NH ChILD

New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District

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April 2017

Ideal Learning Roundtable educational partners

Alliance for Public Waldorf Education

Bank Street College of Education

Friends Center for Children

Montessori Leaders Collaborative

North American Reggio Emilia Alliance

Tools of the Mind

Trust for Learning
Ideal learning made real.

WECAN
Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America

Executive Summary

Birth through age eight is a critical time of development for all children and forms the foundation for later success. The growth that takes place in this period sets the stage for all complex learning, including problem solving and the ability to sustain meaningful and caring relationships.[1] However, without careful support and care, young children can begin to gather compounding challenges instead of strengths.[2] Quality early care and education can significantly improve children's outcomes. Heckman's analyses of multiple early care and education programs show that every dollar spent on high-quality, birth-to-five programs serving disadvantaged children yields a 13% annual return.[3]

To expand these types of supports, reduce gaps and improve outcomes, we propose creating place-based partnerships aimed systematically to increase access to high-quality early care and education for all children from birth to age eight. Critical to this effort is a comprehensive approach built upon proven pedagogical beliefs shared across the early care and childhood community. The principles of Ideal Learning, as defined by the Trust for Learning, offer a strong foundation.

Ideal Learning starts at birth and puts the child at the center of the design. It supports children in all aspects of their development, deepening and accelerating academic learning through direct experiences with their community. It also transforms home and day care settings and classrooms into exciting places where children learn by exploring the wonder of the world around them. Ideal Learning helps children learn to think for themselves and with others, better positioning them to positively engage as citizens in a rapidly changing world.

New Haven, Connecticut is well poised to serve as a national model for an Ideal Learning place-based pilot given its size, diversity, capacity and commitment to early childhood. At least 1,966 children under the age of five in New Haven do not have access to quality early care and education. This lack of access contributes to lower academic performance, especially for low income students. The achievement gap in Connecticut is 34%—the largest in the country—and in New Haven the gap is 33%. The strength of the existing early childhood community in New Haven, including dedicated leadership from the Mayor and public school district on this issue, further underscores the opportunity. Many providers already operating in the city have successful centers that attract waiting lists of families and are philosophically aligned with the Ideal Learning model. In addition, there is growing interest and momentum among the early childhood community to provide coordinated access to quality early education for children from birth through second grade and professional learning to educators of young children.

In order to make significant gains in New Haven, attention must be paid to both closing the access gap—by increasing the number of seats available in early care and education programs—and to improving the quality of those programs. By expanding and replicating existing models of programs that are already aligned with

[1] NRC and IOM, 2000

[2] Greenough & Black, 1992

[3] Garcia, Heckman, Leaf & Prados, 2016

the Ideal Learning philosophy and approach, it is possible to create 1,966 new seats for young children who currently do not have access to early care and education. In addition, existing and new funding models need to be explored, including a review of state funding streams as well as sliding scale tuition programs, where private funds supplement public resources. It is particularly crucial to explore ways to overcome barriers to access for children in poverty so that they can enroll in high-quality early care and education. Two possible options include improving transportation options to child care sites and creating a universal application system.

At the same time, it is important to provide the supports necessary to improve the quality of existing and new programs, including those in the private sector and those run by New Haven Public Schools. Early care and education programs need to adhere to standards aligned with the Ideal Learning philosophy and approach in order to translate to positive long-term outcomes for children. Based on our preliminary research we propose providing professional learning supports to educators and providers across the community in order to bridge the divide that exists as children transition from one level of care to the next and foster a common language and set of practices across the continuum of care. At the same time, targeted supports to meet the specific needs of infant and toddler home care providers, pre-K to second grade providers, and preschool educators are also needed. We will seek to identify existing efforts that are making a positive impact and bolster those initiatives. Finally, in order to comply with new educational requirements that require preschool teachers to have a Bachelor's degree by 2020, we will build degree-granting satellite programs aligned to Ideal Learning for preschool teachers.

By establishing the New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District (NH ChILD) we can work together to advance these strategies. Since the success of this one-of-a-kind Ideal Learning district is contingent upon the participation of the entire New Haven community—including city government, the public school system, private providers, businesses and nonprofit organizations—our intention is for this paper to provide stakeholders with the foundation necessary to inform the development of a more detailed, inclusive implementation plan in the next phase of the work. Through this process we aim to galvanize the New Haven community to collaborate on shared solutions while raising the funds necessary to bring high-quality early care and education to all children in New Haven.

Making the Case

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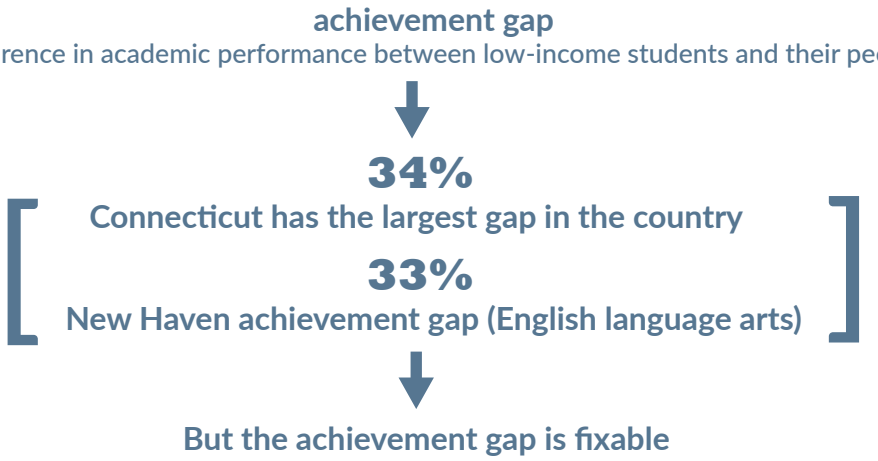
Introduction

Birth through age eight is a critical time of development for all children. The growth that takes place in this period acts as a foundation for all complex learning, including problem solving and the ability to sustain meaningful and caring relationships.[1] Without careful and strategic support of these key elements throughout early childhood, young children can begin to gather compounding challenges instead of strengths.[2] These challenges grow each year and without careful intervention, many children lack an essential foundation by third grade.

Studies have shown that early education is critical to reversing these outcomes since students cannot adequately catch up after second grade.[3] The challenges are particularly great for children from low-income families. An important study by Hart & Risley (1995) demonstrated that children in low-income families hear approximately 30 million fewer words by age three than children from high-income families. By third grade, these children exhibited lower performance on assessments of their reading, language, and comprehension ability. This is universally known as the achievement gap: the difference in academic performance between low-income students and their peers. Connecticut, with an achievement gap of 34%, has the largest gap in the country. New Haven's gap mirrors the Connecticut gap at 33% in English language arts.



Fortunately, research has shown that thoughtful early investment in quality early care and education, followed by consistent high-quality early elementary education, can have lasting positive outcomes on children. A recent study by the NICHD Early Child Care Research Network demonstrated that "higher quality care [in early childhood] predicted higher cognitive-academic achievement at age 15, with escalating positive effects at higher levels of quality."[4] Important longitudinal studies of the HighScope Perry Preschool and Carolina Abecedarian Projects have shown that high-quality early care can close early gaps in both cognitive ***and*** non-

[1] NRC and IOM, 2000

[2] Greenough & Black, 1992

[3] Heckman, 2011, citing work by Campbell and colleagues

[4] Vandell, Belsky & Burchinal, Steinberg & Vandergrift, 2010

cognitive skills between children of varying socioeconomic statuses when they are still small.[1] Follow-up studies overwhelmingly show long-term health and economic benefits. These include higher rates of high school graduation and reduced rates of heart and metabolic disease, adolescent pregnancy, and incarceration.

Early childhood education also has economic returns; Heckman's analyses of multiple programs showed that every dollar spent on high-quality, birth-to-five programs serving disadvantaged children yields a 13% annual return.[2] The earlier these services begin, the higher the return.[3]

$1 spent on high-quality early childhood education = 13% annual return

However, simply providing opportunity in the form of "seats" in a program or school is inadequate. Care and education must be high quality. An effective approach needs to marry a deep understanding of child development with an understanding of the child's unique context.[4] Care and early education should be consistent; children in care for more than one year have significantly greater success than those in programs for less than one year.[5] Care and education is also most impactful when it takes a trauma-informed approach to social emotional learning to provide support for children and families in stress. For educators and care providers to do all of this effectively, they need education, training, and support.

In recent years some states and cities across the country, including Boston, Tulsa and Omaha, have worked to address these challenges by developing new approaches to increasing access to quality early care and education. Each offers important lessons learned in approach and program design. What emerged from analysis was the importance of leadership and working across a community to develop a shared understanding of what good care and education looks like so multiple stakeholders involved can work collectively for greater impact. Without a district-wide approach, outcomes are more limited**.** A complete discussion of the lessons learned in these cities can be found in Appendix II.

This paper intends to make the case for a significant investment in building an Ideal Learning District in New Haven, CT. An Ideal Learning District will support children ages zero to eight and their families, caregivers, and educators by providing high-quality early care and education through a developmentally meaningful and responsive integrated system. No such system exists in the country. If successful, this Ideal Learning District will reduce or eliminate the achievement gap for New Haven children. Based on input from early childhood leaders at the local, state, and national level, this proposal could act as a mechanism to create access to high-quality early care and education for all children, with a particular focus on those most at risk in our community. To realize this goal, a focus on both increasing access and strengthening quality is critical.

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[1] Elango et al., 2016

[2] Garcia, Heckman, Leaf & Prados, 2016

[3] Heckman, 2008

[4] Nager & Shapiro, 2000

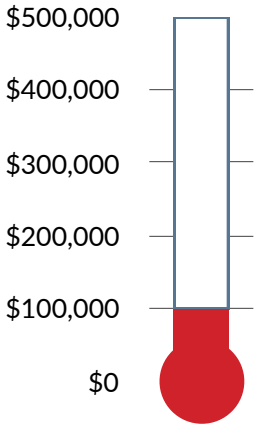
[5] Nores & Barnett, 2011

NH ChILD Project

The concept driving this paper was an outgrowth of work begun by the Ideal Learning Roundtable in 2015, when the Trust for Learning convened practitioners, researchers, funders, and leaders in the early childhood education community. The Roundtable's goal was to agree on a set of principles for Ideal Learning, with specific attention to critical aspects of a high-quality early childhood setting necessary to yield positive long-term outcomes for young children. To take advantage of the momentum that is building nationally from a growing interest in and understanding of the importance of investing in early childhood, it was agreed that the time is right to launch a place-based pilot that could serve as a model for a community-wide commitment to Ideal Learning. This kind of comprehensive approach to early childhood care and education could be an important vehicle for supporting long-term positive outcomes for an entire community.[1] This Making the Case paper serves as a landscape analysis of the possibilities for realizing this vision in New Haven and also a call to action to the early childhood community in New Haven to lead the way.

Phase 1
by summer 2017

- [x] Make the case
- [x] Unveil the vision
- [x] Conduct local parent focus groups
- [x] Administer national parent survey
- [ ] in process — Engage potential partners
- [ ] in process — Raise $500,000 for phase II



Phase 2
by summer 2018

- [ ] Identify implementation partners
- [ ] Continue to engage community
- [ ] Raise implementation funds needed to launch phase III

Phase 3
fall 2018 and beyond

- [ ] Begin efforts to close the gap in access by providing additional early childhood education seats
- [ ] Continue to expand professional learning supports to improve quality of new and existing programs and schools
- [ ] Monitor and evaluate progress

[1] Kagan & Kauerz, 2012

What is Ideal Learning?

The concept of Ideal Learning stems from a partnership of organizations—Alliance for Public Waldorf Education, Bank Street College of Education, Friends Center for Children, Montessori Leaders Collaborative, North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, Tools of the Mind, Trust for Learning, and Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America—committed to high-quality early care and education for all young learners age zero to eight. While members of the roundtable represent organizations with different pedagogical approaches, they share common fundamental beliefs about how children learn. While an Ideal Learning District would honor and create space for these differences, it calls attention to a shared commitment to:

developmentally meaningful, play-based, and trauma-informed care.

If New Haven creates an Ideal Learning District that is embraced by its early care and education community, it can work to close the achievement gap for its youngest children.

Ideal Learning starts at birth and puts the child at the center of the design. It supports children in all aspects of their development and deepens and accelerates academic learning through direct experiences with their community. It also transforms home and daycare settings and classrooms into exciting places where children learn by exploring the wonder of the world around them. Ideal Learning helps children learn to think for themselves and with others, better positioning them to positively engage as citizens in a rapidly changing world.

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Establishing the New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District

What does Ideal Learning look like?

Ideal Learning assumes that children best achieve their potential through learning that activates their interests, abilities, and talents to build knowledge, know-how, and confidence. Not all Ideal Learning providers nurture children the exact same way, but they do have the same basic approach to helping young children develop their potential. All Ideal Learning programs include the following elements:

- Each child receives a personalized approach to education.
- Each child is known and appreciated for their unique abilities, interests, and potential.
- Children develop all facets of intelligence—academic, social, and emotional—learning how to learn in groups and work with ideas, tasks, and people.
- Children have high standards without standardization—they are challenged to reach their developmental milestones and given the support to actualize their individual potential.
- Teachers guide children to carry out their own learning; this self-directed learning is supported by an intentional, structured, and measured curriculum that has been proven to be effective.
- Classroom environments are designed to develop students' ability to concentrate, grow their collaboration skills, and build a sense of community.
- The entire school teaches, not just the teacher.
- Children are learning partners with educators, families, and peers—Ideal Learning educates ***with*** children, not ***to*** children.
- Children work at the bigger goal of developing into well-rounded, intelligent, and constructive individuals.
- Programs are an integral part of the community: they support children, thereby advancing community progress.

What do Ideal Learning partners look like?

Committed Partners of Trust for Learning | Interested Partners | Potential Partners

Alliance for Public Waldorf Education	Bank Street College of Education	Brady Education Foundation	Buffett Early Childhood Fund
Ania Czekaj-Farber	Friends Center for Children	Harold Simmons Foundation	McCall Kulak Family Foundation
McTeague Catalyst Fund	Montessori Leaders Collaborative	Neimand Collaborative	North American Reggio Emilia Alliance
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	SeaChange Capital Partners	Stranahan Foundation	Tools of the Mind
Trust for Learning	The Walton Family Foundation	Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America	
All our Kin	City of New Haven	Connecticut Center for Arts and Technology (ConnCAT)	Gesell Institute
Luckey Climbers	New Haven Early Childhood Council	United Way of Greater New Haven	Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
Achievement First Greenfield Schools	Albertus Magnus College	Birth to Three	Board of Regents
Chamber of Commerce	Community Foundation for Greater New Haven	Connecticut Association for the Education of Young Children	Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance
Connecticut Office of Early Childhood	Connecticut Voices for Children	ConnCAN	CT Early Childhood Collaborative
CT Parent Power	The Dalio Foundation	Eder Family Foundation	Education Roundtable
Friends Council on Education	Gateway Community College	The Grossman Family Foundation	Junta for Progressive Action
The Melville Charitable Trust	National Association for the Education of Young Children	The Netter Foundation	NewAlliance Foundation
New England Yearly Meeting	New Haven Board of Education	New Haven Public Library	New Haven Public Schools
Read to Grow	The RISC Foundation, Inc.	Rotary Club	Seedlings Foundation
Southern Connecticut State University	SNAVE Foundation	University of New Haven	Webster Bank
William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund	Yale Child Study Center	Yale University	ZERO to THREE

The Foundation for Change:

Promising Approaches in Boston, Tulsa, and Omaha

Cities across the nation have recently bolstered efforts to increase access to early care and education. A look at initiatives in Boston, Tulsa, and Omaha suggest that there are five important elements of a comprehensive reform effort. See Appendix II for more information.

1. **Unified leadership** sets the tone and pace for any attempts at unification and reform.

2. **Curriculum and pedagogy** must reflect a unified approach to early childhood education aligned to a common vision. This diminishes the potential for a cognitive and social-emotional gap that occurs when children attend programs with conflicting approaches. It also allows for shared support resources and increased coordination.

3. **Professional learning experiences and coaching** should be widely available for providers and educators in private, public, and home-care providers serving children ages zero to eight. These opportunities communicate a clear and consistent message on early childhood practices and create a network of professionals.

4. **Family engagement, empowerment, and partnerships** create mechanisms for parents, families, and community organizations to act as advocates for a child's educational experiences. Early care and education settings should serve as hubs for parent training programs, two generational programs, workforce opportunities, and innovative community-based approaches such as teaching local business owners about care options for children and families.

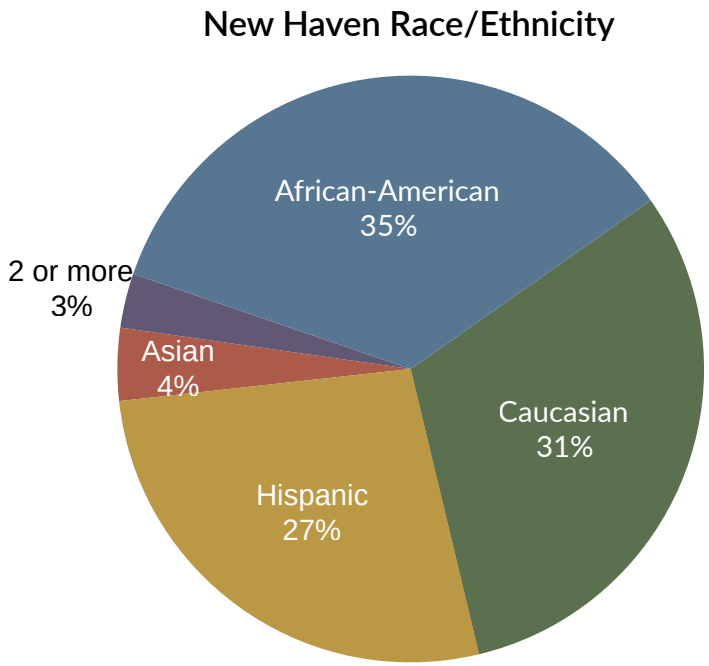
5. **Social emotional learning and trauma-informed care** provides the necessary supports for children and families in crisis and ensures that "school readiness" means that children are emotionally ready to learn. Various early childhood centers, schools, higher education institutions, and other local organizations need to work together to support families in need.

Why New Haven?

Local Capacity for an Ideal Learning District

New Haven is well poised to serve as a national model for a place-based pilot around Ideal Learning given its size, diversity, capacity, and commitment to early childhood. New Haven is a diverse urban center with a population of 130,322, which is 35% African American, 31% Caucasian, 27% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 3% two or more races.[1]

"Based on age, educational attainment, and race and ethnicity...the metropolitan area that looks most like the U.S. is New Haven, Connecticut."



This was articulated in a 2016 study by Jed Kolko which calculated "how demographically similar each U.S. metropolitan area is to the U.S. overall, based on age, educational attainment, and race and ethnicity. The index equals 100 if a metro's demographic mix were identical to that of the U.S. overall. [Using] a standard dissimilarity index applied across 90 combinations of five age groups, six racial/ethnic categories, and four levels of educational attainment, some education categories were combined for 18 - 24 year olds and omitted for children. By this measure, the metropolitan area that looks most like the U.S. is New Haven, Connecticut, followed by Tampa, Florida, and Hartford, Connecticut."

Given the close parallel between the demographics of New Haven and other urban areas in the U.S., there is tremendous potential to create a pilot program that can be replicated across the country.

[1] Suburban Stats, 2013-16

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The strength of the existing early childhood community in New Haven also presents opportunities. Many providers already operating in the city have successful centers that attract waiting lists of families and are philosophically aligned with the Ideal Learning model. All Our Kin, a nonprofit organization that trains and supports family childcare providers, reports that with its help, the total number of family child care providers in New Haven increased by two-thirds from 2000-2011, while the number in Connecticut declined by a third.[1]

In addition, there is growing interest and momentum amongst the early childhood community to provide coordinated access to quality early education. This has been clearly articulated in the City of New Haven's 2016 Transformation Plan, issued by the Mayor's Office:

> *Early childhood is a crucial developmental window in a child's life. Evidence-based knowledge shows that positive interactions between children and their family and neighborhood environments before conception, through birth, and into early childhood shape the architecture of the brain and overall child development… 79.9% of New Haven children currently enter kindergarten with pre- K experience as four year-olds but children from more disadvantaged backgrounds are much less likely to enter with adequate school-readiness. …An effort is needed to systematically use all available resources to restore the positive interactions between children and their environments — by facilitating conditions for positive attachments between children and caring adults; and supportive relationships between family and community—that will intentionally and systematically promote development in a way that prepares children for successful school, future work, family and community life in this more complex age (p. 28).*

City of New Haven
CONNECTICUT

Another example of this investment has been the City of New Haven's continued support of the New Haven Early Childhood Council. The Mayor has also established the Blue Ribbon Commission on Reading that issued a report recommending partnerships between public and private entities working with children ages zero to five, as well as a comprehensive professional learning plan supporting educators grades K-2.[2] Importantly, there are also a number of established organizations supporting the work of early care and education programs that are poised to help.

[1] Downs, 2013

[2] Blue Ribbon Commission on Reading, 2016

In response to this growing interest, in the spring of 2016 New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) commissioned the Bank Street Education Center to engage in a study of its programs to identify areas of strength and room for growth. The review focused on answering the essential question vital to the vision of an Ideal Learning District:

How do current resources, practices, and supports align to developmentally meaningful, play-based, trauma-informed approaches to learning?

The question was explored by visiting almost half of New Haven's Head Start, School Readiness, and Magnet School pre-K classrooms; meeting with school leaders, teachers, and other school staff; interviewing central office staff, parents, and volunteers; and meeting with community partners and union representatives. Through this collaborative review process, three major recommendations were generated by the stakeholder groups:

1. Deepen collaboration with key stakeholders to develop a clearly articulated vision for early childhood education for all classrooms across the three NHPS program strands.

2. Implement the NHPS-wide vision through Pre-K curriculum and assessment supports, with aligned professional learning expectations and structures.

3. Strengthen relationships with families and existing community partners to embed effective early childhood practices and build capacity NHPS-wide.

The result has been an investment in developing a common vision for early childhood education across NHPS program strands, and increasing the capacity of teachers and coaches through professional learning experiences to realize a developmentally-based curriculum for all students in the NHPS system.

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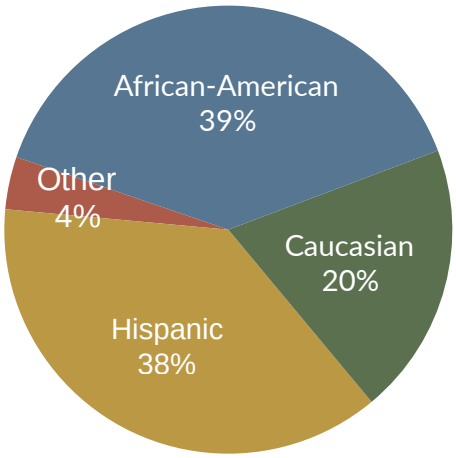
While the New Haven early childhood community is making some progress, the children of New Haven still face serious obstacles. New Haven's significant poverty rate poses a challenge for families to access high-quality early care and education. The child poverty rate in New Haven is currently 27%. Along racial lines, the poverty rate is 39% for African Americans, 38% for Hispanic or Latinos, and 20% for Caucasians.[1] Further, an analysis of the child poverty rate by race indicates that African-American and Hispanic children are disproportionately impacted by poverty (see chart below).

Racial Breakdown of New Haven Children in Poverty



New Haven is also confronted by persistent violence and instability. According to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven's 2016 report, the number one leading cause of death for New Haven young men ages 15-39 is assault with a gun. High violence and poverty rates increase the likelihood that New Haven's youngest children will be exposed to multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) which interfere with an ability to function well in school. Moreover, research shows that children exposed to multiple ACEs are two times more likely to smoke cigarettes, four and a half times more likely to do drugs, seven times more likely to be alcoholic, eleven times more likely to use intravenous drugs, and nineteen more times likely to attempt suicide as they move into adolescence and adulthood.[2] For an explanation about ACEs please refer to Appendix I.

Impacts of Exposure to Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences

2 x cigarettes **4.5 x drugs**

7 x alcoholic **11 x intravenous drugs**

19 x attempt suicide

[1] Suburban Stat 2013-2016

[2] Center for Disease Control-Kaiser Permenente ACE Study

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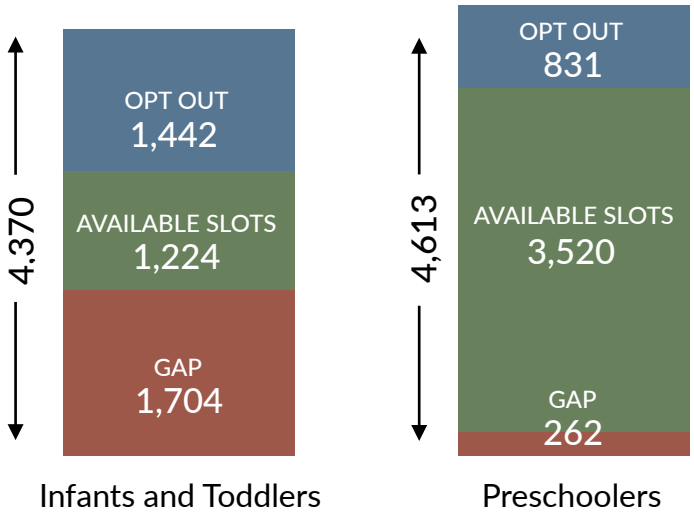
According to the Unmet Need Report commissioned by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), there are 8,983 children not yet old enough to enter Kindergarten in New Haven, including 4,370 infants and toddlers and 4,613 preschool-aged children (Unmet Need Report, Office of Early Childhood, 2016). Typical models for early childhood needs assessment apply an opt-out rate to account for families who choose not to enroll children in early childhood programs. The OEC of State of Connecticut uses 33% for infants and toddlers and 18% for preschoolers. Using these rates there are approximately 2,928 infants and toddlers and 3,782 preschoolers in New Haven that seek care.[1]

According to the same study, there are 1,224 slots available for infants and toddlers in a combination of private center-based programs and licensed family child care (center-based care: 628 slots; licensed/unlicensed family child care: 596). With 2,928 infant and toddlers needing care and only 1,224 slots, this leaves a gap of 1,704 infants and toddlers unable to receive the care their families seek.

For preschoolers, there are 3,520 seats available in full-day programs (1,688 in NHPS; 1,406 in private center-based programs, 426 seats in licensed family daycare settings). With 3,782 preschool-aged children in need of early education, this leaves a gap of 262 slots for preschoolers.[2]



It is important to note that this data requires further analysis to reveal the true extent of the gaps in access. The OEC agrees that the opt out rates used in urban areas, like New Haven, need to be adjusted to account for the higher number of working families who need care. Importantly, these figures also do not filter for quality programming. While some of New Haven's programs already align with the principles of Ideal Learning, many need additional support to meet this bar. When we balance long waitlists at many established programs with vacancy rates (339 preschool; 178 infant/toddler seats) it is clear that many existing programs do not meet the needs of local families. Despite these limitations in the data, it is clear that at least 1,966 children are not receiving the care and early education their families seek before they enter Kindergarten. When we account for barriers to access facing many families in New Haven the issues become more profound and complex. Phase II of our efforts will require a more detailed examination of family needs and also program capacity to ensure that efforts to build additional programming accurately reflect our community.

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[1] The analysis assumes that Care4Kids Relative Care (formerly FFN) is factored into these opt out figures

[2] Next to 1,688 that 220 NHPS classrooms are part-time

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A different set of challenges are posed by the fact that there is currently no common pedagogical or philosophical approach to early care and education among programs in New Haven. As in cities across the country, this incoherence stems from the lack of a systemic approach. The loose organization of early care and education that occurs in many communities can be connected to multiple funding sources and a lack of direct accountability from a central organizing structure and oversight.[1]

Currently, community providers do not have a strong sense of cohesion and NHPS does not have a dedicated Early Childhood Supervisor. This leadership vacuum has created a disconnect in pedagogy, accessibility, and reform approaches. The consequence is a diminished partnership between early childhood sites and their larger community which translates into lost opportunities for children, programs, families, and the City of New Haven.

By building upon the strengths of the community and leveraging the capacity and commitment of all stakeholders, New Haven is well positioned to make significant gains and chart a path towards a national model for systemic supports. Critical to the next phase of work is to gather additional input and commitment from New Haven's City Hall, NHPS leadership, and other key constituents to ensure that everyone is in agreement as to how to build what we are calling the "New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District," or NH ChILD. The time is right for capitalizing on the attention and energies of the early childhood care and education community to engage and empower the community to organize around the vision for the Ideal Learning District.

[1] Biven, Garcia, Gould, Weiss & Wilson, 2016

A Path Forward

A District-Wide Strategy to Realize Ideal Learning in New Haven

NH ChILD proposes to revolutionize the early care and education landscape in New Haven by galvanizing the community around a common vision of Ideal Learning to provide quality early care and education experiences for all children ages zero to eight. To achieve this goal, additional seats in *quality* early childhood programs need to be added to provide access for all children. At the same time, a differentiated set of professional learning opportunities should be designed to increase the capacity of care providers and educators to provide consistent, developmentally appropriate experiences for all children ages zero to eight.

At this stage, we offer these two key pathways to bring NH ChILD to reality: **Access** and **Quality.** Together, these strategies rely on the five elements for change mentioned before: unified leadership; pedagogy and curriculum steeped in the principles of Ideal Learning; aligned professional learning and coaching; family engagement, empowerment and partnership; and social emotional learning and trauma-informed care.

Pathway 1: Access

Provide Access to Ideal Learning Early Childhood Education for All New Haven Children Ages Zero to Five

Provide access for New Haven children ages zero to five without access to Ideal Learning opportunities
By expanding and replicating select existing models, already aligned with the philosophy and approach espoused by the Ideal Learning District, access to quality care can be ensured. Closing the gap is do-able. While a final strategy would likely include an array of program models, we can get a sense of the scale required by modeling after the enrollment numbers at Friends Center (~86 per site) and All Our Kin (~6 per site). If we opened 15 new home care sites and four new center-based programs in the first stages of implementation, access could be provided for 434 children currently without care. This would close the gap by 20%.

Four Early Childhood Education Centers

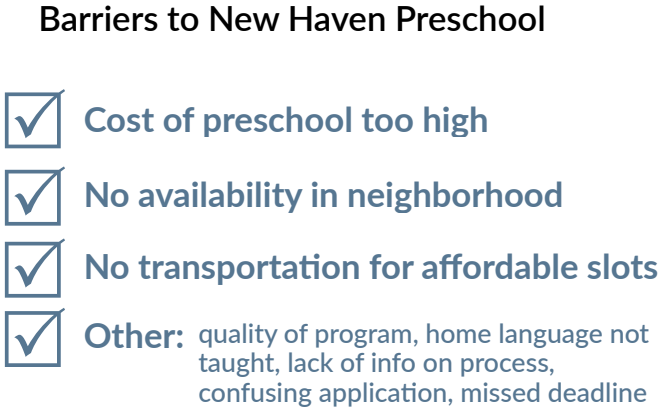
Fifteen Home Care Providers

Overcome barriers to preschool access

As an implementation strategy is devised, it will be critical to pay close attention to the barriers in access that exist, especially for the 27% of children living in poverty in New Haven. Based on the New Haven Early Childhood Council Unmet Need Study, many families with children entering Kindergarten report that they did not access preschool because of high costs, lack of transportation, the location of existing centers and a lack of information or confusion with the process of enrolling (For more information on survey data see Appendix III). As plans to open new programs are explored it will be important to simultaneously plan to overcome these barriers to access.

First, the feasibility of a pilot transportation program should be assessed to provide priority access to early childhood care and education slots for communities and children most at risk. Priority should be based on transparent criteria, including underserved neighborhoods and poverty level. New centers and programs should be placed in areas accessible to those with the fewest existing slots and needs. Family care options should also be located near those neighborhoods, when possible.

Second, a universal application system should be explored to simplify the application process, allow programs to share enrollment information to fill seats and share information with parents about available slots, and collect data to better understand the needs of children and families seeking early care and education opportunities in New Haven.



Funding models for increasing access

Connecticut has a strong history and track record of funding early care and childhood programs going back to the 1960s. In recent years Connecticut has bolstered this commitment through the establishment of the Office of Early Childhood and expanding funding for public Pre-K. Despite these investments, funding is still insufficient; Connecticut's programs still serve less than two-thirds of low income children[1]. The establishment of new programs has also created a complicated and fragmented system of reimbursement for providers. Programs in New Haven rely on a mix of different public funds, private donations, and in some programs, parent contributions. Combining public funding streams that come with different requirements creates complications for enrollment and program design.

The cost of care is high: center care costs across the state for infants average $13,800 and $11,500 for four-year olds[2]. In addition, costs are expected to rise as increased requirements for teacher certification continue to phase-in making the constraints on programs even more difficult. The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood's 2014 Report of School Readiness explains that the cost of providing quality preschool will increase "because at least 50 percent of preschool teachers in the state-funded programs will be required to have a bachelor's degree … salaries will need to be considered as a major incentive to recruit and retain staff under this qualification. Further, a major investment in preschool programs will be needed as 100 percent of teachers in state-funded programs will be required to have a bachelor's degree by the year 2020" (p. 7). While further research into potential sources of funds is required, some early findings offer some paths forward that could be pursued in the first years of implementation while advocacy work for local, state, and federal or other private funding sources are secured.

- **School Readiness**: As a starting point it would be important to identify how to leverage existing funding streams, such as the School Readiness program that offers $8,492 per child. Funding models used by high-quality, existing programs should be studied to determine feasibility for replication and scale, including the Friends Center for Children and other private centers that leverage these School Readiness funds.

School Readiness Subsidy = $8,492 per child
(full day, full year)

- **Sliding Scale Tuition Programs:** The Ideal Learning vision shares a commitment to socioeconomic diversity, thus determining how far a model could be scaled that offers subsidized seats through a sliding scale (i.e., largely dependent on full-paying families) would be a worthy investigation. Similarly, determining if there are ways to pool subsidies from private paying families with higher incomes to support subsidized seats across a system of centers could also be a consideration. Pooled funds would be especially important to consider as a source of resources to support slots for infants and toddlers in center-based programs as those seats have extremely limited federal and state subsidies available.

[1] ConnCan Report, 2015

[2] Updegrove, Leventhal-Weiner, Iverson, Fredericks & Long, 2016

- **Charter Schools**: Charter school funding streams may also provide opportunities for expansion and a closer look at the local Montessori Charter School may serve as a model worthy of study and replication. Charter schools provide flexibility as they are tuition-free and can enroll any local family regardless of income.[1] Funding is less restrictive than School Readiness funds, but currently they can only be applied to three and four-year olds. Exploring changes to the age limitations on Charter funding may be a focus for NH ChILD.

- **Care4kids:** Connecticut state-funded Care4Kids is a primary source of funding to home and center based early care centers. This source of funding is now closed for new families (except those on cash assistance) as of August 2016[2] and the rate it provides has not been increased for eleven years.[3] The FY 2017 State Budget cut early care and education funding by $4.3 million, creating a $6.3 million shortage in Care4Kids Subsidies. Local experts project that it will not reopen for two years given political and budgetary realities in Connecticut.

  As a result, there has been a decline in the number of new sites opened by the primary home based provider, All Our Kin. In past years, All Our Kin has supported opening an average of 25-30 new licensed providers annually. This year that number is down to 17, most of which identify families who can afford to pay for care. If current levels of public subsidies remain the same or decline, sites may be at risk of closing, resulting in a potential loss of care for families, which also puts families at risk of losing jobs dependent on child care. Given these constraints, a reduction of about 6,000 families is projected to occur statewide in FY 2017 as compared to FY 2016.[4]

- **Other Potential Options**: A sustainable funding stream, possibly modeled after the targeted taxes levied in cities like Omaha, could provide a more politically protected source of regular revenue and provide a real path to increasing access (See Appendix II). Advocates, including CT Voices for Children, have also called for an integration or "braiding" of funding streams across Head Start, childcare subsidies, and preschool funding sources to create more flexibility for providers and localities to meet local needs.[5] Because infant and toddler care is so expensive, co-locating programs for this age group in centers that serve preschool age children may also provide opportunities for subsidizing costs in the current structure.[6] This co-location system is evident at the Friends Center for Children and also has the benefit of providing continuity for families that have more than one child under the age of five.

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[1] ConnCan, 2015
[2] CT Voices report
[3] Downs, 2013
[4] Updegrove et al., 2016
[5] ConnCan, 2015
[6] Updegrove et al., 2016

Shared costs

As creative models are explored, considering the power and potential of a district-wide approach is critical. Pooling resources across early childhood centers to reduce overhead costs and to leverage more support for high-quality instruction and interactions is just one example of where a collaborative approach to tackling the challenges of sustainable funding can help. According to Opportunities Exchange, an organization working to support shared services alliances in the early childhood education community, a shared service model can:

- Reduce or share costs and time through joint purchasing, staff sharing, centralized administration or some combination of these;
  - Shared program and/or administrative capacity-building through the use of common tools and systems, shared mentoring and supervision and collaborative improvement processes; and
  - Reinvestment of cost and time savings into enhanced program quality.

Early childhood education providers can use the savings they gain from adopting a shared services model to invest in high-quality care and education—whether that means increasing their capacity to serve more children or improving the quality of their existing program.

Pathway 2: Quality

Strengthen Existing Programs to Support Ideal Learning for New Haven Children through 2nd Grade

For care and educational programs to translate to positive long-term outcomes for children, they need to adhere to quality standards aligned with the vision of an Ideal Learning District informed by research and experience. As a starting point, it is important to acknowledge that while many providers in the New Haven early childhood education community are already practicing the educational practices embedded in a vision for Ideal Learning, others are not there yet. An approach to quality therefore needs to begin by bringing together providers and educators across all funding strands and age groups to understand, unpack, and ultimately commit to this vision. Based on our preliminary research we can anticipate the following strands of support and professional development that would need to be considered and explored:

Creating professional early childhood learning communities to bridge the divide

For a unified and coherent set of learning experiences for all children to take hold in both the public and private sector, there must be an investment in an on-going series of professional learning experiences that bring educators from across the community together. Gaps in understanding among educators and providers should be assessed to develop the right mix of learning opportunities that will enable all sites to provide an aligned and high-quality learning experience for children. This approach can also serve as a vehicle for weaving the community together around a shared vision and should draw from the expertise of the Ideal Learning Roundtable organizations. One possibility is to establish professional learning communities for practitioners around specific inquiry questions related to realizing the Ideal Learning vision in their classrooms and sites. Based on early conversations with providers, one important focus for this learning should be on best practices for supportive, trauma-informed approaches to care [See Appendix I for a discussion of ACEs]. Another focus should be on how to counterbalance implicit bias and racial and cultural trauma in the classroom.

Deep instructional professional learning for all New Haven early childhood providers

While the specific professional development needs of early childhood educators are highly dependent upon context, we know that high-quality professional development needs to be content-specific, provide opportunities for active learning, make explicit connections to classroom practice, be sustained and cohesive across sessions, and address equity and diversity concerns.[1] Professional development that meets these criteria, and that includes close coaching and mentoring, has been associated with improved teacher-child relationships as well as stronger social problem-solving skills in children and fewer challenging behaviors.[2]

- **Infant and Toddler Home Care Providers**: For providers working with infants and toddlers, the need for support and professional development is clear. Low wages, unstable work arrangements, emotionally demanding work environments, and inadequate time for planning and professional development make it difficult for early childhood centers to attract and retain quality early care providers.

  Care providers supported by All Our Kin benefit from robust supports around the complicated operational intricacies of running small home-based care facilities and also receive access to instructional professional development and coaching. There is strong interest from All Our Kin to expand these offerings through a partnership with Ideal Learning partner organizations and to connect the providers it serves to professionals from other settings through these opportunities. By broadening the kinds of learning and training care providers receive, more sites are likely to achieve All Our Kin's new "showcase" status, which measures and celebrates a site's quality when it meets a bar similar to those set for national accreditation.

  Bank Street College's new Guttman Center for Early Care and Education may offer a model from which to learn from or adapt. Over the next decade, the Guttman Center is scaling up a pilot program—currently based in East New York, Brooklyn—aimed at providing intensive coaching, weekend coursework, and eventually a local network of professional support to sustain the work for 32 child care sites and 100 practitioners a year. Other Roundtable partners, like North American Reggio Emilia Alliance and Friends Council on Education, may also be interested in offering support as this kind of structure is imagined and realized.

- **Preschool Providers**: For programs working with preschoolers, professional development is critical. Given the varying levels of experience, experience across programs, and the differing requirements associated with different funding streams, early childhood educators need support to make sense of how to realize the Ideal Learning principles in their own context. New Haven has already created a strong network of early childhood educators. One example is the Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC), housed in the New Haven Children's Museum that offers free

[1] Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001; IOM & NRC 2015

[2] IOM & NRC, 2015; Aikens, Akers & Atkins-Burnett, 2016

weekly professional development to local early childhood educators. As supports are developed through NH ChILD they should build upon already established programs like this one.

The Connecticut Children's Museum's Early Childhood Resource Center provides PD and resources to early care providers

- **Pre-K to Second Grade providers:** The long-term academic effects of quality early childhood programming diminish when early elementary education fails to provide a continuous set of high-quality learning opportunities for children as they age.[1] Transition supports and aligned standards, curriculum, and assessments across settings that reflect a developmental approach are key to creating this consistency. Studies have proven that collaboration around curriculum and sharing information about children between pre-K and kindergarten are the most reliable predictors of success.[2] Without structures to support this kind of collaboration in New Haven our early investment in care and education may not have the desired outcomes.

  If the Ideal Learning District is to succeed in supporting developmentally appropriate educational opportunities for children that provide a coherent transition from early care and education to elementary school, the Ideal Learning District needs to extend its reach for professional learning into the lower elementary grades. This work can begin by building off NHPS's efforts to strengthen literacy in grades K-2 and other engagements with local and regional higher education and nonprofit partners, such as the current collaboration with Bank Street Education Center to

[1] Kagan & Kauerz, 2012

[2] Ahtola, Silinskas, Poikonen, Kontoniemi, Niemi & Nurmi, 2011

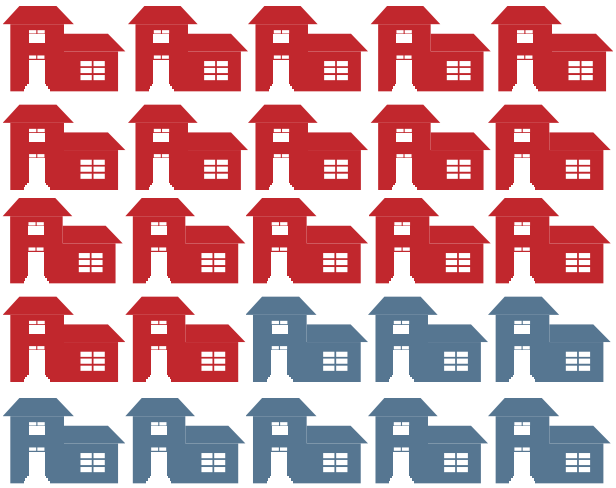
support Pre-K and Kindergarten teachers, coaches, and leaders to learn more about developmentally appropriate child-centered practices and interactions. In doing this, the expertise of all Ideal Learning roundtable partners may be tapped to provide a broad base of support. For example, by leveraging nationally recognized experts, like Tools of the Mind, which supports pre-K and Kindergarten teachers through a play-based curriculum that fosters the development of executive function skills in young children, we can bolster the resources teachers and schools need to successfully create a coherent bridge from early education to elementary school.

Degree-granting satellite programs for preschool teachers

As noted above, by the year 2020 all early childhood education providers will be required by law to have a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education. Sixty-eight percent of existing New Haven publicly-funded early childhood programs will not meet the 2020 requirement.

68%

of New Haven publicly-funded early childhood programs will not meet the 2020 requirement.



According to local practitioners, a scarcity of local university partners with early childhood degree-granting programs in New Haven has led teachers to use online degree and other programs to move towards certification. It is not clear that these avenues for certification will support and reinforce the practices associated with an Ideal Learning District. One option would be to contract with a trusted early childhood institution, like Bank Street College of Education, to create a new early childhood program in partnership with a local college or run a satellite program. This would simultaneously help to meet the requirement and also build the collective capacity of educators in ways that align with the Ideal Learning vision. It is important to note that while there is no certification requirement for providers working in family settings with children ages zero to three, there is likely interest from some of those providers to also take advantage of an opportunity for higher education, especially if tuition could be subsidized. Given the lack of access they typically have to quality professional development and other career advancement opportunities, this kind of program could support unmet workforce development needs and lead to greater program quality and stability in the early care provider workforce. A deeper look at these issues and opportunities is required.

CONCLUSION

Without access to quality early care and education, New Haven's youngest children are at risk—academically and socially. Each year that goes by without a cohesive high-quality network of early care and education in New Haven, we squander opportunities for these children and also the City of New Haven.

Each New Haven child that is denied early learning experiences because of poverty is denied the chance for real academic success and is at risk of being caught in a negative narrative. This results in an overall human capital loss to society that translates into a tremendous negative fiscal impact on the municipality of New Haven.

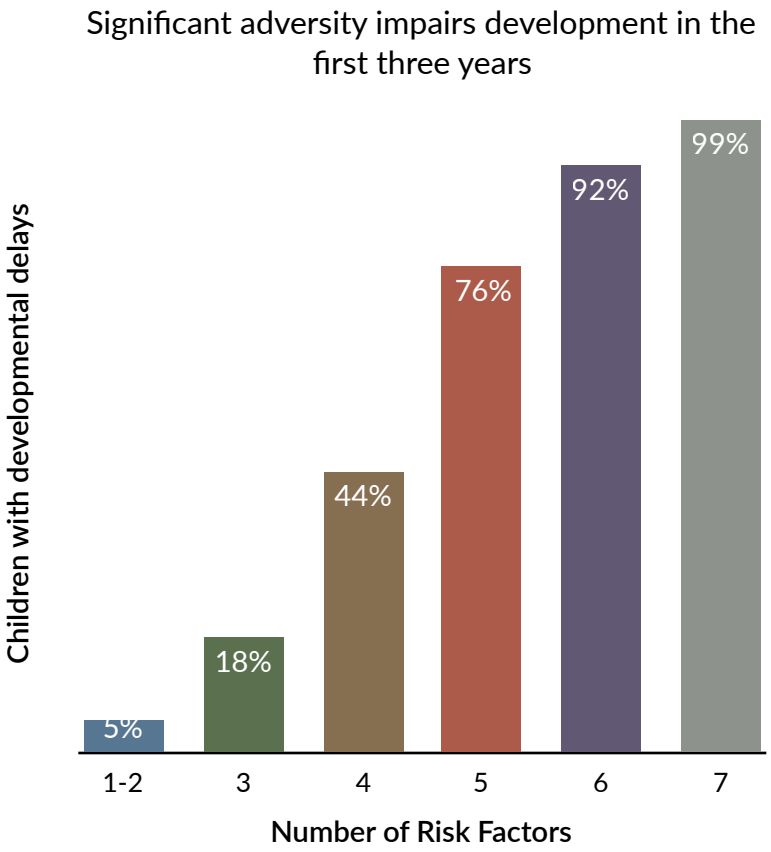
The research is evident. The need is clear. The pedagogy is strong. The time is right. The opportunity is here. The NH ChILD offers a path forward and a solution. Only the willingness is needed…

Will you join us as we reshape the narrative for New Haven's youngest children from one of obstacles to one of opportunity?

APPENDICES

I. A Further Look at Adverse Childhood Experiences

Children at all socioeconomic levels exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are at increased risk if providers do not provide a trauma-informed approach to care.[1] A landmark study by the Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente established that ACEs have a cumulative impact on a child's ability to function successfully.[2] Children exposed to ACEs sustain significant delays in their cognitive development due to the neurobiological impact of chronic stress. These traumatic experiences activate a "flight or fight" response in children, making it harder for them to stay focused, control impulses, and learn regardless of the educational environment.[3] ACEs also create multiple psychosocial challenges such as less secure attachments, problems socializing, and issues in self-regulation. Taken together, these issues can impede learning and cognitive growth, if providers do not provide a trauma-informed approach to care.[4]



[1] Blair & Raver, 2012
[2] Felitti, Anda et al., 1998
[3] McEwen, 2012
[4] Garner & Shonkoff, 2012

II. Promising Approaches in Boston, Tulsa, and Omaha

Cities across the nation have recently bolstered efforts to increase access to early care and childhood education. A look at initiatives in Boston, Tulsa, and Omaha offer helpful lessons learned. While each of the cities studied have embarked on different pathways to strengthen their early childhood supports, all engaged in strategies driven by leadership at the city or regional level that brought together private and public partnerships in a shared commitment for improved access and quality for all children and families. In Omaha, leaders from across 11 neighboring school districts have leveraged an existing learning community to create a common focus on early childhood. By collaborating with community and political stakeholders, they were able to successfully pass a tax levy that generated $7.5 million over three years to build and implement a shared vision for early learning supports for children ages zero to eight. In the Tulsa region, an organization named Impact Tulsa has brought together over 300 organizations–from the public school system and early childhood providers to businesses and philanthropic organizations–to collectively make a difference on the learning outcomes of their students. Accordingly, there is great public support for early childhood improvements and a variety of government bonds have been created to facilitate these efforts.

Although curriculum, pedagogy, and professional learning resources looked different across regions, in each case they were grounded in a vision of early childhood care and education that is based on research on child and adult development. In Boston, there has been a tight focus on the creation of coherent, developmentally meaningful units of study across pre-K to second grade, along with aligned, regular professional learning experiences and in-class coaching. Omaha's learning community used its tax levy funding to engage with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska to build a differentiated professional learning experience model that includes supports for home- or center-based early care providers and schools. There are three tiers of interventions, with universal access to tier 1 professional learning sessions for any organization or school interested, targeted technical assistance for those who choose and qualify for tier 2, and intensive resources provided for a select group of a dozen schools that are transformed into community "hubs" for tier 3.

Each of Omaha's hubs include full-time instructional coaches, family facilitators, and home visitors, which links to the last, and perhaps most important, shared characteristic of each of these efforts. Due to the diverse needs of families and children in these three urban areas, strategies have been put in place to combat the impact of poverty and toxic stress on families and children. In particular, all of the initiatives prioritize social-emotional and trauma-informed aspects of their improvement approaches. Boston has focused on the use of coaching to support current programs in making their classrooms and practices more child and family centered, while also using a federal grant to expand pre-K access to more than 250 high-needs children. Meanwhile, Tulsa has leveraged a focus on purposeful play, social-emotional learning and mindsets to foster stronger relationships, and interactions with children and their families. The city has also focused on developing the oral language abilities of Tulsa's increasing population of English Language Learners.

III. A Closer Look at New Haven Access

The 2013-14 New Haven Pre-K Enrollment and Accessibility Report, commissioned by the New Haven Early Childhood Council, included a survey of parents whose children entered formal education for the first time in kindergarten–about 20% of all kindergarten students.[1] While some parents did report wanting to keep children at home (32% in 2013; 24% in 2015), 33% of families reported that they did not enroll their children in preschool because costs were too high. This may be in part because of a gap in the numbers of subsidized slots. While there are 1,852 students eligible to receive free lunch, only 1,103 slots for free, licensed preschool exist, leaving a gap of 749 fully subsidized preschool slots. Other barriers to access that were reported through the survey including transportation not being available (22% in 2013; 10% in 2015) and no availability of pre-K in their neighborhood (22% in 2013).

The neighborhoods with the most parents reporting not having accessed early care or education before kindergarten include: Fair Haven (41), Long Wharf (29), Dwight/West River/Edgewood/Dixwell (19), and Beaver Hills/Newhallville (17). Two of those neighborhoods have low numbers of fully subsidized slots: Dwight/West River/Edgewood/Dixwell (only 36 fully subsidized slots) and Beaver Hills (only 34 fully subsidized slots).[2]

[1] DataHaven, 2015

[2] DataHaven, 2015

Background

This report has been commissioned by the Trust for Learning, an organization committed to finding, elevating, and delivering the best early childhood programs so all children—regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds—may have access. It was written by the Bank Street Education Center and Allyx Schiavone, Director of the Friends Center for Children, with input from stakeholders throughout the New Haven community.

The Education Center is an arm of Bank Street College of Education that partners with districts, states, and other school management organizations to build and implement plans that establish a throughline of teaching and learning to support teacher and student success by connecting every layer of a system. It works closely with leaders and educators to offer strategic guidance and implementation services ranging from in-depth collaborative district reviews and analysis of curricula, practices, and resources, to professional learning experiences and ongoing coaching.

Friends Center for Children is an early childhood education program that provides a progressive, child-centered learning environment for children ages three months to five years old and their families. The Center's mission—educate children, empower families, inspire teachers, engage community, embrace diversity—is integrated into all aspects of its program. Friends Center is a non-sectarian organization whose values-based curriculum is guided and enhanced by its foundations in the Quaker principles of simplicity, peace, truth, community, equality and stewardship. Friends Center utilizes a sliding scale tuition program to ensure socio-economic diversity. As a cooperative organization, parents and teachers at the Center work together to create a partnership of support for each child.

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