Advancing Investments in the Early Years: Opportunities for Strategic Investments in Evidence-Based Early Childhood Programs in New Hampshire

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January 2019
2017 RAND study estimated costs and benefits of early childhood investments in NH

- Statewide data showed need for early childhood supports, especially for at-risk children

- Rigorous research documents the short- and longer-term benefits from early childhood programs
  - Well-designed home visiting programs
  - High-quality preschool programs

- State can expect positive return
  - $4 to $6 for every $1 in proven nurse home visiting program
  - $2 to $4 for every $1 in one-year preschool program
Second study asks: How can NH be strategic in making new early childhood investments?

- Examine local-level data to understand the variation across the state in the factors that place child and families at risk and where investments are being made
- Gather more in-depth information on four focal communities that are making advances in early childhood services
- Draw on findings from indictors and focal communities to make recommendations for a strategic approach to further investments in early childhood programs

Focus:
- Evidence-based home visiting
- High quality 4K (and 3K) preschool
Focus on two types of early childhood interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home Visiting</th>
<th>Preschool Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Typically targeted; universal models available</td>
<td>May be targeted or universal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent focus</td>
<td>Child focus; family involvement usually included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May begin prenatally or soon after birth; regularly scheduled visits for 2 to 3 years</td>
<td>Academic- or calendar-year programs for part-day or school-day; 1 or 2 years before K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Quality considerations:  
  ✓ Education/training of home visitor  
  ✓ Curriculum  
  ✓ Retention and visits received | Quality considerations:  
  ✓ Education/training of classroom teachers  
  ✓ Structural features of programs  
  ✓ Process features of programs |
| Experimental evaluations in multiple sites for varied models | Quasi-experimental evaluations in states and localities of different models |
| Cost per year per family: $3,500 to $5,000 | Cost per year per child: $8,000 to $12,000 |
| MIECHV – Healthy Families America (HFA)  
Comprehensive Family Support Services (CFSS)  
Early Head Start | Head Start  
District preschool programs  
Private provider programs |
Four focal communities

Identified communities with:

- Family Resource Center with home visiting through MIECHV and Comprehensive Family Support Services
- Early Head Start/Head Start
- School districts with preschool enrollment
- Spark NH regional partnership or coalition
Four communities provide an array of early childhood programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Claremont</th>
<th>Manchester</th>
<th>Nashua</th>
<th>Coös</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>13,028</td>
<td>110,601</td>
<td>87,642</td>
<td>32,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population under age 5</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>6,238</td>
<td>4,877</td>
<td>1,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Resource Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Families America</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFSS</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project LAUNCH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Head Start/Head Start</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>EHS &amp; HS</td>
<td>EHS &amp; HS</td>
<td>HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicly funded preschool</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition/Partnership</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: RAND analysis of data from the American Community Survey and focal community interviews.
Key findings

- Tremendous variability in risk factors across local communities
Wide range in child poverty rate across districts

Poverty rate for children 5 to 17

- State average = 9.1%
- Minimum = 1.0%
- Maximum = 27.6%

25% of districts have a rate of 12.6% or higher

SOURCE: RAND analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau.
Key findings

• Tremendous variability in risk factors across local communities

• Home visiting services statewide reach only a fraction of those who could benefit; further work needed to map gap in services relative to need
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• Home visiting services statewide reach only a fraction of those who could benefit; further work needed to map gap in services relative to need

• Little is known about district preK across all districts; focal communities show
  – Serve children with disabilities and typically developing peers
  – Mostly part-day and part-week; features consistent with high quality
District preschool enrollment has been increasing

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Districts with preschool enrollment (N)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District preschool enrollment (N)</td>
<td>3,670</td>
<td>3,894</td>
<td>3,876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide estimated 4K district enrollment rate (%)</td>
<td>22 to 24</td>
<td>22 to 27</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: There are 154 elementary and unified school districts.

SOURCE: RAND analysis of data from the US and NH Departments of Education.
### School district preschool programs vary across across 4 focal communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
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<th>Nashua</th>
<th>Coös</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages of children enrolled</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With special needs</td>
<td>3K and 4K</td>
<td>3K and 4K</td>
<td>3K and 4K</td>
<td>3K and 4K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically developing</td>
<td>3K and 4K</td>
<td>3K and 4K</td>
<td>4K</td>
<td>4K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program hours and days</td>
<td>Part-day and part-week</td>
<td>Part- or full-day, part- or full-week</td>
<td>Part-day and part-week</td>
<td>Part-day and part-week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families pay sliding scale fee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** RAND analysis of focal community interviews.
Key findings

• Tremendous variability in risk factors across local communities

• Home visiting services statewide reach only a fraction of those who could benefit; further work needed to map gap in services relative to need

• Little is known about district preK across all districts; focal communities show
  – Serve children with disabilities and typically developing peers
  – Mostly part-day and part-week; features consistent with high quality

• Estimate of district 4K enrollment rate shows no relationship with community need factors
4K enrollment rate is not linked to need

- 4K enrollment rate can be computed for 69 of 154 districts
- Uncorrelated with district child poverty rate

SOURCE: RAND analysis.
Head Start has limited reach

Head Start
5 agencies in 35 communities with 1,183 slots

Early Head Start
3 agencies in 13 communities with 385 slots

SOURCE: RAND analysis.
Key findings

• Tremendous variability in risk factors across local communities

• Home visiting services statewide reach only a fraction of those who could benefit; further work needed to map gap in services relative to need

• Little is known about district preK across all districts; focal communities show
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• Scope for expanding evidence-based programs in a strategic fashion
Focal communities demonstrate promising strategies and common challenges

- **Promising strategies**
  - Combining universal and targeted approaches
  - Institutionalizing collaboration across birth-to-five service areas
  - Leveraging multiple resources in the public and private sectors
  - Importance of leadership

- **Common challenges**
  - Engaging children and families in programs
  - Recruiting and retaining qualified program staff
  - Addressing potential displacement of services
  - Need for appropriate facilities
  - Using evidence
  - Building useful data systems
Recommended approach for strategic early childhood investments

• Focus first on communities with greatest need but low rates of current access
  – Maximize return on investment measured in first study
  – May be universal or targeted programs

• Requires public and private funding, particularly from state government

• Fund pilot communities if not yet ready for statewide expansion

• Continue current regional community of practice

• Support local investments with state-supported infrastructure
  – Data systems
  – Quality assurance
  – Workforce development
Advancing Investments in the Early Years

Opportunities for Strategic Investments in Evidence-Based Early Childhood Programs in New Hampshire
Lynn A. Kandy

Key Findings
- There is tremendous variability across New Hampshire communities in the extent to which the state’s youngest children and their families face risks and stresses that can compromise healthy child development.
- Home visiting programs serve up to 1,100 families and children in New Hampshire each year, for below the estimated 9,500 who could benefit. Further work is needed to map where the gap in services relative to need is greatest.
- There is little information about the nature and quality of school district preschool programs, which reach about 4,000 children annually, both children with special needs and their typically developing peers. Information from the district in our local community—Claremont, Manchester, Nashua, and Coos County—shows that most of their preschool enrollment is in part-day and part-week programs, with teacher qualifications, class sizes, and teacher-child ratios consistent with high quality.
- Access to district preschool programs is not aligned with the districts where children are at most risk of poor academic performance because of high rates of poverty and other disadvantages.
- To maximize the expected return, there is scope for expanding evidence-based home visiting and preschool programs in a strategic fashion, focusing first on those communities with the greatest need, but with current low rates of enrollment.
- Strategic investments going forward should involve public funds at the state and local levels, as well as private contributions from philanthropy and businesses, to (1) expand access to high-quality evidence-based home visiting and preschool programs, starting in those communities with the greatest access gap; (2) center strategies to realize an effective and efficient integrated early childhood system; and (3) build the data systems and other infrastructures at the state level to support informed decisions about future investments and to ensure that quality is achieved and expected impacts are realized.

By some measures, New Hampshire’s children ages 0 to 5 are relatively well-off, compared with their counterparts in other states. New Hampshire ranked first nationally on the 2018 Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT composite index of child well-being, which comprises 16 indicators related to economic status, education, health, and family and community. For example, New Hampshire’s child poverty rate stood at 8 percent in 2016, compared with the national average of 19 percent and the highest rate of 30 percent in Mississippi and New Mexico. This pattern of better outcomes than the national average holds for each of the indicators in the KIDS COUNT index, several of which are outcomes specific to children younger than age 5, such as the prevalence of low-birth-weight births, preschool attendance, and the teen birth rate.

At the same time, New Hampshire’s consistently high ranking on the Casey Foundation index, which is based on state averages, conceals the high levels of poverty and material hardship for a subset of the state’s children living in both rural and urban communities. For example, the state’s poverty rate for children under age 5 was 11.8 percent in 2017 but was still nearly 20 percent in Colebrook, a rural community in Coos County. New Hampshire’s largest, least populated, and poorest county the countrywide poverty rate for children under age 5 was 18.7 percent. This was 19.9 percent in Manchester, the state’s largest city. These two communities, at opposite ends of the rural-to-urban continuum, are illustrative of the disparities in well-being across a state where children are relatively well-off on average.

With a growing recognition of the importance of the early years and the lifelong detrimental effects of growing up living in poverty, leaders in the public and private sectors across New Hampshire have sought to increase investments in early childhood programs that promote the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-being of at-risk children.

Report and policy brief available at www.rand.org
## Illustrative local indicators

### Indicators of Need

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family income, poverty rate</td>
<td>Female-headed household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births to women in poverty</td>
<td>Opioid-related deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low birth weight babies</td>
<td>Reading and math achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teen birth rate</td>
<td>High school dropout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free and reduced-price lunch eligibility</td>
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</table>

### Indicators of Current Investments

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families served by home visiting</td>
<td>Public preschool enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Head Start / Head Start slots</td>
<td>Availability of full-day kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed Plus ECE providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAEYC accredited providers</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Bold items available for 154 elementary and unified school districts.