

Building Our Foundation

Assessing Early Care and Education in Arizona



High-quality early care matters

Parents, grandparents and early childhood professionals know intuitively what neuroscience advances have now proved concretely — the first three years of life are a pivotal time of development. Babies are born learning, and the engagement and experiences provided from birth have a profound impact on a child's success well into adulthood.

And a growing body of research and subsequent evidence points to one critical strategy for ensuring the success of our K–12 system of education: Our youngest children, birth to 5, need to have high-quality experiences that enable them to enter kindergarten healthy and ready to succeed in school.

One of the most alarming findings is that the children who would most benefit from high-quality early care and education are the ones who

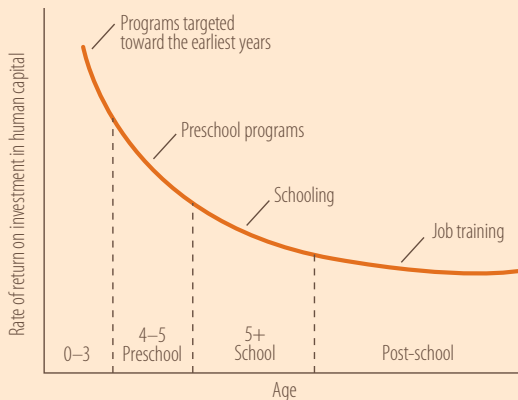
are least likely to receive it. Arizona's children are more likely than the national average to live in poverty, a single-parent family, a household with low educational attainment or a household where a language other than English is primarily or only spoken, and have less access to health care.

Children who live with more than one of these factors likely will struggle when they get to kindergarten. Given that many of these children also spend at least a portion of their day with someone other than a parent, it is important to focus on the quality of experiences outside the primary home.

A central finding is that Arizona, like many states, has no organized system of early care and education. Multiple agencies are responsible for licensing, certification, funding, standards, and related issues. High-quality programs exist, but families who wish to take advantage of them must have access to accurate information about the quality of the setting. And they must be wealthy enough to afford it on their own or be able to navigate through the tangled web of financial assistance resources.

The good news is that there is growing awareness about the importance of quality early care and education. And we are making progress with terrific support from citizens and community leaders from all sectors. **This is our opportunity to build a strong foundation for all of Arizona's children.**

Rate of return on human capital investment at different ages: Return on an extra dollar at various ages



Source: Heckman, Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children Is Good Economics and Good Public Policy, presentation to the NAEYC 2007 Annual Conference and Expo, Nov. 8, 2007.



How Arizona Compares

To the extent the data allow, the following table compares the performance of Arizona’s “system” of early care and education with the U.S. averages in five key areas that are the primary focus of this report: affordability, accessibility, program quality, teacher quality and governance/leadership structures.

Affordability	Arizona	United States
Average annual fees paid for full-time infant care in a child care center (reported 2007)¹	\$7,860	\$4,388–\$14,647
A family’s eligibility for child care subsidy (2007)²	Families earning up to 165 percent of the federal poverty level	Arizona ranks 36th out of 51 (includes DC).
State maintains a waiting list for those eligible for child care subsidy (2007)³	No	Seventeen states had waiting lists or stopped enrolling new students.
Child care reimbursement rates (2007)⁴	Based on 2000 market rates	Federal recommendation is to base reimbursement on the current market rate. Nine states meet the federal recommendation, and only seven had not updated rates since 2001 (including Arizona).
State subsidizes federal Head Start allocation (2006)⁵	No	Fourteen states subsidize federal Head Start allocation.

Accessibility

Percentage of children in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten by age group (2005)⁶	Age 3–4: 34 percent Age 3–5: 48 percent	Age 3–4: 45 percent Age 3–5: 57 percent
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Notes

1. National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) Web site: Research and Data, State by State Facts.

2. Arizona data per the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES); U.S. data per National Women’s Law Center, Report on Childcare Assistance Policies.

3. National Women’s Law Center, Report on Childcare Assistance Policies.

4. Arizona data per the Arizona DES; U.S. data per National Women’s Law Center, Report on Childcare Assistance Policies.

5. National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), Early Childhood Care and Education Variables.

6. Kids Count state-level data online: Comparisons by topic, Child enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten by age group, 2005.

7. AZ data per Arizona Department of Health Services (also recorded National Child Care Information Center, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families); U.S. data per National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Web site: Teacher-Child Ratio.

8. *First Things First: The Right System for Bright Futures*, Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board, 2007 Statewide Needs and Assets report, p.27.

9. NAEYC Web site statistics, accessed Nov. 9, 2007, summary of NAEYC-Accredited Programs for Young Children, Number of Children Served by State, divided by 0–5 population statistics from U.S. Census Bureau Web site: American Fact Finder, 2006 American Community Survey.

10. National Child Care Information Center; NAEYC accreditation information via personal communication with Davida McDonald at NAEYC.

11. Arizona Department of Education.

12. NCCP Web site: Early Childhood Care and Education Variables; *The State of Preschool: 2003 State Preschool Yearbook*, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), 2003.

13. Early Childhood Workforce Web site by Keystone Research Center, Losing Ground, States Table 1.

14. *The State of Preschool: 2003 State Preschool Yearbook*, NIEER, 2003. Note: In Arizona, per *Compensations and Credentials: A Survey of Arizona’s Early Education Workforce*, Children’s Action Alliance, July 2005, only 32 percent of teachers have at least a college degree.

15. NACCRRRA Web site: Research and Data, State by State Facts.

16. *Compensation and Credentials*, Children’s Action Alliance, July 2005, pp. 12–13.

Program Quality

	Arizona	United States
Child-to-caregiver licensing ratios and group size for child care centers (2005)⁷	4-year-olds 15:1 18-month-olds 6:1 No maximum group size for any age group	National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) benchmark is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 10:1 for 4-year-olds (no more than 20 per classroom) — 14 states meet this standard — and ■ 4:1 for 18-month-olds (no more than eight per classroom) — eight states meet this standard.
Monitoring caseloads — child care licensing surveyors per licensed child care facility (2007)⁸	1:78 cases per surveyor	NAEYC recommends no more than 1:50.
Number of children cared for in NAEYC-accredited centers as a percentage of the 0–5 population (2006–07)⁹	3.1 percent	3.5 percent (Arizona ranks 26th out of 51, includes DC)
Quality rating system in place (2007)¹⁰	No	Fourteen states plus DC have quality rating systems; 13 of the 14 link to NAEYC accreditation. Only two (NC and TN) require all licensed programs to participate.
Early learning standards or developmental guidelines for infants/toddlers and 3- and 4-year-olds in place (2007)	No developmental guidelines exist for infants and toddlers. Standards are in place for 3- and 4-year-olds, but they are not tied to child care licensing or subsidy reimbursement. ¹¹	Twenty-two states have early learning standards or developmental guidelines in place for infants and toddlers. Comprehensive preschool standards are in place in 10 states. ¹²

Teacher Quality

Percentage of center-based early childhood teachers and administrators who are college graduates (2004)¹³	28 percent	30 percent Twenty-one states require preschool teachers to have a college degree. Arizona requires a high school diploma or GED. ¹⁴
Average annual wage for child care worker (excludes self-employed providers) (2005)¹⁵	\$16,130	\$18,180
Percentage of teachers in their job for less than two years (2004)¹⁶	17 percent	Not available

Governance/Leadership

Governance model	Department of Health Services (reporting to Governor), Department of Economic Security (reporting to Governor), Department of Education (reporting to Superintendent of Public Instruction), and new Arizona Child Development and Health Board (independent agency) manage components of early care and education delivery.	Various models exist; some have greater success than others. No one model is considered the “gold standard.”
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Recommendations

Make quality count. Consider (a) implementing an improvement and rating system; (b) increasing the number of NAEYC-accredited child care centers and National Association for Family Child Care-accredited family child care homes; (c) reducing the turnover of child care teachers; (d) creating a comprehensive tiered reimbursement strategy; (e) increasing training and education for home-based child care providers; (f) exploring incentives to increase the number of trained, licensed and/or certified home-based providers; (g) establishing a public recognition program for home-based providers who meet quality standards; and (h) examining ways to support family, friend and neighbor caregivers who provide voluntary care.

Reimburse at market rates. Consider (a) meeting the federally suggested guidelines for reimbursing early childhood programs at the current market rates (Arizona is seven years behind in adjusting reimbursements) and (b) committing to a multiyear solution that will allow them to remain current in years to come.

Raise income eligibility for child care subsidy.

Increase the eligibility from families earning 165 percent of the federal poverty level to 200 percent.

Reprioritize Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) funding to preschool.

With the expansion of the state's all-day kindergarten, all ECBG funding should be directed to preschool programs and allocated based on a competitive process instead of a formula.

Offer professional development opportunities.

Consider (a) offering scholarships to those seeking degrees in early childhood development; (b) working with community colleges and universities to ensure a clear path toward degrees; and (c) tying rigorous evaluation and college credit to the training available for child care professionals.

Increase coordination among Arizona's Departments of Economic Security, Education and Health Services.

Make early childhood standards count. Early childhood programs not receiving ECBG funding should have an incentive to use the early learning standards in their classrooms.

Strengthen licensing and monitoring. Consider (a) integrating widely regarded measures of quality into licensing regulations and (b) increasing the number of licensing surveyors.

Develop a uniform data-gathering and -measuring mechanism. Needed: a single, coherent set of standards, assessments, data and professional development efforts across all categorical programs and funding streams.

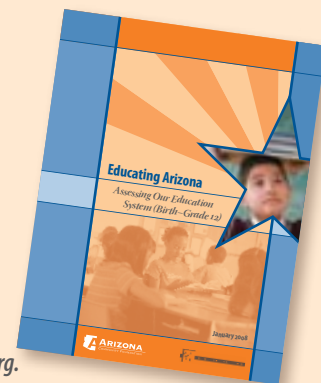
Initiate a conversation between K–12 educators and early childhood professionals. The goal: a seamless P–20 system.

Make more information available to parents.

Truly changing outcomes for children and families will take leadership at all levels. Parents, communities, higher education, child care directors and teachers, and policymakers — we are all partners, equally accountable.

To learn more about how early care and education can support Arizona's K–12 system, see our companion report, *Educating Arizona: Assessing Our Education System (Birth–Grade 12)*.

For more information, visit our Web site, www.educatingarizona.org.



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