

Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development

2010-2011



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NSECD Participating Schools

Caddo Parish
M. Alexander Christian Academy
Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament

Calcasieu Parish
Sacred Heart Catholic School

East Baton Rouge Parish
Redemptorist Elementary School

East Carroll Parish
Briarfield Academy

NSECD Participating Schools (cont.)

Franklin Parish
Family Community Christian School

Jefferson Parish
Conquering Word Christian Academy
Our Lady of Perpetual Help School
Our Lady of Prompt Succor
St. Anthony School

Lafayette Parish
Gethsemane Christian Academy
Holy Family Catholic School
Immaculate Heart of Mary School

Lafourche Parish
Holy Rosary Catholic School
St. Mary's Nativity Catholic School

Lincoln Parish
New Living Word

Orleans Parish
Bishop McManus Academy
Cathedral Academy
Holy Ghost Catholic School
Resurrection of Our Lord School
Royal Castle Child Development Center
St. Alphonsus School
St. Benedict the Moor
St. Leo the Great
St. Joan of Arc School
St. Mary's Academy
St. Peter Claver School
St. Rita School
Upperroom Bible Church Academy

Ouachita Parish
Claiborne Christian School
Our Lady of Fatima School

St. Charles Parish
Boutte Christian Academy

St. John the Baptist Parish
Our Lady of Grace School

St. Landry Parish
Family Worship Christian Academy

Tangipahoa Parish
Gordon Richardson Christian Academy

St. Tammany Parish
Cedarwood School

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NSECD's Prekindergarten Success

Analyses of NSECD test scores over past school years reveal significant improvements in the participating children's performance. In 2010–11, progress was measured for 1,035 NSECD students who completed both a pretest and a posttest in Language, Print, and Math. NSECD student performance has shown steady growth; children's posttest performance for the last eight years remains close to or higher than the national average on the Developing Skills Checklist (see Figure 3). These results coincide with the implementation of high-quality *Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children*, such as hiring certified teachers, providing full-day programs, and maintaining a low child-to-teacher ratio. Research-based and developmentally appropriate practices outlined by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC) serve as a philosophical foundation for the NSECD program. Though all posttest scores were statistically significant and above the national average in all areas tested, 12% of NSECD students remain in the first quartile for Math, 7% in Language, and 6% in Print (see Figure 4).

The History of Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development (NSECD)

The NSECD prekindergarten program began in 2001 with legislative appropriation through Louisiana's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a federal block grant designed to foster interest in learning, increase literacy skills, prevent poverty, and promote development of responsible behavior. Through TANF funding, NSECD students are required to regularly attend the program (regular enrollment equates to 74% attendance of all classes each month). The program's goal is to "provide at-risk 4-year-old children access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate prekindergarten classes and before- and after-school enrichment activities, in a nonpublic school and Class A child care setting." The prekindergarten program follows the *Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children* to ensure the provision of high-quality services at no cost to those children eligible for free or reduced price lunch services (FRL). Children who do not qualify based on income may pay tuition or may be privately funded. Over the last eight years, the following characteristics have emerged as quality anchors of the Louisiana preschool effort:

- Teachers maintain qualifications mandated by the Louisiana Department of Education
- At least 18 hours of targeted professional development provided to teachers each year
- 10:1 child-to-adult ratio
- Small classroom size of 20 children
- Full-day (6-hour) program
- Vision, hearing, and dental screenings
- Research-based and developmentally appropriate curricula
- Before and afterschool enrichment activities
- Pretest and posttest measurement of student progress using the DSC
- Evaluation and longitudinal research necessary to measure and predict outcomes
- Appropriate materials and supplies
- Portfolio assessments to guide individual student instruction
- Collaboration with physical health, mental health, and social service agencies
- Support and adult education for children and their families

"We have become more aware of the benefits and advantages of community collaboration as a result of being in the program and all of our students have benefited from the mandatory health screenings."

-Monique Stubbs, Preschool Director
Cedarwood School

Who Is Served by NSECD?

In 2010–11, prekindergarten intervention was provided in the NSECD program for 1,312 NSECD-eligible children. The NSECD program targets at-risk children whose family income is below 200% of the federal poverty level. In addition, the program provides access to support services, which include vision, hearing, and dental screenings.

At the beginning of the school year, parents reported that nearly 96% of NSECD participants qualified for FRL services for the 2010–11 school year. This percentage is based upon the data set of 1,035 NSECD students. This demonstrates that the program serves the targeted population of at-risk children.

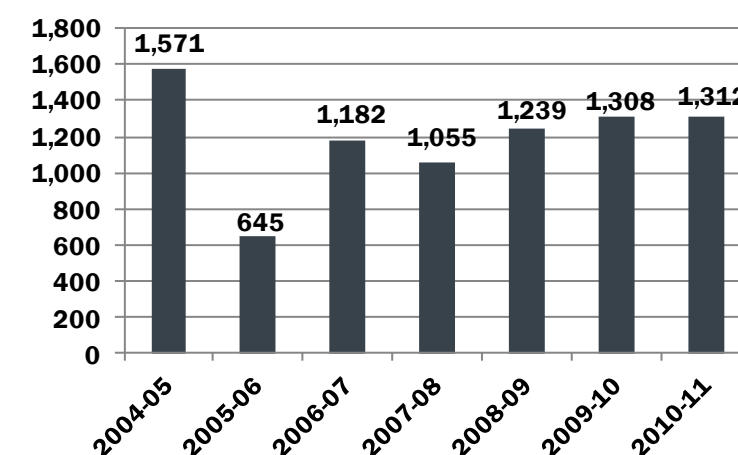


Figure 1. Enrollment of NSECD students across program years
Primary Data Source: NSECD program

Changes in enrollment differ from 2004–05 and 2005–06 due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Enrollment numbers were obtained on October 1st of each year.

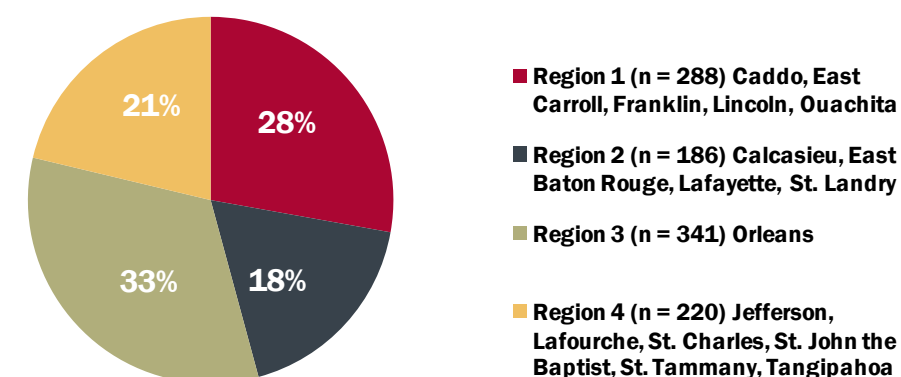


Figure 2. Percentage of NSECD Cohort 8 students enrolled and attending regularly by region, 2010–11.
Primary Data Source: NSECD program

Improved Performance on the Developing Skills Checklist (DSC)

Each year, NSECD students’ progress over the school year is measured, in part, by comparing their pretest performance to their posttest performance on the DSC. In 2010–11, progress was measured in this way for the NSECD Cohort 8 (n = 1,035) students. Figures 3 and 4 document the progress students made in the three subtest areas of Language, Print, and Math. Regardless of the data analysis conducted, percentile ranking across the years, or quartile movement during the year, the NSECD Cohort 8 children showed significant improvement from pretest to posttest.

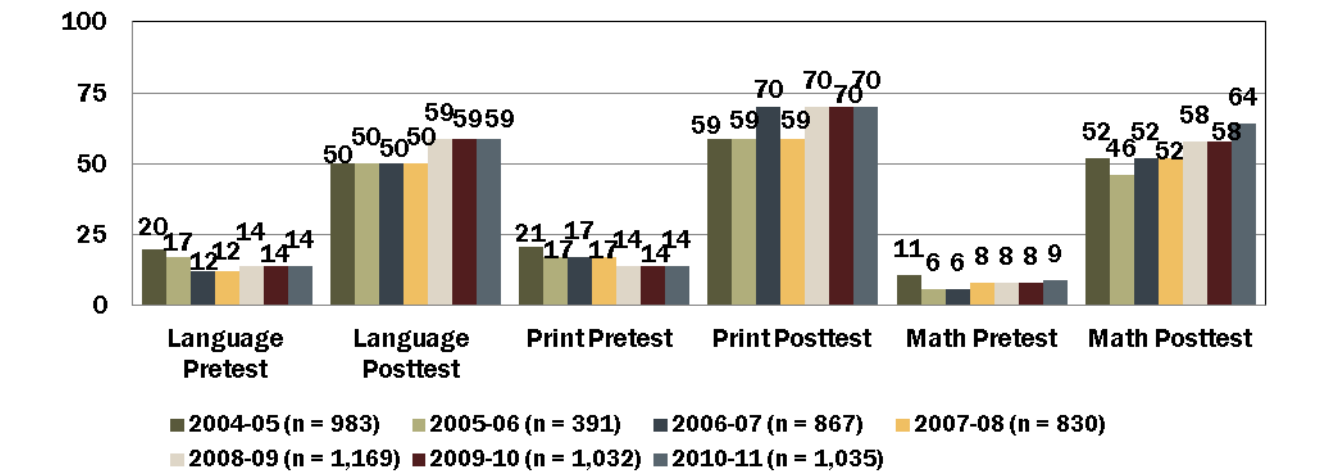


Figure 3. National Percentile Rank for NSECD students statewide in Language, Print, and Math across program years.
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2010–11

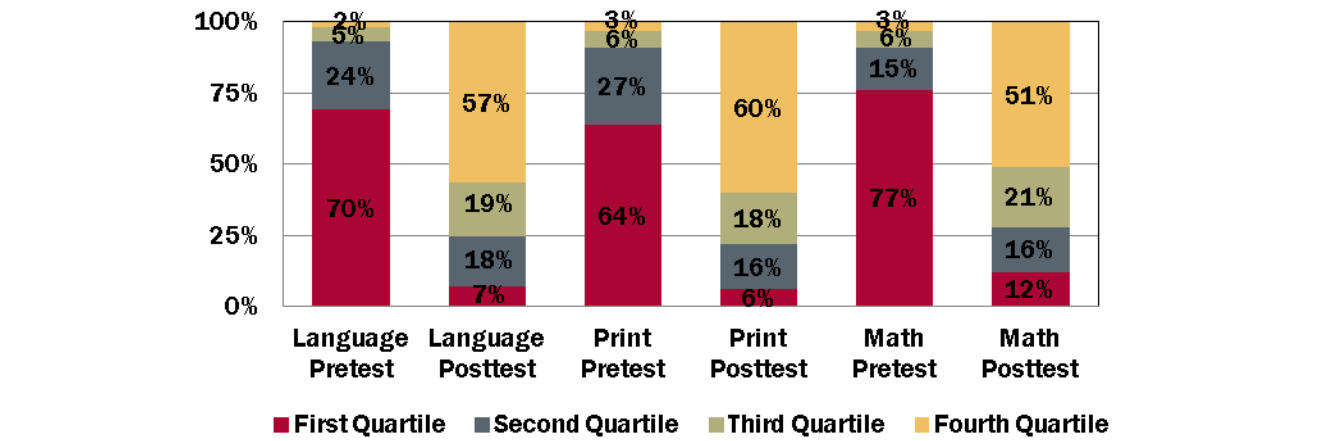


Figure 4. Percentage of NSECD students scoring in the respective quartiles on the DSC pretest and posttest fall 2010 to spring 2011 (n = 1,035).
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2010–11

Closing the Gap: Student Performance

Children enrolled in the NSECD program demonstrate a similar proportion of correct responses on the DSC, regardless of ethnicity or income level. These results also suggest positive responses from lower income families.

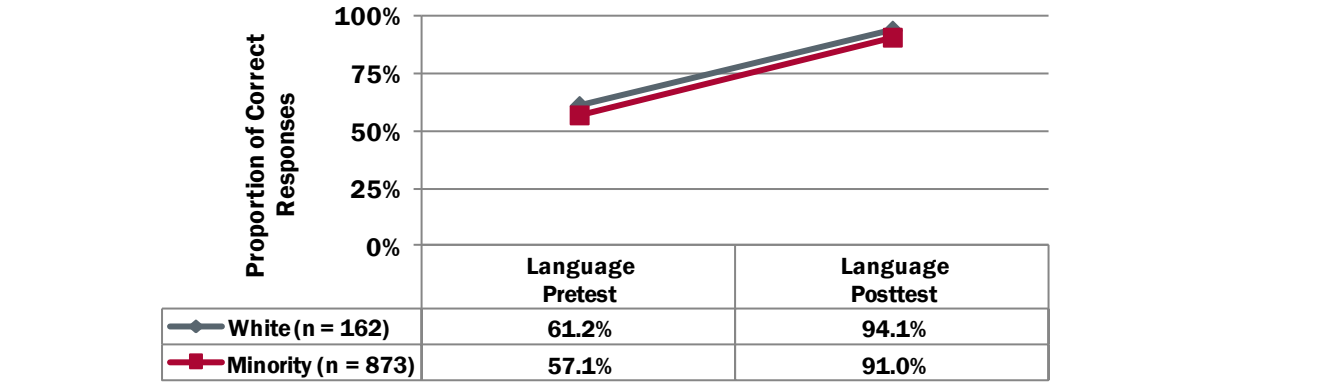


Figure 5. Proportion of correct responses in Language on the DSC for NSECD Cohort 8 students, by ethnicity (n = 1,035).
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2010–11

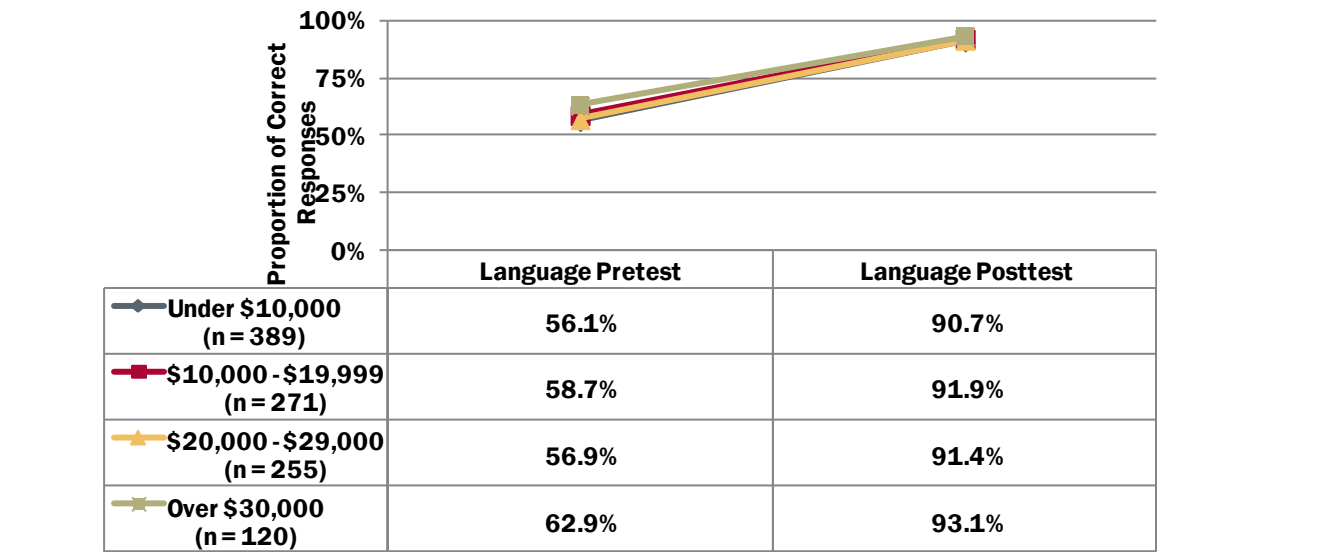


Figure 6. Proportion of correct responses in Language on the DSC for NSECD Cohort 8 students, by income level (n = 1,035).
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2010–11

Program Quality

NSECD seeks to offer the highest quality early childhood experience. The central expectations that serve as a foundation are developmentally appropriate practices, the NAEYC philosophy, extended before- and after-school enrichment activities, a competent and caring staff, and the full utilization of materials, supplies, and equipment. In order to document the implementation of these expectations, specific program information is outlined in this summary.

Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) Data

The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) is a standardized tool that describes those supports considered important for language and literacy development in the classroom. The revised ELLCO Pre-K Tool includes two subscales: (1) general classroom environment, and (2) language and literacy. It is described as an observation instrument that has been designed for use in center-based classrooms for 3- to 5-year-old children.

The 2010–11 school year represented the second year of ELLCO implementation within 77 NSECD classrooms. NSECD classrooms were observed during the fall 2010 and spring 2011 terms. NSECD completed the 2010–11 school year with an overall ELLCO score of 4.48. This score constitutes a “sufficient” ELLCO rating during the second year of ELLCO implementation. All observational data were collected during the 2010–11 school year by NSECD program monitors. In general, NSECD classrooms exceeded the standard for effective literacy practices.

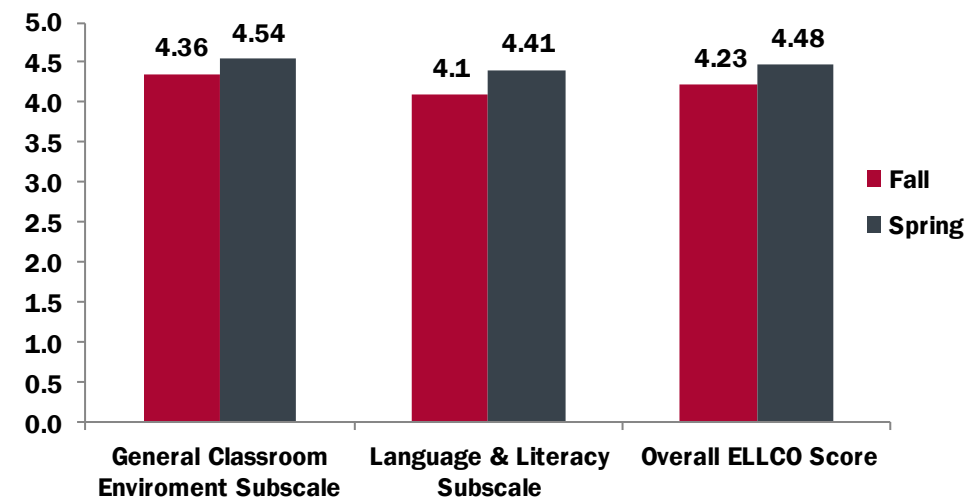


Figure 7. NSECD classroom ELLCO scores from fall 2010 to spring 2011 (n = 77). Primary Data Source: NSECD Program Monitor ELLCO score forms, 2010–11

What the Future Holds

For the past eight years, results from the evaluation of the NSECD program have consistently supported the same conclusion: high-quality preschool works! In order to continue monitoring the short- and long-term progress of these children, the Governor’s Office of Community Programs’ early childhood staff and the Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette will work to promote the following goals, based on recent research findings:

- Consider increasing statewide participation in NSECD in highly impoverished parishes and regions across the state.
- Identify and provide ongoing technical assistance to NSECD outlying districts (lowest performing schools on the DSC posttest assessment and ELLCO tool).
- Determine factors that contribute to the success of the higher performing schools and ascertain the needs of the lower performing schools (e.g. curriculum integration, leadership and staff morale, parent interaction and ongoing professional development).
- Investigate the benefit of serving at-risk, targeted 3-year-olds by identifying the essential predictors that would warrant a child’s participation in high-quality early childhood education for two years.
- Collaborate with child care, Head Start, and other agencies to explore opportunities for expansion.
- Continue to expand professional development opportunities focused on program needs (e.g., planning, curriculum alignment, portfolios, using assessments to guide instruction, preparing the environment, science, math, and art integration).
- Collaborate with university partners to develop alternative strategies that will increase the number of certified teachers and highly qualified teacher assistants.
- Continue to compare pretest and posttest scores of at-risk 4-year-old children who participate in the NSECD program to ensure that these students continue to show significant gains in the academic areas of Language, Print, and Math.
- Encourage schools to provide additional high-quality early education opportunities to help children become “school ready.”
- Increase student achievement on high-stakes assessments, such as iLEAP, LEAP, and the Graduation Exit Exam (GEE) by increasing participation in NSECD.
- Reduce grade-retention rates by increasing participation in NSECD.
- Reduce special education classification by increasing participation in NSECD.

“The program focus exposes children to literacy in such a way that children are prepared to learn to read before ever starting kindergarten.”

- Mae Winbush, Principal
Gethsemane Christian Academy