

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Nonpublic Schools

## Early Childhood Development

### 2009-2010

### Acknowledgements

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**Ruth Johnson**  
Secretary

#### Louisiana Department of Education

**Paul G. Pastorek**  
Superintendent

**Ollie Tyler**  
Deputy Superintendent of Education

#### NSECD Participating Schools

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

**Calcasieu Parish**  
Sacred Heart Catholic School

**East Baton Rouge Parish**  
Kiddies Kampos  
St. Gerard Majella School

**East Carroll Parish**  
Briarfield Academy

**Franklin Parish**  
Family Community Christian School

**Iberia Parish**  
Little Treasures Early Learning Center

#### NSECD Participating Schools (cont.)

**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**  
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

**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**  
Louisiana Preparatory School  
Family Worship

**Tangipahoa Parish**  
Gordon Richardson Christian

**St. Tammany Parish**  
Cedarwood School

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## NSECD's Prekindergarten Success

Analyses of Louisiana's Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development Program (NSECD) test scores over past school years reveal significant improvements in the participating children's performance. In 2009–10, progress was measured for 1,032 NSECD students who completed both a pretest and a posttest in Language, Print, and Math. NSECD student performance has shown steady growth, with posttest scores for the last six years close to or higher than the national average on the Developing Skills Checklist (DSC). All posttest scores during the 2009–10 school year remained consistent with posttest scores during the 2008–09 school year and surpassed the achievement level of previous years across all subject areas. 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 the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) serve as a philosophical foundation for the NSECD program.

## 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 six 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 (six-hour) program
- Vision, hearing, and dental screenings
- Research-based and developmentally appropriate curricula
- Before- and after-school 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

## What the Future Holds

For the past six 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 (both the highest performing and lowest performing schools on the DSC posttest assessment).
- 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, 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 expand literacy materials relative to early childhood curricula.
- 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.
- Analyze the impact of high-stakes testing results upon student dropout rates among NSECD students at the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup>-grade levels.

**“Let us be a proud nation that takes responsibility for all our children.”**

- Judy Heumann  
American disability rights activist



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) Pilot Data

The *Early Language & 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 2009–10 school year represented the first year of *ELLCO* implementation within 77 NSECD classrooms. NSECD classrooms were observed during the fall 2009 and spring 2010 terms. NSECD completed the 2009–10 school year with an overall *ELLCO* score of 4.4. This score constitutes a “sufficient” *ELLCO* rating during the pilot year of *ELLCO* implementation. All observational data were collected during the 2009–10 school year by NSECD program monitors. In general, NSECD classrooms exceeded the standard of effective literacy practices. NSECD classrooms rated highest within the Books and Book Reading section of the *ELLCO Pre-K Tool*, with an overall post-assessment score of 4.6 (see Figure 7). Although scores increased and represented a “sufficient” rating in each section of the *ELLCO Pre-K Tool*, it was identified that the Language Environment and the Print and Early Writing sections of the *ELLCO Pre-K Tool* represented the lowest overall post-assessment scores of 4.2 (see Figure 7).

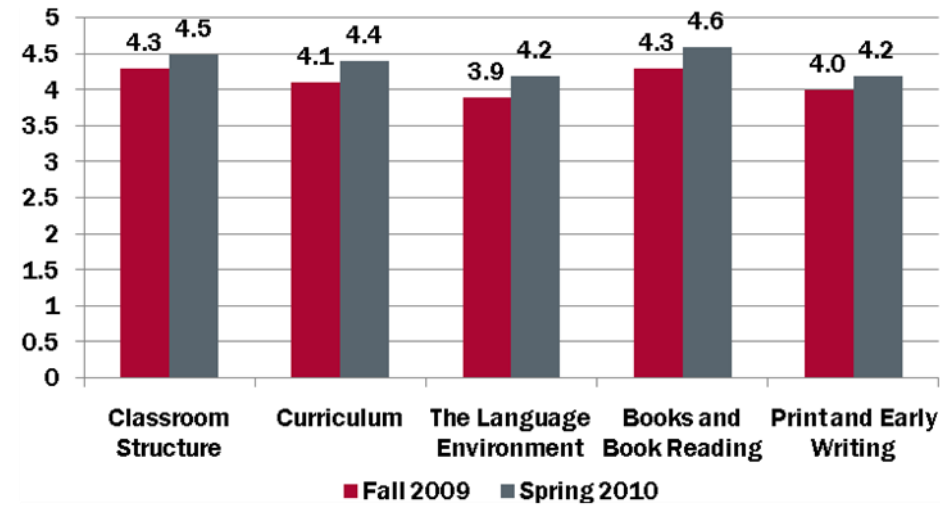


Figure 7. NSECD classroom *ELLCO* scores from fall 2009 to spring 2010 (n = 77)  
Primary Data Source: NSECD Program Monitor *ELLCO* score forms, 2009–10

Who Is Served by NSECD?

In 2009–10, prekindergarten intervention was provided in the NSECD program for 1,308 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 92% of NSECD participants qualified for FRL services for the 2009–10 school year. This percentage is based upon the dataset of 1,032 NSECD students. This demonstrates that the program serves the targeted population of at-risk children.

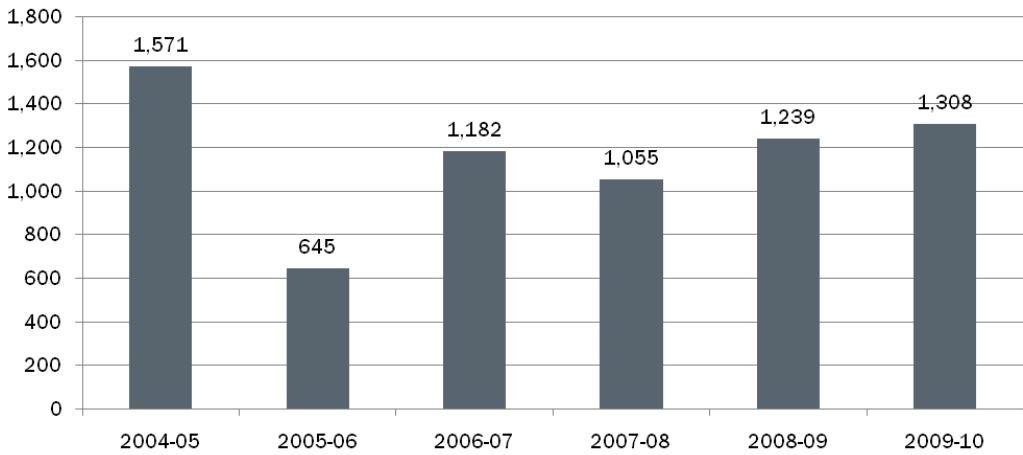


Figure 1. Enrollment of NSECD students across program years  
Data Source: NSECD program  
Changes in enrollment differ from 2004–05 and 2005–06 due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Enrollment numbers were obtained on October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.

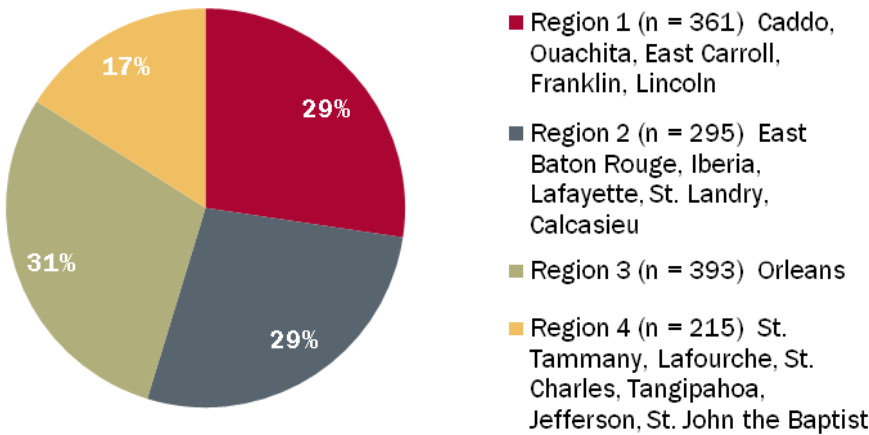


Figure 2. Percentage of NSECD cohort 7 students enrolled and attending regularly by region, 2009–10  
Data Source: NSECD program

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 2009–10, progress was measured in this way for the NSECD cohort 7 (n = 1,032) 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 7 children showed significant improvement from pretest to posttest. While all posttest scores were statistically significant and above the national average in all areas tested, Math continues to be the greatest challenge for the NSECD population, with 15% of students remaining in the first quartile (see Figure 4).

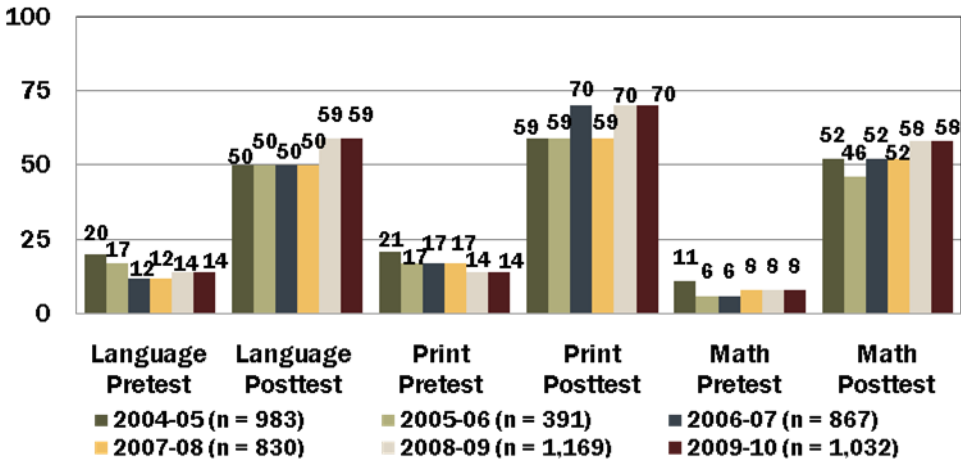


Figure 3. National Percentile Rank for NSECD students statewide in Language, Print, and Math across program years  
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2009–10

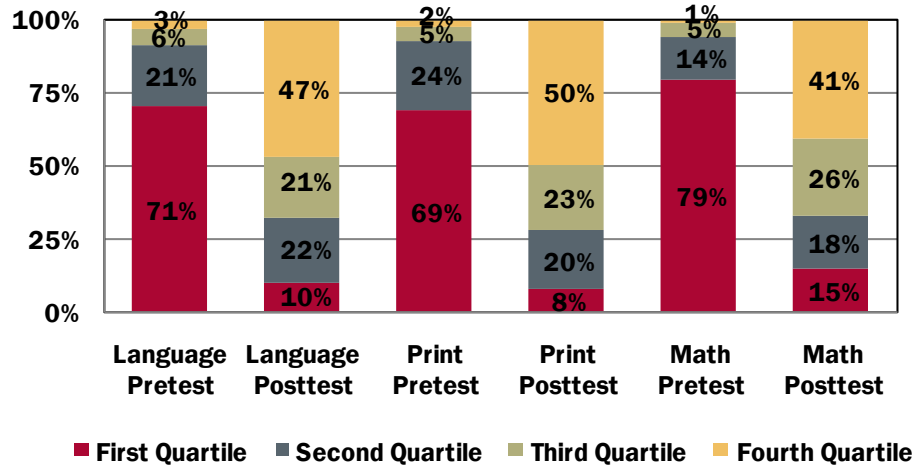


Figure 4. Percentage of NSECD cohort 7 students scoring in the respective quartiles on the DSC pretest and post-test fall 2009 to spring 2010 (n = 1,032)  
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2009–10

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.

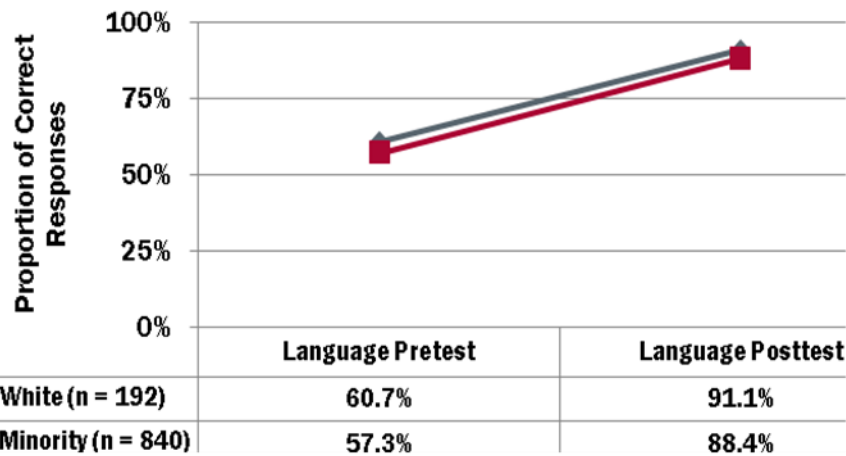


Figure 5. Proportion of Correct Responses in Language on the DSC for NSECD cohort 7 students by ethnicity (n = 1,032)  
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2009–10

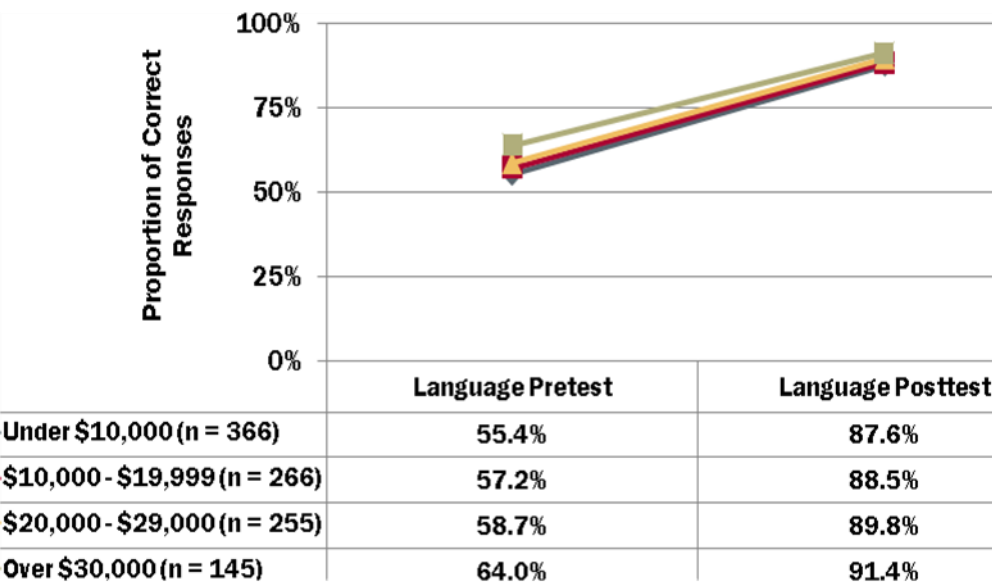


Figure 6. Proportion of Correct Responses in Language on the DSC for NSECD cohort 7 students by income level (n = 1,032)  
Primary Data Source: Developing Skills Checklist, 2009–10