Good to Great Expanding Access to Quality Pre-K in Arkansas











UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS Clinton School of Public Service PHILANTHROPY



Introduction

The Center on Community Philanthropy (the Center) promotes community philanthropy as an approach to social change with lasting impact. At the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, we believe that offering high-quality early education programs is one of the most effective and enduring ways to improve life in Arkansas for families, as well as for the community as a whole.

As a way of supporting this commitment to Arkansas's children and families, two Scholars in Residence who are experts in early childhood visited the Center in 2015 and 2016. Dr. W. Steven Barnett is the Board of

Governors Professor of Education and the Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University. Dr. Joan Lombardi is the Director of Early Opportunities and currently serves as Senior Advisor to the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

These scholars' papers, written during their residencies, illuminate the theme, *Good to Great: Expanding Access to Quality Pre-K in Arkansas.* The Good to Great initiative is a collaboration of organizations, local community leaders, policymakers, and educators working to develop and implement strategies that improve the quality of early education in Arkansas. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Arkansas State University's Early Childhood Services, the Arkansas Public Policy Panel, Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, and the Clinton School Center on Community Philanthropy are all partners in this endeavor. The initiative is designed to establish a model to expand access to quality early childhood education in Arkansas and to create tools and public will to scale the model in our state, region, and country.

Dr. Barnett outlines the smart investments that are necessary to take Arkansas from good to great in early care and education. He lays out practical steps that the state can take to reap the educational, social, and economic benefits of high-quality preschool education—affecting children's early years and reaching far beyond them.

Dr. Lombardi delineates the common elements of successful community planning to create a renewed vision for the role of communities in supporting early childhood care and increasing the well-being of families and children. She considers ongoing efforts that mirror those currently under way in Arkansas, including the model expanding access to quality early childhood education in Marvell and Prescott.

I hope you utilize the knowledge from these scholars to improve early education in your own communities. Let us continue to create change so that all can live in—and future generations can grow up in—thriving communities where all children have access to quality learning.

This work is made possible through generous grants from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

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Taking Arkansas from Good to Great in Early Care and Education

Introduction

Smart investment in education, beginning with the first five years of life, is an essential strategy for creating sustained, long-term economic growth in Arkansas. Despite its abundant natural resources, growing population, low unemployment rate, and well-known business enterprises, Arkansas ranks 48th of the 50 states in per capita income. Without reform and new investments in education, this poor ranking will continue to be true. Arkansas scores below the national average in reading and math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, starting in fourth grade. Only 21 percent of its citizens have a four-year college degree, compared to 29 percent of people nationally.

Arkansas's education, income, and economic growth problems are exacerbated by the inequalities behind the averages. Arkansas has large achievement gaps in both reading and math for children. While some progress has been made in closing the achievement gap in math, there has been no significant reduction in the reading gap since 1998. These gaps presage future economic inequality and low average wages, given the large numbers of low-income and minority children who are on the wrong side of these achievement gaps.

The future can be better, if Arkansas makes smart investments that improve education and its outcomes, beginning with young children. High-quality preschool education by itself can add to long-term economic growth, but it can accomplish even more as the leading edge of school reform P-20. Economists have estimated that high-quality pre-K for all could add \$2 trillion to the economy nationally by 2080 or nearly \$8,000 per capita (Dickens, Sawhill, & Tebbs, 2006). In addition, because pre-K adds greater value for children from lower- and middle-income families, this economic growth favors these families and reduces income inequality while raising the average income (Bartik, 2014). This paper considers why—and how—those estimates can be made a reality in Arkansas.

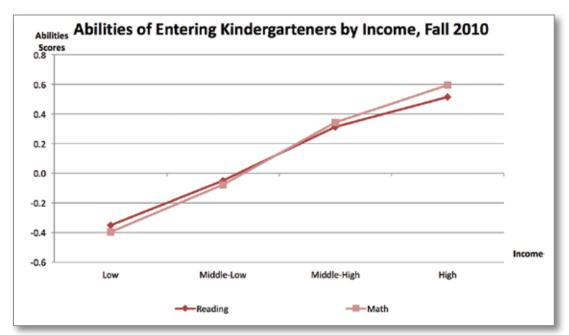
Why should Arkansas be concerned with education prior to kindergarten?

The first five years of life are a time of rapid learning and development with results that are especially sensitive to the child's experiences (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). These experiences have positive or negative effects, and children with the least supportive or

most negative social and physical environments have the least optimal development. Differences in experiences—including differences in opportunities to learn—produce differences in development by race and income that are evident before children turn two years of age (Barnett & Lamy, 2013; Fernald, Marchman, & Weisleder, 2013; Hart & Risley, 1995). By kindergarten entry, these differences are large enough to account fully for achievement gaps at fourth grade (Reardon, 2013).

The problem of differences in early learning opportunities in and out of the home is not limited to children in poverty (Barnett & Lamy, 2013). As Figure 1 illustrates for reading and math, not only do children in poverty enter kindergarten at a disadvantage, children from middle-income families score well below those from higher-income families at kindergarten entry. And this early learning gap has been getting bigger because of increasing differences in parental preschool spending. The highest-income families have been increasing their investments in early education, which has further widened these opportunity and achievement gaps (Smeeding, 2016). These disparities are particularly disadvantageous for children in a state like Arkansas, where 29 percent of all young children live in poverty and 58 percent are low-income. With the vast majority of Arkansas's children in families with incomes far below the national average, a reliance on families for investments in the first five years is certain to leave them much less well prepared for success when they enter kindergarten than their counterparts in many other states. As the children experiencing the consequences of this early learning gap work their way through the educational system and join the labor market, Arkansas will find that it is even more disadvantaged in the competition for good paying jobs with other states in the future than it is today.

Figure 1: Reading and Math Scores at Kindergarten Entry in 2010 by Family Income (scores are rescaled so that 0 equals national average and a standard deviation equals 1)



Note: Fractions on the left axis may be interpreted as percentages of the achievement gap separating the income quartiles from top to bottom—20 percent of the gap is between the top quartile and the next, 40 percent between the 2nd and 3rd, and 40 percent between the bottom quartile and the mid-lower quartile.

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How can high-quality preschool education help?

While parents are by far the most powerful influences on their children's early learning and development, public investments can help much more than many people realize. High-quality early childhood programs have been found to produce large gains in children's learning and development, particularly for children in low-income families (Barnett, 2011). Long-term follow-up has found that high-quality early education yields educational, social, and economic benefits, including greater school success, higher earnings, and other positive life outcomes—including decreases in crime and better health (Reynolds & Temple, 2008; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). These are described in greater detail below.

Educational Benefits

- Despite some decline in the achievement advantage from preschool as children move through kindergarten and the early grades, substantial achievement gains persist for the strongest programs (Reynolds & Temple, 2008; Kay & Pennucci, 2014; Ladd, Muskin, & Dodge, 2014; Barnett & Frede, in press).
- If all children could be provided with full-day pre-K at age four comparable in quality to programs in Boston and Tulsa, it is estimated that the Black-White and Hispanic-White achievement gaps at kindergarten would be vastly reduced, and virtually eliminated in reading (Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, & Nores, 2016). Achievement gaps between high- and low-income groups would be reduced substantially, as well.
- Other educational benefits from preschool emerge as children progress through school, including reductions in grade repetition and special education (Karoly, 2016; Kay & Pennucci, 2014). Students who enrolled in quality preschool programs also are more likely to graduate from high school on time (Kay & Pennucci, 2014).
- Follow-ups of adults who participated in intensive, high-quality preschool programs find that they continue to have advantages in knowledge and skills (Campbell et al., 2012; Schweinhart et al., 2005).

Social Benefits

• High-quality preschool helps children to develop social and emotional skills needed to succeed in school and life, including attention skills, motivation, grit and determination, a sense of personal responsibility, and the abilities to regulate

their behavior and get along with others (Barnett, 2008; Diamond, Barnett, Jung, & Munro, 2007; Camilli et al., 2010).

• Long-term benefits of high-quality preschool have included improved classroom behavior, less delinquency and crime, and decreases in risky behaviors that have adverse health impacts, such as drug use and teen pregnancy (Barnett, 2008; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Kay & Pennucci, 2014).

Economic Benefits

- Preschool programs can contribute to lowering overall educational costs by reducing the need for special education and grade repetition.
- Other economic benefits include decreases in social services costs and the costs of crime and the criminal justice system, as well as increases in earnings (which then generate increased tax revenues without tax rate increases).
- Estimates of the economic returns on investments in high-quality preschool have found that benefits exceed costs many times over. The estimated benefits of the Chicago Child Parent Centers—which are similar in cost to high-quality preschool programs practical in Arkansas—are 10 times the cost of the program.
- The increased productivity of the workforce from participation in high-quality pre-K is estimated to boost economic growth, increase per capita income, and reduce income inequality (Dickens et al., 2006; Bartik, 2014).

What can Arkansas do to obtain the full potential benefits of pre-K?

In Arkansas today, about 40 percent of four-year-olds and 20 percent of three-year-olds have access to state-funded pre-K, an average of 30 percent. Adding in Head Start and private programs is estimated to take enrollment up to 45 percent across both three- and four-year-olds. Parent reporting puts enrollment in public or private pre-K at 41 percent for three- and four-year-old children in families under 200 percent of the poverty level (Children's Defense Fund, 2015). Clearly, Arkansas has more to do to enroll all children in low-income families, but even this is only part of the task. Arkansas also needs to ensure that all of these programs provide a high-quality education.

Ensuring high quality is a tall order, but it is essential, because not all programs have large and persistent effects on the full range of cognitive and social-emotional outcomes that matter for school and life success. The largest and most persistent impacts have been found for small-scale programs in well-designed, highly controlled studies (Barnett, 2011). These programs have had excellent teachers who are well compensated, very small classes, strong and well-implemented curricula, and expert data-based feedback to teachers on their practices (Frede, 1998). The large-scale public programs found to produce larger and persistent effects strongly resemble the highly effective small-scale programs with respect to teacher characteristics, class size, curriculum, intensity or duration, and a focus on guiding continuous improvement of teaching (Minervino, 2014). Most public programs fall short with respect to these features of highly effective programs (Barnett et al., 2016).

Arkansas is fortunate to have independent estimates of the quality and effectiveness of its Arkansas Better Chance (ABC) and Arkansas Better Chance for School Success (ABCSS) preschool programs. These programs have some of the structural features of the highly effective programs, but not all of them (Barnett et al., 2016). Research conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) examined both the quality of teaching and the impacts of participation on children at kindergarten entry and through grade four. Unfortunately, the study was conducted for children who attended the programs in 2004-2005, which was more than a decade ago. For this and other reasons, the positive results in this study may exceed those of the programs offered today.

High-quality early childhood programs have been found to produce large gains in children's learning and development, particularly for children in lowincome families. NIEER assessed the quality of ABC/ABCSS programs with a range of measures that used trained observers to directly rate quality with standardized rating scales. This part of the study had important limitations. Only 68 classrooms were observed, and teachers in these classrooms were relatively well educated. Nearly all had at least a BA degree and 36 percent had a master's degree. It seems likely that the programs that agreed to the study were above average. On the most general measure of quality, these classrooms scored "good" on average. However, there was a wide range within the sample, especially for teacher-child interactions,

which were found to be lower overall and far less than good in some classrooms. Literacy practices were rated higher than math teaching, which also was highly variable.

To assess the ABC program's impacts on children at kindergarten entry, a rigorous design was used that controls for the characteristics of children who meet eligibility criteria and whose parents choose to enroll them. This design has been widely used to evaluate other programs, including the universal pre-K programs in Boston and Tulsa. Substantial impacts were found, with the largest effect on simple literacy skills. Somewhat smaller effects were found on vocabulary and mathematics. The effects on vocabulary and, especially, math are smaller than those in these other high-quality programs (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). In follow-ups comparing former preschoolers to children who did not attend the program (adjusting for family background) in kindergarten through grade four, the estimated effects on language and literacy were notable, but much smaller than those of other high-quality programs, such as New Jersey's Abbott pre-K (Jung et al., 2013). In math, the follow-up effect estimates were essentially zero. In addition, a more recent study by Argue and Holland (2013) found that from 2008 to 2012, children who had attended ABC programs scored better on Arkansas's kindergarten entry assessment than did similarly low-income children who did not attend ABC.

A reasonable conclusion is that state-funded preschool programs in Arkansas have had positive effects on children's learning and development, but that these effects are not nearly as large as is desirable and possible. Despite this, an earlier analysis found these programs were likely to yield a modest positive economic return (Belfield, 2006). It seems likely that the programs evaluated were better than current programs, as they were average at the time, and funding per child has declined considerably since the ABC/ABCSS programs were expanded to serve more children. The decline in funding can be expected to have reduced program effectiveness. Arkansas can (and should) improve ABC/ABCSS by providing more resources and by taking other steps, such as ensuring that programs use rigorous curricula and implement them well, especially in mathematics. The educational, social, and economic payoffs can be expected to rise as a result.

Arkansas can take three steps to build on its past success in order to increase its preschool programs' effectiveness and economic payoffs. First, increase funding for the program to permit expansion to serve all children at ages three and four (though not necessarily free for all) and raise funding per child to an amount adequate for high quality. Returning state spending per child to its level of just a few years ago would get much of this job done, if all programs also have access to additional funds from school districts. Second, develop and implement a continuous improvement system to ensure that the program uses the resources provided with maximum efficiency to produce the desired results. Third, provide guidance and professional development to school administrators and teachers to reform curricula in K-3 to align with the increased competencies and expectations of children who have attended high-quality pre-K. Eventually, course offerings in the higher grades will have to be shifted, so that more advanced math and science courses are offered earlier. Models for this can be found in other states, including my own state of New Jersey, where Union City, for example, has raised achievement far above the national average, despite having a population that is essentially all low-income and minority (Barnett & Frede, in press; Kirp, 2013; Rich, Cox, & Bloch, 2016).

The first step, increasing funding, can be phased in over multiple years. Experience in other states indicates that it could be accomplished within as little as five years. However, a timeline that offered pre-K to all four-year-olds within five years and to all three-year-olds within 10 years would be more easily accomplished. Other timelines may be considered; what is critical is having a firm timeline and a plan for implementing it that includes a funding mechanism. For Arkansas, such a plan might include: gradually tripling state spending; administering all programs through school districts, which would provide matching funds, leadership, and support (contracting with private providers, as well as operating pre-K in public schools); and partnering with Head Start.

The second step, developing and implementing a continuous improvement system, will build capacity statewide to guide and support continuous development of high-quality teaching. High-quality teaching on a large scale requires high expectations for learning and teaching, strong curricula, rigorous assessments of learning and teaching, and the use of data to inform continuous improvement at every level—from the classroom to state departments of education (Frede, 1998; Duncan & Magnusson, 2013; Minervino, 2014; Pianta et al., 2009; Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Arkansas already has some elements of this capacity, but the state needs to build a complete system capable of supporting every classroom. Stakeholders in the system will need to work together to plan and coordinate across state and local governments and higher education in order to align standards, curricula, initial teacher preparation, ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators, regular planning, and one-to-one coaching in the classroom. This step calls for a greater degree of alignment than is commonly found; for example, institutions of higher education would be asked to prepare teachers in the curricula that they will use in ABC classrooms.

The third step, providing guidance and professional development to reform curricula, is to reform K-3 curricula to build on the higher expectations for and capabilities of children who benefit from high-quality pre-K. Administrators and teachers will need guidance and support to change the early grades to take advantage of the gains from pre-K. However, early education is not an immunization against later adversity,

High-quality pre-K for all is one of the keys to increased economic development and a better future for the children of Arkansas. inadequate educational investment, or schooling that fails to build on these capabilities. Learning and development continue to be strongly influenced by experience—including schooling—through adolescence (Howard-Jones et al., 2013; Thomas, 2012). In short, the kind of capacity developed to support high-quality pre-K is needed for K-3 as well, and policymakers will have to attend carefully to ensuring that the enhanced trajectory established in pre-K continues through third grade.

Partnerships will be required to accomplish all three of these steps. These include partnerships of ABC/ABCSS with Head Start and subsidized child care, between the public and private sectors, and between the state and higher education. Most importantly, the state will need to partner with local public schools as the hubs for supporting all statefunded pre-K, public and private. Local funding is needed to support program quality as a shared responsibility with the state. Local public schools also will need to provide a substantial part of the capacity for continuous improvement, as resources alone do not guarantee quality. Finally, local schools are essential to aligning and reforming K-3 in order to build on pre-K's success as children move on through elementary school.

Conclusion

High-quality pre-K for all is one of the keys to increased economic development and a better future for the children of Arkansas. It is a necessary first step in a broader effort to reform education as a means of propelling Arkansas forward from the bottom of the income ladder. In taking this step, Arkansas begins with some substantial advantages in its ABC/ABCSS programs. Though there is much to be done, it can be accomplished in a decade or less. By providing high-quality pre-K, Arkansas can produce a wide array of benefits: raise average achievement, decrease achievement gaps, reduce school failure and dropout, improve classroom behavior and school climate, decrease crime and delinquency, and increase the productivity of the workforce. The economic consequences will be reduced costs of public education for grade repetition and special education, reduced costs of crime and the criminal justice system, and increased earnings and economic growth. For citizens of Arkansas and their leaders, the choice is clear. If they continue with current policies that underinvest in young children, the future will differ little from the present—with globalization, incomes may even deteriorate. If Arkansas takes the path proposed here, however, a better future—from good to great—is on the horizon.

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Starting Off Right: The Role of Communities in Supporting Young Children and Families

Introduction

In 1965, a panel of experts chaired by Dr. Robert Cooke from John Hopkins University set forth a set of recommendations for the establishment of the Head Start Program. Those recommendations started with the following statement: "There is considerable evidence that the early years are the most critical period in the poverty cycle. During these years the creation of learning patterns, emotional development and the formation of individual expectations and aspirations take place at a very rapid pace."

The evidence demonstrating the importance of the early years to long-term health, behavior, and learning has continued to mount: from neuroscience to economics, from psychology to sociology. Moreover, the founders of Head Start knew that to make a real difference in child development, children from low-income families need comprehensive services that integrate health and education, and they need services that empower families and involve communities.

Unlike during that first year of Head Start, we now know that we cannot erase the impact of poverty with an eight-week summer program. Rather, young children need continuity of quality services from the prenatal period through the early grades. However, what has remained an essential ingredient over the years—and remains a core part of early childhood services today—is the understanding that young children who are most at risk need enriched opportunities for learning, engaged families, and involved communities.

In that spirit, this article discusses the role of community in supporting families and enhancing the development of young children. It was written during a one-week Scholar in Residence program at the Clinton School of Public Service. It builds on lessons learned from initiatives across the country, as well as reflections on the current early childhood efforts in Arkansas, including the community-based initiative, Good to Great.

A Renewed Vision for the Role of Communities in Supporting Early Childhood

Since those early days of Head Start, there has been an explosion of interest in early childhood. Over the years, a number of different programs and approaches have emerged from the federal and state level. Since policies often address different needs, or target certain aspects of development over others, early childhood services are too often disconnected. This has led to a separation between care and education, limited integration between health and education, and a lack of alignment across early childhood programs and the schools.

In the late 1990s and early in the 21st century, things began to change. Recognizing the need to focus on the holistic needs of children, to reach out to families, and to increase continuity across early childhood programs, state system reform efforts began to emerge. One of the most far-reaching efforts—the BUILD Initiative—was launched by a group of foundations, including both national and local funders. Additional collaborations were started through state leadership, while others emerged from federal actions—including the Maternal and Child Health Early Childhood System Grants and State Advisory Councils.

Most of these system reform efforts brought state

The evidence demonstrating the importance of the early years to long-term health, behavior, and learning has continued to mount: from neuroscience to economics, from psychology to sociology.

agencies together to plan in a more coordinated way. Others created public-private partnerships, which not only focused on more coordinated planning, but also included linkages with localities across the state. The pioneering efforts of Smart Start in North Carolina and First Five California provided a new focus on local planning that was linked to a state-based entity. These partnerships created local infrastructure, focused on children from birth to age five, and were often based on innovative financing strategies and private sector involvement.

In more recent years, several federal initiatives have encouraged a greater focus on systems reform and place-based strategies, including Promise Neighborhoods, modeled on the successful Harlem Children's Zone; the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; the Early Learning Challenge; the Preschool Development Grants; and the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships. At the same time, many state and local leaders, from governors to mayors, have stepped forward to launch community planning efforts that support young children and families.

This more recent trend toward a focus on community-wide early childhood systems is particularly important for young children. One of the core concepts of child development is that families have the most important impact on the developing child, and families, in turn, are influenced by the communities they live in and by the broader policy environment. In the report, *Village Building and School Readiness: Closing Opportunity Gaps in a Diverse Society*, Bruner and Tirmizi put it this way: "Place matters, and neighborhood is particularly important to young children, whose lives often are largely defined by the few blocks around their homes."

Common Elements of Successful Community Planning

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services convened a number of communities to learn how best to encourage community dialogue and coordination to promote the well-being of pregnant women and of children from birth through age eight. The goals were to provide guidance and to underscore examples of effective community collaborations that would result in:

- Children who are healthy, happy, and successful
- Families that are safe, stable, and supportive of children's development
- Schools and early childhood education providers that are high quality, and
- Communities that are mobilized and coordinated in a way that assures resources are used efficiently and are leveraged for the greatest possible outcomes for children.

A framework for community early childhood systems emerged from these meetings that includes the following elements:

A coordinated system of leadership and planning that is composed of representatives from the public and private sectors, parents, schools, community-based organizations, child care programs, Head Start, and home visiting programs, as well as health, mental health, child welfare, family support, and disability services.

A system of data collection that provides accurate and current information on the status and well-being of pregnant women, young children, and their families—and that outlines the services available to them.

A set of quality services and a quality assurance system that measures the quality of services being delivered to pregnant women, young children, and families and that also provides information, incentives, and supports for continuous improvement.

A school system that is ready for children and has a strong connection to the early learning programs—both to facilitate a seamless transition to kindergarten and to ensure continuity.

The final report, *Putting the Pieces Together: Community Efforts to Support Our Young Children 0-8, A Report of the Early Learning Community Initiative*, suggested that—at a minimum—communities track child well-being across the early years to assure:

- Healthy pregnancies and births
- Children thriving at age three
- Children eager, engaged, and ready to learn at age five, and
- Children successful in school and well-rounded at age eight.

A few years later, the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) launched a network aimed at connecting innovative community efforts and sharing lessons learned from local early childhood initiatives emerging across the country. Through this effort, CSSP identified key components to community-based planning and core elements that help pave the way to success. According to *Achieving Success for Young Children: Local Partnerships, National Results*, these include:

- A commonly agreed upon set of outcomes or expected results
- A framework of deep respect for parents and the parental role
- Efforts to build caregiver capacity, and
- Assurance that services are available to families and young children at the right time and in the right sequence to ensure continuity.

This "results-based integrated community early childhood system" depends on the use of data to inform decision-making, including: demographics of children and families in the community, a sense of how children are developing during the early years, and a map of key programs and service resources and the gaps in those services.

Service supports that are closely associated with positive developmental outcomes include, among others:

- Accessible and affordable prenatal care
- Access to an ongoing medical home and developmental screening
- Quality early childhood programs, including home visiting, quality infant care, and preschool, and
- Ongoing family supports, including access to social networks, mental health services, financial counseling and support, employment and adult education opportunities, and special supports in times of crisis.

Examples of Community Planning Efforts

Community-level initiatives are emerging in various ways. Some are based at the county level, particularly if the state has a longstanding county-based service delivery system. Others are establishing regions within the state, and still others are working closer to the ground and creating initiatives focused on high-need areas or neighborhoods. In *Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families*, Karen Ponder outlined several examples of how these programs are being implemented:

- In Delaware, 20 cross-sector readiness teams have been established across the state's three counties.
- In Maryland, 24 local councils, including Baltimore City, have been established to improve school readiness and to improve connections between early childhood and K-12.
- In North Carolina, 72 local Smart Start partnerships assure statewide coverage and linkages to the State Smart Start Partnership.
- In Georgia, four Early Education Empowerment Zones with large numbers of high-need children have been established to improve access to high-quality early childhood care and education.

In Arkansas, this focus on communities and early childhood is emerging in at least two ways: the convening of Readiness Teams and the Good to Great initiative. One of the core concepts of child development is that families have the most important impact on the developing child, and families, in turn, are influenced by the communities they live in and by the broader policy environment. **Readiness Teams:** Arkansas has a long history of investments in early childhood, including Arkansas Better Chance, the state pre-K program, and the HIPPY home visiting program, among others. The state also has a longstanding early childhood advisory committee, the Arkansas Early Childhood Commission. In addition, the state has established a Quality Rating and Improvement System (Better Beginnings). In recent years, the state has also convened Readiness Teams from communities across the state to review the local data emerging on young children in order to inform community and program efforts for improvement. While, to date, 12 teams have been participating, this number could grow in the future, according to Tonya Williams, Director of the

Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education at the Arkansas Department of Human Services.

Good to Great is an initiative to establish a model to expand access to quality early childhood education in Arkansas. The model is focused on collaboration between state-level partners and the communities of Prescott and Marvell. By documenting the process, it is hoped that this initiative will create the tools and public will to scale the model across the state. The Good to Great model includes the following key components:

- Establishing Good to Great Advisory Committees in Marvell and Prescott.
- **Building the capacity and quality** of the early childhood care facilities in these two communities. Arkansas State University is providing targeted technical assistance, one-to-one coaching, and enhanced professional development. Centers are also encouraged to achieve a higher rating through the Arkansas Quality Rating and Improvement System.
- **Increasing parental voice** for high-quality early childhood care. The Arkansas Public Policy Panel is engaging parents in the targeted communities—in partnership with providers and other citizens—to ensure children have access to quality early education.
- **Promoting relevant research.** The Center on Community Philanthropy at the Clinton School of Public Service is bringing in national experts to help inform the process. Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families is providing background research and developing communication strategies for improving access.

Like other community efforts emerging across the country, the Good to Great initiative's process is informed by community data, which is tracked through a data dashboard provided to each community. The process will culminate with a summit that will include education, policy, and business leaders to discuss what must be done to improve early education in Arkansas and move the state from good to great.

Lessons Learned: What Can Community Philanthropy Accomplish?

Community philanthropy can play an important role in supporting local efforts to create and sustain community systems for early childhood. Key to success is ongoing access to data, resources, professional development, and technical assistance. Philanthropic and other private investments are needed to:

- Build capacity at the local level
- Support quality improvements, including professional preparation
- Develop integrated data systems
- Launch public awareness campaigns to increase the understanding of quality early childhood programs
- Stimulate innovations in service delivery
- Support technical assistance and networking for local collaborations across the state and with other states
- Create linkages between early childhood programs and adult-serving agencies to support two-generation strategies
- Develop leadership opportunities for community members, and
- Track results through regular reporting and research.

When concerned citizens come together and share in the caring, the results can include better outcomes and opportunities for children, stronger families and communities, and expanded economic development. It is up to all of us working together at the local level to support families in their efforts to assure that all young children thrive and are successful in school—and in life.

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Established in 1930, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation supports children, families and communities as they strengthen and create conditions that propel vulnerable children to achieve success as individuals and as contributors to the larger community and society. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and southern Africa. For further information, please visit the Foundation's website at www.wkkf.org.

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For nearly 40 years, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation has worked to make a difference by helping to build and sustain the organizations that serve and strengthen Arkansas. Through grantmaking and strategic partnerships, WRF is working even harder to help close the economic and educational gaps that leave too many Arkansas families in persistent poverty. Working together, the needle can and must move from poverty to prosperity for all Arkansans. For more information, visit www.wrfoundation.org.



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The Center on Community Philanthropy at the Clinton School has a vision to expand the knowledge, tools, and practice of community spawned and community driven philanthropy. The Center promotes community philanthropy as the giving of time, talent, and treasure that when invested in community results in positive change and long-lasting improvement.

The Center is unique in its mission to study philanthropic concepts and acts emerging from within communities. It is a place for learning about philanthropy in a way that becomes understood and practiced by a new wave of donors, foundation board and staff members, community leaders, and policy decision-makers.

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