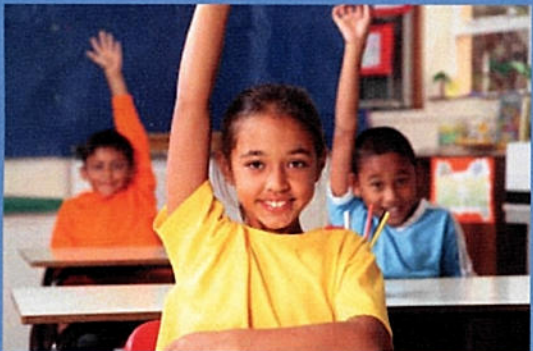


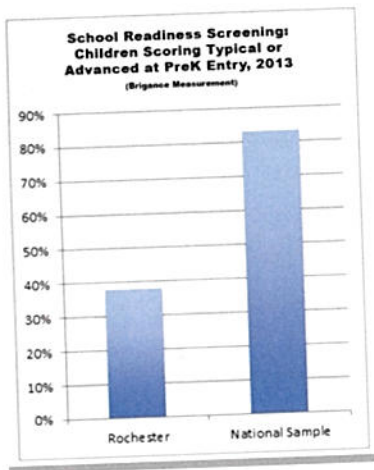
NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES



Educational Alignment for Young Children

October 2014

Rochester New York
Project Report



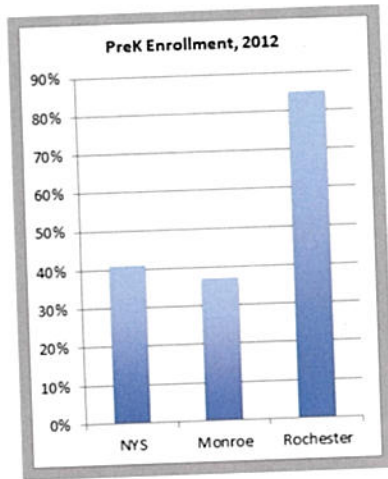
Making the first eight years of life a priority is critical to the success of any community. The research is clear – many traits that make good employees, neighbors, and citizens are being developed in the first years of life. 85% of brain development happens in the first 5 years. University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman touts investing in early childhood development as one of the best investments for better education, health, and economic returns.

While the research has also made clear that 3rd grade reading achievement is a critical indicator of future educational success, Rochester City School District students face a mix of risk factors that inhibit their likelihood of success.

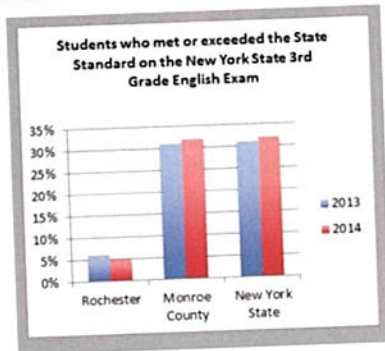
A staggering 82% of Rochester City School District eighth-graders are functionally illiterate, the lowest reading proficiency rate in NYS. 91% of our African-American boys and 89% of our Latino boys won't graduate on time, the lowest graduation rate for this demographic in the United States.

In their home lives:

- For many, their parents have low education rates and many did not have a positive educational experience themselves: 43% of incoming Pre-K and K pupils' parents did not finish high school; 10% were in Special Education. These statistics have been consistent since 1998.
- 19.5% of incoming Pre-K and Kindergarteners in Rochester City Schools were hospitalized in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at birth, most for more than 3 days – two key at-risk indicators.



Rochester's Profile



In Rochester, 88% of our school children qualify for free and reduced lunch – the vast majority of children in Rochester's public schools live in concentrated poverty. In fact, Rochester is 5th in child poverty in the Nation. Research has found that educational outcomes are much harder to achieve for children living in concentrated poverty – the latest statistic to illustrate this locally is that only 5% of RCSD 3rd graders passed the NYS ELA Reading Assessment.

- 16% - 21% of incoming Pre-K and K have or have had an incarcerated parent – an extremely high risk factor.
- 27% have experienced the death of a close family member; 20% have witnessed violence in their neighborhood, 14% have witnessed violence in their homes.



91% of Rochester City School District students attend a chronically underperforming school, as defined and determined by the New York State Department of Education. Only three high schools graduate more than 50% of their students.

National League of Cities

5 goal areas identified by Rochester for local planning during 2014



In 2013, Rochester was one of 6 U.S. cities selected by the National League of Cities to participate in a technical assistance project to explore issues around educational alignment for young children.

3rd grade reading ability is critical to achieving success. This is based on work across the first 8-9 years of life, not just the work of 2nd and 3rd grade. Of the challenging barriers, Rochester chose the following priorities to address with NLC's technical assistance:

- Too few Rochester parents are effectively engaged by Rochester's agencies, entities, and schools
- Too many Rochester children 0-3 years have developmental needs that are not detected and/or served, decreasing their school readiness. National research indicates that without a standardized screening system for developmental needs only 10-30% of children with developmental needs are detected and referred for services.
- Too many children are walking in the Pre-Kindergarten door already behind. 2012-13 local results of the Brigance Assessment of 4 year olds found that 68% are not meeting grade level expectations, compared with 17% nation-wide. More children need access to high quality early education programming before they turn 4.
- The Rochester City School District supports high quality PreK. Over 80% of Rochester's 4 year olds are enrolled in some of the highest functioning classrooms in the Nation. Annual evaluations using the ECERS and CLASS tool show that the classrooms are of the highest quality evaluated anywhere. The well-regarded Child Observation Record (COR) shows that the individual children grow beyond all expectations. Yet in a city with one of the highest concentrations of poverty in the nation, the children arrive at PreK with significant delays,

and in spite of great growth, are still not meeting a national norm for "ready for Kindergarten". Evaluation of PreK outcomes compared to entering K outcomes shows significant summer learning loss.

- The lack of alignment of curriculum, measurement, and practice between PreK and K-3 needs to be ameliorated to strengthen the transition between Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten.
- Too few RCSD elementary school principals have an early childhood development or literacy background. There is a growing awareness that a basic knowledge of research regarding best practices for young children is essential in any school improvement process. Given the enormous pressures that our principals are under, the lack of this knowledge creates barriers between alignment of Pre-K and K programs and the delivery of appropriate practices and curriculum.

Rochester selected the following goals for the project period:

1. Research principles and practices of transformational family engagement.
2. Create a business plan to double the number of 3 year olds receiving developmental screenings.
3. Vet financing mechanisms to provide high quality early education for all 3 year olds in Rochester.
4. Align curriculum, assessment, and professional development for PreK-3rd grade.
5. Increase summer learning opportunities for young children.

Goal 1:

Research principles and practices of transformational family engagement

Results:

- › A volunteer Family Engagement Work Group was convened, including Rochester City School District Office of Parent Engagement, an RCSD Principal, Head Start, City of Rochester, Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency, the Early Childhood Development Initiative, Parent Leadership Training Institute Alumni, the Genesee Valley PTA, Rochester's Child, and The Children's Agenda. The group has met every 2 weeks for 6 months.
- › The Family Engagement Work Group has shared practices on a local level and researched best practices on a National level.
- › The Work Group created draft definition, principles, and practices and has vetted these with multiple community tables and parent groups.

Next steps:

- › Working with the school district to identify 1-2 principals who would be willing to co-convene focus groups of teachers, staff, and parents to discuss family engagement needs and next steps.
- › Identify a community based organization who will be willing to convene a focus group of parents and staff to discuss what is working and what could be improved; and identify resource needs, including skill development for staff and parents); and identify community resources.
- › Sign-up community organizations who will pilot an agency assessment tool, and select one best practice to improve on in 2015.
- › Offer a TA session in 2015 on an identified area of family engagement that the community would like to strengthen.



Goal 2:

Create a business plan to double the number of 3 year olds receiving developmental screenings

Results:

- › The Roc the Future (Strive) Collaborative Action Network (CAN) for School Readiness has met 2x/month for 2 years, has assessed barriers, resources, current practices, and identified the gap of children who need to receive screenings in order to increase the number of children who receive comprehensive developmental screening by their 3rd birthday.
- › Local information gathered on current screening practices of pediatricians and child care providers, referral systems of multiple screening agencies including vision, hearing, and dental, overall background of the initiatives, pre-existing factors related to experiences, barriers, lessons learned, and goals.
- › A business plan was created to provide developmental screenings to an additional 1,000 3 year-olds as a first step in increasing the number of children screened & referred for services.
- › This project will screen →rescreen, when needed →refer to existing assessment and diagnostic services →provide follow-up monitoring, making sure parents and families have considered and decided what, if any, assessment and evaluation services they desire for their children →monitor assessment evaluation services by providers →and, when warranted, assist parents and families in getting and monitoring the initiation of interventions and treatments for their children.

- › Head Start staff are leading a subgroup to discuss a model of comprehensive screening and possible collaboration for professional development.
- › Mayor Warren has pledged support and partnership to get screening initiative in place.

Next steps:

- › Approach local and national foundations for support.
- › Establish and sustain effective communication and collaboration among primary care, early childhood education, and early childhood mental health care providers: those who can facilitate collaboration, referral, and tracking.
- › Investigate possible increase of reimbursement for screening.
- › Create a best practices guide for partnering with parents in referral follow-up.

Goal 3:

Vet financing mechanisms to increase access to high quality early education for 3 year olds

Results:

- › Researching viability of Social Impact Bonds to offer PreK-like programming to 3 year olds
- › The Children's Agenda, Early Childhood Development Initiative, and the The Children's Agenda Interfaith Collaborative, have started researching the viability of alternative financing structures, including pilot projects with evaluation.
- › In the meantime, Head Start staff are taking the lead on serving more 3 year olds this year: With more 4 year olds being served with the new full-day PreK program from Rochester City School District in 2014-15, Head Start responded by restructuring to serve as many 3 year olds as ratio requirements allow in blended age classrooms, and has created fifteen 3 year only classrooms for Fall 2014. Head Start has a proposal pending with the Regional Office of Head Start for additional restructuring that would further increase their capacity to serve children 3 and younger. Early Head Start and Head Start classrooms are utilizing the High Scope curriculum, in alignment with the Rochester UPK program.

Next steps:

- › Community Partners will continue to research and lead the conversation on additional public financing mechanisms for funding early education for 0-4 year olds.



Goal 4:

Align curriculum, assessment, and professional development for PreK-3rd grade

Results:

Summer PreK/K Learning Institute to increase professional learning:

- › Professional Development Collaboration between PreK, Kindergarten, and Head Start: Working in partnership with Head Start and with help from Roc the Future and Monroe Community College, – the RCSD Early Childhood Department hosted and facilitated a week-long summer professional development institute for all Pre-K teachers, both those working in RCSD schools as well as in Community Based Organizations, working with Head Start.
- › Kindergarten teachers were invited and encouraged to attend several of the sessions as we look to build a “bridge to transition” from PreK to K. K teachers will participate in Brigance screener training, conflict resolution, PBS Kids, and a training on linking PreK to K academically and developmentally. This was the first time PreK and K teachers came together as a group in 8 years.
- › Training & Aligning in measurement: Professional development in 2014 included turnkey training in the use of COR Advantage (new pre-k assessment tool), Brigance Preschool Screen, collaborative facilitated discussion with work-groups of pre-k and kindergarten teachers, conflict resolution strategies, and more.

Summer Institute for Principals & Administrators:

- › RCSD approved professional development in early education, based on the fact that many of our elementary school principals do not have a background in early education. 11 of 38 principals have volunteered for a 2nd session, which will be one-on-one guided observation in UPK classrooms in school buildings during Fall 2014.

Next steps:

- › Fall 2014: initiate Collegial Learning Circles, convened by the Executive Director for 3rd Grade Reading, sponsored by the City School District ELA and Science Departments and supported by the Early Childhood Development Institute (ECDI). The focus of this Collegial Circle is the creation of Kindergarten “Experience Boxes” that will be used as hands-on extension activities to help Kindergarten students connect to and apply Listening and Learning Domain science and social studies content. The initial work will be to create hands-on activities/experiences around the three science-based L&L Domains: The Five Senses, Plants, and Seasons & Weather. The ECDI, in partnership with a private funder, is purchasing the materials needed to create these boxes for all collegial circle participants.

Goal 5:

Increase
summer
learning
opportunities
for young
children

Results:

› Increase in coordination of planning and a focus on young children brings increase in the opportunities for summer learning for young children

› RCSD offered additional opportunities for young children:

- Through a partnership with the Federation of Teachers, Roc the Future, First Book, Mercier, and Center for Youth, RCSD was able to deliver 10 books to every child in K-2. Each student went home with these books in a cinch bag, a bookmark from the public library, and a letter from the Superintendent with many tips for reading.
- RCSD Early Childhood Department provided all Pre-K students with a book bag that contained 5 books per child and a variety of activities to complete over the summer.
- RCSD School Libraries Open Summer 2014 - All 5 AIS summer school program sites had a FT school librarian on site so that students could borrow materials.

› New initiative to increase summer learning slots for children PreK go K: Based on the documented summer learning loss, ECDI worked with multiple local funders in Summer 2014 to support an intensive summer pilot program for PreK go K. The model employed the key components of the National Horizons model which includes two certified teachers and one aide for classes of fifteen children, a curriculum based on High Scope emphasizing hands-on interactive learning, and swimming lessons for all children. Preliminary results are promising. Whereas children have historically entered Kindergarten rating a 3.2 on the COR, two weeks before Kindergarten, the 55 children in this pilot were rated at an average of 3.7 on the COR.

Next steps:

- › Evaluation by Kindergarten teachers of these children to compare to the overall kindergarten assessment
- › Seek District Resolution of support for summer learning programming for PreK go K students
- › Seek funding for a statistically significant sample of children for summer 2015.



**Increase
student reading
comprehension
skills through
directed summer
reading camps at
public libraries.**

Results:

- › 98% of students who participated in pre- and post-testing in the camps maintained or showed an increase in reading and/or social-emotional skills.
- › On average, students who participated in the pre- and post-testing showed an average increase in reading comprehension of 16%.
- › Library performance indicators at the summer Camp sites outperformed all other branches in the areas of circulation (both adult and children's materials), door count, programs, and library cards issued.
- › 21 Literacy Aides hired at Arnett, Charlotte, Highland, Lincoln, Lyell, Maplewood, Sully and Wheatley branch libraries.
 - 19,494 contacts in July and August.
 - 26% of the contacts directly supported reading camps or reading with children; other contacts involved activities requiring reading and comprehension skills.
 - 4 Literacy Aides hired permanently by Rochester Public Library.

Next Steps:

- › Evaluate effectiveness of the program.
- › Address issues around attendance and enrollment.
- › Involve City GIS to target families with young children within a four block radius of participating libraries.
- › Continue Literacy Aide program in 2015.
- › Develop process for training Literacy Aides prior to July 2015.



National League of Cities EAYC Rochester Leadership

- City of Rochester – Patricia Uttaro, Rochester Public Library, Director
- The Children’s Agenda – Carolyn Lee-Davis

National League of Cities EAYC Rochester- Coordinating Council

- Tonia Burton, Rochester Public Library, Children’s Services Consultant
- Jacque Cady, Early Childhood Development Initiative, Chair Emeritus
- Jackie Campbell, Rochester Public Library, Youth Services Manager
- Kristina Heiligenthaler, Rochester Department of Recreation & Youth Services, Coordinator of Program Development
- Dirk Hightower, Children’s Institute, Executive Director
- Robin Hooper, Rochester City School District, Early Childhood Director
- Nancy Kaplan, Rochester’s Child, Coordinator
- Loretta Kruger, ABC Head Start, Deputy Director for Early Childhood Services
- Carolyn Lee-Davis, The Children’s Agenda – Policy Analyst, and Parent Leadership Training Institute – Coordinator
- Shelley Matthews, Rochester Public Library, Literacy Coordinator
- Jerome Underwood, Rochester City School District, Senior Director of Youth Development & Family Services
- Patricia Uttaro, Rochester Public Library, Director
- Kathryn Yarlett, Rochester City School District, Executive Director of 3rd Grade Reading

NLC EAYC Summit Planning Volunteers: Marsha Dumka and Mary Jo Brach





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- The W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families
 - City of Rochester
 - Rochester Public Library
- Rochester Department of Recreation & Youth Services
 - The Children's Agenda
- Early Childhood Development Initiative
 - Children's Institute
- Rochester City School District
 - Rochester's Child
- Rochester Area Community Foundation
- Action for a Better Community, Head Start
 - Roc the Future
- Roc the Future School Readiness Collaborative Action Network
- Greater Rochester Parent Leadership Training Institute Alumni Group
 - National Parent Leadership Training Institute
- The Children's Agenda Interfaith Collaborative
 - United Way of Greater Rochester NY
 - Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency
- Rochester Association for the Education of Young Children

