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Voluntary Pre-K in Tennessee: Understanding the Collaboration Model

Executive Summary

Over the past 10 years, education leaders in Tennessee have worked diligently to implement an effective early learning program for Tennessee's 4-year-olds. Since 1998 when the state first began serving 600 at-risk children in its small-scale early childhood education pilot program, pre-K in Tennessee has developed into a strong, nationally recognized program that now serves 13,000 4-year-olds in 677 classrooms. The success of the program is due in large part to Gov. Phil Bredesen, key education leaders in the state Senate and House, and the overall bipartisan support pre-K has received among Tennessee legislators.

Perhaps the greatest hallmark of Tennessee's pre-kindergarten program is its collaborative structure that encourages partnerships between school systems and private child care providers, Head Start programs, community organizations and local businesses. Tennessee's pre-K model allocates a portion of the total classroom funding to a school system based on the Basic Education Program formula. The balance of operating costs for each classroom must then come from another source, which is where the collaborative partnerships come into play.

As we work toward ensuring that all 4-year-olds have the opportunity to begin kindergarten with the school readiness skills needed to succeed in life, it is essential that we evaluate our progress and look for opportunities where we can do more to bring high-quality early education to more 4-year-olds.

"Finally, lawmakers – Republicans and Democrats alike – are working toward an education plan that takes the big picture into account. From our youngest to our oldest learners, we are making great progress toward ensuring that each child in Tennessee has access to a quality education."

Rakeya A. Matthews
Mt. Juliet, Tenn.

"Every Child Needs a Quality Education," Letter to the Editor, 5.20.07,
The Tennessean

The goal of this report is to provide an overview of Tennessee's pre-K collaboration model, along with profiles of communities and providers that have successfully implemented the model. Challenges to successful collaboration and ways these challenges can be addressed will also be discussed. As Tennessee's program matures, it is important that all stakeholders understand what the collaboration

model is and how it works. Collaboration, the process by which communities create and nurture strong partnerships among a variety of organizations in order to deliver high-quality pre-K to more of Tennessee's 4-year-olds, is a central component of Tennessee's program.

In 2005, Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen proposed legislation that would expand the state's existing pilot pre-Kindergarten program. Known as the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005, the bill sought to make voluntary pre-K an option for at-risk 4-year-olds across the state.

Recognizing the importance of early education, the Tennessee Association for the Education of Young Children and Tennessee Stand for Children joined forces to create the Tennessee Alliance for Early Education, a grassroots organization with the sole mission of supporting the expansion of pre-K in Tennessee.

In a few weeks, the Alliance quickly grew from only two organizations to more than 75. With a small army of advocates and supporters, Alliance members regularly attended legislative committee hearings,

"Early childhood development not only is good for children, but actually serves as a strong economic development strategy. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with the governor on the pre-K program. Building a stronger community by educating our children will benefit all of us."

"Research shows that an investment in early childhood education and development yields extraordinary returns to the community — children who are better prepared to learn, more educated workers, and less crime. And that's something we all have a stake in."

Paulette Jackson
Executive Vice President
Caterpillar Financial Services
United Way news release, 10.17.06

maintained contact with legislators and worked hard to spread the word that pre-K was integral in preparing for the future of Tennessee and its children.

Gov. Bredesen made a priority of significantly expanding the state's pilot pre-kindergarten program. Funded through excess monies from the state lottery, the governor proposed adding \$25 million to the existing pilot program.

Extensive research clearly showed the benefits of pre-K – that children who participate in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs go on to greater successes throughout their educational careers and throughout life. With information from the National Institute for Early Education Research and the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, and support from the national advocacy organization called Pre-K Now, members of the Alliance were able to accurately inform legislators, community and business leaders and citizens about the benefits of pre-K.

At the end of the 2005 legislative session, one victory stood above the rest: the passage of the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005. The bill passed in the House by a final vote of 79-16. In an even bigger victory, the legislation passed the Senate by a final vote of 27-2.

The Alliance was again hard at work throughout the 2006 and 2007 legislative sessions, and the fight for early education in Tennessee saw two more legislative victories. Strong bipartisan support again led the way to legislative success for pre-K in Tennessee as the state legislature passed Gov. Bredesen's 2006 and 2007 budget proposals, bringing an additional \$45 million to pre-K.

To date, the victories our state has achieved during three legislative sessions are astounding. During the 2004-2005 school year, Tennessee served 3,000 children in 148 pilot pre-K classrooms. During the 2005-2006 school year, Tennessee served 9,000 children in 447 pre-K classrooms. In the 2006-2007 school year, 13,000 children were served in 677 pre-K classrooms. During the 2007-2008 school year, 17,000 4-year-olds are being served in 934 pre-K classrooms.

Thank you to all of the dedicated teachers, directors, school system administrators, and others who are working very hard to implement this program, and to the communities that are supporting these efforts by offering services through the collaboration model. We should all be encouraged by the communities across Tennessee that are seeing overwhelming progress every day. The commitment and enthusiasm with which this program has been embraced will benefit many generations of Tennesseans.

I. OVERVIEW: TENNESSEE PRE-K PROGRAM AND STRUCTURE

Tennessee's pre-K program targets at-risk 4-year-olds, with "at-risk" being defined as those who qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program. The ultimate goal is to provide access, on a voluntary basis, to all 4-year-olds in the state.

Funding

The pilot program is funded through \$10 million in state revenue, while the expanded program is funded through \$25 million of recurring state lottery funds and \$45 million from the state's general fund, bringing the total investment in Tennessee's pre-K program for the 2007-2008 school year to \$80 million. Gov. Phil Bredesen, with the support of many lawmakers from both parties, looks to continue expansion of the program throughout his second term.

Funding for pre-K classrooms is distributed to school systems through a competitive grant process. Local school systems may apply to the Tennessee Department of Education for funding and approval of one or more pre-K programs. School districts may contract and enter into collaborative agreements for operation of these programs with non-school system organizations in the geographical area served by the local school system. This includes, but is not limited to, nonprofit and for-profit child care providers and Head Start programs that have attained the highest designation under the rated licensing system administered by the Department of Human Services.

As a condition of receiving state funds, each local school system is accountable for providing a matching amount of funds based on their BEP formula state/local match requirement. Local school districts have the ability to use federal funds, private dollars or in-kind resources as part of their local match. In-kind resources include contributions such as non-school district-owned facilities, instructional materials, equipment and supplies, food and nutrition services, and transportation services.

The Office of Early Learning

The Office of Early Learning was created in 2005 to increase coordination among state-level offices working with preschool children and their families. This office monitors pre-K programs for accountability, oversees the application process, consults with local communities/school systems about new programs, works closely with child care providers and Head Start programs, and serves as a clearinghouse of information about early education in Tennessee. The office works in close partnership with the Department of Human Services Child Care programs. The Office of Early Learning staff directory is listed at the end of this report, Pages 23-25. You can also visit the Office of Early Learning Web site at www.state.tn.us/education/prek.

Community Pre-K Advisory Council

Each school district that offers state-funded pre-kindergarten is required to create and facilitate a Community Pre-K Advisory Council. The Council develops the overall pre-kindergarten implementation plan for the local school district, and includes a diverse group of representatives from business leaders and parents to for-profit child care providers and school board members.

Quality Standards

In both 2005 and 2006, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) recognized Tennessee as a national leader in providing and sustaining a high-quality pre-K program funded by state dollars. The central reason for this distinction is the quality standards that have been maintained throughout the program's growth:

- Small class size (maximum 20 students)
- Low student-teacher ratio (1:10)
- Comprehensive and age-appropriate curriculum aligned with the Tennessee Early Childhood Education – Early Learning Developmental Standards

"As a substitute teacher, I have seen too many preschool children who do not have a home life that teaches the basics of social interaction, manners, health and hygiene, nutrition or safety, as well as the education fundamentals ... Too many children start school never having had a book read to them or owning a crayon to color with ... These are the preschoolers the state is trying to reach first before they slip through the cracks."

Cindy M. House
Nashville, Tenn.

*"State must reach neglected preschoolers,"
Letter to the Editor, 5.8.07,
The Tennessean*

- Certified teachers
- Nutritious meals provided
- Family engagement program
- Vision, hearing and health screening and referral services
- Professional development support for teachers

2006-2007 Statewide Classroom and Demographic Statistics¹

4-year-olds in Tennessee	78,000
Total at-risk 4-year-olds in Tennessee based on free/reduced lunch	40,000
Total number of students enrolled in state-funded pre-K ²	13,000
Total number of state-funded pre-K classrooms	677

Collaborative partnership examples:

Memphis City Schools

51 total state-funded pre-K classrooms

25 partnerships with community partners/private providers

Hamilton County

23 total state-funded pre-K classrooms

12 partnerships with community partners/Head Start

Clarksville-Montgomery County

12 total state-funded pre-K classrooms

1 higher education partnership

(currently developing three partnerships with private providers for 2007-2008)

Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools

35 total state-funded pre-K classrooms

3 partnerships with community partners/private providers

What Is Collaboration? How Does It Work?

Collaboration is a central component of Tennessee's pre-K program. Collaboration – creating and nurturing strong partnerships among a variety of organizations – allows communities to accomplish several important steps toward delivering high-quality pre-K to more of Tennessee's 4-year-olds:

- Secures the local funding match for classrooms
- Minimizes duplication of services and delivers pre-K education through a diverse delivery system (for-profit and nonprofit child care centers, local Head Start programs, school-based classrooms, higher education settings, etc.)
- Obtains broader access to pre-K and faster start-up time³
- Improves quality across all settings⁴

One of the most important outcomes of collaboration is a successful "diverse delivery system," which uses both community-based and school sites to provide pre-K services. Once the school system has applied for and been awarded one or more pre-K classrooms through the Department of Education, the school system can then contract and enter into collaborative agreements for operation of these classrooms with non-school system organizations. The success of the diverse delivery system is

¹ Statistics provided by the Tennessee Department of Education Office of Early Learning.

² The state-funded pilot Pre-K program serves 3- and 4-year-old children; the expanded program serves only 4-year-old children.

³ Betty Holcomb, Child Care, Inc., "A Diverse System Delivers for Pre-K: Lessons Learned in New York State," (Washington, DC: Pre-K Now 2006) 5.

⁴ Betty Holcomb, Child Care, Inc., "A Diverse System Delivers for Pre-K: Lessons Learned in New York State," (Washington, DC: Pre-K Now 2006) 5.

dependent on the willingness of the different entities within a local early education community to collaborate.

The experiences of other states that are developing and implementing similar statewide pre-K programs are often valuable when assessing the strengths and weaknesses of our own program here in Tennessee. A study on the diverse delivery system in New York state, released by the pre-K advocacy group Pre-K Now in July 2006, states:

The *how* of a diverse delivery system rests finally on the sometimes-elusive ability of people to collaborate. Where programs in New York have succeeded, it is because everyone came to the table with open minds and a willingness to learn and to see the strengths that different parties brought to the effort. Often, participants have had to abandon preconceptions and invent wholly new approaches as they go.⁵

An overview of this report

Discussed throughout this report are the components of Tennessee's pre-K program that are made successful through collaborative partnerships: the Star-Quality Program, Community Pre-K Advisory Councils, and examples of collaboration. Each section in this report is accompanied by a success story from a Tennessee community that has developed a pre-K delivery system for its community through effective collaborative partnerships.

⁵ Betty Holcomb, Child Care, Inc., "A Diverse System Delivers for Pre-K: Lessons Learned in New York State," (Washington, DC: Pre-K Now 2006) 5.

II. BENEFITS OF QUALITY PRE-K

Why Pre-K?

It is widely accepted in educational communities that early education produces a multitude of benefits. Educators observe on a daily basis how children interact with one another, how they learn and how they succeed. Ask any elementary school teacher if pre-kindergarten education makes a difference and you're likely to hear a resounding "yes." That's because children who take part in high-quality pre-kindergarten programs have been shown to perform better on standardized tests, are more likely to read at grade level and are less likely to exhibit behavior problems in and out of the classroom.⁶

While these benefits can easily be reported based simply on firsthand accounts from teachers, solid, in-depth research also exists to support this information. There have been, and continue to be, a significant number of studies that examine the benefits of early education in terms of educational, social and personal development.

Studies regularly conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) show that high-quality pre-K programs have significant effects on student performance, behavior and success throughout their educations, not just in kindergarten.

Because the 4-year-old brain develops rapidly, pre-K provides the perfect opportunity to extend the learning process by teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills, in addition to color and shape recognition, science concepts and social skills. Research shows that children who learn these skills in high-quality pre-K environments not only are more likely to retain the information, but are more likely to read at grade level, perform better on standardized tests and are even more likely to graduate from high school, than those children not taking part in early education.

Furthermore, these children enter kindergarten with a foundation of knowledge necessary for academic success throughout their first year of school. Their peers who do not attend high-quality pre-K programs will likely enter the classroom with a disadvantage of not knowing fundamental skills required for learning. This often creates a pattern that is difficult to break.

"It's much more than glorified day care. It's a time when children can prepare for kindergarten through literacy and language growth all overseen by a certified teacher while also learning how to play with other children and become a little more independent while away from their parents."

Editorial, *The Daily News Journal*
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

"Pre-Kindergarten sparks young minds for lifelong learning," 4.2.07

Children who are not taking part in early education, and particularly those from low-income families, frequently don't read at grade level and many times fall behind the rest of the class in terms of academic performance and success.

Many studies have been conducted that illustrate these points. One in particular is the longest-running study of its kind, having been in progress for more than four decades – the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project.

About the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project

Between 1962 and 1967 a group of educators in Ypsilanti, Mich., operated the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program to help young children avoid school failure and related issues. As part of the program, 123 low-income African-American children believed to be at high risk for school failure were selected and randomly

assigned to one of two groups. The first (program) group took part in a high-quality pre-kindergarten program at ages 3 and 4, while the second (no-program) group did not participate in a preschool program.

"Pre-K is the difference between being ready for school and not being ready. Part of the dropout problem in Tennessee is that a lot of youngsters start school behind and never catch up."

Steve Suits

Program Coordinator
Southern Education Foundation

"As reality takes kids out of home early, we can't neglect Pre-K,"
5.17.07, by Dwight Lewis,
The Tennessean

⁶ Judi Boyd, W. Steven Barnett, Elena Bodrova, Deborah J. Leong, and Deanna Gomby, "Promoting Children's Social and Emotional Development Through Preschool Education" (NIEER Policy Report: March 2005)

Because of the random assignment to each group, the preschool experience of each child remains the best explanation for differences in their performance over the years. Data was collected annually from ages 3 to 11, then again at ages 14, 15, 19, 27 and 40. With each data collection, researchers looked at the areas of education, economic performance, crime prevention, family relationships and health.

Throughout the course of the study, significant differences have emerged between the two groups, with preschool believed to be the cause for these disparities.

The study has shown that the program group significantly outperformed the no-program group in terms of high school graduation rates (65 percent to 45 percent). Furthermore, various intellectual tests conducted throughout the study also show the program group outperforming its counterparts in language, school achievement and adult literacy tests.

Based on surveys, a substantially greater number of the program group was employed at age 40 (76 percent vs. 62 percent), which continued a pattern observed at age 27. The program group also showed higher median annual earnings than the no-program group at ages 27 and 40. Additionally, no-program group members demonstrated a greater dependence on social services and government assistance.

The study also indicates that preschool played a major factor in reducing the number of arrests among the program group. In fact, only 36 percent had five or more lifetime arrests, as opposed to 55 percent in the no-program group. This number breaks down further to show fewer arrests in the program group for violent, property and drug-related crimes.

In terms of family relationships, a significantly higher number of men in the program group raised their

“Early exposure to the classroom setting allows students to get a head start, and in some cases students need a head start to be successful in the classroom.”

Sara Longhini
Executive Director
Fannie Battle Day Home for Children
(a three-star facility)

“Residents school mayoral candidates in education,”
5.21.07, by Ralph Loos,
The Tennessean

own children. Also, considerably fewer members of the program group reported use of illegal and controlled substances such as marijuana and heroin.

While the study highlights numerous benefits of high-quality pre-kindergarten education, one of the most telling results is the cost-benefit analysis. Currently, the study shows a return on investment of \$16 for every dollar spent on pre-K.

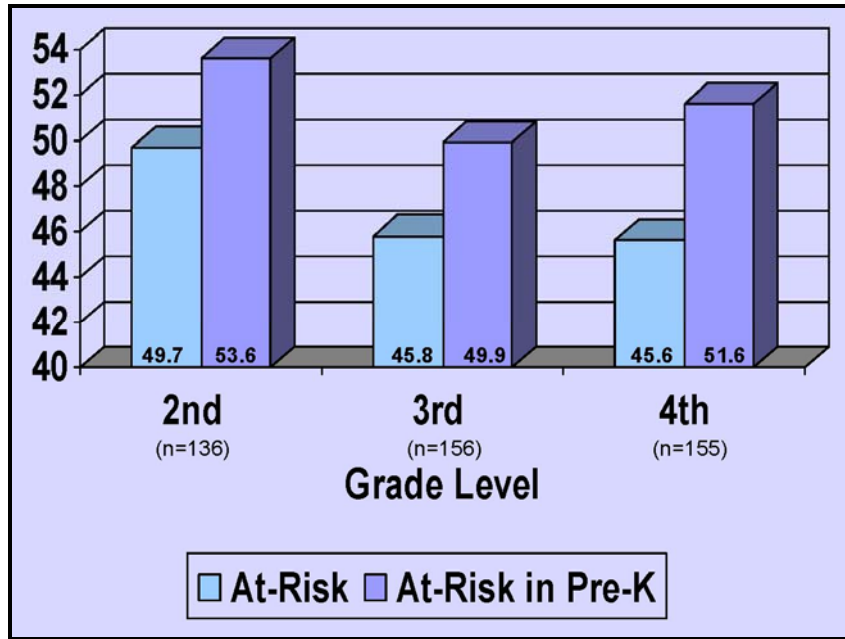
Pre-K in Tennessee

Based on the information presented above, it’s clear that pre-kindergarten works and has a positive impact on children, families and the community at large. This is certainly the case with Tennessee’s high-quality program.

Since the launch of the pilot program in 1998, thousands of Tennessee’s 4-year-olds have benefited from pre-kindergarten education. During that time the Department of Education and Office of Early Learning have been working together to monitor student success in reading and math.

These studies have consistently shown one thing: Tennessee’s targeted pre-K program is helping close the learning gap between at-risk and non-at-risk children. For example, children who took part in 1998’s pilot program have shown impressive gains in grade-level reading proficiency through fourth grade, where more than 51 percent of the at-risk pre-K group was reading at grade level compared with 45 percent of at-risk students who did not attend pre-K. This is illustrated in the chart that follows.

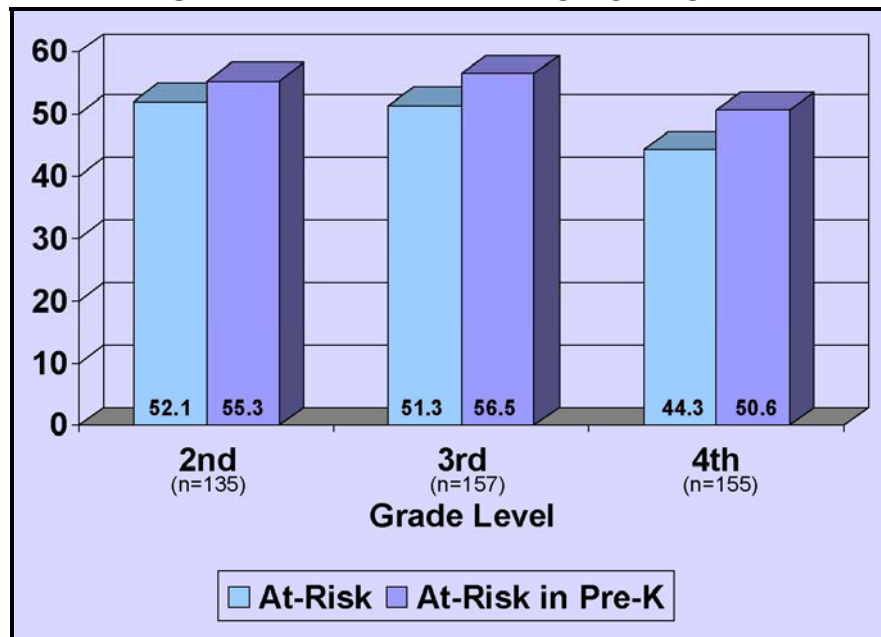
GRADE-LEVEL READING PROFICIENCY⁷



n=the number of children in the sample

Additionally, substantial gains have also been noted in grade-level math proficiency, as shown in the following chart. By fourth grade, more than 50 percent of at-risk students who participated in pre-K were considered to be working at grade level, while less than 45 percent of their non-pre-K at-risk peers were performing at grade level.

GRADE-LEVEL MATH PROFICIENCY⁸



n=the number of children in the sample

⁷ Tennessee Department of Education, "Pre-K in Tennessee," Presentation to Senate Education Committee, March 2006.

⁸ Tennessee Department of Education, "Pre-K in Tennessee," Presentation to Senate Education Committee, March 2006.

These statistics make clear the power and benefit of pre-K, specifically the positive impact the program is having on the state of Tennessee. For years, Tennessee and its students have consistently ranked in the bottom third nationally in terms of academic proficiency and success. High-quality pre-K has the ability to change that, and the tide is already turning.

Our state's at-risk children are showing the early signs of improved academic success – numbers that can only be expected to continue to grow and improve. As more children across the state take part in Tennessee's voluntary pre-K program, more children will become better, higher performing students. Such success translates into higher graduate rates, better jobs, more fiscally responsible citizens and a significant improvement of our state's economy.

The bottom line is simple: pre-K is a win-win situation. While Tennessee is just starting to see the positive results of its pre-kindergarten program, all signs are pointing to great successes.

Over time, our state will reap huge benefits from the investments of the past decade and those investments that are yet to come. We truly are making a difference in the lives of our children.

Success Stories from a Knox County Pre-K Classroom

Perhaps the best way to show exactly how children are benefiting from pre-K is through real-life examples. Judy Hiscock, Ph.D., a pre-K instructor from Knoxville, offers the following success stories.

- Austin came to our class recognizing few letters, no letter sounds and with warnings from his parents about hyperactivity and poor behavior. Austin has become one of our most accomplished students. He has learned every letter and sound we have studied. Furthermore, he has incidentally learned most other letters and sounds we have not yet studied. He can now spell and write his name, as well as the names of several other students in the class. He also recognizes several words on sight. Now that Austin is busy building his literacy and math skills, he has no behavior problems. His family can't believe the good behavior reports that are being sent home!
- Megan came to school recognizing no letters or sounds and very few numbers. She wrote a story on her own today about her "Dd" dinosaur. If she did not know how to spell a word, she sounded it out as best she could, then asked us if she was correct. Her parents have been astounded at her progress, especially her improved social confidence. During the past year, Megan has developed into a classroom leader.
- On the first day of school, three students cried because they didn't want to stay. Since then, two of those students have cried because they didn't want to leave. They enjoy school so much that they want to stay at school longer. They love it that much. All of our students are eager to come to school each day. They have become independent and self-sufficient learners away from their parents. Our pre-K program is a wonderful gift to the children of Knox County.

III. THE TENNESSEE STAR-QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAM: WHAT IT MEANS FOR PRE-K

Tennessee's pre-K program is based on a diverse delivery system through which pre-K services are provided in both community-based and school settings.

"We think it is important to have a diverse delivery system for two reasons. The first being parent choice, and the second being that it makes economic sense to leverage the existing infrastructure ... from across all providers."

Gary Graves
President and CEO
La Petite Academy

2006 National Satellite Broadcast,
"Effective Advocacy in the Pre-K
Movement," Pre-K Now

There are many advantages to a diverse delivery system, including an increase in enrollment in pre-K classes, enhanced services, parental choice, facilities in community-based programs, and more collaborative partnerships.⁹ Private providers also offer many advantages to working parents such as wrap-around and extended services.

There are also challenges that must be addressed if this system is to successfully deliver high-quality pre-K to 4-year-olds in our state. In Tennessee, one of the central challenges is low involvement among three-star private child care providers in the state's pre-K program. A child care program receives a three-star rating if it achieves a certain level of quality above the minimum licensing standards.

Three-star child care providers are the only community-based providers eligible to participate in the state pre-K program. This ensures that high-quality standards are maintained in every pre-K classroom in the state. To address the challenge of low involvement among three-star private providers in the state's pre-K program, there is a need to raise awareness among child care centers about the Star-Quality Program, to increase knowledge among local school systems about what a three-star rating really means, and to encourage collaboration between local school systems and three-star child care providers.

An increase in the number of three-star private child care centers across the state would mean a boost in availability of high-quality child care, and more opportunities for local school systems to collaborate with child care centers to deliver pre-K education.

Overview of the Star-Quality Child Care Program

In 2000 and 2001 Tennessee launched a comprehensive plan to provide more information to parents and improve the quality of child care in the state. The Star-Quality Child Care Program is part of this larger quality initiative, and is a voluntary program for child care providers that encourages and recognizes high-quality child care programs.

The Star-Quality Program recognizes child care providers who exceed minimum licensing standards. Under the program, a provider can receive a rating of one, two or three stars to place on its license and display in its center or home. Each star shows that the provider meets increasingly higher standards. The more stars a program has, the better the quality of care it offers to children.

It is important to note that a program with fewer than three stars is not a substandard program. This has been a common misconception since the launch of the program. A program with one star is a step above minimum state requirements, and this is increasingly true for programs with two and three stars.

Zero stars: A child care provider meets the minimum Child Care Licensing requirements of the state.

One star: A provider has achieved quality standards at a level above the minimum requirements.

Two stars: A provider has achieved quality standards increasingly higher than the minimum requirements.

⁹ Betty Holcomb, Child Care, Inc., "A Diverse System Delivers for Pre-K: Lessons Learned in New York State," (Washington, DC: Pre-K Now 2006) 7.

Three stars: A provider has achieved the highest quality standards above the minimum requirements set out by the state.

What It Means To Be a Star-Quality Child Care Provider

A provider's evaluator uses results of the annual mandatory evaluation to determine whether a provider is eligible to participate in the Star-Quality Program. Based on the annual evaluation results, the evaluator calculates a star rating for each of the areas in which a provider is evaluated and an overall rating – one, two, or three stars – for the child care program. If the report card evaluation indicates that the agency would be eligible to receive at least one star, the agency will be automatically enrolled in the Star-Quality Program.

To determine the number of stars a program receives once it is deemed eligible for the Star-Quality Program, the program evaluator uses the same information the provider supplied for its annual evaluation, so the provider is not asked to supply additional information. The program evaluator calculates a facility's rating for each area used in the annual evaluation, and also gives an overall rating. A provider can receive up to three stars in each area and for its overall program rating.

A program's overall rating is determined by totaling the star ratings received in all areas and averaging the total. Based on its average, a program will be awarded one, two, or three stars for its overall rating.

To let parents know that a program is star-rated because it exceeds minimum licensing standards, each program that is awarded a star rating will receive a Quality Program Report Card with its overall rating printed on it, stars to attach to its license, and a stars sticker to display on the door or window of the child care facility. The providers also receive a detailed report with the results from each classroom assessment so they can proactively identify strengths and areas for improvement.

The Star-Quality Program ensures that private providers offering state-funded pre-K classes are of the highest quality.

How Stars Are Awarded

Every child care program in the state is evaluated annually as part of the licensing renewal process. The Star-Quality Program rating process is based on the same areas of evaluation that are used in the annual evaluation.

Child care centers are evaluated in seven areas:

- Director qualifications
- Professional development
- Compliance history
- Parent/family involvement
- Ratio and group size
- Staff compensation
- Program assessment

Family and group child care homes are evaluated in five areas:

- Professional development
- Compliance history
- Parent/family involvement
- Business management
- Program assessment

If the evaluation shows that a child care program meets all of the following criteria, the program is eligible for the Star-Quality Program:

- The program received at least a 1 in the "Compliance History" category
- The program received at least a 1 in the "Program Assessment" category
- The program received an overall rating of at least 1

The final overall star rating for the child care program is calculated using this formula:

- Add up all the ratings in each of the areas of evaluation.

- Add one point to the total if a child care program is accredited by a DHS-recognized accrediting agency.
- Divide the total by seven (for a child care center) or five (for a family or group home).
- The result is the program's overall star rating.

If a child care center does not qualify for the Star-Quality Program or wants to earn more stars in the future, assistance is available through the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS). TDHS offers technical assistance and training to help child care providers achieve higher quality and more stars. Visit http://tnstarquality.org/html/more_info.htm for more information about the support services provided through TDHS.

For more information about how the Star-Quality Program works, please visit <http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/ccrcsq.htm>.

Success Story: The Memphis Learning Academy, a Three-star Program

How the Memphis Learning Academy got involved

Following the overwhelming passage of the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005 by the state legislature, Memphis City Schools (MCS) sent letters to all three-star community child care centers in the school system describing the voluntary pre-K program and informing the centers that they were eligible to become a partner. One of the recipients of this letter was Dr. Rutha Smith-Carr, founder and CEO of the Memphis Learning Academy.

This three-star private child care center, located in the heart of Memphis, met the criteria identified by MCS and the Tennessee Department of Education to be a potential community partner within the pre-K program. The letter informed Dr. Smith-Carr that if she was interested in participating in the pre-K effort, she would need to complete a grant application for Memphis City Schools.

“Through working with Memphis City Schools, I’ve been able to upgrade the quality of services I provide to the children I serve and their families. And that’s why I really made a decision to support [Pre-K].”

Rutha Smith-Carr, Ph.D.
Director
Memphis Learning Academy

2006 National Satellite Broadcast,
“Effective Advocacy in the Pre-K
Movement,” Pre-K Now

Upon submitting written notification to MCS that Memphis Learning Academy was interested in becoming a partner, Dr. Smith-Carr received the grant application. She completed the application and returned it to MCS along with all required documentation. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Smith-Carr was notified by MCS that Memphis Learning Academy had been accepted into the pre-K program.

Dr. Smith-Carr says that she was interested in applying to become a partner with Memphis City Schools because the idea of bringing the child care community together was exciting to her. “I think there is strength in collaboration efforts,” says Dr. Smith-Carr. “I also felt that partnering with Memphis City Schools offered opportunities to upgrade the [early education] programs offered to students throughout the city and I wanted to be a part of this first effort.”

Resources and support available to pre-K partners

Through its partnership with MCS, the Memphis Learning Academy has had the opportunity to upgrade the quality of services provided to the children enrolled in the Academy. MCS provides a research-based program design that the Academy would have been unable to implement as a standalone child care center because of a lack of staffing and financial resources, says Dr. Smith-Carr.

Memphis City Schools also researched and identified assessment tools to help pre-K partners identify students’ weaknesses and strengths, and trained providers to implement the tools properly.

“We then used the assessment data to assist us in planning our program to reinforce and expand areas where students are strong and strengthen areas identified as weak through assessments,” says Dr. Smith-Carr. “This actually provided more focus and direction to our program.”

“As a participant in the program, we received training from national experts in the field of early education. This helped us to keep abreast of current research, teaching strategies, methodologies and different perspectives in early childhood education.”

Challenges

Collaborating to deliver pre-K services to children does not come without its challenges, especially in the early stages of state-funded pre-K. The Memphis Learning Academy has had to learn how to cope with a lack of administrative funds, insufficient funds for teacher salaries, and reimbursement delays from MCS.

However, Dr. Smith-Carr says that these issues are not going unnoticed by the school system. “I must add that in the latter part of this second year, Memphis City Schools did slightly increase the dollar amount of each grant and did begin to provide up-front dollars to pay teacher’s salaries. That was helpful in that it relieved some of the financial strain on our budget.” Dr. Smith-Carr adds that increasing funding and providing administrative costs should continue to be in the forefront of discussions about how to improve the program.

“I’ve addressed these challenges by making ... internal financial adjustments to compensate for insufficient funding and delayed reimbursements,” Dr. Smith-Carr says.

Benefits

For Dr. Smith-Carr and the Memphis Learning Academy, the benefits of collaborating with the local school system seem to outweigh the challenges:

“The most rewarding aspect of collaborating with the local school system has been the opportunity to provide a higher quality program for all of the children entrusted to our care. It has been very rewarding to see the children develop and progress. It’s an excellent feeling to see the excitement and feeling of pride in the children as they master new skills, as they actually read words, put words together to form sentences, recognize subtle differences between letters and numbers as they explore and investigate open-ended ‘what if, how would you, what do you think’ kinds of questions, and to see them actually guide their own learning in some instances. It is most exhilarating when you see that a child has finally understood a new concept, actually grasps the meaning and can apply and transfer that learning to new situations. It is just rewarding to see children excited about learning.

“Another rewarding aspect of working with Memphis City Schools has been the opportunity to work closely with Drs. Brenda Taylor and Linda Kennard. ... Dr. Taylor really took the lead in designing the voluntary pre-K program for Memphis. I’ve looked at [pre-K] program designs throughout the country, and I must say we here in Memphis are working with a top-of-the-line pre-K design. With my strong professional background in early childhood education as a university professor and curriculum developer, I appreciate and enjoy the opportunity to interface with other professionals such as Dr. Taylor who are sincerely dedicated to young children. This is not just a job for her; it is a commitment.”

Advice for private child care providers

Dr. Smith-Carr offers this advice for private child care providers considering a partnership with their local school system to provide state-funded pre-kindergarten: “Be flexible, have an open mind, and realize the program is still in its formative stages.”

The child care provider, the school system, the family, and the community

The benefits of high-quality pre-K delivered through a diverse delivery system are numerous.

According to Dr. Smith-Carr, “This partnership has given me personal gratification through the fact that we are making a major difference in the lives of the children we serve, and it is really all about the children. The school system benefits because the students entering kindergarten are more advanced in their skills and, thus, more ready to learn. The family benefits because [parents] learn strategies and methodologies to reinforce and enhance their child’s academic progress. The community benefits because there are more components working in concert for children’s progress, which should mean more schools in these communities are now in better positions to make their AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) which will draw working families into these areas, thus upgrading the quality of the community.”

IV. COMMUNITY PRE-K ADVISORY COUNCILS

The Community Pre-K Advisory Council is the driving force behind collaboration efforts in a community. Formation of an advisory council that includes a diverse group of child care stakeholders from the community is required as part of the application process for programs under the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005.

Structure

Through collaboration with other agencies, the Director of Schools or designee and the local school system assumes the leadership role within the council. The director or designee assumes the role of convening council meetings and organizing the tasks necessary to reach decisions regarding program design, grant application, and program implementation. It is the responsibility of the school system to ensure the active participation of the Pre-K Advisory Council.

It is mandated by the state that each council include members representing the local community, including:

- School board
- Parents
- Teachers
- Nonprofit providers
- For-profit providers
- Head Start
- The business community
- Local government funding bodies, where applicable

The Tennessee Office of Early Learning suggests several other agencies for consideration, though these are not required by state law to be included in the council:

- Even Start or other family literacy organization
- Representative of an institution of higher education with an early childhood education department
- Community leaders who have demonstrated interest in quality pre-kindergarten education
- Family child care providers
- Special education representatives

Role

Each council develops a pre-kindergarten implementation plan to meet the needs of the 4-year-old population within the service area of the local school system, with the first priority being those 4-year-olds who are at risk. The plan is expected to include short-term plans for the immediate year and long-term plans working toward full implementation.

The Pre-K Advisory Council has three central goals within the development of pre-K.

- A timeline for pre-K expansion must be developed, which should include a process to identify 4-year-old children most at risk of failure to develop school readiness skills by 5 years of age. As part of this timeline, the council should also include a pre-kindergarten phase-in plan with access to the most at-risk, underserved 4-year-old children in the initial phases of program expansion.
- A plan to ensure access to adequate facilities, staff and equipment (including playgrounds) must be developed.
- The council must identify community resources that may support pre-K efforts, including the local funding match, materials and supplies, auxiliary services to promote family

“Pre-K is a quality of life issue, in my opinion, especially from a business perspective. We sell Memphis to relocating companies, but we also have to develop a work force here for our existing companies. And so, overall, it produces a quality of life standard that makes our community attractive overall.”

John Moore
President and CEO
Memphis Regional Chamber of
Commerce

2006 National Satellite Broadcast,
“Effective Advocacy in the Pre-K
Movement,” Pre-K Now

engagement, existing programs serving 4-year-olds (e.g., for-profit and nonprofit child care centers, Head Start, etc.), and availability for wrap-around and summer child care services for children in need of full-day/full-year care.

- The council must assist the local school system in facilitating collaborative partnerships with non-school organizations.

“We’re very pleased with access to pre-K, but it’s just the tip of the iceberg ... and with 70 percent of our children coming from poverty-based backgrounds, the need is very great for more.”

Marsha Warden
Metro Nashville School Board

**Channel 2 News, WKRN
Nashville, Tenn.**
“Citizen group pushes for
Pre-K funding,” 4.4.07
Reporter: Melissa Penry

It is vital that the Director of Schools and local Board of Education take into account the unique needs and characteristics of the community and the diversity of local early education stakeholders when selecting the members of the Pre-K Advisory Council. Tennessee pre-K policy was designed to encourage community ownership of the pre-K program, as it gives a great deal of flexibility to the local school system and Pre-K Advisory Council.

The council serves in an advisory capacity to the local school board, and plays a major role in the planning, design, and ongoing guidance of the pre-kindergarten program. All council members should understand the importance of their active participation on the council and be committed to giving the time

and effort necessary to establish and maintain a successful pre-kindergarten program.

Collaboration

Agency collaboration with the Pre-K Advisory Council can result in the development of successful partnerships, which are essential to the expansion of pre-kindergarten programs and to maintaining high quality standards. Such collaborative partnerships often result in facilities, resources, recruitment, funding, and community support for the pre-K program.

Success Story: A Look at the Hamilton County Pre-K Advisory Council

Hamilton County’s school system formed one of the first Community Pre-K Advisory Councils in the state. As new school systems become involved in the state program, it is often helpful to look at how other systems have created and managed their own council’s activities.

Composition of the Hamilton County Pre-K Advisory Council

*indicates required by state legislation

- Council Chair: Director of pre-K programs in Hamilton County (designee of the Director of Schools)*
- Superintendent of Schools
- Associate Superintendent of Elementary Education
- Director of Certified Personnel, Hamilton County Department of Education
- Local school board members* (2)
- Parents* (1)
- Teachers* (2)
- Nonprofit early childhood education/child care providers* (2)
- For-profit early childhood education/child care providers* (2)
- Head Start representatives* (2)
- Business community representative* (1)
- Local government funding bodies* (1 county commissioner; 1 city council member)
- Even Start or other family literacy organization (1 family literacy representative; 1 Parents as First Teachers and Hamilton County Parent Coordinator representative)
- Representative of an institution of higher education with an early education department (1)
- Special education representative (2)
- Title 1 representative (1)

- Community leaders who have demonstrated an interest in quality pre-kindergarten education:
 - Chattanooga Housing Authority representative
 - Director of Elementary Education, Hamilton County Department of Education
 - School principals (3)
 - United Way representatives (3)
 - Director of Classified Personnel, Hamilton County Department of Education
 - Read 20 Director, Hamilton County Government Literacy Initiative
 - Site directors from community-based pre-K programs (3)
 - Childcare Resource Center representative
 - Members of the Chattanooga Association for the Education of Young Children
 - Pre-K nurse, Hamilton County Department of Education
 - Pre-K social worker, Hamilton County Department of Education

Recruiting for the Hamilton County Pre-K Advisory Council

According to Dr. Brenda Benford, director of pre-K programs in Hamilton County and chair of the Hamilton County Pre-K Advisory Council, recruiting a balanced group that represents the local child care community to be a part of the Council was not as challenging as she had anticipated.

“People were eager to serve and to meet. Our early childhood community has worked together for years through the county mayor’s literacy initiatives, Chattanooga Area Association for the Education of Young Children, and United Way projects,” says Dr. Benford. “Creating the Pre-K Advisory Council was just a natural next step. Scheduling meetings so they work with everyone’s schedules is the main challenge. Everyone I have asked to be on the Council has agreed to serve.”

Encouraging collaboration

Even before the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act of 2005 was passed, Hamilton County was already well on its way to delivering pre-K to many 4-year-olds in the area. Funding by Title 1, collaborative partnerships with Head Start, and the addition of the state pilot programs in 1998 gave Hamilton County 19 pre-K programs before Gov. Bredesen’s voluntary pre-K program was initiated.

“The governor’s program allowed us to extend our services to more children,” says Dr. Benford. “We work with United Way (which provides some matching funds for the community-based programs), Parents as First Teachers (through Even Start), University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and all of the other agencies that are part of the Hamilton County Pre-K Advisory Council. The community was ready to step in and provide the support that was needed.”

The most successful method the Council used at the beginning to identify community resources and opportunities for collaboration was brainstorming and discussion, says Dr. Benford. “At our meetings we did a lot of brainstorming. We put up charts and responded to different questions and concerns. If an agency had the answer they would step in and explain how they could help. We have added new members as their names come up in our discussions. With our district’s desire to emphasize diversity on the Council and encourage fresh ideas, we include anyone who wants to be involved.”

Key resources for each pre-K program

The Hamilton County Pre-K Advisory Council places a major emphasis on ensuring that all programs, whether they are in a for-profit, nonprofit, school, or Head Start setting, are treated equally and without distinction, says Dr. Benford. “In Hamilton County all of our pre-K programs are staffed with certified teachers and highly qualified staff. The community-based programs are all involved in

“Tracie Record, a parent of a child in pre-K, became sold on the idea early on. ‘She comes home and wants to read and wants to know what this is and that is and tells me what she’s learned at school.’

“Record’s daughter is among 740 4-year-old children enrolled in pre-K in Hamilton County, and school leaders say there’s enough demand to serve more. [Pre-K teacher Rose] Keefe says, ‘We have a waiting list, we have kept children on the waiting list our entire time. We’ve managed to place three children since the year began, since some kids transferred out.’”

**WDEF News 12,
Chattanooga, Tenn.
“Parents want more Pre-K in
Hamilton County,” 2.7.07
Reporter: Joe Legge**

the interview process of teachers and assistants and are allowed to select their staff.

“We use the information provided by the state that lists materials and equipment that should be in a pre-K classroom, and we do our best to make sure that each classroom has these materials. All of the pre-K staff in the county are trained on the same curriculum and assessments and are trained together as a group. There are no distinctions between programs; they are all treated equitably,” says Dr. Benford.

V. COLLABORATION EXAMPLES

Funding the Local Match

Perhaps the most important feature of Tennessee's pre-kindergarten program is its collaborative structure that encourages partnerships between school systems and private child care providers, Head Start programs, community organizations or local businesses. Tennessee's pre-K model allocates a portion of the total classroom funding to a school system based on the Basic Education Program formula. The balance of operating costs for each classroom must then come from another source, which is where the collaborative partnerships come into play.

This collaborative approach fosters community involvement and investment in early learning and is working across the state. For the 2006-2007 school year, 145 of the state's 529 voluntary pre-K classrooms were the result of collaborative partnerships. This total represents a two-year growth of 120 percent in the number of collaborative classrooms in Tennessee. While these figures are encouraging, there is plenty of room to grow. Given the structure of Tennessee's program, options for collaboration are plentiful.

Despite this, the barriers for collaboration can be daunting. For starters, identifying a partner to fund the local match can often be a difficult task, especially for more rural school districts where resources are significantly limited.

"... Bradley County and Cleveland City Schools formed a partnership with the state's pre-K program and Head Start. This became a win/win for all groups for some of the following reasons: Head Start receives certified teachers, which will help them to meet their pending 2011 mandate; public schools receive the experience, additional staff, training and funding that Head Start has to offer; state pre-K receives a successful example of collaboration to critique, build upon and model to other potential collaborators."

David Kelley
Head Start Director
Southeast Tennessee

These limitations can be amplified in the case of partnerships with private providers, which must be state-approved three-star child care centers. The reality is that not every Tennessee county has an abundance of qualifying centers. In fact, 57 percent of counties have one or zero three-star child care centers. This puts many districts at an immediate disadvantage and thereby makes collaboration a major hurdle. However, even in cases where three-star centers do exist, there are sometimes issues in finding willing partners on the parts of both the school system and match funding partner.

Head Start also remains a viable partnership opportunity, as it counts for the majority of collaborative classrooms in the state. Despite this, the difference in educational requirements for Head Start and pre-K classrooms can sometimes create a barrier for collaboration. In spite of this fact, many school systems have found ways to overcome the differences in requirements. For example, Greeneville City Schools (GCS) has partnered with Head Start on the understanding that GCS will provide a certified

teacher, staff development training and a social worker, while Head Start will provide qualified assistants. What is encouraging is that the Greenville example is just one of many successful Head Start collaborations. In the 2006-2007 school year, 91 of the state's 677 state-funded pre-K classrooms were made possible as a result of collaborative partnerships between local school systems and Head Start programs throughout the state, and that number will continue to rise.

The key to encouraging further collaboration is education. From school officials to private providers and community leaders, the more information the local early learning community has about collaboration and how it works, the easier the process will become. It is clear that pre-K is working throughout the state. The next step, aside from continued expansion, is to encourage and initiate partnerships for classrooms across Tennessee.

"Early childhood development not only is good for children, but actually serves as a strong economic development strategy. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with the governor on the pre-K program. Building a stronger community by educating our children will benefit all of us."

"Research shows that an investment in early childhood education and development yields extraordinary returns to the community — children who are better prepared to learn, more educated workers, and less crime. And that's something we all have a stake in."

Paulette Jackson
Executive Vice President
Caterpillar Financial Services
United Way news release, 10.17.06

Success Story: United Ways of Tennessee

As outlined previously, collaboration comes in a variety of forms, including in-kind donations, partnerships with private providers and Head Start centers, and corporate or business partnerships to provide matching funds. The latter method of collaboration has proved to be very successful in Nashville thanks to the work of major corporations and community organizations.

In 2006, Gov. Bredesen addressed the annual meeting of the United Way of Metropolitan Nashville, which was going public with its first policy initiative to support pre-K in Tennessee. At the meeting, the governor challenged every United Way chapter in the state to provide matching funds for a pre-K classroom in its community.

The United Way of Metropolitan Nashville took Gov. Bredesen's charge to heart and went a step further – they helped secure match funding for three Davidson County pre-K classrooms. One such class is located in The McNeilly Center for Children, an organization that has served low-income families since 1916. The certified three-star facility, which serves a large number of children from the Sam Levy Homes community in East Nashville, has also been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC accredits programs for young children through its national voluntary system that sets high standards for early education programs.

The pre-K classroom at McNeilly Center became a reality thanks to the generosity of Caterpillar Financial Services Corporation, an involved United Way partner and a leader in the Nashville business community. With a long-standing commitment to community involvement and support, Caterpillar raised the bar by partnering with United Way to bring high-quality pre-kindergarten education to the children of East Nashville.

United Way's efforts in Nashville also spawned pre-K classrooms at the Martha O'Bryan Center and the Fannie Battle Day Home for Children, both of which are located on the city's east side. United Way has helped established 46 new pre-K classrooms statewide, which serve more than 600 Tennessee children.

“In response to a challenge by Gov. Phil Bredesen, the United Ways of Tennessee have provided matching funds for 47 pre-K classrooms across the state, bringing quality early education to more than 900 4-year-olds. This collaborative approach to early education, which is playing out across the state, is a hallmark of Tennessee's program and serves as a national model for quality pre-K programs.

“In Nashville, the United Way has sponsored pre-K classrooms at McNeilly Center for Children, the Martha O'Bryan Center and Fannie Battle Day Home for Children as part of this collaborative effort.

“Last spring, the governor issued a charge for every United Way in the state to sponsor a local pre-K classroom as part of Tennessee's collaboration system. The system provides partial state funding to willing local school districts and three-star child care centers to open classrooms. The remaining funds must come from an outside source, be it the school district itself, a private child care provider, a community nonprofit organization or a local for-profit company. ...

“For every great example of community partnership, there are countless opportunities for more successful collaborations. As pre-K in Tennessee continues to grow, it is imperative that others join in United Way's commitment and help make quality early education a reality for more children in our state.”

Mary Graham
President
United Ways of Tennessee

“Join in to build great young Tennesseans, from pre-K upward,” Op-Ed, 3.20.07
The Tennessean

VI. NEXT STEPS: HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Three-star child care providers

Three-star child care providers who are interested in learning more about becoming involved in the state's pre-K program should contact the school system in which they are located. The contact person who typically oversees pre-K in a specific district is either the Director of Schools or the Pre-K Coordinator. Some school systems include pre-K information on their districts' Web sites.

School systems

Several school systems such as Clarksville-Montgomery County have successfully reached out to three-star child care providers by sending letters to all three-star providers in their districts, inviting them to a meeting regarding pre-K. The regional Child Care Resource and Referral System should be able to provide an updated list of all three-star providers in a specific area to a school system.

The Clarksville-Montgomery school system began building relationships with the local three-star providers by holding meetings in the fall, prior to the following spring's pre-K classroom application deadline with the state. The goals of these meetings were to educate providers about the state pre-K program, and gauge providers' interest in partnering with the school system to provide a pre-K classroom.

Providers interested in partnering with the school system then completed an application and submitted it to the Clarksville-Montgomery County school system. The school system made site visits to each child care program, and reported its observations to the local community pre-K advisory council. The advisory council then decided which providers would be selected to partner with the school district, if the school district received funding from the state for the additional pre-K classrooms.

While this is one method that many school systems have found effective, every school district is different and is encouraged to reach out to community-based programs in a way that best meets the needs of that district.

Community organizations and businesses

Community organizations and businesses that would like to be involved in the state's pre-K program at the local level should contact either the Director of Schools or the Pre-K Coordinator of a school system to find out what the district's specific needs are. Typical items or services that can be given in-kind to a school district to support its pre-K classrooms are non-school district-owned facilities, instructional materials, equipment and supplies, food and nutrition services, and transportation services. Businesses can also help provide the local matching fund for a pre-K classroom.

Early childhood education advocates

Those who are interested in becoming involved in advocating for continued expansion of Tennessee's high-quality early education program can visit www.prekfortn.com to sign up as a member of the Tennessee Alliance for Early Education, and to learn how to get more involved.

Questions regarding pre-K in Tennessee can be directed to the Tennessee Department of Education Office of Early Learning staff. A directory of contact information can be found on pages 23, 24 and 25. Questions regarding how to get involved in advocacy efforts can be directed to the Tennessee Alliance for Early Education at prekalliance@mpf.com.

Helpful Web Sites

Tennessee Department of Education Office of Early Learning

<http://www.tennessee.gov/education/prek/>

Provides information about the state's pre-K program, including scope of services for potential pre-K providers, contact information for Office of Early Learning staff, list of approved pre-kindergarten curricula, and more.

Tennessee Department of Human Services, Child Care Services

http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.htm

Provides information on the report card and star-quality program for licensed child care agencies, information about local Child Care Resource and Referral Centers, and other information regarding child care in Tennessee.

Child Care Agency Database and Star Ratings

<http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/childcare/providers-map.htm>

Provides an interactive map of Tennessee where you can click on a specific county and it will bring up a list of all child care providers within certain ZIP codes in that county. Star-quality information, capacity, minimum and maximum age, and other information are provided for each provider.

Child Care Resource and Referral Center database

http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/st_map.htm

Provides an interactive map of Tennessee where you can click on a county to find contact information for your local Child Care Resource and Referral Centers.

Tennessee Alliance for Early Education (TAEЕ)

<http://www.prekfortn.com>

Provides legislative updates regarding pre-K funding initiatives, recent news stories covering Tennessee's pre-K program, TAEЕ events such as the Early Childhood Summit and days on the hill, a list of TAEЕ members, and a page to sign up to become a TAEЕ member.

Pre-K Now

<http://www.preknow.org>

Pre-K Now is a public education and advocacy organization that advances high-quality, voluntary pre-kindergarten for all 3- and 4-year-olds. Pre-K Now supports state-based children's advocates, including the Tennessee Alliance for Early Education. Pre-K Now also works to educate policy makers about the need for pre-K and to raise public awareness about the need for pre-K for all children. The Pre-K Now Web site provides a variety of resources and reports on the benefits of pre-K and best practices for states administering a pre-K program, pre-K news stories from across the country, and other resources for pre-K advocates to use to advance high-quality early education throughout the country.

Tennessee Department of Education Rules and Regulations for Health and Safety

<http://www.state.tn.us/sos/rules/0520/0520-12/0520-12-01.pdf>

Tennessee Early Childhood Education – Early Learning Developmental Standards

<http://state.tn.us/education/ci/standards/earlychildhood/>

Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA)

<http://www.tecta.info/training.htm>

Head Start

<http://www.tnheadstart.org>

<http://headstartinfo.org>

Tennessee's Smart from the Start

<http://www.state.tn.us/education/smart/>



About the Tennessee Alliance for Early Education

The Tennessee Alliance for Early Education was established in 2005 to support Gov. Phil Bredesen's proposal to expand the state's existing pre-kindergarten education program. The Alliance is a broad coalition of individuals and groups who believe the expansion of pre-kindergarten opportunities across the state is critical to the future success of our children.

In the organization's three-year history, more than 450 organizations and individuals from across the state have signed on as members. From nonprofits and major corporations to teachers, parents and child advocates, each member recognizes the importance of quality early education and the value of a voluntary program in Tennessee. Alliance members work to support legislative action related to pre-K through grassroots contact with state lawmakers, attendance at legislative committee hearings and public outreach through community meetings and local media efforts.

The Alliance is proud to have been a part of the successful legislative campaigns in 2005, 2006 and 2007, and even prouder of the expanded program's success. This success was highlighted in March 2007, when Tennessee was recognized for the second consecutive year by the National Institute for Early Education Research as a national leader in providing a high-quality, state-funded pre-K program.

Visit the Alliance at www.prekfortn.com.

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Office of Early Learning Web site: www.state.tn.us/education/prek

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