



# Connecticut Early Care & Education Progress Report, 2013

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## Introduction

This edition<sup>1</sup> of our annual Early Care and Education Progress Report looks at State Fiscal Year 2013<sup>2</sup> in seeking to answer the following questions:

- *How much is Connecticut spending on early care and education, and how are these dollars being spent?*
- *How many children is Connecticut serving?*
- *What is the quality of the state-subsidized early care and education settings and services available to Connecticut's children?*
- *Which Connecticut children are accessing subsidies and services?*
- *How are these children performing in kindergarten and beyond?*

1 For 2013, we have updated all data from our 2012 Early Care & Education Progress Report. This document provides a brief overview of any significant changes from 2012 and shares our recommendations for reform. For a more complete picture of Connecticut's early care landscape, please see the Connecticut Early Care and Education Progress Report, 2012, available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/connecticut-early-care-education-progress-report-2012>.

2 State Fiscal Year 2013 covers July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013.



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### *Key findings*

- **Connecticut's overall investment in early care and education has declined recently.** Total spending on early care and education decreased in FY 13 from FY 12 by \$4.2 million (1.8%) in inflation-adjusted terms, a change driven mainly by reduced spending in the state's child care subsidy program, Care4Kids.
- **Fewer children are receiving state subsidies for early care and education.** The unduplicated number of children receiving state-subsidized care decreased, when comparing enrollment on October 1, 2011 to enrollment on October 1, 2012, by 61 infants and toddlers, which represents a reduction of 0.7%, and 523 preschoolers, or a 1.6% reduction.
- **Fewer children with subsidies are participating in accredited early care and education programs.** The percentage of young children receiving subsidies attending accredited programs decreased by 6.3% (for a total reduction of 1,381 children).
- While child care and education subsidies predominantly go to the highest-need children, including those who come from poor and struggling families and communities and racial and ethnic minority groups, **children in the poorest areas continue to attend preschool at a significantly lower rate than children in wealthier areas.** For the 2012-2013 school year, one-third of kindergarteners in the state's poorest communities (DRG I) had no preschool experience, while less than 5% of children in the state's wealthiest districts (DRG A) had not attended preschool.

### *Key conclusions*

- **We need to continue to support system reform.** Connecticut needs a comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system that unites multiple funding streams, streamlines varied reporting and eligibility requirements, supports development of the ECE workforce, improves access

for children and families, collects reliable data, and ensures that all children are being served in high-quality settings. The creation of an Office of Early Childhood (OEC) demonstrates a first step in the state's commitment to such system building and improvement<sup>3</sup>, and the Office must work to realize these goals.

- **Current funding levels are insufficient.** The state's support for systems building and improvement has not been accompanied by funding for this system. Total state funding for early care and education in 2013 decreased by \$4.2 million since 2012, and remains more than 10% below 2002 levels.
- **Children who need help are not getting services.** Connecticut took crucial steps forward in increasing the number of School Readiness slots for children to access quality early care in FY 13. However, over 80% of infants and toddlers and at least 25% of preschoolers living in financially struggling families (defined here as families earning under 75% of the state median income) still are not served by any form of state or federal early care and education subsidy.
- **More data will be necessary to make smart decisions.** We continue to have insufficient data to evaluate the impact of these services. The new Office of Early Childhood has committed to developing an Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) that will track child, staff, and program level-data and will be linked to the K-12 system. Connecticut must fully fund and support this data system if the Office is to succeed in creating an effective, functioning early childhood infrastructure.

## *The Need: Affordable, High Quality Early Care and Education is Essential to Connecticut's Children and Families*

The research is clear: high quality early care and education can be powerful counterweights to risk factors such as poverty, abuse or neglect, and limited parental education that cause some children to start kindergarten at a disadvantage from which they never recover. This research demonstrates that children who have access to nurturing, responsive, and language-rich early care and education in the early years are more likely to be prepared socially and academically for kindergarten, less likely to be retained or need special education services, and more likely to graduate from high school and become productive members of the workforce.<sup>4</sup>

3 The Office of Early Childhood was created by Executive Order in July 2013. See [http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/lib/malloy/EO\\_35\\_Early\\_Childhood.pdf](http://www.governor.ct.gov/malloy/lib/malloy/EO_35_Early_Childhood.pdf).

4 Susan H. Landry, "Effective Early Childhood Programs" The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (2005), available at [http://www.childrenslearninginstitute.org/library/publications/documents/Effective-Early\\_Childhood-Programs.pdf](http://www.childrenslearninginstitute.org/library/publications/documents/Effective-Early_Childhood-Programs.pdf).



**Connecticut's working families depend on early care and education.** Parents and children reap enormous benefits from quality early care and education programs. Affordable, safe, and quality facilities for children are necessary for parents to work and support their families. Nearly three-quarters of young children in Connecticut have all parents in their home working.<sup>5</sup>

- In 2012, Connecticut was home to 230,068 children under age six.<sup>6</sup>
- Nearly all of these young children (93%) lived in families with at least one parent employed or looking for work. The vast majority (70%) had all parents in their home working or seeking employment.<sup>7</sup>

**A significant number of Connecticut's children face risk factors associated with poor educational outcomes.** Preschool attendance is the single most important factor contributing to kindergarten readiness, and can make the greatest difference for low-income and at-risk children (families in poverty, families with a single parent, families with limited English proficiency, and parents with low educational attainment) children.<sup>8</sup> With its large achievement gap, Connecticut has a particularly urgent need for quality education programs in order for its most high-need children to arrive in school ready to learn.

- More than one in six children ages zero to five in Connecticut (17%) lived in poverty in 2012.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2012, over one-quarter (27% or 62,049) – of young children lived in single mother households. More than one-third (34%) lived with only one parent.<sup>10</sup>
- Last year, more than a quarter (27% or 10,457) of the Connecticut women who gave birth had a high school education or less.<sup>11</sup>

**Need is increasing, outpacing growth in slots.** While the population of children under six has fallen slightly in recent years (by 5.9% since 2006),<sup>12</sup> the number and

5 U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B23008: Age of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies by Living Arrangements by Employment Status of Parents.

6 *Id.*

7 *Id.*

8 Debra Ackerman and Steven Barnett, "Preparedness for Kindergarten: What Does 'Readiness' Mean?" Preschool Policy Brief, National Institute for Early Education Research (March 2005): 12, available at <http://nieer.org/resources/policyreports/report5.pdf>

9 U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B17024: Age by Ratio of Income to Poverty Level in the Past 12 Months.

10 U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B23008: Age of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies by Living Arrangements by Employment Status of Parents.

11 U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B13014: Women 15 to 50 Years Who Had a Birth in the Past 12 Months by Marital Status and Educational Attainment.

12 U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 and 2007 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B23008: Age of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies by Living Arrangements by Employment Status of Parents.





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share of young children at risk has risen. Despite some positive growth in access to subsidized care, the number of new subsidized slots for young children has not kept up with this dramatic increase in need.

- The proportion of young children in poverty grew 25% over the last five years (from 11% to 17%). The total number of children in poverty rose by almost 7,000 (from 26,308 to 32,917).<sup>13</sup>
- The share of children younger than six in single-parent families grew by over one third between 2007 and 2012 (from 28% to 34%).<sup>14</sup>

**Child care continues to be unaffordable for Connecticut families.** Without subsidies, child care is unaffordable for low-income and many middle-income families.

- The average yearly cost for full-time care for a preschooler in a licensed child care center is \$10,954. The average cost for full-time care for an infant or toddler in a licensed center is \$13,177.<sup>15</sup>
- Despite recommendations that child care for all families consume no more than 10% of a family's budget,<sup>16</sup> for a family with a preschooler and a toddler in center-based care, average annual child costs would reach \$24,131. For a single mother of two earning the state median income, \$86,665, 28% of her pre-tax income would be devoted to child care.<sup>17</sup>

13 U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 and 2007 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B17001: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months by Sex by Age.

14 U.S. Census Bureau. 2012 and 2007 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Table B23008: Age of Own Children Under 18 Years in Families and Subfamilies by Living Arrangements by Employment Status of Parents.

15 211 Child Care. "Fee Analysis of Child Care Facilities in Connecticut: July 16, 2013." Available at <http://www.211childcare.org/professionals/FeeCT.asp>.

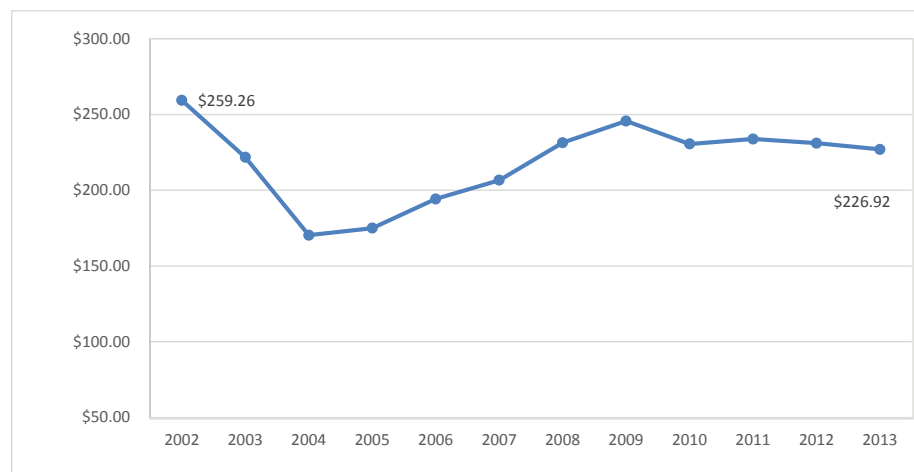
16 Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs, "Mapping Change," (December 2002), 78

17 "Selected Annual Federal Poverty and State Median Income Guidelines," Connecticut Department of Social Services, (July 2013), available at: <http://www.ct.gov/dss/lib/dss/PDFs/PovSML.pdf>

## Resources: How much is Connecticut spending on early care and education, and how are these dollars being spent?

Connecticut spent \$226.92 million on early care and education in FY 13, down from \$231.08 million in FY 12 and \$233.76 million in FY 11 (adjusted for inflation).<sup>18</sup> In the past decade, Connecticut has failed to provide for a significant increase in early care and education funding, although current funding is up from the low of \$170.32 million in FY 04.

**Total Amount Spent on Early Childhood (Adjusted to 2013 Dollars)**



Connecticut's early care and education is often described as program-rich, but system-poor. This is reflected in the distribution of state and federal funds in 2013:

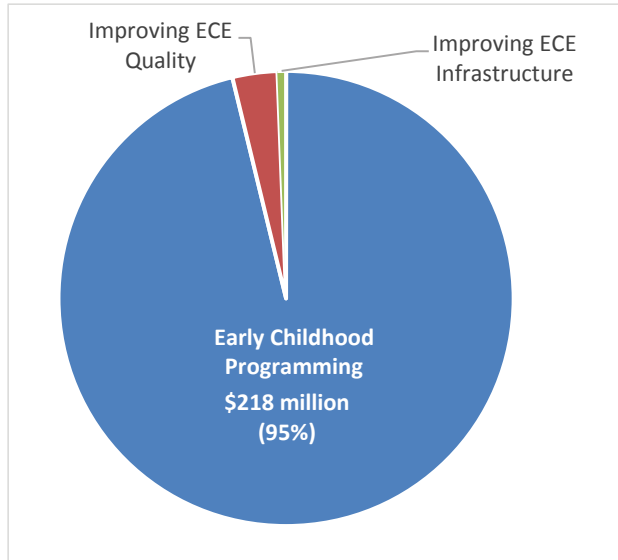
1. \$218.31 million was spent on programming, defined as funding given directly to early care and education providers to subsidize slots in their programs, centers, or homes;
2. \$7.2 million was spent on quality improvement, defined as funding earmarked for program enhancements, professional training and development, and technical assistance and support;
3. Approximately \$1.41 million was spent on infrastructure, defined as funding for strategic planning, data collection and analysis, and design and management of a coordinated system of early care and education.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> We made several requests for, but did not receive, FY 2013 spending amounts for the administration of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet and the ECE Workforce Registry which have been included in the calculations for FY 11 and FY 13. Therefore, comparing the FY 2013 number with previous years does not provide for an entirely accurate comparison. In FY 12 the state expended approximately \$120,000 on the Cabinet and in FY 11 the state expended approximately \$630,000 on the ECE Workforce Registry.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*



### Spending on Early Childhood by Category (FY 13)



#### The Good News:

The state increased spending on its School Readiness program in FY 2013, and created an additional 1,000 slots for preschool-aged children. The School Readiness program helps target low-income children by requiring that 60% of children enrolled in School Readiness must be in families that are at or below 75% of the State Median Income.

#### The Bad News:

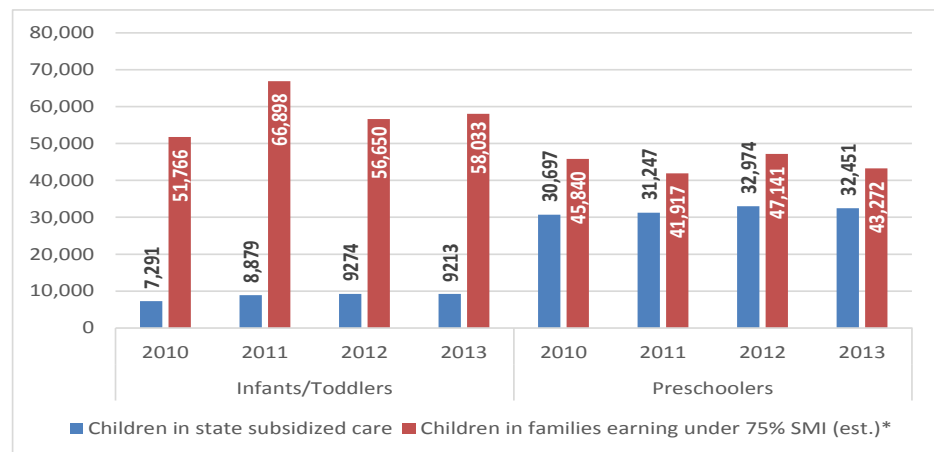
Connecticut decreased its overall expenditures on early care and education in 2013, and overall spending on early childhood remains well below the high watermark seen in 2002. Spending on infrastructure remained low, despite a renewed focus on the creation of an integrated early care and education system in both the Governor's Office and in the Legislature.



## Capacity: How many children is CT serving with early care and education subsidies?

In 2013, Connecticut served 9,213 infants and toddlers, and 32,451 3- and 4-year olds<sup>20</sup> with early care and education subsidies – representing approximately 16% of infants and toddlers and 75% of preschoolers in struggling families (defined in this section as families earning less than 75% of the state median income).

### Access to State-Subsidized Care for Young Children FY 2010-2013



\* Source: Estimates come from CT Voices analysis of US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013 Public Use Microdata Sample

### The Good News:

The data show that Connecticut's early care and education programs are mostly accessible to preschoolers in the state's struggling families, with three out of every four of these children attending state-subsidized programs.

### The Bad News:

The state continues to underserve our youngest children. Only around 16% of infants and toddlers in families earning less than or equal to 75% of the State's Median Income are receiving state subsidized care.

<sup>20</sup> This number includes all preschool-aged children receiving some form of subsidized early and education as of October 1, 2012. However, we have recently learned that our point-in-time calculations of the number of unduplicated children served by state subsidies in prior years unknowingly undercounted the total number of children served, as the data provided to us by the State Department of Education did not include all three-year-olds being served by the public schools. Programs were provided with an option to code three-year-olds in a particular reporting field that was not included in the counts which SDE provided to us. On October 1, 2012, 1,896 children were coded in this field. See e-mail from Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Bureau of Data Collection, Research, and Evaluation, State Department of Education, June 18, 2013. This number is, as stated above, included in our calculations for FY 13, but we do not have this number for prior years. Accordingly, we cannot make any assessment about whether there was an increase or decrease in the number of preschoolers served by state subsidies in October 2012 from previous years, as, without this number, we are not comparing like to like.

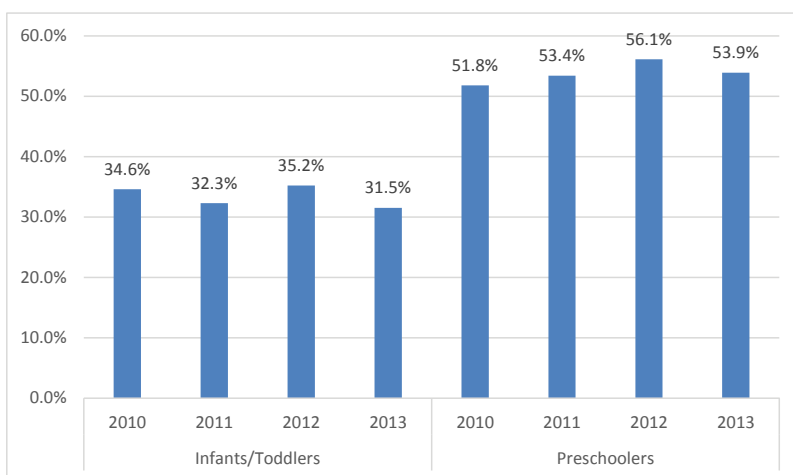
## Quality: What is the quality of the state-subsidized early care and education settings and services to which Connecticut's children have access?

Although Connecticut has spent a number of years working towards the creation of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) (a tool designed to document and compare the quality of early education settings), the system has still yet to be implemented.<sup>21</sup> In the absence of this system as a measure of quality, this Report Card uses accreditation and workforce education as proxies to assess quality.

- Accreditation<sup>22</sup>

In FY 2013, the percentage of young children receiving subsidies was slightly lower than the previous high achieved in FY 2012. In 2013, 31.5% of infants and toddlers and 53.9% of preschool-aged children received subsidies in accredited settings, compared to 35.2% and 56.1% respectively in the previous year. We have found consistently over our previous four reports that among children receiving state subsidized care, nearly two-thirds of infant and toddlers and just less than half of preschoolers are not being served in accredited settings.

**Percent of Children Receiving Subsidies in Accredited Care**

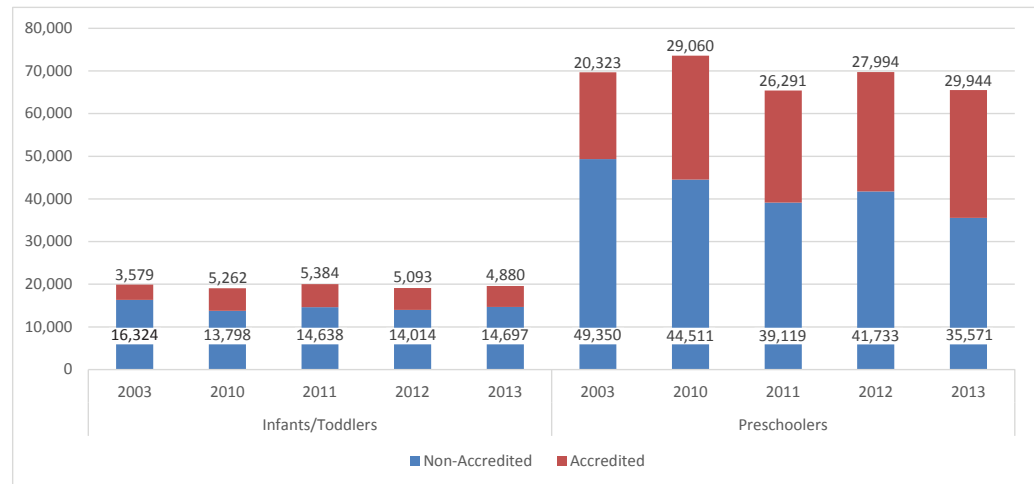


<sup>21</sup> In the state's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Application (submitted on October 15, 2013) the new Office of Early Childhood requested \$1 million in funding to complete the TQRIS project, which will be complemented by state funds. The state learned on December 19, 2013 that the application was unsuccessful. The application states that TQRIS will begin rolling out in March 2014 and will be in full operation by 2015.

<sup>22</sup> In this Report, a program is referred to as “accredited” if it has achieved accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC), the American Montessori Society (AMS), the Association of Montessori Internationale (AMI), the National Afterschool Association (NAA), and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), or it is in compliance with Head Start standards.



### Supply of Accredited Early Care and Education Slots <sup>23</sup>



#### • Staff Educational Attainment

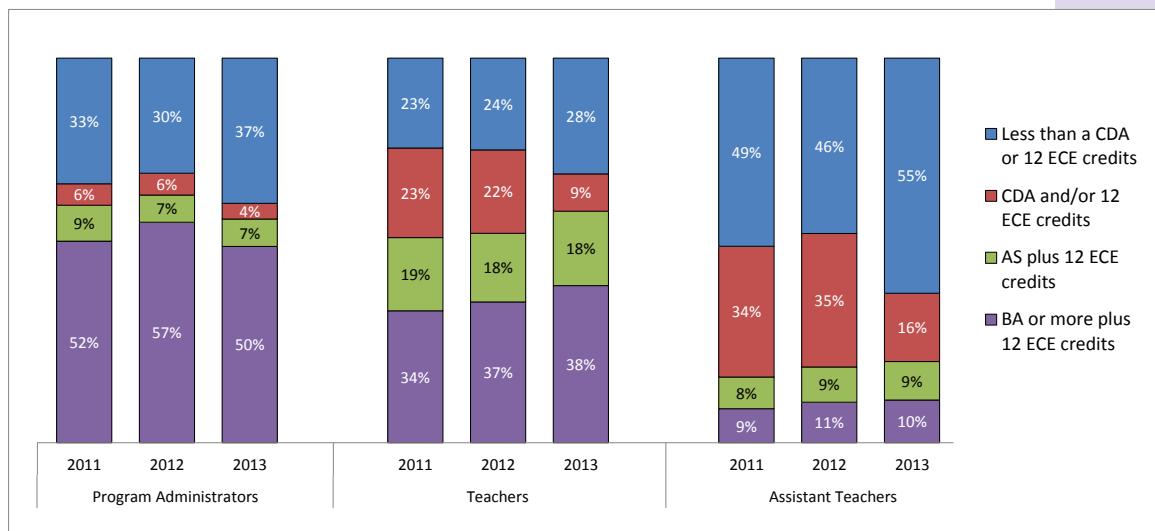
We also use educational attainment of program staff as a way to assess quality of programs. According to the state's Workforce Registry, in 2013, 57% of administrators, 56% of teachers, and 19% of assistant teachers had a bachelor's or associate's degree and 12 early childhood education (ECE) credits.<sup>24</sup> This represents a slight increase (1 percentage point) in the percent of teachers with a bachelor's or associate's degree, but a decline in percent of program administrators and assistant teachers with such credentials. 2013 also saw an increase in the percent of staff that lack even a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) and 12 ECE credits - 37% of administrators, 28% of teachers, and 55% of assistant teachers.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The numbers for Number for FY 2003 came from "Keeping Children on the Path to School Success: How is Connecticut Doing? A Report on the State of the Young Child." Frances Duran and Susan Wilson, Early Childhood DataCONNECTIONS (September 2004) at 55. Numbers for FY 2010 through FY 2013 obtained via report commissioned by Connecticut Voices for Children and executed by 211 Child Care. In FY 2013, the State Department of Education began collecting data about slots from Charter and Magnet schools, therefore making the 2013 numbers unable to be directly compared to previous years.

<sup>24</sup> Note that the state's Workforce Registry collects information from all centers receiving state subsidies but only about half of the state's early childhood centers overall. .

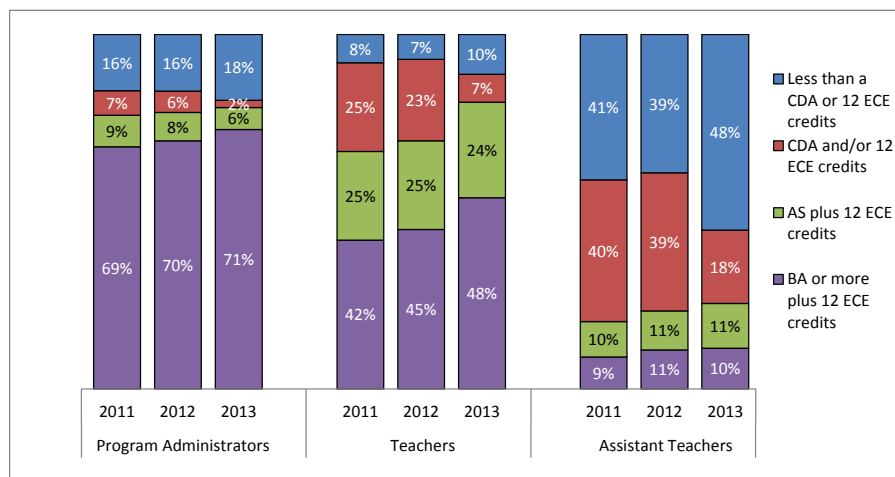
<sup>25</sup> However, this statistic fails to capture those with advanced education in topics other than early childhood. The representation of high educated staff without a specialty in early childhood is likely to be particularly strong among the one third of programs administrators with less than a CDA and 12 ECE credits, who may have college or master's degrees but lack the 12 ECE credits, and to a lesser extent the classroom teachers.

### Educational Attainment of ECE Center Staff, 2011-2013



The staff in publicly funded centers were significantly better educated, with higher percentages of administrators and teachers holding bachelor's degrees and fewer of all staff without a CDA or 12 ECE credits. This suggests that the most highly trained staff serve some of the highest need children. While the publicly funded early childhood workforce is ahead of the general ECE workforce and has made considerable progress since 2012, it still falls short of meeting 2015 and 2020 statutory requirements for staff educational attainment benchmarks.<sup>26</sup> The 37% of teachers with only, or less than, a CDA will need to obtain at least an associate's degree by 2015.

### Educational Attainment of Staff in Publicly Funded ECE Centers, 2011-2013



<sup>26</sup> Under PA 11-54, available at <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2011/act/pa/2011PA-00054-R00SB-00927-PA.htm>, the publicly funded workforce must meet certain educational attainment benchmarks by 2015 and 2020. By 2015, 50% of head teachers must hold a bachelor's degree in an approved early childhood or related program, or a teaching certificate with an early childhood endorsement. All head teachers without a bachelor's degree must hold an associate's degree in the field. By 2012, all head teachers must hold a BA or teaching certification with an endorsement. Current teachers with Bas in non-related fields are grandfathered in and exempt from the requirements.





### **The Good News:**

Educational attainment among ECE staff continues to rise. The state-funded workforce has been making particularly good progress, with over 70% of program administrators and nearly 50% of teachers in publicly funded early childhood programs in FY 13 holding a Bachelor's Degree.

### **The Bad News:**

While progress has been made, a large portion of the ECE workforce still has little to no formal early childhood education training. And although the state-funded programs have been doing better than the general ECE workforce, the publicly funded early childhood workforce continues to fall short of meeting 2015 and 2020 statutory requirements for staff educational attainment benchmarks.<sup>27</sup>

## **Access: Which Connecticut children receive early care and education subsidies and services?**

High quality early care and education programs are crucial for children to enter K-12 education adequately prepared. With limited funding, Connecticut must focus on increasing and ensuring access for those children whose parents struggle to afford the high cost of quality care, and those most impacted by achievement gaps, including minority children and children in low income families.

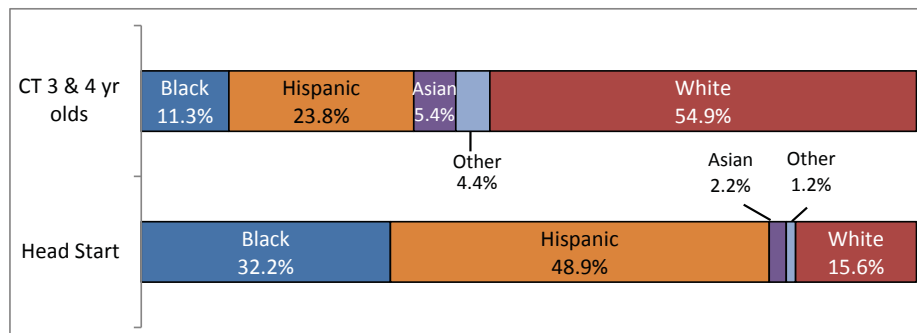
Black and Hispanic children, who face severe achievement gaps at kindergarten entrance and in Connecticut's K-12 education system, receive the vast majority of Head Start and School Readiness slots – 81% and 75%, respectively. This suggests the state is successfully targeting the program to some of the highest-need children, ensuring that they start school ready to learn.

School readiness programs continue to serve mainly children from the poorest families, with over 90% of slots allocated to families under 75% of the State Median Income. Without state subsidies, however, child care remains unaffordable for many middle-income families, and will remain unaffordable without new funding for more slots. As noted earlier, a single mother with two children in child care would spend 28% of her income for child care.<sup>28</sup>

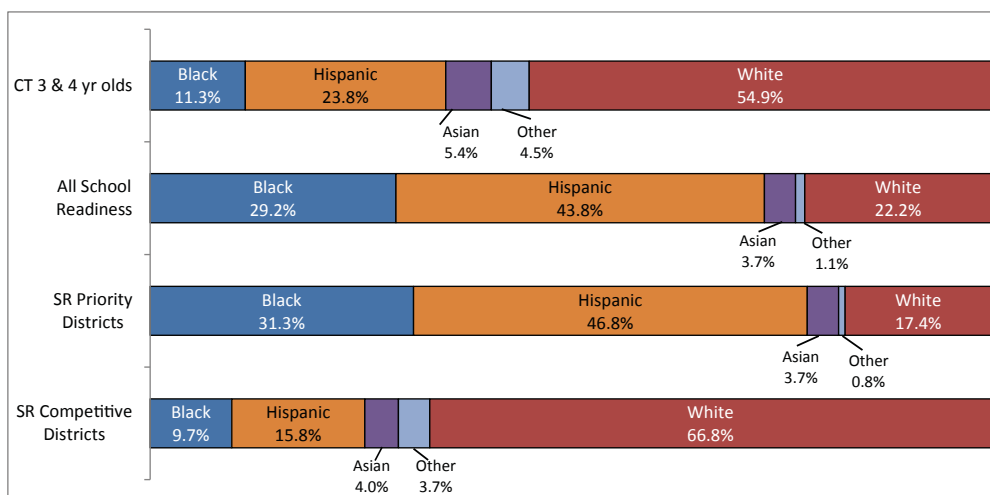
<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> 211 Child Care. "Fee Analysis of Child Care Facilities in Connecticut: July 16, 2013." Available at <http://www.211childcare.org/professionals/FeeCT.asp>. "Selected Annual Federal Poverty and State Median Income Guidelines," Connecticut Department of Social Services, (July 2013), available at: <http://www.ct.gov/dss/lib/dss/PDFs/PovSML.pdf>

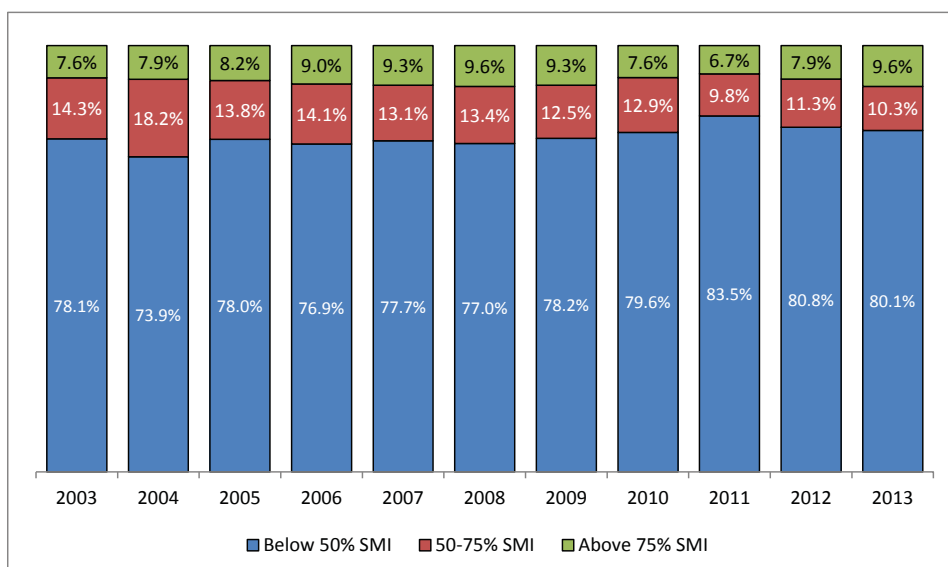
### Demographics of Head Start Program (October 2012)



### Demographics of School Readiness Program (October 2012)



### Income Distribution of School Readiness Recipients Statewide, 2003-2013





### **The Good News:**

The strong representation of Black and Hispanic students – who face some of the largest achievement gaps when entering Kindergarten – in the Head Start and School Readiness programs shows that the state is appropriately targeting its resources to the children with the highest needs.

### **The Bad News:**

Since race/ethnicity of children is not recorded on the current prekindergarten experience surveys, we lack the data to determine whether the state is meeting its goals of early education classroom integration.

## ***Outcomes: Are children receiving state subsidies for early care and education prepared for kindergarten, and how are they doing by fourth grade?***

Connecticut’s early care and education systems should not only provide a safe and quality environment for children to stay while their parents work, but should nurture and support the development of these children so they are “ready by five, fine by nine” – i.e., they enter kindergarten ready to learn and are at grade level by fourth grade. However, Connecticut still lacks longitudinal data to determine whether children who receive state subsidies for early care and education have better education outcomes than their similarly situated peers. There are not even sufficient data available to minimally assess program quality, such as comparing the performance on the kindergarten inventory assessment (conducted when children begin kindergarten) by children who participated in a subsidized ECE program than their peers who did not.

There is an opportunity to address longstanding data gaps with the new Office of Early Childhood. The Office shared its plan for developing an Early Childhood Information System (ECIS) in its 2013 Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Application.<sup>29</sup> The Office will be using \$6 million in bonding funds to design an ECIS system intended to link all of the existing early childhood data systems in the state. The goal of the project is to coordinate data and produce reports based on unduplicated data across many areas, including licensing, quality improvement

<sup>29</sup> Discussion of the ECIS system can be found on page 44 of the grant application, available at: [http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/uploads/6/3/3/7/6337139/2013\\_race\\_to\\_the\\_top\\_early\\_learning\\_challenge\\_application\\_-\\_connecticut-small.pdf](http://www.ctearlychildhood.org/uploads/6/3/3/7/6337139/2013_race_to_the_top_early_learning_challenge_application_-_connecticut-small.pdf). The state learned on December 19, 2013 that the application was unsuccessful.



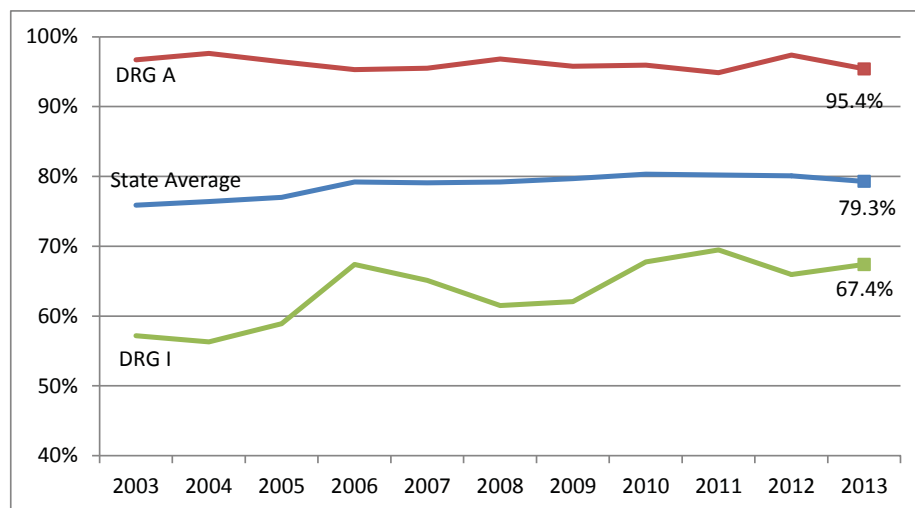
planning, workforce requirements and professional development offerings, academic achievement in school, among other data points.

However, without available data that directly compare students with and without access to state-subsidized early care and education, we must rely on other metrics. The current best way to assess the success of the state's programs is to analyze trends in the performance of children in the state's poorest communities (District Reference Group [DRG] I), where the majority of the state's ECE dollars flow.

### ***Ready by Five***

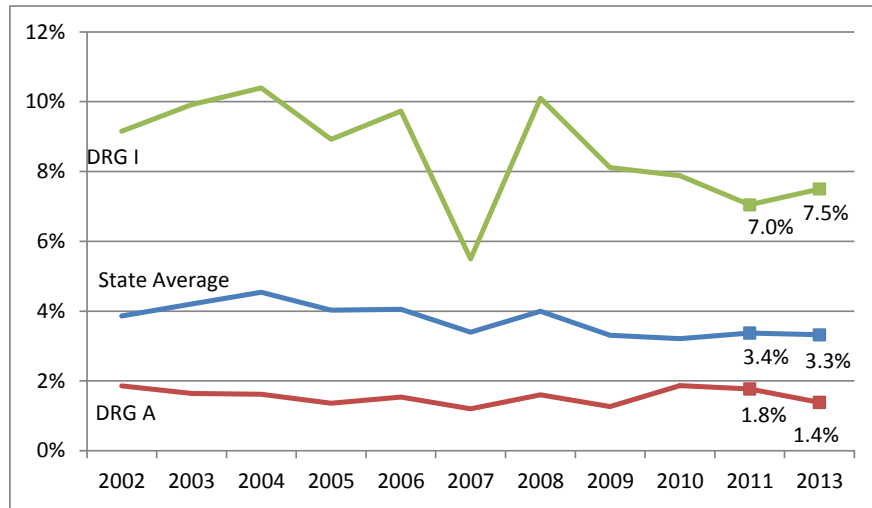
Between School Year 2011-2012 and School Year 2012- 2013, the poorest communities (DRG I) saw a slight increase (from 65.9% to 67.4%) in the percentage of kindergarteners with preschool experience, the highest rate of kindergarten experience since 2011 (69.5%). Despite this positive news, children in the poorest communities (DRG I) continue to lag behind their wealthier peers. One-third of kindergarteners in the state's poorest communities (DRG I) had no preschool experience at all in School Year 2012-2013. In contrast, less than 5% of children in the state's wealthiest districts (DRG A) had no preschool experience at all in School Year 2012-2013. In addition, after four years of declines in the percent of kindergarteners held back in DRG I, between School Year 2011-2012 and School Year 2012-2013 the percentage increased from 7.0% to 7.5%. Retention rates for children in the poorest communities continue to be much higher than the state average and the average in wealthier communities – two and five times greater, respectively.

**Percentage of Kindergarteners with Preschool Experience,  
by District Reference Group (DRG)**





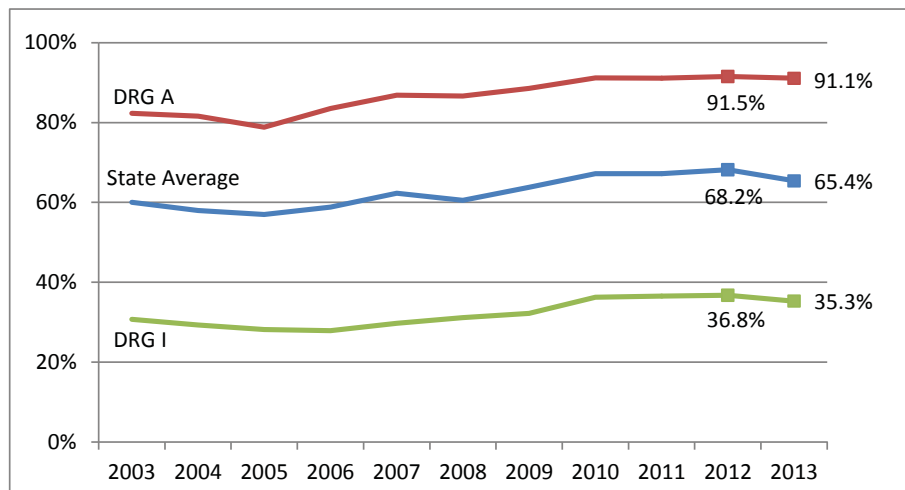
**Percentage of Kindergarteners Held Back,  
by District Reference Group (DRG)**



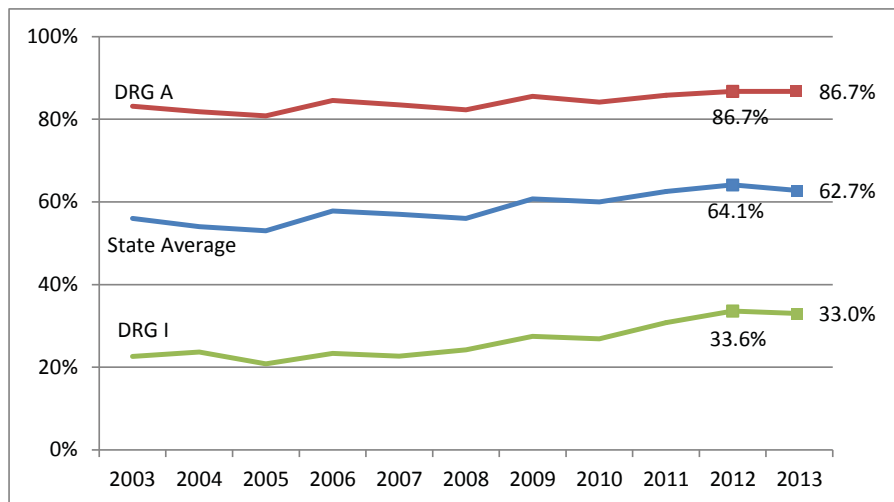
***Fine by Nine***

In School Year 2012-2013, children in wealthier communities (DRG A) continued to outperform children from poor communities in fourth grade standardized test performance. While fourth graders in DRG I made slight improvements in their performance in the writing section of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), after several years of improvements in mathematics and reading, test scores in those subjects fell slightly. In math and reading, only about half as many fourth graders in poor communities met the “goal” standard as the statewide average, and a third as many as in DRG A. Connecticut has one of the largest achievement gaps in the country, and it must invest heavily in early care and education for this gap to be closed.

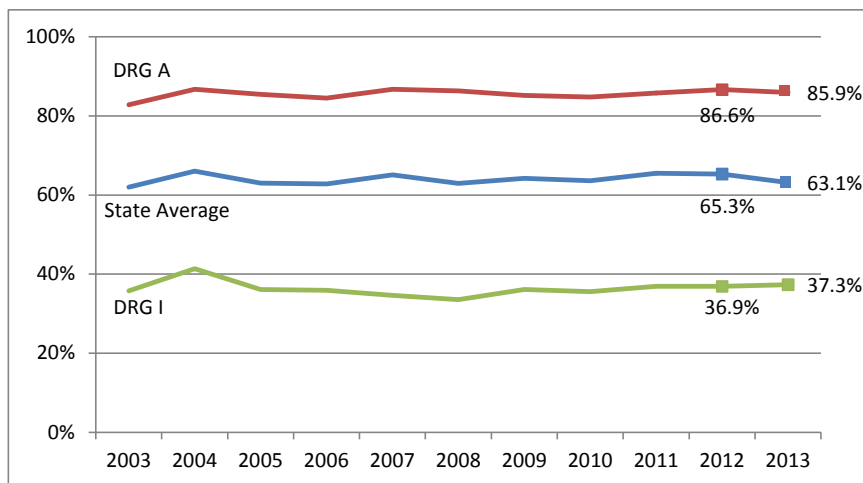
**Percent of Fourth Graders Meeting Goal in Mathematics on the CMT**



### Percent of Fourth Graders Meeting Goal in Reading on the CMT



### Percent of Fourth Graders Meeting Goal in Writing on the CMT



#### The Good News:

The state's early education programs, Head Start and School Readiness, are designed to support children in the areas of the state with the highest numbers and percentages of children in poverty. This targeted investment is intended to help the children in the communities with the highest needs, and to address the performance gap that can be seen in these communities in fourth grade testing.

#### The Bad News:

Insufficient data collection at kindergarten entry makes it nearly impossible to gauge which children attend early care, and therefore we are unable to ascertain the extent and location of unmet need.

## New Opportunities: The Office of Early Childhood

In 2013, the Connecticut legislature passed a budget that contained funding for a new Office of Early Childhood.<sup>30</sup> However, accompanying legislation that would have moved programs from five different state agencies into this Office did not receive a final floor vote in the General Assembly before the legislative session expired. In response, the Governor signed an Executive Order in June 2013 formally establishing the Office and placing early childhood programs and services from four different state agencies under its scope.

The following chart shows the programs and offices that have moved, or will be moving, to the new Office of Early Childhood from existing state agencies:

<b>The Office of Early Childhood</b>	
<b>Agency</b>	<b>Program</b>
Board of Regents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecticut Charts-a-Course (CCAC): <i>Moved July 1, 2013</i></li> <li>• CCAC Registry for ECE Staff: <i>Moved July 1, 2013</i></li> <li>• Accreditation Facilitation Project: <i>Moved July 1, 2013</i></li> </ul>
Department of Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help Me Grow: <i>Moved July 1, 2013</i></li> <li>• Care 4 Kids: <i>Moving July 1, 2014</i></li> </ul>
State Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bureau of Teaching and Learning Early Childhood Activities: <i>Moved July 1, 2013</i></li> <li>• Early Childhood Special Education IDEA Part B – 619: <i>Moving July 1, 2014</i></li> </ul>
Department of Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Day Care Licensing: <i>Moving July 1, 2014</i></li> <li>• Home Visitation (MIECHV Grant): <i>Moving July 1, 2014 contingent upon final approval of HRSA</i></li> </ul>
Department of Developmental Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birth-to-Three System : <i>Feasibility study underway to determine if it will move July 1, 2014</i></li> </ul>

The Office of Early Childhood represents an opportunity for the state to address many of the recommendations that have been put forward in each of our previous Progress Reports – recommendations that have been called for by the early care advocacy community as necessary to better serve the state’s children.

<sup>30</sup> Although this section discusses the new Office of Early Childhood, legislation moving funding to this Office did not go into effect until the beginning of FY 2014, and therefore the new Office is not reflected in our analysis of FY 13 state spending and programming in this Report.



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## ***Recommendations: What can Connecticut do to better serve its youngest and most vulnerable citizens?***

For the past few years our early care progress reports have documented the problems of coordination and data collection that arise when programs serving young children are housed in different agencies across state government. The Office of Early Childhood has the ability to make important policy decisions and administer all the state's major early childhood funding streams. However, the creation of an Office of Early Childhood is not an end in itself, but an opportunity for real system change and reform. This Office has the capability to ensure that our early care and education system includes the eight elements that we consider fundamental to a functional ECE system, and which we have laid out in each of our previous Progress Reports. Again, these elements are described below:

- **Uniform reporting requirements.** Reporting requirements should be combined across all programs, so providers must comply with a single set of standards that satisfy all statutory mandates and include all data elements necessary for quality assessment and longitudinal analysis.
- **Unified funding stream.** State and federal funding sources must be blended and braided to create a single revenue stream that local providers can access.
- **Fully-funded slots.** Research and evidence tells us that the real cost of high quality care is significantly higher than the level currently offered. Unified funding streams must be sufficient to cover high-quality, fully-funded slots for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

- **A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS).** A quality rating and improvement system would allow greater transparency for parents and providers to assess and improve program quality by creating incentives and providing technical assistance for improvement. Connecticut's application for federal funds lays out a detailed plan and strategy for implementing a tiered QRIS, called ConneCT2Quality, poised to launch in March 2014.
- **Workforce development and improved workforce compensation.** Professional development opportunities should be expanded, through methods such as increasing the number of state scholarships available for child care workers or providing subsidies to state institutions of higher education to enhance their degree programs in early education. Compensation and benefits for all ECE workers should be increased to levels that would allow job openings for qualified workers in the ECE community to be competitive with jobs in other education fields.
- **Coordinated, complete, and transparent data collection.** Complete and accurate data must be collected and coordinated with the K-12 data system, so that we can easily access and monitor spending, service quality and the impact of our investments. (Connecticut has recently bonded \$6 million to create an Early Childhood Information System to do this.)
- **Uniform standards for early learning.** A comprehensive set of early learning standards for birth through age five should be developed through collaboration between members of the ECE and K-12 communities, to ensure that such standards are developmentally appropriate, align with Common Core standards, and are disseminated and implemented in early childhood settings.
- **Improved outreach to parents and easier access to programs.** Parents should be able and encouraged to apply for any and all early care and education programs through a streamlined, efficient application process that would allow them to retain some degree of choice, and would ensure that these choices are based on the best available information.

While the new Office of Early Childhood represents clear support from the state for a unified early care and education system, the Office and advocates must continue to pursue greater systematic reform, consistent with our eight elements, in order to fully capitalize on this opportunity. This reform effort must be coupled with ongoing, and ideally increased, financial support targeted to allow parents to access to high quality early care and education programs, to support a better educated early care and education workforce, and to serve a greater number of the state's vulnerable children.

*See separate Appendix for the report at [www.ctvoices.org](http://www.ctvoices.org)*

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