

# 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: Johnson and Wyandotte Counties, Kansas** *Executive Summary*

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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 Early Education Funders Collaborative commissioned a landscape survey to better understand the existing early care and learning programs within Johnson and Wyandotte counties, Kansas, and to provide concrete information to use for future planning and investment. The survey focused on three types of early childhood programs: school-based, center-based, and home-based programs. This report complements the existing landscape survey that was completed for Jackson County, Missouri (*The Greater Kansas City Early Care and Education Landscape Study Final Report: Jackson County, Missouri* available at <https://www.growyourgiving.org/sites/default/files/GKC-Early-Care-and-Education-Landscape-Report.pdf>).

## 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 205 programs were surveyed: 15 school-based programs, 125 center-based, and 65 home-based programs. The overall return rate for the survey was 50%. The 205 programs employed 3,148 staff serving 16,411 children. About one-third (32%) of children were from racial/ethnic minority groups (11% African-American/Black, 13% Latino/Hispanic, 6% Asian, and 2% other race/ethnicity). The overall percentage of children receiving special services was 9%; the percentage of children who were English Language Learners (ELL) was 15%.

Only 7% of programs (all centers) were accredited across all program types. With respect to county, 161 programs (78.5%) were in Johnson County and 44 (21.5%) were in Wyandotte County. Wyandotte County programs were more likely to serve children on subsidies and minority children than Johnson County programs. It should be noted that this survey did not include any direct measures of quality, such as classroom observations or independent ratings of quality. In general, analyses were conducted on all programs surveyed and not disaggregated by county.

## LIMITATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS

One drawback of survey research is that the data are based on self-report, which relies on the memory and knowledge of the respondents. Some programs were reluctant to share financial data, including staff pay, which resulted in missing data. The school-based program data represents information for most school district early childhood programs. However, because school districts were given the option to complete more than one survey if they had more than one early childhood program within the district, the sample size for school-based programs represents 3 overall district responses (representing 13 programs) and 12 specific school-based program responses (from 4 districts).

It should be noted that the center sample contained more subsidy-receiving programs than expected based on the program population.

Due to project fiscal considerations, there were no direct assessments of program or class quality, which limits the ability of this study to draw any direct conclusions regarding the quality of early learning programs.

## RESULTS

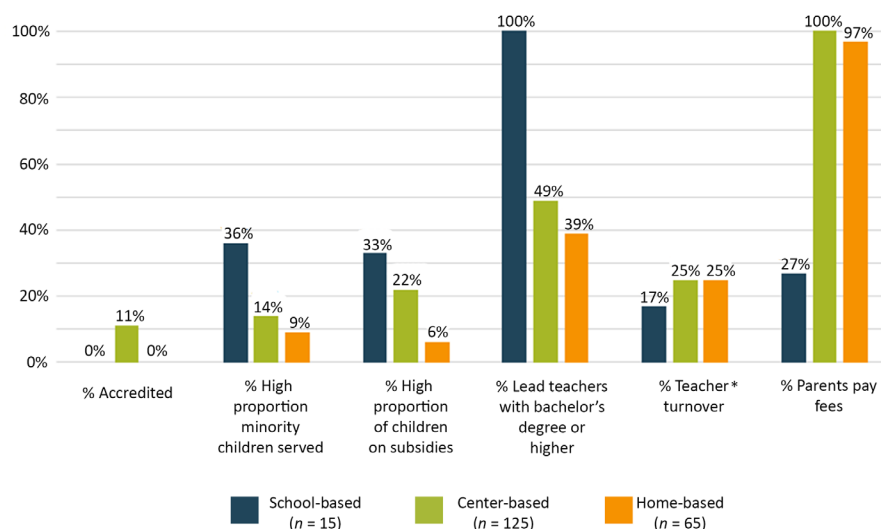
Based on the research questions, a summary of pertinent results is provided below by analysis area.

### 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). Only centers were accredited; no school-based or home-based programs were. School-based programs were more likely to serve children receiving subsidies, to serve minority children, and to have bachelor's-level teachers who receive appropriate compensation and benefits compared to centers and homes. Far fewer schools charge fees compared to centers and homes. Teacher turnover rates were slightly higher in centers and homes compared to schools. The focus on formal learning opportunities varied with respect to program type as well. School-based programs were most likely to use a curriculum and assess kindergarten readiness (100% and 87%, respectively), followed by centers (91% and 58%, respectively), then homes (28% and 8%, respectively).

**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 (31%) compared to centers (2%) and homes (4%).
- School-based programs had a higher percentage of children who are ELL (36%) compared to centers (8%) and homes (9%).

### *Program Characteristics*

- For all programs, the rate of child attrition (children leaving the program) was 14%. The attrition rate for schools (6%) was lower than that for centers (11%) and homes (22%).
- Centers and schools were more likely to offer summer school (50% and 47%, respectively) compared to homes (19%).
- Centers were most likely to offer before/after school services (52%), followed by homes (42%) and schools (7%).
- 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*

- Centers had the highest percentage of minority staff (21%), followed by homes (17%) and schools (13%).
- Center lead teachers' average starting hourly wage (\$10.78) was less than half the average starting hourly wage for lead teachers in school-based programs (\$23.84). Much of this difference was likely due to the disparity in education levels.

## **Significant Findings for Accreditation Status**

In order to be accredited, early childhood programs must meet specific evidence-based standards of quality that surpass licensing requirements; these standards differ somewhat by accrediting entity. Programs that held current accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) were counted as accredited for this project. Only 7% of the programs surveyed were accredited, all of them centers. It is noteworthy that no schools or homes were accredited. Because the accreditation requirements for NAEYC and NAFCC are based on evidence for what makes quality programs, it is not surprising that accredited programs compared favorably to non-accredited programs on a number of ostensible quality indicators.

An important consideration with respect to accreditation is whether children of all backgrounds have access to accredited programs. In this survey, 5% of programs that served a high proportion of children on subsidies were accredited, compared to 7% of centers serving a low proportion. These data suggest that low-income families accessed accredited centers at nearly the same but low rates as families with higher incomes. On the other hand, based on reported child counts, non-accredited programs served nearly twice the percentage of minority children as accredited programs (34% vs. 18%), which suggests that minority children accessed accredited programs at lower rates than nonminority 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 within programs 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. Overall, 82% of programs were classified as low and 18% as high. By program type, 33% of schools fell into the high proportion category, 22% of centers, and 6% of homes. It should be noted that type of subsidies differed by program type.

Compared to programs that served a low proportion of children receiving subsidies, programs that served a high proportion were less likely to have teachers with at least a bachelor's degree and had somewhat higher attrition rates. High-subsidy schools and homes were less likely to offer summer school and before/after school services than low-subsidy schools and homes. Compared to low-subsidy schools and centers, high-subsidy schools and centers were less likely to communicate with neighborhood schools about the social and academic skills children need to be ready for school. These results suggest that programs that serve relatively more low-income families differ in important ways that may affect the quality of early childhood education environment when compared to programs that serve relatively fewer low-income families. In particular, high-subsidy centers and homes likely have access to fewer financial resources, which may account for many of the differences. However, there were some positive findings based on the subsidy analyses. High-subsidy programs in general were more likely to offer transportation services than low-subsidy programs. High-subsidy centers were more likely to offer before/after school services and high-subsidy schools were more likely to engage families by providing child activity reports than their low-subsidy counterparts.

## Significant Findings for Proportion of Minority Children Served

Given that nearly one-third of the children served were from racial/ethnic minority groups, examining differences based on the proportion of minority children served provided additional information about access and equitability. Programs that served a high proportion of minority children compared both favorably and unfavorably with those serving a low proportion. On the positive side, programs that served a high proportion of minority children were more likely to offer transportation services (all program types), use student assessments (all program types), and provide before/after school 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 were less likely to have lead teachers with at least a bachelor's degree (centers) and less likely to communicate with neighborhood schools about the social and academic skills children need to be ready for school (all programs).

## NEXT STEPS

A final report that summarizes the landscape conditions across the three counties of Study Phases 1 and 2 will be prepared. Similarities and differences across the three counties, as well as the two states, will be addressed, with an emphasis on program access and theoretical aspects of program quality. The final report will also address important state and national policies and contexts that affect the early childhood landscape in metropolitan Kansas City, as well as identify gaps in the early childhood landscape.