



System Transitions from Preschool to Kindergarten

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Agenda



- I. Investing in School Readiness
- II. Overview of EC Strategy
- III. Four Systems of Support
- IV. Recent EC Grants and Funding Efforts
- V. LDOE New PDG Planning Narrative
- VI. PDG Projected Outcomes and Potential Partnerships

Louisiana Believes...



Children are our highest priority



Equity matters



Families are our partners



Choice expands opportunities



Educators are valued professionals



Schools are invaluable to communities



Graduates must be ready



Our future is bright

Louisiana's Goals and Priorities

SIX CRITICAL GOALS

Students enter kindergarten ready.

Students will achieve mastery on third-grade assessments and enter fourth grade prepared for grade-level content.

Students will achieve mastery on eighth-grade assessments and enter ninth grade prepared for grade-level content.

Students will graduate on time.

Students will graduate with a college and/or career credential.

Students will graduate eligible for a TOPS award.

EDUCATIONAL PRIORITIES

Ensure every student is on track to a professional career, college degree, or service.

Remove barriers and create equitable, inclusive learning experiences for all children.

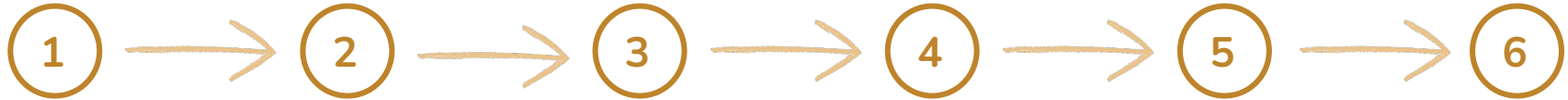
Provide the highest quality teaching and learning environment.

Develop and retain a diverse, highly effective educator workforce.

Cultivate high-impact systems, structures, and partnerships

Each child's educational journey is focused on six critical goals.

Birth *through* Graduation



Students enter Kindergarten ready.

Students achieve Mastery level on third grade assessments and enter fourth grade ready for grade-level content.

Students will achieve Mastery level on eighth grade assessments and enter ninth grade prepared for grade-level content.

Students will graduate on time.

Students will graduate with a college and/or career credential.

Students will graduate eligible for a TOPS award.





Investing in School Readiness

Early care and education (ECE) supports the foundations that develop executive functioning and problem-solving skills necessary for transitioning preschoolers to be successful academically in elementary school.

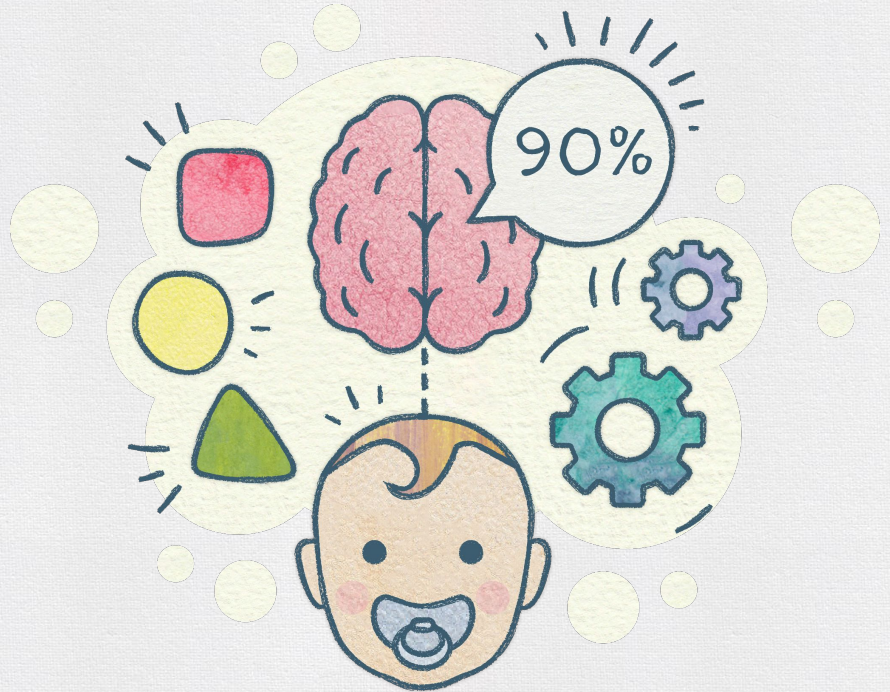
Children who attend high-quality ECE programs are associated with higher test scores and demonstrate long-term positive outcomes, including fewer referrals for special education services, fewer grade retentions, and increased likelihood to graduate from high school.

Only 40% of Louisiana children arrive at kindergarten meeting critical benchmarks.

- Children who begin school behind, or below the appropriate benchmark, generally remain behind.
- When children can read proficiently by third grade, they are more likely to achieve academic success, graduate from high school, and do well when they enter the workforce.

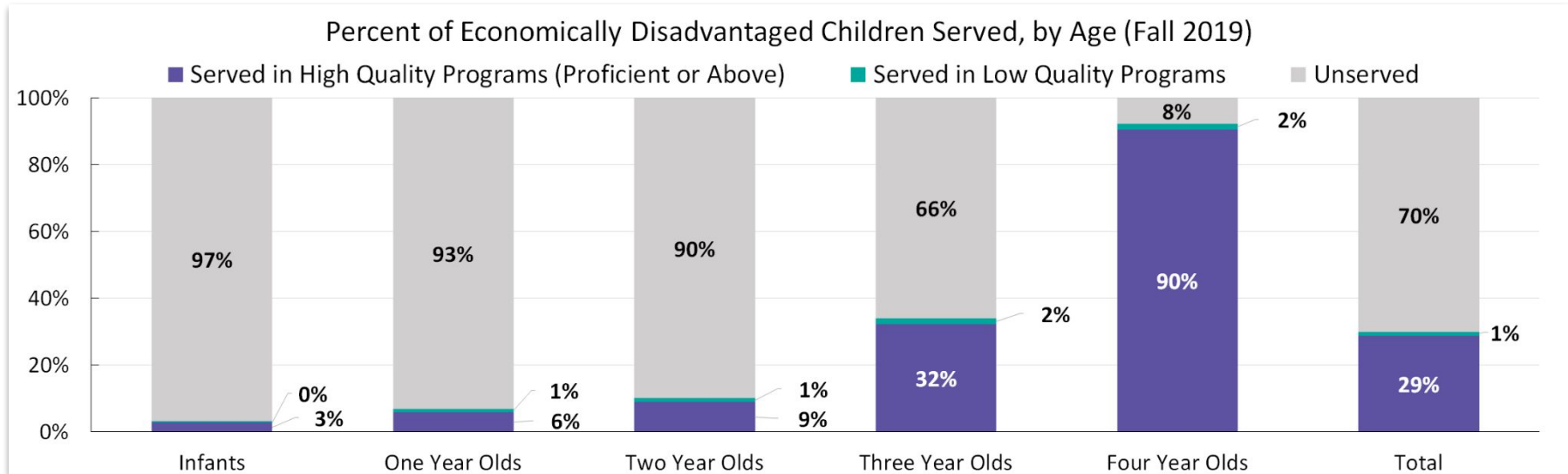
Why Early Childhood Matters

The first five years are the most critical in the development of a child's brain. From birth to age three, children grow and learn at the most intense rate, forming more than a million neural connections every second; these are the years when children are learning how to learn. 90% of a child's brain development happens before age 5.



Why Early Childhood Matters

Even prior to COVID-19, fewer than 7% of economically disadvantaged children birth to two years old, and less than 33% of three year olds, had access to high-quality child care in Louisiana.



Early Care and Education Access and Enrollment

4-Year-Olds

- Over 83% of 4-year-olds in Louisiana attend free public pre-K in schools, Type II centers, or Head Start programs.
- 80% of 4-year-olds are in a program rated as a quality program.

Birth to 3-Year-Olds

- For children under age 4, quality early care and education is severely underfunded and out of reach for most low-income, working families.
- Less than 16% of low-income children under age 4 have access to any publicly funded program, including only 32% of 3-year-olds, 14% of 2-year-olds, 12% of 1-year-olds, and 6% of infants.



Overview of EC Strategy

Community Network Lead Agencies

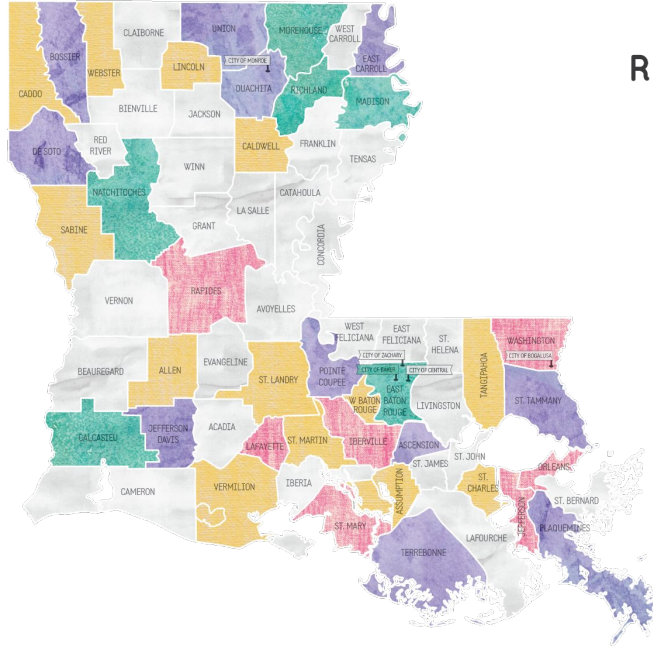
With the Louisiana Legislature's 2012 passage of the Louisiana Early Childhood Education Act (Act 3), the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has worked with partners across the state to bring all early childhood sites receiving public dollars into a single system with consistent quality standards, local governance and leadership through 64 Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLAs).

The LDOE has leveraged Preschool Development Grant (PDG), Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), and federal stimulus dollars with state and local resources to establish a strong foundation for a statewide birth-to-five (B-5) ECE system to expand access to quality, engage diverse families, and close gaps.



Ready Start Networks

RSNs support local demand for access, update strategic plans to quality ECE, strengthen coalitions and local governance structures, and identify and develop local funding for expansion and sustainability.



READY START NETWORK

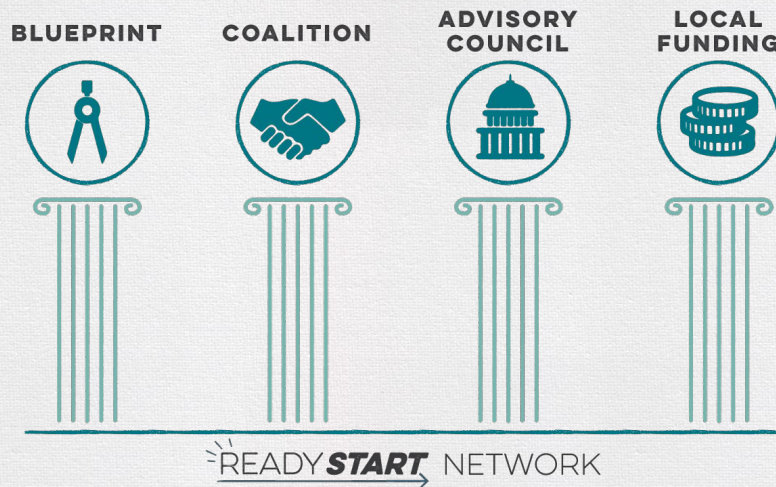
- COHORT 1
- COHORT 2
- COHORT 3
- COHORT 4

Ready Start Networks

In 2018, legislation passed that allowed BESE to create and fund pilot programs, called Ready Start Networks, to expand those local responsibilities to include access to quality. Ready Start Networks were codified in policy during the 2021-2022 academic year.

Driven by local data and context, Ready Start Networks:

- assess local demand for early care and education and create a blueprint to **address gaps**;
- recruit stakeholders to expand **early childhood coalition**;
- establish **local advisory council structures** to make collaborative decisions; and
- implement **fundraising strategies** to satisfy local demand.



EC Lead Agency Supports

Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLA)

Coordinated Enrollment
CLASS[®] Observations
TS GOLD[®]
Child Count

Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (CCR&R)

Technical assistance
Coaching
Training
Referrals
Respite Care/SIP

Mental Health Consultation Services (ECMHC)

Multi-leveled services:
Network
Program
Classroom
Child and Family

Ready Start Network Lead Agencies (RSN)

Blueprint
Coalition
Advisory Council
Local Funding

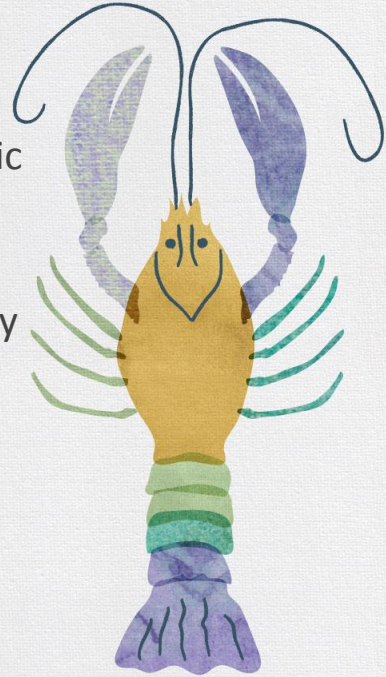
Access

Family Child Care (FCC) in Louisiana

The Department made revisions to Bulletins 139 and 140 to allow Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)-certified family child care providers to apply for Academic Approval, starting in the 2022-2023 academic year.

CCAP-certified FCCs who opt into Academic Approval participate in the state's quality rating system and are eligible for related incentives and supports, including

- School Readiness Tax Credits (SRTC)
- CCAP bonus payments (if site is rated Proficient or higher)
- quality improvement supports and more!



Agencies Supporting Early Care and Education

The Department works with additional agencies that are tasked with ensuring that children have access to high-quality early childhood care and education.

Community Network Lead Agencies (CNLA)

Coordinated Enrollment
CLASS® Observations
Teaching Strategies GOLD®
Child Count



Ready Start Network Lead Agencies (RSN)

Blueprint
Coalition
Advisory Council
Local Funding
Access

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R)

Technical assistance
Coaching
Training
Referrals
Respite Care



The Four Primary Systems of Support

**What are the 4 primary
systems that support a child's
readiness for school?**



The Four Primary Systems of Support

Communities

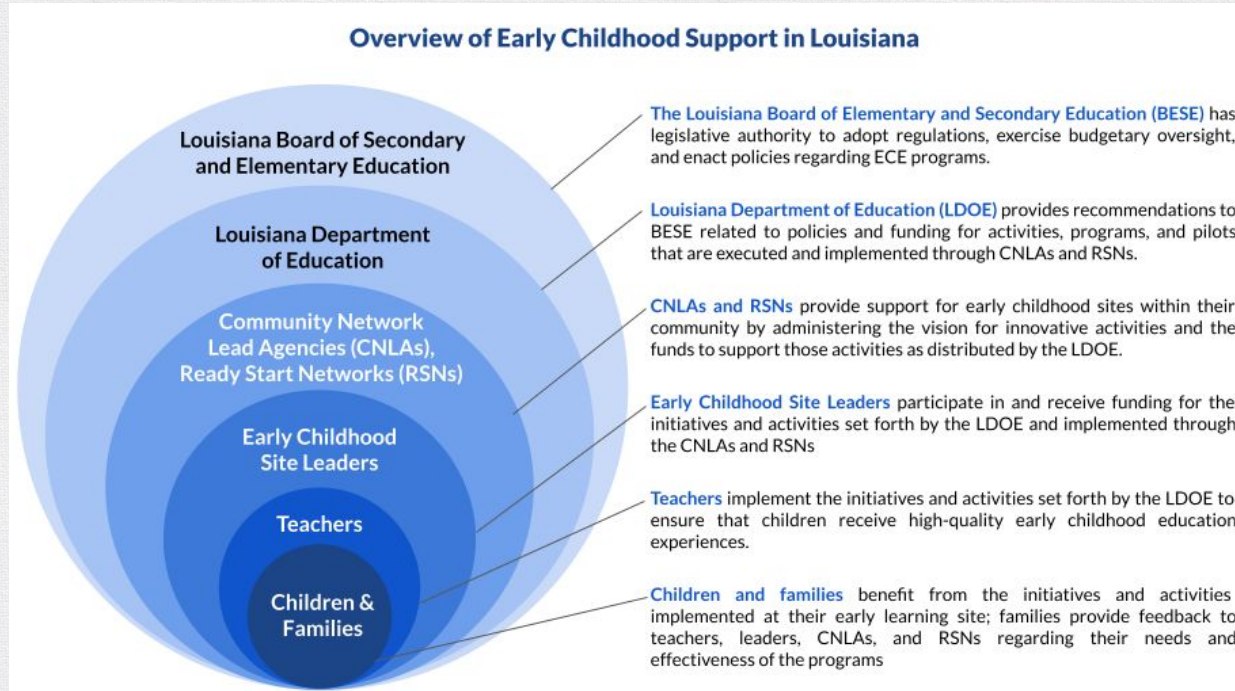
Families and
Children

**Child Care
Programs
(feeder systems)**

Local School
Systems

Collaborative focus is needed to strengthen the four primary points of connection that have been identified as necessary components for facilitating effective transitions by the Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.

Louisiana's ECE B-5 System Governance Structure Reaching the Child Within A Community





Recent Funding Opportunities for EC Lead Agencies

2021- 2023 Community Supply Building and Access Expansion (CSBAE) Grant

As part of efforts to increase child care infrastructure to expand access, from Fall 2021-Spring 2023, the Louisiana Department of Education implemented an innovative, new funding opportunity focused on community-level strategies and solutions to increase supply of, and access to, quality early care and education.

27 RSNs were awarded the grant opportunity, which was executed over a two year period to provide funding to support initiatives focused on building child care supply and increasing access at the local level that can be tailored to the specific needs of each early childhood community network.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Community Access Analysis, Strategic Planning and Design	Strategy Implementation & Sustainability Planning	Long Term Sustainability and Evaluation of Strategy Implementation

Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Efforts by Ready Start Networks

Twenty-seven networks continue efforts to increase access to high-quality care and education at the local level through the Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Grant .

The Community Supply Building and Access Expansion Grant was executed in two cohorts:

- Cohort 1 grantees are implementing the access expansion strategies that were developed in 2022. These strategies include increasing the number of seats at existing sites by providing furnishings and materials for new classrooms; increasing access and supports for non-English speaking families; initiating workforce development efforts focused on creating and recruiting new teachers; and increasing wrap-around services for families to address children's developmental and physical needs.
- Cohort 2 grantees completed a multi-factored community access analysis in 2022 and utilized the findings to begin developing strategic plans for access expansion in the communities they serve.

ECE Fund Match Plan

LDOE will commit a 1-1 match to match funding for Ready Start Networks who secured local funding to create seats that expand access for birth through three year olds.

Ready Start Network	Local Funds Raised	ECE Match Funds	Total for Early Childhood Education
Orleans	\$3,250,000	\$3,250,000	\$6,500,000
Caddo	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000

Other networks anticipate securing local funds in the coming months, including Jefferson and Rapides.

Use of state funding awarded from the ECE Fund:

- At least 70% of any funding awarded to the applicant will be used to directly fund additional slots in Type III early learning centers rated “Proficient”
- Seats are for children eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), otherwise defined as *economically disadvantaged*
- Remaining funds can be used to administer the program, improve quality of seats offered (e.g., professional development, curriculum, enrollment initiatives, etc.), and cover other costs





2023 Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Planning Grant

PDG Project Context

For decades, Louisiana has consistently ranked at the bottom among the United States for all favorable measures related to children and their families.

- In the annual Annie E. Casey KIDS COUNT rankings of child well-being across numerous domains, Louisiana's 33-year average ranking among states is 49th, exactly where Louisiana stands in the latest KIDS COUNT.
- Louisiana has the second-highest poverty rate in the nation and significant economic inequality.
- Almost one third of all Louisiana children under age five live in poverty, and Black children are three times more likely to live in poverty than white children. 51% of Louisiana households are considered Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, and Employed (ALICE).

Louisiana provides the perfect conditions to demonstrate to the nation what is possible in building an integrated birth to five early childhood system that equitably supports young children's development and families' economic security.



2023 Preschool Development Grant (PDG)

In January 2023, Louisiana was awarded a Birth through Five PDG Planning Grant by the Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care.

Louisiana will build on the focus of its previous PDG award to identify and address the gaps in Louisiana's B-5 mixed delivery ECE system that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and revise its existing needs assessment and comprehensive statewide strategic plan accordingly.

These efforts will prioritize building systems and structures to support the implementation of state-level and local strategies within the following activities:

- strengthen family engagement
- support for vulnerable families within diverse communities
- develop and sustain quality ECE workforce
- address access gaps to quality education and care through research and data analysis

Activity One: Strengthen Family Engagement

The LDOE will execute plans that include:

- improve the capacities of existing programs and systems to effectively engage *all* Louisiana families;
- increasing the reach and scope of its Early Childhood (EC) Guides program;
- launching the Ready Start Families website;
- ensuring family representation on regional network Advisory Councils;
- and piloting Family Academies that promote family leadership within community networks.

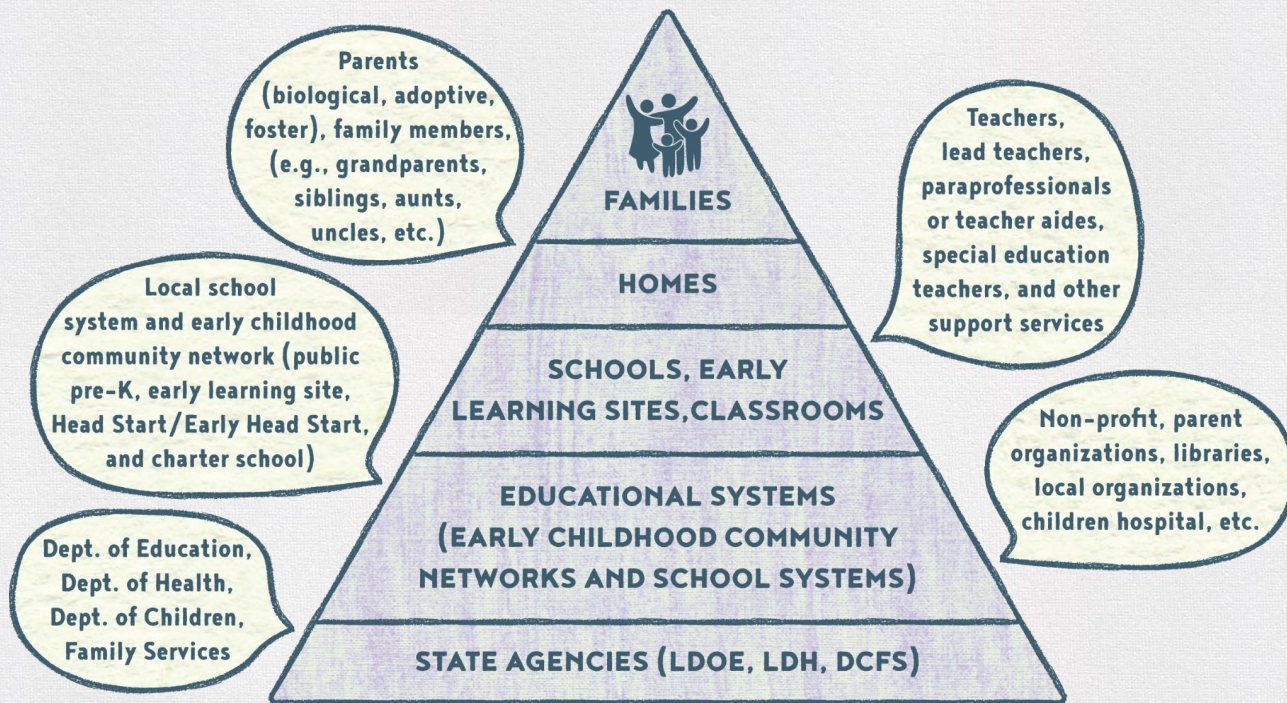


Family Academies

The families academies will build on the successful models like the National Parent Leadership Institute's Parents Leadership Training Institute (PLTI), which has been implemented in New Orleans since 2012.

- LDOE will support five RSNs in identifying and selecting an approach to parent and family leadership development that is grounded in best practice research and aligns with each RSN's local goals and strategies.
- The pilot for the Family Academies will establish leadership and advocacy training for families to be effective partners in decision-making in the ECE system, and not simply token representatives on an Advisory Council.
- Family Academies will identify parents and family members as leaders, hone their leadership skills, and empower them as parent and family advocates for children.
- Family Academy participants will take on projects to address community needs and support their peers in navigating, improving, and thriving in the ECE system.
- Beyond the grant period, the LDOE will work to fully implement, evaluate, and scale the number of RSNs who adopt meaningful and effective Family Academies.

Family Engagement Collaboration, Interdependence, and Support



Activity Two: Support For Vulnerable Families



The PDG planning will include targeted supports that include:

- Young Children with Disabilities
- non-English speaking families
- teen parents
- families residing in rural areas

LDOE will strengthen the capacity of EC Guides interactive relationships with families and supportive family-facing materials, surveys, and assessments are offered in multiple languages.

Projected PDG grant outcomes is that at least 80% of the state's 64 local early childhood community networks will have embedded family engagement strategies into their strategic plans.

PDG Strategic Plan - EC Guides Positioning

In 2020, the LDOE used PDG funds to begin implementing the Early Childhood Guides (EC Guides) pilot program, which now serves seven parishes.

The staff serve as local enrollment coordinators to help families apply for CCAP, learn about child care options in their community, and inform how to improve the state's mixed delivery ECE system. Through the EC Guides pilot, the LDOE ensured a personal champion for each family, regardless of their access to technology. The EC Guides provided individualized support to help families clearly understand their options and program eligibility requirements, reduced their barriers to enrollment, ensured their online subsidy applications were completed correctly, and connected them to needed resources.

The EC Guides go beyond the traditional methods of family outreach and target outreach to families in traditionally under-reached and underserved communities through community presentations and community partnerships.

As part of application assistance, EC Guides regularly accompany families to hospitals and/or state Vital Records offices to retrieve birth certificates and contact employers to provide documentation to verify employment.

The EC Guides also go to places that CNLA administrators cannot typically go because of logistics, schedules, and/or lack of community trust, such as neighborhoods, apartment complexes, WIC clinics, and more.

Future Plans for EC Guides

Funding will be provided for EC Guides to engage families and communities by strengthening relationships in underserved regions and supporting access to CCAP and wraparound supports.

- The six existing guides will continue to serve in their established communities
- Additional EC Guides will be placed in five new RSNs
- One bilingual guide will be launched within a RSN who serves a high Latinx population identified within the CSBAE expansion efforts



Activity Three: Quality ECE Workforce

Grow and better sustain a quality ECE workforce that includes:

- addressing workforce compensation through the establishment of an ECE Workforce Stabilization Working Group,
- new partnerships to ensure access to healthcare and
- a stronger pipeline for the ECE workforce, and
- expanding professional development for ECE site directors around workforce competencies

The LDOE will also launch new efforts to grow, retain, and advance a qualified ECE workforce that lead to a comprehensive statewide strategic plan as well as local plans in at least five diverse Louisiana communities to address workforce retention, recruitment, and advancement to ensure responsiveness to local demand and the needs of diverse learners.



PDG Plans to Support the B-5 Workforce

During this grant period, the LDOE will develop, pilot, and expand a combination of local and state strategies that address the state's workforce challenges as part of a comprehensive statewide plan for the ECE workforce.

Early educators who work outside a school setting are particularly vulnerable.

- Their poverty rate is 60% higher than for employees in other sectors and 530% higher than it is for K-8 teachers.
- In 2019, the median wage for child care workers in Louisiana was \$9.13.
- Preschool teachers and child care center directors have seen median wage decreases since 2017 at 28% and 6% respectively. As a result, half of Louisiana's child care teachers are food insecure, 56% struggle to pay medical expenses, and nearly one in three struggle to pay their rent. This presents enormous challenges to the stability and retention of the ECE workforce, the recruitment of new ECE educators, and Louisiana's ability to create and sustain gains in access and quality.

PDG Plans to Support the B-5 Workforce



Activities	LDOE Strategies & Plans			
Workforce Compensation	Teacher Compensation Pilot	ECE Workforce Stabilization Working Group	Affordable Health Insurance	EC Leadership Training On Recruitment and Retention
Alignment of Key Partnerships	EC Ancillary Certificate Programs	LA Workforce Commission	Office of College and Career Readiness	Board of Regents
Expand EC Workforce Capacity	10 RSN Workforce Planning Subgrants	Louisiana Early Leaders Academy (LELA)	EC Instructional Leadership Teams - School Readiness	Develop a Campaign to Elevate the ECE Profession

Activity Four:

Address Access Gaps

Continue to build on Louisiana's progressive Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to address access gaps:

- by increasing the number of Family Child Care (FCC) sites that fall under the QRIS through academic approval
- promoting the use of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) statewide to support early identification of infants and toddlers with disabilities
- and reducing the administrative burdens of ECE administrators

The LDOE will also continue to advance its program quality improvement efforts by establishing a diverse support model to advance kindergarten readiness that leverages local and state partnerships to complement and extend efforts to improve outcomes.

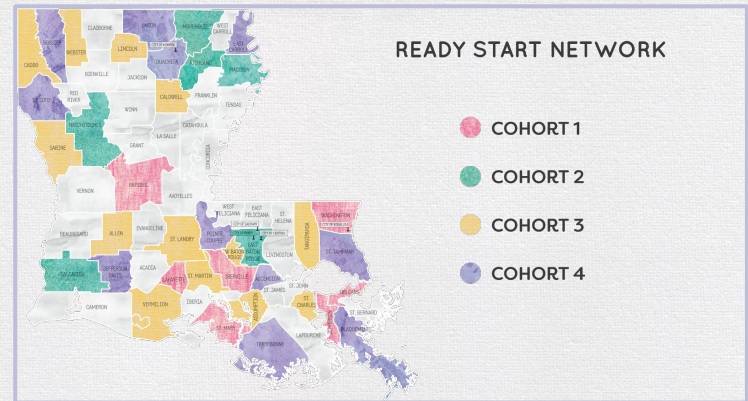


Research Focused On Access Gaps

Through the CSBAE grant program, advanced local community networks' multi-factor landscape analysis of current levels of access will be utilized by the department to review the following:

- each zip code served
- including for vulnerable families and
- develop and implement local strategic plans for access expansion

The LDOE has also partnered with Tulane to study the access expansion efforts of CSBAE grant partners to inform future initiatives.



Developmental Screening Initiative

ASQ-3 Kits

In an effort to expand the state's Developmental Screening Initiative:

- The Department purchased 1,390 ASQ-3 kits from Brookes Publishing and had them distributed to 66 networks across the state.
- The Department partnered with Brookes Publishing to offer ASQ-3 training of trainers in October, November, January, and March.
- 135 participants attended a 3-day training of trainers to build capacity within the field surround developmental screening.

Contact Caitlyn.Robinson@la.gov with questions about ASQ training and materials

Young Children With Disabilities Community of Practice Webinar

The Department hosts YCWD webinars for OSEP Administrators and early childhood administrators each month to expand support for young children with disabilities at the state and local levels.

Various professional development opportunities focused on supporting young children with disabilities were provided across the state. These opportunities were attended by instructional specialists, curriculum supervisors, educational diagnosticians, early childhood coordinators, SER specialists, network administrators, district personnel, educators, and educational coaches, and more.

The Young Children with Disabilities Community of Practice webinars continue to be held monthly and focus topics such as:

- **Using CLASS in the Early Childhood Setting**-Included information about inclusion in early childhood programs, indicator 6 (PK environment data), characteristics of high quality inclusive classrooms, and using CLASS in early childhood environments
- **Louisiana's Educational Rights of Children with Disabilities**-included information about supporting children with disabilities, the LDOE developmental screening guidebook, the developmental screening framework, and resources related to student rights
- **Strategies for Success**-included information about special education processes and procedural safeguards, reviewed problems of practice surrounding screening in native language, disciplining children with disabilities, and evaluation of students with disabilities in preschool environments.

Please contact Caitlyn.Robinson@la.gov for any questions or concerns.

Support Program Quality Improvement



The LDOE will use the PDG Planning Grant period to:

1. expand the quality and inclusiveness of care for infants and toddlers in FCC settings across the state;
2. developing and implementing evidence-based practices that ensure early identification and provision of supports for all children, especially children with – or at risk of – disabilities and/or developmental or behavioral health challenges;
3. improving transitions to kindergarten through deeper partnerships between early childhood programs and K-12 systems;
4. collecting data on children's behavioral needs and discipline and providing supports through CNLAs;
5. exploring the expansion of regional RSNs to better support quality in rural communities; and
6. reducing the administrative burden on ECE program administrators, including FCC providers.

Support Program Quality Improvement

The LDOE will establish Early Childhood Special Education Community-Based Teams to build communities that offer more and higher quality inclusive opportunities for children in order to increase the number of children with disabilities who are identified and receive appropriate supports before entering kindergarten.

- Funding for community-based teams to provide comprehensive professional development and coaching to increase understanding and collaboration across ECE and early intervention settings and programs.
- The LDOE will select a cohort of 5 teams who will work together and with an expert coach to facilitate a local needs assessment and develop and implement an action plan to improve the availability, quality, and coordination of ECE special education services.
- The LDOE will host facilitated quarterly sessions and monthly, virtual check-ins with the full cohort of community teams.
- These strategies ultimately will support ECE providers in meeting the developmental needs of all children and create additional pathways from providers to early childhood special education service providers.



Projected Outcomes and Possible Partnerships

Expected Outcomes

The LDOE will prioritize leveraging existing lead agencies' structures to establish plans and sustainable structures that improves structures that support transitions into kindergarten.

The LDOE will use PDG Planning Grant funds to update its comprehensive B-5 statewide needs assessment, with a focus on:

- the impacts of COVID-19 and recent natural disasters, like Hurricane Ida in 2021;
- on the ECE workforce development;
- the specific needs of rural families, families of young children with disabilities, non-English speaking families, and teen parents; and
- the availability and quality of existing programs across the mixed delivery B-5 system.

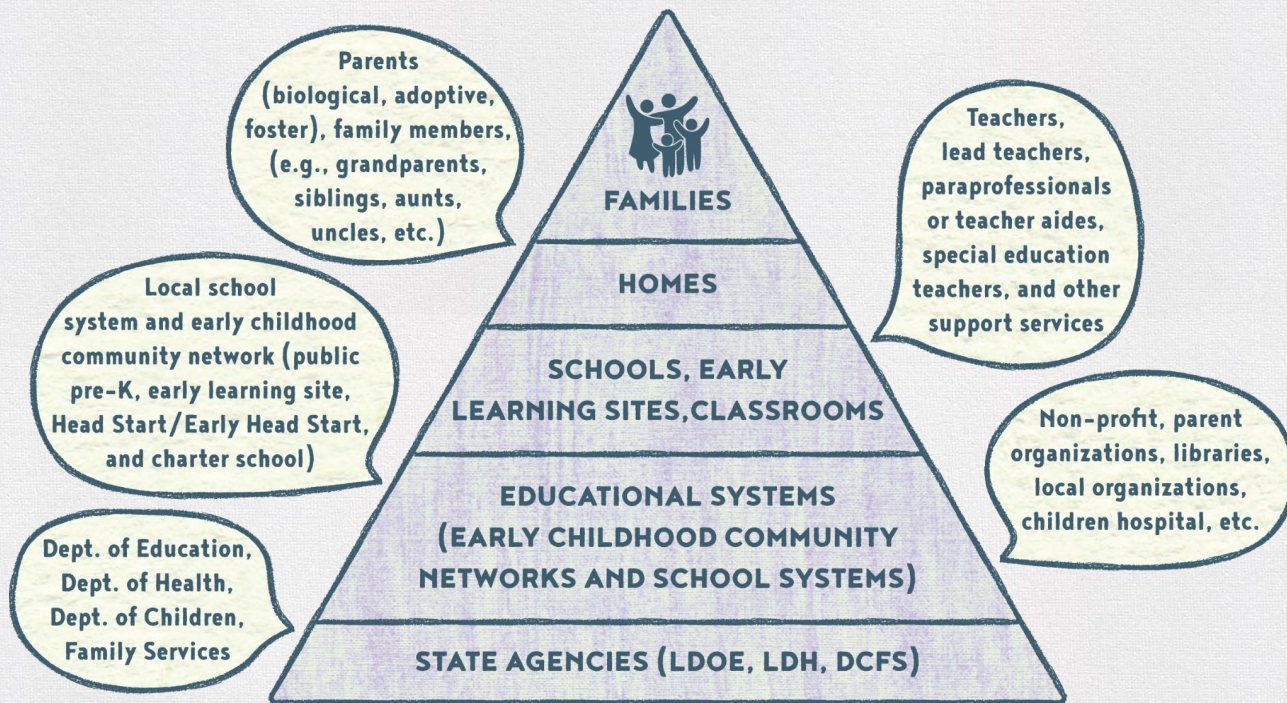
The Power of Partnerships



The LDOE will also continue to advance its program quality improvement efforts by establishing a diverse support model to advance kindergarten readiness that leverages local and state partnerships to complement and extend efforts to improve outcomes for children of at-risk families, including young children with disabilities, dual language learners, rural families, and others.

Additional partnerships are needed across state agencies and educational systems to promote the four primary points of connection, which are communities, families and children, child care programs, and local school systems.

Family Engagement Collaboration, Interdependence, and Support



The Four Primary Systems of Support



Communities

Families and
Children

**Child Care
Programs
(feeder systems)**

Local School
Systems

Planning for the future



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