

# Kansas City Pre-K Landscape Study

*The Greater Kansas City Early Care and Education Study*



## The Greater Kansas City Early Care and Education Landscape Study Final Report: Jackson County, Missouri

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PURPOSE

Given that research shows early care and learning programs can have an important impact on children's school readiness and later success in life, the Kansas City Pre-K Collaborative commissioned a landscape survey to better understand the existing early care and learning programs within Jackson County, Missouri, and to provide concrete information to use for future planning and investment. The survey focused on three types of state-regulated early childhood programs: school-based, center-based, and home-based programs.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were addressed by the survey.

Question 1: What are children's demographic characteristics?

Question 2: What are the programs' characteristics?

Question 3: What are program staff characteristics?

Results were examined by program type (schools, centers, and homes), accreditation status (accredited, not accredited), the proportion of children receiving child care subsidies (low and high), and the proportion of minority children served (low and high).

## METHOD

Three surveys were developed specifically for each program type. A total of 209 programs were surveyed: 10 schools, 123 centers, and 76 homes. The overall return rate for the survey was 58%. The 209 programs employed 2,371 staff serving 10,081 children. Almost half (42%) of children were from racial/ethnic minority groups (32% African-American/Black, 5% Latino/Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 2% other race/ethnicity). The overall percentage of children receiving special services was 6%; the percentage of children who were English Language Learners (ELL) was 5%.

Only 12% of programs were accredited across all program types. More programs were located in the Kansas City, Missouri, Public School District than in any other school district in the county. It should be noted that this survey did not include any direct measures of quality, such as classroom observations or independent ratings of quality.

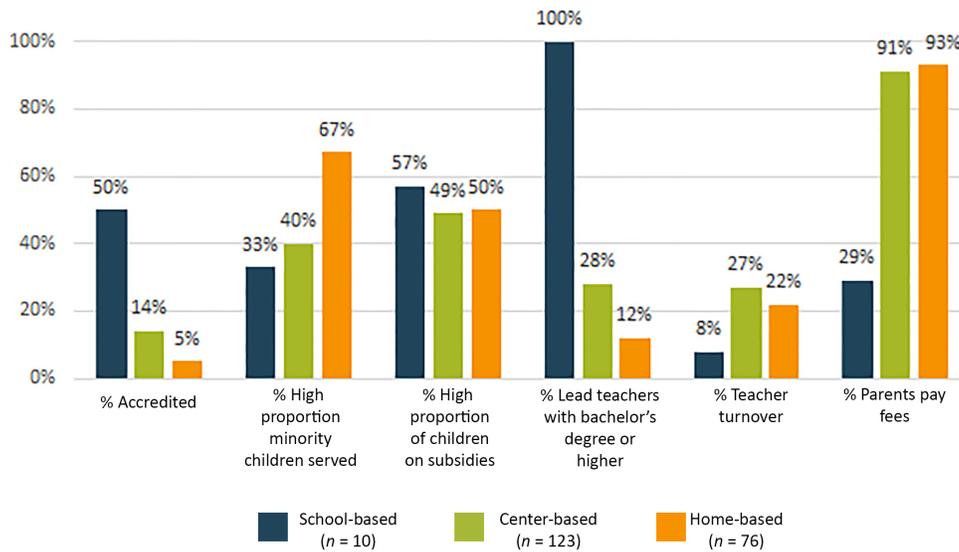
## RESULTS

Based on the research questions, a summary of pertinent results is provided below by analysis area.

## Significant Findings for Program Type

The survey showed that schools, centers, and homes differed with respect to children served, program characteristics, and staff characteristics (see Figure 1). Likely as a result of their access to more sources of revenue, school-based programs were more likely to be accredited, to have appropriately educated teachers who receive fair compensation and benefits, to offer services such as transportation and summer school, and to use strategies to engage families compared to centers and homes. The focus on formal learning opportunities varied with respect to program type. School-based programs were most likely to use a curriculum and to assess kindergarten readiness (100% and 71%, respectively), followed by centers (74% and 50%, respectively), then homes (65% and 32%, respectively). Additional relevant findings are listed below.

**Figure 1 Comparison of Program Types on Select Indicators**



Note n's may differ by indicator.  
 \*For homes, the figure is the percent of home providers that reported they were considering closing.

### Children Served

- School-based programs had a much higher percentage of children receiving special services (48%) compared to centers (4%) and homes (3%).
- School-based programs had a higher percentage of children who are ELL (13%) compared to centers (6%) and homes (4%).

### Program Characteristics

- For all programs, the rate of child attrition (children leaving the program) was 13%. The attrition rate for schools (7%) was somewhat lower than that for centers (12%) and homes (13%).
- Homes were most likely to offer before- and/or after-school services (71%) compared to school-based (40%) and center-based (60%) programs.
- More than 90% of centers and homes use parent fees, compared to 29% of schools. Only schools are eligible for federal IDEA funds (Part B-Special Education). In addition, Missouri Preschool Project funds were accessed by schools but not by centers and homes.
- All program types had expenditures for instructional materials/equipment and salaries, but only centers and homes had direct expenses for operation and maintenance of facilities.

## Staff Characteristics

- The teacher turnover rate in centers was more than three times higher (27%) than the school rate (8%).
- Homes had the highest percentage of minority staff (68%), followed by centers (43%) and schools (11%).
- Center lead teachers' average hourly wage was higher than home providers' (\$9.42 vs. \$8.48). The mean hourly wage for school-based lead teachers (\$24.50) was based on only two cases.

### Significant Findings for Accreditation Status

Accredited early childhood programs must meet specific evidence-based standards of quality that surpass licensing requirements. Only 12% of the programs surveyed were accredited. However, schools were far more likely to be accredited (50%) than centers (14%) and homes (5%). Due to accreditation requirements, it is not surprising that accredited programs compare favorably to non-accredited programs on a number of ostensible quality indicators. Overall, accredited programs had lower child attrition and were more likely to have better educated teachers, to use a curriculum, and to assess kindergarten readiness compared to non-accredited programs. In addition, accredited programs were more likely to offer transportation services, to offer parent conferences and family education workshops, and to engage in program assessments than non-accredited programs.

An important consideration with respect to accreditation is whether children of all socioeconomic backgrounds have access to accredited programs. In this survey, 13% of programs that served a high proportion of children on subsidies were accredited, compared to 11% of programs serving a low proportion. These data suggest that children from low-income families were accessing accredited programs at roughly the same rate as children from families with higher incomes. Similarly, 14% of all programs that served a high proportion of minority children were accredited, compared to 10% of accredited programs serving a low proportion, which suggests that minority children were accessing accredited programs at about the same rate, if not slightly higher, as non-minority children.

### Significant Findings for Proportion of Children Receiving Subsidies

Childhood poverty is one of the most salient risk factors for children not being ready for school as well as other future academic and social problems. In this study, the density of children receiving child care subsidies was examined to determine whether there were important differences based on programs' proportion of children on subsidies. For centers and homes, the percentage of children receiving subsidies was used to classify their programs as low proportion (20% or less) or high proportion (more than 20%). For school-based programs, Title I funding was used as a proxy for high proportion of children receiving subsidies. Half of all programs were classified as low and half as high. By program type, 57% of schools fell into the high proportion category, 49% of centers, and 50% of homes.

Compared to programs that served a low proportion, programs that served a high proportion of children receiving subsidies had higher child attrition rates, were less likely to have teachers with at least a bachelor's degree, were less likely to use a curriculum, and were less likely to assess kindergarten readiness. These results suggest that programs that serve relatively more low-income families differ in important ways that may affect the early childhood education environment when compared to programs that serve relatively fewer low-income families. In particular, centers and homes that serve more low-income families likely have access to fewer financial resources, which may account for many of the differences noted above.

## Significant Findings for Proportion of Minority Children Served

Given that nearly half of the children served were from racial/ethnic minority groups, examining differences based on the proportion of minority children served provides additional information on concerns about access and equitability. Programs that served a high proportion of minority children (more than 54%) compared both favorably and unfavorably with those serving a low proportion (54% or less). On the positive side, programs that served a high proportion of minority children were more likely to offer crucial supports such as before- and/or after-school services (all program types), summer school (homes), and transportation services (centers) than counterparts that served a low proportion. On the negative side, compared to programs that served a low proportion, programs serving a high proportion of minority children have higher child attrition rates (17% vs. 8%), are less likely to have lead teachers with at least a bachelor's degree (17% vs. 36%), and are less likely to assess kindergarten readiness (34% vs. 53%).

## NEXT STEPS

The Pre-K Collaborative is planning on conducting a parallel landscape survey in two Kansas counties (Johnson and Wyandotte) in order to get a complete picture of early childhood education in the metropolitan Kansas City area. It is hoped that this report, as well as the forthcoming one, will provide further guidance to all stakeholders in their planning and investment in early care and education in the Kansas City area.