

MASSACHUSETTS

FACTS: SCHOOL READINESS IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEFINITION

School Readiness refers to the field within Early Childhood Education that prepares children, aged 2¾ to 6, to participate in and derive maximum benefit from kindergarten, laying the foundation for continuous success in school. School Readiness programs address language development, cognitive skills, general knowledge, approaches to learning, and social and emotional skills.

Children aged 3-5 that are low income^{1,2}

68,400



Average cost per child to attend a full-day, full-year school readiness program³

\$11,678

% of 3rd grade students scoring proficient or above on MCAS⁴

| | Low-income | Average |
|---------|------------|---------|
| Reading | 43% | 74% |

SOCIAL ISSUE INDICATORS

SIR regards the following as the most important indicators in assessing the short- and long-term progress towards closing the school readiness gap for at-risk children. Massachusetts does not disaggregate school readiness program attendance by income. Uniform strategies for accessing program quality are unavailable. A quality rating and improvement system called QRIS is currently being developed.

Access⁵  71%

Quality Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) is expected to be implemented in 2011. Data is not yet available.

*Access refers to the % of 3 to 5 year-olds enrolled in preschool or kindergarten

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MASSACHUSETTS

MASSACHUSETTS WAS THE FIRST STATE TO CREATE A DEPARTMENT OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE (EEC)

In 2005 Massachusetts brought all early childhood education and care services under one department.

Expanding Access to Early Childhood Education

- Although half of the EEC's annual budget in 2010 was allocated for child-care subsidies for income-eligible families,⁶ the department would need \$65M more to place the entire preschool waiting list of 5,597 children,⁷ at an average cost per child of \$11,678, into full-day, full-year programs
- A 2006 study conducted by Strategies for Children's Early Education for All campaign found that an investment of \$600M would be necessary to achieve universal access to quality school readiness programs for all children in Massachusetts⁸

Improving Quality of School Readiness Programs

- The Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS) is an EEC pilot project to standardize statewide quality assessment frameworks. This has been proven in other states to provide reliable indications of quality, improve program quality over time, and increase low-income children's access to quality programs.⁹ The EEC anticipates that it will be fully implemented in 2011.
- In Massachusetts, only 30% of center-based early educators have a bachelor's degree, compared with 50% nationwide.¹⁰ The EEC's Early Childhood Educators' Scholarships address this need for post-secondary educated early educators. Since 2006, over 4,200 scholarships have been awarded.¹¹
- The state also supports Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) grants for high-quality preschools to further improve their program quality. It currently supports 279 classrooms, most of which serve low-income or at-risk children.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

- A study conducted by scholars at Wellesley College, Columbia University, and Queens College showed that for every \$1 spent on two years of high-quality preschool, Massachusetts would recoup at least \$1.18 in savings and additional revenue. These savings are attributed to:
 - Increased cost savings tied to reduced utilization of public programs such as special education and welfare
 - Increased tax base because children who attend high-quality preschools are more likely to become productive members of society – depending less on welfare, owning their own homes and holding savings accounts¹²

SELECTING HIGH PERFORMING SCHOOL READINESS ORGANIZATIONS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Social Impact Research (SIR) aggregates, analyzes, and disseminates information to help social impact investors identify and support high performing organizations working to solve particular social issues. To this end, SIR compiles three types of reports, designed to be read together. The social issue report provides investors with a broad overview of the social issue. The state report provides context about how the issue is being addressed in a particular state. The organization reports highlight high performing nonprofits in metropolitan areas working on the issue. For school readiness in Massachusetts SIR analyzed organizations across the state. A list of selected organizations are included in this report.

SIR focused on school readiness because it yields an extremely high social return for philanthropic investors. Given the substantial positive social and economic impacts associated with academic preparedness, investment in Massachusetts school readiness programs proves critical in ensuring that all children possess the skills needed to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

In Massachusetts, there are more than 1,500 licensed nonprofit and for-profit organizations that provide center-based childcare for preschool-aged children; only 920 of these are licensed to serve more than 30 children. SIR focused on approximately 140 that are nonprofit and specifically address the needs of at-risk children as part of their mission. Of these programs, fewer than half were found to provide core educational services with parenting and complementary service components and those organizations were invited to submit data and participate in the research. SIR then conducted interviews with participating organizations and administered an extensive

survey in order to gain insight into the organization’s program performance, social impact model, and overall health.

Each organization was analyzed using 31 discrete indicators within the following three categories:

- **Program Performance:** academic and socio-emotional curriculum, teacher quality, assessment tools related to student development, parent-school relationship, provision of services to parents, and quality of complementary services
- **Social and Economic Outcomes:** systemic change activities, community partnerships, strategies to replicate and/or scale and efforts to improve program quality
- **Organizational Health:** financial health and sustainability, board involvement, performance of the management team, and internal data collection process

During the analysis each organization was benchmarked by four analysts using SIR’s five point scale for each indicator. Based on this analysis, SIR selected 21 Recommended Organizations in Massachusetts, listed below. Social impact investors interested in supporting these high-performing nonprofits should refer to the Organization Reports to learn more about organizations in which to invest.

The list of recommended organizations below is not comprehensive and there may be other high performing organizations in Massachusetts that did not submit data and therefore could not be analyzed.

RECOMMENDED ORGANIZATIONS: EXAMPLES OF HIGH PERFORMERS

| ORGANIZATION: GREATER BOSTON | LOCATION | # SERVED* | ORGANIZATION: MA | LOCATION | # SERVED* |
|---|-------------|-----------|---|----------------|-----------|
| Action for Boston Community Development, Inc. | Boston | 2,778 | Berkshire Children and Families | Pittsfield | 131 |
| Associated Early Care and Education | Boston | 526 | Community Action Programs, Inter-City, Inc. | Canton | 246 |
| Children’s Services of Roxbury | Roxbury | 34 | Community Teamwork | Lowell | 585 |
| College Bound Dorchester | Dorchester | 116 | Enable, Inc. | Canton | 127 |
| East Boston Social Centers | East Boston | 90 | Holyoke-Chicopee-Springfield Head Start, Inc. | Springfield | 1,498 |
| Horizons for Homeless Children | Roxbury | 75 | Martha’s Vineyard Community Services | Vineyard Haven | 32 |
| Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion | Boston | 70 | Montachusett Opportunity Council, Inc. | Fitchburg | 488 |
| Lynn Economic Opportunity, Inc. | Lynn | 350 | NorthStar Learning Centers | New Bedford | 46 |
| Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc. | Quincy | 300 | Rainbow Child Development Centers | Worcester | 64 |
| | | | Self Help, Inc. | Brockton | 717 |
| | | | YWCA of Central Massachusetts, Inc. | Worcester | 80 |
| | | | YWCA of Greater Lawrence | Lawrence | 66 |

*# served in 2009

ENDNOTES

1. National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, Massachusetts Early Childhood Profile, (2009), retrieved September 29, 2009 from URL: http://www.nccp.org/profiles/early_childhood.html.
2. Strategies for Children, Fast Facts: Children, Families and Early Education in Massachusetts, (2009), retrieved October 2, 2009 from URL: <https://www.strategiesforchildren.org>.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Kids Count Data Center: Children Ages 3 to 5 not enrolled in Nursery School, Preschool, or Kindergarten 2008, retrieved October 29, 2010 from URL: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?ind=5109>
6. Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, The Capacity of the Early Education System, (2009): 18.
7. Strategies for Children, Momentum Grows: High Quality Early Education in Massachusetts, (2009), retrieved February 24, 2010 from URL: <https://www.strategiesforchildren.org>.
8. Strategies for Children, Early Education for All, A Report On The Cost Of Universal, High-Quality Early Education In Massachusetts, (2006).
9. Strategies for Children, Building a High-Quality Early Education System: QRIS, (2010), retrieved October 25, 2010 from URL: <https://www.strategiesforchildren.org>.
10. Strategies for Children, Strategies for Improving the Early Education and Care Workforce in Massachusetts, (2010).
11. Strategies for Children, Early Education for All, Early Childhood Educators Scholarship Program, (2010).
12. Massachusetts Department of Administration and Finance, FY 2010 Budget Summary, (2009), retrieved July 3, 2010 from URL: http://www.mass.gov/bb/gaa/fy2010/app_10/dpt_10/hhec.htm