

A Report of School Readiness Need and the Costs to Serve All 3- and 4-Year-Old Children in 19 Priority School Districts

Connecticut State Department of Education 2011

INTRODUCTION

The State Departments of Education and Social Services have been implementing the Connecticut School Readiness and Child Day Care Grant Program since 1997. The program allows 3- and 4-year-old children in 63 qualifying towns (19 priority school districts and 44 competitive municipalities) to participate in a high-quality preschool and child care experience. In fiscal year 2011 (July 1, 2010, through July 1, 2011), \$69,182,683 was awarded to priority school districts enabling them to hold almost all of the gains in contracted spaces from the prior year. In fiscal year 2011, there were 9,582 contracted spaces available in priority school districts.

Since 2004, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has issued a report titled *School Readiness Need and the Costs to Serve all 3- and 4-year-old Children in 19 Priority School Districts* as required under Section 10-4(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS). Under CGS Section 10-16r(b), School Readiness Councils are required to report an estimate of the number of children in 19 priority school districts in need of a center-based preschool setting and the costs associated in providing such programs. In addition to the summation of School Readiness Council reports, this document also provides a history of previously submitted reports and recommendations for consideration regarding reducing the number of children in need of a center-based preschool experience while increasing the quality of such programs and recommendations for addressing broader early childhood issues.

This report presents a summary of the responses provided by the priority school districts in accordance with Section 10-16r(b) of the CGS, which outlines the responsibilities of the local School Readiness Councils, which include assisting in the identification of the need for school readiness programs, providing the number of children not being served by such a program and providing an estimated cost of universal school readiness programs to eligible children who are not being served. To meet this charge, the School Readiness Council in each of the 19 priority districts completed a survey to determine and/or verify:

1. the number of children not being served and whose parents desire a program; and
2. the type of spaces such children need, e.g., full-day/full-year, school-day/school-year and part-day/part-year programs.

Similar to previous years, the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) provided technical assistance to calculate the number of classrooms that will be required to serve children and the financial support necessary to reach the number of needed classrooms. In order to establish the operating costs, CHEFA applied the *Early Childhood Education Cost Modeling Tool* created by the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance and CHEFA, in collaboration with the Hartford Area Childcare Collaborative.

Purpose:

This report provides a summary of information collected from the 19 priority school districts addressing the need and costs to serve all 3- and 4-year-old children in their districts and data utilized from the CSDE databases. Data presented in this report reflect the estimated number of 3- and 4-year-old children not currently being served in a center-based preschool program, the estimated space needs to provide access to all 3- and 4-year-old children in priority school districts, the costs associated with providing such space and the costs associated with increasing the quality of programming through advancing the education of the current workforce.

Key Findings:

- Over the past seven years, the number of contracted spaces has increased while the decrease in children needing a program has not decreased by the same rate as space increase.
- Within the 19 priority school districts, 6,900 children would not be able to access a center-based school readiness program due to lack of space. It is projected that nearly 1,303 (about 19 percent) of the children will not seek a center-based school readiness program due to family choice, resulting in 5,597 additional spaces needed to accommodate the remaining estimated population of 3- and 4-year-old children in priority school districts wanting a space.
- An analysis of Professional Development Registry data provided by the Connecticut Charts-A-Course organization that tracks teacher professional development, and an examination of current advertisements for teaching positions, indicates that early education teachers with bachelor degrees in community-based programs earn an average starting salary of \$26,598, greatly reducing the attractiveness of obtaining a degree in early childhood education.
- The children estimated to be in need of a school readiness program are projected to fill the following program space types:
 - 3,442 full-day/full-year
 - 928 school-day/school-year
 - 869 part-day/part year
- The annual cost of operating early education services for the additional 5,597 children in programs with teachers holding various educational levels is approximately \$40,193,665. This cost will presumably be paid for by a combination of family fees, state subsidies and other grant support.
- Approximately 5,597 children will need 4,805 new spaces split between community-based facilities (3,657) and public school buildings (1,148).
- Total capital cost, not adjusted for future inflation, to develop these spaces is estimated to be \$211,017,172, with \$133,768,250 for community-based spaces and \$77,248,922 for public school spaces.

METHODOLOGY

The School Readiness Councils of the 19 priority school districts were informed of their responsibilities as required under Section 10-16r(b) of the CGS. The School Readiness Councils were asked to return a self-report, *Estimate of Potential Space Needs*, to the CSDE, attested to by the chief elected official and superintendent of schools or their designees. The self-report requested the following information:

- the average school readiness utilization;
- the estimated percentage of families who will seek a school readiness program for either full-day/full-year, school-day/school-year, part-day/part-year, extended-day or other;
- the estimated capacity to serve 3- and 4-year-old children across licensed center-based programs, public schools, parochial schools, charter schools and magnet schools;
- the estimated vacancies across licensed center-based programs, public schools, parochial schools, charter schools and magnet schools; and
- the percentage of families who would choose to send their child to a center-based program.

To assist School Readiness Councils in their preparation of this information, the CSDE provided the estimated population of 3- and 4-year-old children as determined by adding the kindergarten and first grade attendance figures based on the CSDE October 2009 database of Public and Non-Public Enrollment by Town of Residence.

Summary of “Meeting the Need” Reports

Over the past seven fiscal years, the number of contracted spaces purchased in community-based and public school-based settings with school readiness funds has increased steadily while the need for space has decreased. The number of contracted spaces purchased in any given year does not directly correlate to a one-to-one ratio decrease in the need for space. Collectively, over the past seven years, the need for preschool has decreased by 2,711 while the contracted spaces offered increased by 2,605. Overall, the difference between preschool spaces created did not result in a decrease in needs. See Figure 1.

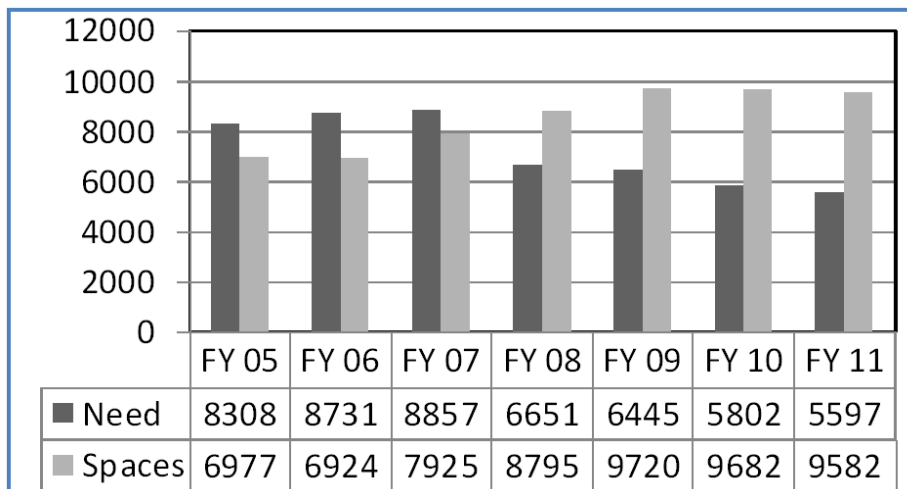


Figure 1: Comparison between contracted spaces and space need from FY 05 to FY 11

Availability of Programs

To determine the availability of programs in the 19 priority school districts, the population of the 3- and 4-year-old cohort of children was first determined. Rather than using birth cohorts and aging this population forward, kindergarten and first grade populations were added together¹. Since kindergarten and first grade are closer in time to pre-kindergarten, this is thought to be a more accurate method of determining the base population and therefore used as a basis from which to determine an estimated preschool population in priority school districts.

Once the base population for priority school districts was established, the total number of available spaces to serve pre-kindergarten children was determined. Since the actual capacity of early education programs may vary from licensed capacity, this report utilizes survey data collected by the School Readiness Councils in the 19 priority school districts to determine the actual number of spaces available, as provided under Section 10-16r(b) of the CGS.

The difference between the estimated 3- and 4-year-old population and the actual capacity identified in each priority school district resulted in the number of spaces needed to accommodate all 3- and 4-year-olds in priority school districts. However, not all families would choose to place their child in a center-based early education program. A non-participation rate of 20 percent was determined for 3- and 4-year-old children not currently enrolled in an early education program. Evidence to validate the use of a 20 percent non-participation rate is supported through the National Household Education Surveys Program². However, this report reflects 17 priority school districts that chose to use the 20 percent non-participant rate and two priority districts that chose to reflect higher (35 percent) and lower (11 percent) non-participation rates based on their trend data.

Operating Costs

To determine operating costs, the *Early Childhood Education Cost Model*, a tool that provides an interactive spreadsheet to estimate the costs of center-based preschool programs was applied. The tool uses the following assumptions related to program space type, teacher credential and compensation and class size. These assumptions are based on current statistics in the existing priority school districts.

Program Space Type

With regard to the type of spaces that children might occupy in the coming years, it was assumed that in:

- full-day/full-year programs, 95 percent of the children will be enrolled in community-based programs, while 5 percent will be enrolled in public school programs;
- school-day/school-year programs, 25 percent of the children will be enrolled in community-based settings, while 75 percent will be enrolled in public school programs; and

¹ Data from *Connecticut Education Data and Research* (CEDAR) database for October 2009.

² National Household Education Surveys Program (2005) by the National Center for Education Statistics.

- in part-day/part-year programs, 30 percent of the children will be enrolled in community-based spaces, while 70 percent will be enrolled in public school programs.

Teacher Credential and Compensation

Teachers in state-funded community-based settings are assumed to have a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential with 12 college credits in early childhood education and five years teaching experience. Current data suggests that teachers in state-funded, community-based programs will hold an associate or bachelor degree with specific early childhood content by the year 2015. Due to economic conditions, salaries were maintained at the same level as in last year’s report. A teacher with such credentials and little or no job experience will earn a base salary of approximately \$26,698 per year. The teacher aides are assumed to have five years teaching experience and will earn a base salary of \$17,798 per year. Public school teachers are assumed to have a bachelor’s degree with one year experience and will earn \$39,542 per year. Public school teacher aides are assumed to have one year experience and will earn \$16,480 per year.

Teacher benefits for the community-based programs (e.g., federal and state unemployment insurance costs, pension, vacation, etc.) are calculated at 28 percent of their salary. Public school teacher benefits are established at 50 percent of their base salary. Public school teacher salaries are calculated using a 39-week year, while the community-based teacher salaries are calculated using a 52-week year. The cost template factors in the need for additional staff to cover preparation, lunch and planning times. Planning time was assumed to be one hour per day for full-day/full-year programs, .5 hour per day for part-day/part-year programs and .5 hour per day for school-day/school-year programs.

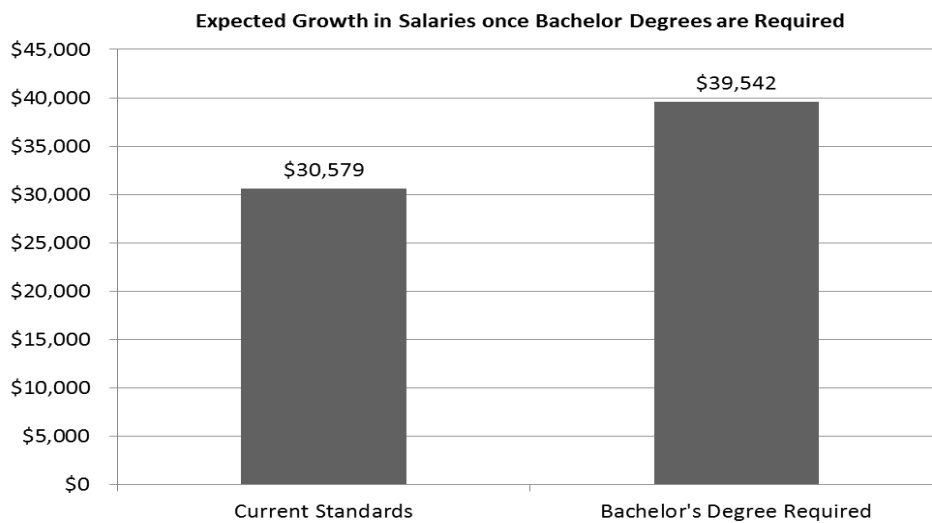


Figure 2: Comparison of staff salaries for bachelor’s degree level

Figure 2 above illustrates the gap in salaries between current levels and projected levels once bachelor degrees are required for at least one teacher in every School Readiness funded classroom. Although expanding programs hire a mix of bachelor and associate degree holders, existing programs largely depend on employees without these degrees. A recent Connecticut

Charts-A-Course report found that 37 percent of Connecticut's early childhood teachers, employed in programs receiving one or a variety of state funds, have not yet earned their associate degree. The CSDE Results-Based Accountability (RBA) data show that 54 percent of teachers in School Readiness state-funded programs in priority or competitive municipalities hold a baccalaureate or higher. Specifically, 50 percent of teachers in School Readiness priority districts hold a baccalaureate degree or higher and 75 percent of teachers in School Readiness competitive municipalities hold a baccalaureate degree or higher. Because degree requirements are increasing, average salaries in community-based child care centers have risen to \$30,579. Salaries in a system requiring bachelor degrees are projected to be \$39,542 (starting bachelor degree teachers).

It is important to note that full-day programs require 50 hours of instructional time per week, as well as teacher preparation time. The resulting full-time equivalence (FTE) requirement for both teachers and aides is 1.57 in each classroom. School-day and part-day programs require .93 and .43 FTEs respectively.

Total salaries are calculated by multiplying salaries by the number of FTE teachers and aides in community-based programs (609 staff) and adding salaries from public school teachers. Please note that this increase does not include fringe benefits.

Class Size

A class size of 18 children is used in the application of the *Early Childhood Education Cost Model* as this follows the CSDE's recommendation for class size in school readiness programs.

Capital Cost Estimation

To determine capital costs, this report presents space need and location projections for community and public school settings. Construction cost estimates, based on square footage costs from recent CHEFA-funded and new public school construction projects, will be applied. Overall, the estimate for spaces is proportioned with 70 percent in community-based settings and 30 percent in public school-based settings.

Space Need and Location

The projections for spaces and location of such spaces are influenced by several conditions:

- The growth in spaces is anticipated to reflect the current split between community and public-based programs (i.e., in community-based programs, 25 percent of school-day children, 30 percent of part-day children and 95 percent in full-day spaces).
- The projection assumes that part-day programs which offer morning and afternoon sessions can share the same space.
- Full-time, school-day and part-day components are then allocated to public school and community-based facilities.
- Ten percent of community-based programs are assumed to be housed in public school buildings. In other words, the building will be owned by the public school system and rented to the community-based provider.

Calculation of Capital Cost and Debt Service

The calculations for capital cost and debt service are based on 100 square feet per child with a total development cost of \$385 per square foot for community-based centers. For public schools, a 125 square foot standard was applied with a total development cost set at \$465 per square foot.

The capital cost calculations assume that the annual interest rate for the loan will be at a tax exempt rate of 5 percent and the community-based provider will be required to fund 12 percent of the total project costs with their own funds. Public school construction will borrow 100 percent of the total project cost using state and local resources. For community-based providers, the debt service is reduced by 20 percent, since providers must pay approximately one-fifth of the debt service out of operating subsidies.

RESULTS

The Number of Children Not Being Served

To assist towns in determining the number of spaces needed to serve all 3- and 4-year-old children in priority school districts, the CSDE supplied each School Readiness Council with 3- and 4-year-old child population data based upon data in the CSDE's *October 2009 Public and Non-Public Enrollment by Town of Residence Tables* found in the Connecticut Education Data and Research (CEDaR) database. Populations for kindergarten and first grade were added across categories including Public, Open Choice, Magnet, Interdistrict Cooperative Agreement, Homebound, Non-Public School Programs, Non-Public Preschool Programs, Non-Public Special Education Programs and Others. The populations for kindergarten and first grade were added and assumed to be a close equivalent of the 3-year-old and 4-year-old population. See Table 1.

Local School Readiness Councils confirmed the reliability of the Department of Public Health's child counts. Most districts used telephone and/or mail surveys to determine how many 3- and 4-year-old children are currently enrolled in their programs. Others used responses from kindergarten registration and from local strategic school profiles. The numbers derived from these surveys, along with the existing numbers that are currently being served in other state and federal programs, were then deducted from the number of children enrolled in kindergarten and first grade in each town. The "Number of Children Not Being Served" is the estimated population of 3- and 4-year-old children less the current capacity of the town.

Table I presents by priority school district the following statistics: (1) kindergarten and first grade population; (2) center-based capacity in 2010; (3) current estimated capacity; (4) the change in licensed and school-based capacity since 2010; (5) estimated number of children not being served; (6) the percentage of parents who would choose a center-based preschool setting; and (7) the total number of children needing a center-based preschool program. Current estimated capacity was subtracted from the kindergarten and first grade population to establish the "Number of Children Not Being Served." The total estimate of children not being served in the 19 priority school districts is 6,900 of which 5,597 would be seeking a center-based space.

Table I
Estimated Number of Children in Need of a Center-Based Space

Town	Estimated Pre-K Population 2011	Center-based Capacity FY 10	Center-based Capacity FY 11	Change in Capacity	Children Not Being Served	Percent Choice	Unmet Need
Ansonia	511	404	398	-6	113	80%	90
Bloomfield	358	659	452	-207	-94	80%	0
Bridgeport	4,206	3,338	3,471	133	735	80%	588
Bristol	1,400	1,042	914	-128	486	80%	389
Danbury	1,908	1,237	1,338	101	570	80%	456
East Hartford	1,315	914	736	-178	579	80%	463
Hartford	4,041	2,985	2,880	-105	1,161	80%	929
Meriden	1,524	1,351	1,341	-10	183	80%	146
Middletown	1,030	1,067	913	-154	117	89%	104
New Britain	1,852	1,219	1,316	97	536	80%	429
New Haven	3,472	2,989	3,083	94	389	80%	311
New London	690	709	632	-77	58	65%	38
Norwalk	2,191	1,798	1,822	24	369	80%	295
Norwich	960	642	660	18	300	80%	240
Putnam	195	194	187	-7	8	80%	6
Stamford	2,982	2,646	2,677	31	305	80%	244
Waterbury	3,385	2,198	2,735	537	650	80%	520
West Haven	1,279	916	915	-1	364	80%	291
Windham	602	502	531	29	71	80%	57
TOTALS	33,901	26,810	27,001	191	6,900		5,597

Number of Children Who Need School Readiness Programs

Overall, it was calculated that 5,597 3- and 4-year-old children are in need of a preschool program. Given the educational risk for children in a priority school district who do not have a preschool experience, the CSDE encourages all 3- and 4-year-old children to attend a preschool. The National Center for Education Statistics evaluates participation rates of families nationally. Since families earning more than \$100,000 lack most barriers to accessing early education, the participation rate of this group can be considered the norm for families across income groups. The study found an average participation rate of 79 percent for 3-year-olds and 89 percent among 4-year-olds. Using this data, 20 percent of families not participating in the early education system are assumed to “opt out” of center-based early education. Once this factor, or an alternative percentage as reported by town, is applied to the number of children not served, the total number of children needing services is 5,597.

Participation Distribution by School Readiness Type

Table II provides the distribution of School Readiness types that are available to 5,597 children projected to need a preschool program. The program types are full-day/full-year, school-day/school-year, part-day/part-year, and other, typically referred to as a wrap-around program. A full-day/full-year preschool program operates up to 10 hours per day, five days per week, for 50 weeks per year. A school-day/school-year program operates at least six hours per day, five days per week for a minimum of 180 days per year. A part-day/part-year program operates at least 2.5 hours per day, five days per week for a minimum of 180 days per year. Anecdotally,

districts are requesting flexibility regarding the hours, number of days and days per year the current system offers in order to meet the unique needs of their community (e.g., accommodations in schedule to allow for families working nontraditional shifts and hours). This accounts for 152 children not represented in Table II below.

Based on information provided by the School Readiness Councils, it is estimated that close to 62 percent or 3,442 of the children who need a preschool program will choose full-day/full-year programs; about 17 percent or 928 of families will choose a school-day/school-year program; about 16 percent or 869 families will choose part-day/part-year programs; and about 4 percent or 206 families would like an alternative to the traditional program offerings. Please note that for purposes of developing a cost estimate, the category of “Other” is considered to be a split between full-day, school-day and part-day programming.

Table II
Participants’ Distribution by Program Types (After Participation Rate Calculation)

Town	Unmet Need	FD	SD	PD	Other
Ansonia	90	63	0	27	0
Bloomfield	0	0	0	0	0
Bridgeport	588	353	100	71	53
Bristol	389	183	27	156	0
Danbury	456	388	0	46	23
East Hartford	463	232	162	69	0
Hartford	929	650	232	0	46
Meriden	146	117	0	29	0
Middletown	104	52	21	31	0
New Britain	429	214	172	43	0
New Haven	311	124	93	16	16
New London	38	14	11	11	0
Norwalk	295	218	12	65	0
Norwich	240	84	12	103	0
Putnam	6	1	1	4	0
Stamford	244	195	12	37	0
Waterbury	520	364	52	78	26
West Haven	291	166	12	64	38
Windham	57	23	10	20	4
TOTALS	5,597	3,442	928	869	206

Estimate of Operating Cost for Community and Public School-Based Programs

Table III presents the cost estimates derived through the *Early Childhood Education Cost Modeling Tool* to provide preschool programs to an additional 5,597 preschool children. Cost projections are representative of the actual total cost of providing services, as compared to the state subsidies necessary to support the additional spaces. Current enrollment by program type data were used to model estimates of cost to provide a full-day/full-year program for community and public school-based programs. The cost will be \$31,552,297, assuming that 95 percent of enrollment will be in community-based programs and 5 percent in public school-based programs. The estimated cost for school-day/school-year for both community and public school-based programs will be \$5,982,445, with the assumption that 25 percent enrollment will be community-based and 75 percent public school-based programs. For part-day/part-year programs, the cost

will be \$2,658,923, assuming that 30 percent enrollment will be community-based and 70 percent public school-based programs. The total operating cost of providing service to all program types, under current staff credential levels, will be \$40,193,665 which can be paid through a combination of state grants, family fees and other grant sources.

Table III
Cost Estimates for Community-Based and Public School-Based Programs

	Community-Based		Public		Total Cost
	Per hour	Per Slot	Per hour	Per Slot	
Full-Day	\$3.66	\$8,753.00	\$6.81	\$17,030.00	\$31,552,297
Part-Day	\$3.98	\$1,790.00	\$7.74	\$3,483.00	\$2,658,923
School-Day	\$3.59	\$3,879.00	\$6.99	\$7,547.00	\$5,982,445
					\$40,193,665

- teachers in community-based programs have a CDA with 12 credits and five years experience (\$26,698); teacher aides have five years experience (\$17,798)
- teachers in public school programs have a BA with one year experience (\$39,542); teacher aides have one year experience (\$16,480)

It should be noted that the higher estimated cost of providing early education in public school-based programs is largely due to the higher education level of public school-based teachers and correspondingly higher pay scale. Connecticut law, as well as accreditation standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), is increasing its educational requirements for community-based preschool teachers. Once bachelor degrees are required, the cost of providing care in community-based preschool programs will increase by approximately \$3,000 for each full-day slot, \$1,400 for each school-day slot and \$600 for each part-day slot for a total estimated cost of \$50,883,032. This will have considerable impact on the cost of providing care in community-based settings.

Estimate of Capital Cost and Debt Service

Table IV presents the total number of 3- and 4-year-old children needing space, reflecting proportions served by public- and private-based providers. The capital cost estimates are based on 95 percent of the full-day/full-year spaces allocated to community programs and 5 percent to public schools, as is the current distribution; 25 percent of school-day/school-year spaces allocated to community programs and 75 percent to public schools; and 30 percent of part-day/part-year spaces allocated to community programs and 70 percent to public schools. Further, 5 percent of the spaces for community-based programs (n = 183) will rent public school space for their programs. Because of this assumption, a total of 330 spaces are needed in public school buildings and 3,588 spaces are needed in community-based buildings.

Table IV
Space Need for Number of Three- and Four-Year-Olds

Number of 3 and 4 year-olds needing space:							
	Total	Community-Based			Public		
	Children	Percent	Number	Spaces	Percent	Number	Spaces
Full-Day:	3,442	95%	3,270	3,270	5%	172	172
Part-Day:	869	25%	217	109	75%	652	326
School Day:	928	30%	278	278	70%	650	650
Total:	5,239		3,766	3,657		1,473	1,148
			Total Spaces Needed:		4,805		

The assumed split between Community-Based and Public Programs is based upon the projection 5 years out.

Table V presents the Capital Cost and Debt Service for community-based and public school-based programs using the adjusted distribution of space to reflect the costs of 3,657 spaces in community-based programs and 1,148 spaces in public school-based programs. Community-based programs will require 100 square feet per child and public schools will require 125 square feet per child. The total development cost per square foot would be \$385 for community-based programs and \$465 for public school programs, a total development cost per child of \$38,500 and \$58,082, respectively.

The total capital cost for community-based spaces would be \$133,678,250 and \$77,248,922 for public school-based spaces. With an assumed interest rate of 5 percent for both community-based and public school-based programs, the total debt service is \$229,727,959 for community-based and \$150,754,598 for public school-based, a total debt service over the 30-year term of \$380,482,557.

Table V
Calculation of Capital Cost and Debt Service

Calculation of Capital Cost and Debt Service Over 30 Years		
	Community-Based	Public
Square Feet Per Child:	100	125
Construction Cost Per Square Foot:	\$ 266	\$ 332
Total Development Cost Per Square Foot:	\$ 385	\$ 465
Total Development Cost Per Child:	\$ 38,500	\$ 58,082
Total Capital Cost:	\$133,768,250	\$77,248,922
Assumed Interest Rate:	5.0%	5.0%
Borrower Cash Contribution:	12.0%	0.0%
Total Borrowing Needed:	\$117,716,060	\$77,248,942
Total Annual Debt Service:	\$ 7,657,599	\$ 5,025,153
Total Debt Service Over 30 Years:	\$229,727,959	\$150,754,598
Public Plus Community-Based Costs		
Total Capital Cost:	\$211,017,172	
Total Debt Service:	\$ 12,682,752	
Total Debt Service Over 30 Years:	\$380,482,557	

CONCLUSION

The Connecticut State Department of Education and the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, designated by the Governor to be the State Advisory Council on early care and education, are committed to quality services for children from birth to age 5. All preschool children in Connecticut deserve access to quality care and educational opportunities so they can begin kindergarten with the foundation essential for future success in school. A great number of children in Connecticut do not participate in preschool programs because: (1) there is not enough funding to establish spaces for all eligible children who need services; (2) market rate program tuitions are more than many low-income working class families can afford; and (3) there is a lack of open preschool spaces in most communities. Consistent with its Position Statement on Early Childhood Education, the CSDE is committed to ensuring that every child whose family cannot afford preschool will have the opportunity to attend a high-quality program. Experiences and services must be appropriate to the child's age and stage of development. As stated in the *Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan for 2006-2011*, offering a high-quality preschool experience to all who need it is the foundation of a comprehensive approach to closing achievement gaps. A concerted effort will be needed to ensure that all children in priority school districts have a preschool experience.

This report estimates that it will cost \$40,193,665 to provide early education services to the 5,597 preschool-age children reported as not being served throughout the 19 priority school districts. The majority of the children, approximately 65 percent, are reported to need a full-day/full-year program. It will also require \$12,682,752 of annual capital investment to provide 4,805 spaces in community-based and public school-based programs.

Nearly 95 percent of children currently needing full-day, full-year preschool will be served by community-based programs and 5 percent by public school-based programs. Projections assume that children will continue to utilize School Readiness spaces with the same ratios of full-day/full-year, school-day/school-year and part-day/part-year spaces in public and community-based programs. The cost to provide a quality preschool experience for Connecticut's children will increase over the next five years because preschool teachers in the community-based programs will be required to have a baccalaureate degree by the year 2015 and salaries will need to be considered as a major incentive to recruit and retain staff under this qualification.

Connecticut's economic success requires children be prepared to succeed in their formal school experience. Quality early childhood programs ameliorate the risk factors that lead to achievement gaps. The State Departments of Education and Social Services, in collaboration with the local communities, are resolved to establish and maintain high-quality preschool programs for all children who need it, beginning in the most impacted communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In alignment with Priority I of the *Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan for 2006-2011*, to provide high-quality preschool education for all students, the following recommendations are offered to address the need and cost to serve preschool children:

- Re-design the Competitive School Readiness Grant Program to align with the Priority School Readiness Grant Program to address parity in reimbursement rates and allow for administrative funds in the Competitive Grant Program to be utilized at the district level for monitoring program quality. By doing so, would provide incentive for providers in the Competitive School Readiness Grant Program to accommodate more children. Providing for administrative funds would increase accountability for progress monitoring. This action requires statute changes and increase in appropriation to maintain current space level.
- Expand early childhood educator preparation programs to allow alternate pathways for the workforce to obtain an early childhood teacher credential. This is related to the current proposed legislative bill (SB 927) regarding raising the staff qualifications for all publicly-funded early childhood programs, which in turn will prompt institutes of higher education to redesign teacher preparation programs for early childhood education to meet the needs of the existing and future workforce.
- Increase funds to existing publicly-funded programs, to support high-quality preschool education. Increase in the reimbursement rates to provide preschool services could be targeted for quality enhancement directed to advancing the early childhood workforce. As the workforce progresses toward higher credentials, compensation will need to be addressed for retention and recruitment of qualified staff. This action will require an increase in the School Readiness appropriation and related legislative changes.

In addition, the following recommendations address the broader context of Connecticut's early care and education system, birth through grade 3:

- Collaborate with stakeholders, in concert with the Early Childhood Cabinet, to develop an integrated and coordinated early care and education system that articulates with the K-12 system and standards. The opportunity to develop and implement such a system exists as Connecticut aggressively pursues the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant recently announced by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.
- Advance professional development opportunities for the existing and future early childhood workforce. Encourage collaboration between institutions of higher education and early care and education settings, including public schools. The existing workforce and student teachers can benefit from the expertise of higher education faculty and coaches through an on-site, job-embedded teaching and supervision.
- Increase the capacity of staff to implement and monitor a coordinated system of early care and education programs, birth through grade 3. Beginning July 1, 2011, the transfer

of child care programs from the Department of Social Services to the CSDE initiates the consolidation early care and education programs that will now include infants, toddlers, preschool, and school-age children. The CSDE will need to expand our current staff expertise to include knowledge of dual language learners and meeting the needs of the expanded age range now expected to be served by CSDE.

The CSDE remains committed to collaborating with multiple stakeholders in building, implementing, and assessing systems of education and service delivery to improve the conditions of all Connecticut's children and families.