, 2002. Phoenix, AZ: Arizona Head Start Association.

Table 7: Arizona Head Start Facts 2001–02

	<b>Regional</b>	<b>Migrant</b>	<b>Tribal</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Children Enrolled</b>	14,852	558	6,063	21,473
<b>Percent under Age 3</b>	5.7%	17%	0.6%	4.6%
<b>Percent aged 3 or older</b>	93.5%	83%	99.4%	95.4%
<b>Number of Classes</b>	589	37	238	864
<b>Number of Staff</b>	2,555	149	1,202	3,906
<b>Number of Volunteers</b>	20,384	358	4,037	24,779

Source: Nagle, A. (2004). *Head Start in Arizona Annual Report, 2002*. Phoenix, AZ: Arizona Head Start Association.

Note: Based on actual enrollment.

Table 8: Arizona Kindergarten Facts 2003

	<b>Public</b>	<b>Charter</b>
<b>Kindergarten-Aged children</b>	65,381	3,367
<b>In Half-day Programs</b>	36,326	1,718
<b>In Full-day Programs</b>	28,813	1,986
<b>Schools Offering Full-day K</b>	511	44

Source: Nagle, A. (2003). Unpublished survey regarding kindergarten facts and figures. Phoenix, AZ.

Table 9: Projections of Demand for ECEC Programs

	<b>Total Non-Parental Care</b>	<b>Center-based Care</b>
<b>2000</b>	178,200	72,100
<b>2005</b>	206,100	83,400
<b>2010</b>	235,100	95,100
<b>2015</b>	268,900	108,800
<b>2020</b>	306,700	124,000

Source: Center for Business Research, L. William Seidman Research Institute, W.P. Carey School of Business, Arizona State University (2004). *The Economics of Early Care and Education in Arizona*. Arizona State University: Tempe, AZ.

## Early Childhood Professional Development

Table 10: ECEC Professionals 2001

<b>Assistant Teachers</b>	6,732
<b>Teachers</b>	9,940
<b>Teacher Directors</b>	1,363
<b>Administrative Directors</b>	1,317
<b>Total</b>	19,352

Source: Maricopa County Office of Research and Reporting (2001). *Arizona Wage and Benefit Survey, A Study of Child Care/Early Childhood Education Center Based Personnel*. Phoenix, AZ: Governor's Division for Children.

Note: Licensed centers only

Table 11: ECEC Practitioners and Trainers Registered with S\*CCEEDS

	<b>Applied</b>	<b>Assigned Career Level</b>
<b>Practitioners</b>	1,800	1,282
<b>Trainers</b>	320	270

Source: Personal communication with Boni Lowney of the Association for Supportive Child Care, S\*CCEEDS Program, March 4, 2004.

Table 12: Median Hourly Wage for ECEC Practitioners 2001

<b>Assistant Teachers</b>	\$7.22
<b>Teachers</b>	\$8.00
<b>Teacher Directors</b>	\$10.19
<b>Directors</b>	\$13.84
<b>Kindergarten Teachers (public school)</b>	\$25.35

Sources: Maricopa County Office of Research and Reporting (2001). *Arizona Wage and Benefit Survey, A Study of Child Care/Early Childhood Education Center Based Personnel*. Phoenix, AZ: Governor's Division for Children.

American Federation of Teachers (2001). *Survey & Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends 2000-2001*. Retrieved March 19, 2004, from <http://www.aft.org/research/salary/home.htm>

## Funding for Early Childhood Programs

Table 13: Funding Levels for ECEC Programs

<b>Early Head Start</b>	\$12 Million <sup>1</sup>
<b>Head Start</b>	\$87 Million <sup>2</sup>
<b>Early Childhood Block Grant</b>	\$19.5 Million
<b>Block Grant funds used for Pre-school</b>	\$9.95 Million
<b>Childcare Subsidies</b>	\$148.7 Million
<b>Kindergarten</b>	\$134.2 Million <sup>3</sup>
<b>Kith &amp; Kin</b>	\$171,335

Source: Early Childhood Programs Matrix (2003). Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State Board on School Readiness.

<sup>1</sup>2003. Includes tribal program.

<sup>2</sup>2003. Does not include tribal and migrant worker programs.

<sup>3</sup> Does not include the multiple funding streams being utilized by school districts to fund all-day kindergarten.

Table 14: Total and Per Capita Spending by Child

Age	In Millions of Dollars				In Dollars		
	State & Local	Federal	Total	# of Children	Per Capita State/Local	Per Capita Federal	Per Capita Total
0-5	11.50	218.67	230.17	459,141	25	476	501
6-18	5,076.95	441.26	5518.21	982,098	5,169	449	5,619
19-23	1,003.71	284.37	1288.08	368,440	2,724	772	3,496

Source: Bruner, C., Elias, V., Stein, D., & Schaefer, S. (2004). *Early Learning Left Out: An Examination of Public Investments in Education and Development by Child Age*. Retrieved February 26, 2004, from <http://www.voicesforamericaschildren.org>

Table 15: Average Daily Rates for Full-Time Childcare in Arizona

Age of Child	0-1	1-2	3+
Licensed Centers	\$25.20	\$22	\$20
Approved Homes	\$16	\$16	\$15
Certified Group Homes	\$19	\$18	\$18
Unregulated Homes	\$20	\$18	\$17

Source: Maricopa County Office of Research and Reporting (2002). *Child Care Market Rate Survey 2002*. Phoenix, AZ: Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Employment & Rehabilitation Services Child Care Administration.

Table 16: Spending Per Child Enrolled

Childcare Subsidies	\$3,672 <sup>1</sup>
Block Grant Pre-schools	\$2,473 <sup>2</sup>
Head Start	\$7,288
K-12	\$5,900

Source: Personal communication with ADE staff, March 4, 2004.

<sup>1</sup>Average monthly DES payment per child in SRY2004 is expected to be approximately \$306/month. Source: Personal communication with DES staff, March 4, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Represents state block grant resources per child only. This figure does not represent total funding per child as school districts supplement with additional dollars.

Table 17: DES Childcare Subsidy Waiting List

March, 2004	4,681 Families	9,362 Child
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Source: Personal communication (e-mail) with DES staff, March 5, 2004.

## Program Quality

Table 18: Arizona Public School Reading Outcomes for 2002

NAEP 4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Reading <sup>1</sup>	AIMS 3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade Reading <sup>2</sup>
49% below basic level	9% below the standard
29% basic level	17% approached the standard
17% proficient level	45% met the standard
4% advanced level	29% exceeded the standard

Source: School Readiness Indicator Project (2003). *Measuring School Readiness: How Do We Know When We're on Track?* Phoenix, AZ: Children's Action Alliance.

<sup>1</sup>National Assessment of Educational Progress

<sup>2</sup> Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards

There are several categories of statistics available that bear some relation to program quality. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) report<sup>16</sup> gave Arizona a score of four out of ten on quality of ECEC programs, but this was based mostly on assessments of the ECBG pre-schools, which make up a small percentage of the ECEC programs in the state. Another way to measure program quality would be to chart the frequency of ECEC programs found to be in non-compliance by the Department of Health Services (DHS). Between November of 2002 and October of 2003, DHS conducted approximately 2,100 licensing inspections of childcare facilities. During that time frame, DHS issued to ECEC facilities six cease and desist orders, 54 civil penalties, and two intent-to-deny-license notices. The agency also held 47 enforcement meetings.<sup>17</sup> DHS licensing surveyors' caseloads are large: 87 programs per surveyor in 2004, up from 56 per specialist in 1997. In FY2002-03, DHS was determined to be "out of time" 58 times. Of these 58 times, 46 times DHS failed to respond to requests to process licensing applications, and 12 times DHS failed to respond to licensing changes.<sup>18</sup>

Accreditation is a widely accepted criterion of ECEC program quality. The majority of Arizona's ECEC programs appear to not be accredited, but accreditation rates are hard to determine because of the number of accrediting agencies and the lack of an overall accreditation registry. There are 256 programs in Arizona listed as having National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation, 22

accredited from National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC), and three accredited from National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA).<sup>19</sup> Totals for programs accredited by the other four accrediting organizations are not available. Of the 2,152 licensed childcare centers and pre-schools, approximately 281, or 13 percent, are accredited.

There is not much data collected or available on student learning outcomes. Of the ECEC programs in the state, only Head Start and the ADE's Block Grant Pre-schools and kindergartens require any assessments of children. These data are inaccessible and not organized in any systematic fashion. Each local Head Start or Early Childhood Grant Block (ECGB) pre-school program may conduct child assessments, but the assessment tools they use vary and the assessment data they collect are not collected or packaged uniformly. Moreover, since there is no entity responsible for systematic data collection, any data that the individual programs may collect are not useful for ECEC program evaluation or child outcome purposes.

### ***Evaluation of Available Data***

The variety of agencies and groups involved and the lack of a systematic and coordinated statewide data plan make it difficult to evaluate the validity, integrity, and consistency of the ECEC available data. No statewide entity is responsible for coordinating the collection of data that would inform ECEC policy.

#### **Demographic Data on ECEC in Arizona.**

The two tables that report numbers of young children in Arizona, population projections through 2020, and number of children aged 0-5 years in ECEC programs, are drawn from year 2000 U.S. Census and the 1999 National Survey of American Families. These data reflect the strengths and weaknesses of survey data.<sup>20</sup> Although the census and survey data are more than three years old and potentially underestimate the numbers of undocumented immigrants (who are most likely in unregulated home care), these are

the most robust and substantive broad datasets available. The methodology used by the Center for Business Research in formulating future forecasts is based on recent birth data. Figures for poverty and new babies at-risk suggest a great need for ECEC intervention. A limitation of these demographic datasets is their inability to break out the patterns by socioeconomic status of the children by each one-year age range, making it difficult to determine what types of ECEC arrangements are needed.

## Early Childhood Program Numbers and Enrollments

Pre-school and kindergarten enrollment data are not systematically collected or organized. The state's child-care data are problematic for a variety of reasons. Because DHS licenses centers, the agency is able to report licensed capacity. DES, however, estimates enrollment data on an average day basis that does not disaggregate full-time from part-time attendance or pre-school-aged children from school-aged children receiving after-school care. DHS does not collect data on the number of slots available for each age range. The data on childcare center enrollments and capacity suggest that there are ample childcare slots available for children. However, anecdotal data suggest that there are limited slots available for infant care, however, and high-quality accredited childcare centers report substantial waiting lists for slots. Enrollment data on various categories of home-based care are even more difficult to gather. Thus, there is no reliable way at this time to determine an accurate picture of the supply and demand curve for childcare.

Head Start reports actual enrollments. Although these data are reliably collected annually, they do not tell us the percentage of eligible children who *do not* receive service due to lack of federal and state funding. Nationally, it is estimated that only three in five income-eligible children are served by Head Start.<sup>21</sup> If that ratio were applied to Arizona in 2002, then roughly 15,000 eligible low-income children in Arizona were not served by Head Start. That figure is likely higher today, given Arizona's relatively high birth rate and rapid population growth.

The data profiled on kindergarten-aged children are based on a survey conducted by Ami Nagle in Spring 2003. These data are problematic for some planning purposes, as not all schools responded to the survey. It is difficult to reliably forecast future

capacity needs, particularly for full-day kindergarten, without valid enrollment data coupled with birth and population migration projection data and data predicting how many families would enroll their children in full-day kindergarten if it were available in their district.

The data on projections of demand for ECEC programs in Arizona through 2020 are useful for general planning, but because there is no way to break down the projections by age category or socioeconomic status, it is difficult to identify the particular types of ECEC programs needed in the future.

### **Professional Development**

The available data on number and type of ECEC professionals working with children are very limited and problematic. The data are more than two years old and account only for those working in licensed centers; they do not cover practitioners working in kindergartens or in childcare homes. The S\*CCEEDS data are also partial and limited. The hourly wage data show a wide disparity in wages paid to ECEC professionals who work with young children in programs other than public school kindergartens. This is a measure that can be tracked over time. Data on the numbers of practitioners needing further education are scattered and not aggregated, making it difficult for employers and post-secondary education programs to allocate resources to meet this growing need.

### **Funding for Early Childhood Programs**

The data on funding for ECEC programs have limited utility. All that is clear is that many children are underserved and that funding for the birth to age five sector is weak. The complexities of the funding streams that contribute to full-day kindergarten make it difficult to pin down the cost of the move to full-day kindergartens statewide.

### **Program Quality**

The data on ECEC program quality are extremely limited. The NIEER report is based only on the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) pre-schools and does not address the full scope of ECEC program offerings. The National Assessment of

Educational Progress (NAEP) and Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) data, while more rigorous, do not identify who received ECEC services. Because their caseworkers are overworked and because only five percent of programs were found to be out-of-compliance, there is reason to conclude that the Department of Health Services (DHS) licensure compliance data are neither valid nor reliable. The accreditation data gathered by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) are problematic because each accrediting body employs different standards, procedures, and levels. Moreover, many of the accrediting bodies do not report data that could serve as a reliable benchmark for future comparison. Finally, there is little or no readiness or learning outcomes data available on children in ECEC programs. It should be noted that although policy makers seek child outcome data, this brief is not recommending *formal* testing of young children.

## ***Key Unanswered Policy Questions***

### **Demographic and Enrollment Issues**

Even though census and population projections data tell us the big picture on numbers of children aged zero to five years, it is not known how many young children need early care and education and what types of programs are most needed and wanted.

### **Professional Development**

Can the universities, community colleges, and school districts meet the training and certification needs of ECEC practitioners in Arizona in the coming years? Will the requirement of additional professional development for early care and education practitioners change society's perceived value of an ECEC professional and in turn lead to a dramatic rise in ECEC salaries? What effect would a rise in salaries have on tuition?

### **Funding**

What are the costs of meeting the ECEC needs of Arizona's growing population? Where will the funding come from to meet these growing needs, needs that include improvements in program quality, in staff training, in the number of children being served, and in the number of districts providing full-day kindergarten?

## Program Quality

Will implementation of a quality rating system (QRS) increase program quality and school readiness? Will the implementation of full-day kindergarten produce measurable growth in state (AIMS) and federal (NAEP) achievement scores in later grades?

## *Recommendations*

The data in Table 17, showing the high number of children currently on the DES childcare subsidy wait list, are sound. The disparity in wage data across practitioners displayed in Table 11, although somewhat dated, are sufficiently strong and consistent over time. These two findings lead to Recommendations 1-3 that follow. The difficulty experienced in accessing data that would inform the state in the development of critical ECEC policy procedures and initiatives leads to Recommendations 4-8. These recommendations are not meant to address all of the complex issues in ECEC, but merely provide an outline for the collection of data that will be useful for policy analysis.

It is recommended that:

1. The Arizona legislature index the childcare subsidy for eligible families to the most current market rate survey results.
2. The Arizona legislature appropriate additional state general fund dollars to increase childcare subsidies to a level that will reduce and ultimately eliminate the waiting list for eligible families.
3. The Arizona legislature give the School Readiness Board (SRB) the authority and funding to develop and implement a plan to increase wages for all ECEC personnel so that wages are commensurate with the wages of other professionals with similar levels of education and experience.
4. The Arizona legislature give the SRB the authority and funding to develop a comprehensive, coordinated statewide plan for the collection of critical data across the full range of ECEC programs.

5. The Arizona legislature give the SRB the authority to coordinate and implement a Quality Rating System (QRS) to identify and improve the level of education and care for all children from birth to five-years.
6. The Arizona legislature expand and fund the S\*CCEEDS program to collect training and wage data on the educational levels of all ECEC teachers and providers of care so that universities, community colleges, school districts, and ECEC practitioners can plan appropriately for ECEC teacher preparation and staff training needs.
7. The Arizona legislature give the SRB the authority and funding to identify and track annually the amount of federal and state dollars invested in ECEC.
8. The SRB develop and implement an evaluation plan that will use the school readiness indicators data to track child readiness outcomes over time and that the Arizona legislature fund the plan.

## Notes and References

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