


*THE 2000-01 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION EVALUATION REPORT*

reaching for
results 

Louisiana Department of Education
Cecil J. Picard,
State Superintendent of Education

June 2001

Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education

Mr. Paul Pastorek
President
Member-at-Large

Dr. James Stafford
Vice-President
5th SBESE District

Mr. Keith Johnson
Secretary-Treasurer
2nd SBESE District

Ms. Donna Contois
1st SBESE District

Ms. Glenn Lee Buquet
3rd SBESE District

Mr. Walter Lee
4th SBESE District

Dr. Richard Musemeche
6th SBESE District

Mr. Dale Bayard
7th SBESE District

Ms. Linda Johnson
8th SBESE District

Mr. Gerald Dill
Member-at-Large

Ms. Leslie Jacobs
Member-at-Large

Ms. Weegie Peabody
Executive Director

For additional information, please visit the Louisiana Department of Education web site at www.louisianaschools.net or contact the Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources at (225) 342-0917.

This public document was printed at a cost of \$142.50. One hundred copies of this public document were published in this first printing at a cost of \$142.50. This document was published by the Louisiana Department of Education; Office of Management and Finance; Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources; P.O. Box 94064; Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70804-9064, to report information about the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, under authority of R.S. 17:22. The material was printed in accordance with the standards for printing by state agencies established pursuant to R.S. 43:31.

***THE 2000-01 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION EVALUATION REPORT***

**Louisiana Department of Education
Cecil J. Picard,
State Superintendent of Education**

June 2001

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	iv
BACKGROUND	1
EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AND DATA SOURCES	2
PRESENTATION OF DATA SUMMARY TABLES	5
APPLICANT/ENROLLMENT DATA	5
TABLE 1. Extent of Services Provided to Eligible Applicants	5
TABLE 2. Additional Enrollment, Class, and School Information.....	7
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STARTING POINTS CHILDREN	8
TABLE 3. Demographic Characteristics on Starting Points Participants.....	8
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	9
TABLE 4. Screening Instruments Used to Identify At-risk Students.....	9
TABLE 5. Employment/Enrollment Status of Parents/Guardians.....	9
TABLE 6. Monthly Household Income and Number in Household <i>The 2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program</i>	10
TABLE 7. Coordinators' Comments About the Eligibility Criteria	11
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT	12
TABLE 8. Parental Involvement Activities or Special Provisions Frequently Used in Participating Systems	12
TABLE 9. Other Ways Parents/Guardians Were Involved in the Program.....	13
TABLE 10. The Percent of Parents Who Typically Attend the Parent Workshops	14
HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION	15
TABLE 11. Activities/Policies Used to Provide a Safe and Healthy Environment.....	15
TABLE 12. Activities/Practices Used to Promote the Health of Starting Points Participants.....	16
COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM	17
TABLE 13. Comments About the Program.....	17

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS OFFERING <i>THE 2000-01 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM</i>	20
TABLE 14. Certification Status of Teachers Who Provided Instruction to the Starting Points Children	20
DISCUSSION	23
CONCLUSIONS	27
REFERENCES	28
APPENDIX	29
Louisiana Department of Education Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources <i>2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program</i> Project Description Survey.....	29

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE 2000-01 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

FUNDING AND PURPOSE	Louisiana State funds and the U. S. Block Grant Fund provided \$5,019,000 for the 2000-01 <i>Starting Points Preschool Program</i> . Funding was used to provide pre-kindergarten services to at-risk children (identified based on screening test results) who met two Federal and three State eligibility criteria.
SCHOOLS AND CLASSES	By October 2000, 52 systems, 96 public schools, and two nonpublic diocesan schools were serving children in 105 classes. Of the 105 teachers, 90.4% were fully certified in Nursery School, Kindergarten, or Early Childhood Education. The majority of the schools served Starting Points children in the previous school year; 91 of these schools had received a school performance score in 2000.
ELIGIBILITY AND CHILDREN SERVED	For the 2000-01 Program, 3,074 student applications were received; 1,874 children (61.0%) were eligible. Most systems used the <i>Brigance Preschool Screen for Three- and Four-Year-Old Children</i> (53.8%) or the <i>Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning</i> (26.9%) as the screening instruments. As the school year began, 1,556 children were enrolled, with an additional 153 children on waiting lists. Family size and income data were reported on 1,562 participants; 49.0% of these children were from families with four to six people in the household. In addition, 77.4% of these Starting Points participants were from families with a monthly household income under \$1,997 and 74.9% of the children were from single-parent homes. The October 1, 2000 <i>Student Information System (SIS)</i> record count for Starting Points was 1,498 children. These <i>SIS</i> records identified the majority of children as Black (61.2%) or White (35.4%).
PARENT/ GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT	<p>Of the 1,929 parents/guardians of the Starting Points children, 1,693 (87.7%) were working full-time, 138 (7.2%) were enrolled full-time in a job training/education program, and 60 (3.1%) were gainfully employed and enrolled in a job training/education program on a part-time basis.</p> <p>The most frequently-used techniques for involving parents were to inform parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms (69.2%); to send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities (55.8%); and to hold individual parent/teacher conferences (51.9%). Workshops/parent meetings were held in 98.1% of the participating systems; 16 coordinators indicated these were frequently used parent involvement activities. The percentage of parents/guardians most often cited as typically attending workshops/parent meetings was 25% to 49% (cited by 36.5% of the coordinators).</p>
HEALTH AND SAFETY FINDINGS	<p>In more than 98% of the participating systems,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools serving Starting Points children have a policy concerning the administration of first-aid and/or medications. • vision and hearing screenings are provided to the Starting Points children. • the state or city fire departments inspect the schools annually. • classroom materials, mats, and furniture are sanitized on a regular basis. • Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills. • well-balanced meals are provided each day. • the school has a breakfast program. • the daily schedule includes planned, physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities. • the curriculum includes child-centered, developmentally-appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety.

For more information, contact

Louisiana Department of Education
Office of Management and Finance
Division of Planning, Analysis and
Information Resources

Janice Ducote, (225) 342-3391, Jducote@mail.doe.state.la.us
Barbara Abshire, (225) 342-1522, Babshire@mail.doe.state.la.us

BACKGROUND

The *Starting Points Preschool Program* was initiated in 1992-93 through Section H of the U. S. Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (ACT 658, or the Block Grant Act). Under the provisions of this act, Federal funds were provided to improve the availability, affordability, and quality of child care services. In Louisiana, the lead agency for administering the Block Grant is the Department of Social Services. Beginning in 1992, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) was authorized to administer the portion of the Block Grant funds that is to be expended for the expansion of early childhood development programs and for before- and after-school care programs.

As administered by the LDE, Division of Student Standards and Assessments, Elementary Standards Section, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* is a pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) program that is designed to stimulate the development of cognitive, social, emotional, communication, and motor skills in a manner and at a pace consistent with the needs and capabilities of the individual child. As noted in the regulations, the local programs must “Adhere to the developmental philosophy as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.” [*Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations (Bulletin 1934)* revised June 1998]

Furthermore, the participating schools are to provide quality Pre-K classes designed for at-risk children who meet five eligibility criteria. The Federal regulations associated with the *Starting Points Preschool Program* require that parents/guardians of the children must be working or they must be enrolled in job training/education programs. Families must also meet an income requirement. According to State regulations, the children must be one year younger than Kindergarten age and identified as at risk, on the basis of Pre-K screening test results. Parents/guardians must also agree to participate in program activities. [For a detailed description of these eligibility criteria, see the *Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations (Bulletin 1934)*, revised June 1998]

From school years 1992-93 through 1998-99, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* expanded to include additional school systems, schools, classes, and at-risk children. During these school years, the U.S. Block Grant allocation was the source of funds for this program. However, the 1999-2000 Program year was funded by combining \$1,489,137 of Louisiana State funds with \$3,530,363 of Federal funds that were from the U. S. Block Grant. Similarly, in 2000-01, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* received an allocation of \$1,489,137 of State funds and \$3,529,863 of Federal funds. The total allocation of \$5,019,000 was transferred from the lead agency to the LDE, following the normal legislative budgetary approval process. All funds were to be used for the *2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program*.

Once funding for 2000-01 was available, the LDE processed applications from systems or schools that wished to implement local programs. As systems or schools received program approval and notification of the amount of money allocated, the system-level Program coordinators or other employees arranged for the Pre-K classes, advertised the local programs, hired the teachers, and assisted with the identification of eligible children. By the beginning of the 2000-01 school year, 50 public school systems, two diocesan schools, and one nonpublic school had received program approval. Because the nonpublic school was unable to find eligible children, it did not participate in 2000-01. A total of 52 systems were implementing local programs as the 2000-01 school year began.

While most of the participating school systems were offering the *Starting Points Preschool Program* for the ninth consecutive year, some local programs were now located on different school campuses. All local programs were to be placed in low-income areas and were to be supervised by LDE staff of the Elementary Standards Section. These LDE staff are the State-level Program Coordinators; they provide technical assistance such as sponsoring an annual early childhood conference, informing local

administrators of other staff development opportunities, and visiting selected Pre-K classes of Starting Points participants. During the class visits, the State-level Program Coordinators assess the instructional environment, observe the teachers/aides, conduct compliance monitoring at each site, and recommend ways the Pre-K classes can be improved.

In addition, the State-level Program Coordinators agreed to provide the Louisiana Department of Social Services with an evaluation of this Program. At this time, existing LDE staff are responsible for evaluating this Program. Since the inception of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, each evaluation study has been conducted by Barbara Abshire and Janice Ducote (who are currently employed within the Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources). In September of 2000, these LDE employees were informed that they were to continue evaluating the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

The purpose of evaluating this Program is to provide information to policy makers and program administrators. Procedures, instruments, and data sources used in the current evaluation were requested by the State-level Program Coordinators, who have been interested in developing a new evaluation design. In the 1999-2000 evaluation, data collection procedures were modified, in an effort to reduce the amount of paperwork required of the system-level and state-level employees, as well as to make better use of data that were available on the *Starting Points Preschool Program* or its participants. Similar procedures were used in this evaluation to collect the data on the 2000-01 Program year. The collection of data on the *2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program* began in September 2000; it was completed in January 2001. Descriptions of evaluation activities and the data sources for this Program Description Report are included in the next section of this document.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AND DATA SOURCES

In September 2000, the State-level Program Coordinators provided the evaluators with a copy of the *Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations (Bulletin 1934)* for the 2000-01 school year; the program application package; a list of the participating systems and schools; the names/contact information of the system-level Program coordinators; and the names of the Starting Points teachers. All of these materials were reviewed in order to plan for the evaluation.

The evaluators and State-level Program Coordinators updated the 1999-2000 data collection instrument to prepare the *2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program Project Description Survey (PDS)* instrument. As in the previous school year, the *2000-01 PDS* instrument did not include a table previously used to collect data on participating schools, classes, and enrollment information; items regarding teacher certification status; and items on Pre-K screening instruments. Data concerning these characteristics of the Program year were reported to the Elementary Standards Section and were shared with the evaluators.

Since *PDS* items concerning eligible children who could not be accommodated in the available classes produced consistent findings in the previous evaluations, these items were replaced in 1999-2000 by a new item that requested the number of children on waiting lists. The waiting list item remained on the *2000-01 PDS* instrument. Other items eliminated from both the 1999-2000 and 2000-01 *PDS* instruments were those concerning the ethnicity of the enrolled participants and items on the strengths and weaknesses of the Program. The ethnicity of the enrolled participants can be described, based on data in the *Student Information System (SIS)* records, reported by October 1, at the end of the first *SIS* data collection period.

Data concerning the program strengths and weaknesses were not collected in 2000-01 or in 1999-2000 because the five major strengths and the five major weaknesses of this Program had been consistent across the previous evaluations. Other revisions to the *2000-01 PDS* included minor modifications of the

parental involvement items and adjustments to the health and safety items. By October 3, 2000, the 2000-01 *PDS* instrument was finalized; a copy appears in the Appendix.

Next, a database of the system-level program coordinator contact information was established. A cover memorandum and a copy of the 2000-01 *PDS* instrument were mailed to these coordinators on October 6, 2000. Since there is a continuing concern that *SIS* Pre-K records may not be accurate, the cover memorandum asked system-level coordinators to complete the *PDS* and to ensure that accurate *SIS* Pre-K enrollment data were submitted. If corrections were needed in *SIS* data, system-level coordinators were asked to contact the system's *SIS* coordinator before December 1, 2000.

The cover memorandum also directed the system-level coordinators to return the completed *PDS* instrument to Barbara Abshire by November 10, 2000. By this deadline, 46 systems (88.5%) had returned a completed *PDS* instrument. A divisional support staff member contacted systems that had not returned the *PDS* instruments. By December 14, 2000, each participating system had returned a completed *PDS* instrument and both evaluators began reviewing the *PDS* data. The evaluators contacted the system-level program coordinators when corrections and/or additional information were needed.

Since the *PDS* instrument has been revised, this data source does not yield so many statistics as the *PDS* instruments used to evaluate previous Program years. However, the Elementary Standards Section supplied other data for the evaluation. For example, in October, the Elementary Standards Section provided information on the certification status of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* teachers and a list of the Pre-K screening instruments each system had used. The system-level initial roster enrollment counts and the number of classes per system were shared with the evaluators on November 15, 2000. As schedules permitted, both evaluators worked with the information from the Elementary Standards Section, and they analyzed the *PDS* data.

As in the previous evaluation study, Barbara Abshire obtained and analyzed the *SIS* Pre-K data that were used in this report. Janice Ducote searched LDE publications [e.g., the *Louisiana School Directory 2000-01 (Bulletin 1462)* and the web-site version of *School Accountability Data (October 2000)*]. Data from these additional sources were used within the report to provide additional information about the systems and schools that implemented the *Starting Points Preschool Program* in 2000-01.

From October 2000 through January 2001, several different computer software packages were used to analyze all data collected for this report. Following the data analysis, an evaluation report was drafted. In February 2001, staff of the Elementary Standard Sections reviewed the drafted report. These staff members met with the evaluators to discuss findings and to recommend some revisions to the *PDS* report. In May 2001, a subsequent drafted report was prepared and transmitted for review; the State-level Program Coordinators felt comfortable with this draft. Prior to the completion of the final *PDS* report, additional LDE staff members reviewed the drafted report. Recommended changes were made and then the report was completed in June 2001.

The purpose of this Program Description Report is to provide a description of the 2000-01 Program. This report was organized to begin with a brief Executive Summary, a discussion of the Program's background, and a section describing the evaluation activities and the data sources. Data summary tables are then presented to provide statistics based on the analysis of *SIS* data, *PDS* data, the data supplied by the Elementary Standards Section, and/or the list of participating systems/schools. Each data summary table includes source references, while some data tables contain footnotes. In the following sections of this report, data summary tables are presented under the headings that are listed below.

- applicant/enrollment data,
- demographic characteristics of the Starting Points children,
- eligibility criteria,
- parental involvement,
- health and safety information,
- additional comments on the program, and
- characteristics of schools offering the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

Following the data summary tables, the report continues with a discussion section and conclusions about the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. After publication of this report, the State-level and system-level Program Coordinators, certain employees of the Louisiana Department of Social Services, and selected LDE employees will each receive a copy of the full report. Other stakeholders will receive only the Executive Summary.

PRESENTATION OF DATA SUMMARY TABLES

APPLICANT/ENROLLMENT DATA

TABLE 1. EXTENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
(N = 52 Systems)

SYSTEM NAME	STARTING POINTS CHILDREN			NO. OF CHILDREN ON WAITING LIST
	TOTAL NO. OF APPLICANTS	NO. OF ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	NO. OF CHILDREN ENROLLED	
Acadia	42	40	39	0
Allen	55	16	16	0
Ascension	32	18	17	0
Assumption	16	12	12	NA
Avoyelles	66	20	20	0
Beauregard	30	25	20	3
Bossier	27	27	25	0
Caddo	49	49	51	0
Calcasieu	76	69	60	5
Caldwell	30	18	18	0
Catahoula	21	19	20	3
Claiborne	60	40	20	5
Concordia ¹	33	31	20	0
DeSoto	49	27	20	6
East Baton Rouge	146	117	109	13
East Feliciana	25	20	20	0
Evangeline	161	39	39	2
Iberia	50	36	36	0
Iberville	31	25	20	3
Jefferson	255	201	140	15
Lafayette ²	58	56	38	7
Lafourche	152	30	27	3
LaSalle	76	16	16	0
Livingston	60	18	18	0
Madison	42	20	20	0
Morehouse ³	94	29	30	0
Natchitoches	26	20	20	3
Page Subtotals	1,762	1,038	891	68

Source References:

Numbers of applicants, eligible applicants, and children on the waiting list are from the PDS instrument. Numbers of children enrolled are from information that was submitted to the Elementary Standards Section.

TABLE 1. (CONTINUED) EXTENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED
TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
(N = 52 Systems)

SYSTEM NAME	STARTING POINTS CHILDREN			NO. OF CHILDREN ON WAITING LIST
	TOTAL NO. OF APPLICANTS	NO. OF ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	NO. OF CHILDREN ENROLLED	
Orleans	102	96	96	0
Ouachita	43	30	25	7
Plaquemines	28	23	20	3
Pointe Coupee	25	23	19	0
Rapides	80	37	35	0
Red River	83	19	17	0
Richland	42	20	20	2
Sabine	90	59	20	26
St. Helena	20	16	15	0
St. John the Baptist	26	20	20	NA
St. Landry	47	41	40	2
St. Martin	139	107	32	11
St. Mary ⁴	94	24	20	4
St. Tammany	54	48	36	11
Terrebonne	102	50	50	1
Union	28	22	20	2
Vermilion	68	24	24	0
Vernon	30	30	20	10
Washington	27	17	17	0
Webster	26	23	20	3
West Baton Rouge	11	11	9	NA
Winn	20	17	20	0
Monroe City	89	46	40	0
New Orleans Archdiocese	22	18	15	3
Shreveport Diocese	16	15	15	0
Page Subtotals	1,312	836	665	85
Totals ^{5,6}	3,074	1,874	1,556	153

¹ The coordinator indicated some children were placed in other programs and discussed enrollment changes in a letter.

² "Some students were placed in the *Early Childhood Program*."

³ "All applicants were reviewed; those not eligible were placed in other programs."

⁴ The number of applicants was "for three Pre-K classes."

⁵ Among the 3,074 applicants for the 2000-01 *Starting Points Preschool Program*, 61.0% (or 1,874) were determined to be eligible for participation; 1,556 children were enrolled in classes by October 2000. An additional 153 children were on waiting lists in 25 of the participating systems as the school year began.

⁶ Table 2 provides additional information on the number of enrolled children, the number of classes, and the number of participating schools within the 52 systems.

TABLE 2. ADDITIONAL ENROLLMENT, CLASS, AND SCHOOL INFORMATION
(N = 52 Systems)

CHILDREN, CLASSES, AND SCHOOLS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED¹		
Fewer than 20	13	25.0
20 – 39	31	59.6
40 – 59	4	7.7
60 – 79	1	1.9
80 or more	3	5.8
NUMBER OF CLASSES PROVIDED¹		
One	30	57.7
Two	10	19.2
Three	5	9.6
Four	3	5.8
Five	0	0.0
Six	2	3.9
Seven	1	1.9
Eight	0	0.0
Nine	1	1.9
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS²		
One	30	57.7
Two	12	23.0
Three	4	7.7
Four	2	3.9
Five	2	3.9
Six	1	1.9
Seven	0	0.0
Eight	1	1.9

Source References:

Numbers of children enrolled and numbers of classes are from the Elementary Standards Section.

Number of schools is based on the list of participating systems and sites.

- ¹ The majority of the participating systems (59.6%) had enrolled 20 to 39 children in the 2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program. The children were enrolled in a total of 105 classes, with 57.7% of the systems providing only one class.
- ² A total of 98 schools served the Starting Points children, but most systems (57.7%) offered the program at just one school. Thirteen of the schools (or 13.3% of the schools) implemented prorated classes, which may have served additional children funded through other Pre-K programs.

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF
THE STARTING POINTS CHILDREN**

TABLE 3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
ON STARTING POINTS PARTICIPANTS

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS	PARTICIPANTS	
	NO.	%
ETHNICITY¹		
Black	917	61.2
White	530	35.4
Hispanic	27	1.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	13	0.9
American Indian/Alaskan Native	11	0.7
Total Reported	1,498	100.0
CHILDREN FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES²	1,170	74.9
FAMILY SIZE³		
2	279	17.9
3	485	31.0
4 – 6	766	49.0
7 – 9	31	2.0
10 or More	1	0.1
Total Reported	1,562	100.0
MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
\$ 0 - \$1,996	1,209	77.4
\$1,997 - \$2,465	173	11.1
\$2,466 - \$2,935	126	8.1
\$2,936 - \$3,405	44	2.8
\$3,406 - \$3,874	7	0.4
\$3,875 - \$3,962	2	0.1
\$3,963 or Higher	1	0.1
Total Reported	1,562	100.0

Source References:

The *ethnicity data* are from *SIS*.

Children from single-parent homes, family size, and income data are from the *PDS* instrument.

¹ At the end of the first data collection period, *SIS* records indicated that the *2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program* funded 1,498 Pre-K participants. One public system had not entered records on Starting Points children; the two nonpublic schools do not submit data to *SIS*. The majority of the children who did have a *SIS* record were identified as Black (917 or 61.2%), while 530 (or 35.4%) were classified as White. *SIS* records also indicated 777 children (or 51.9%) were females and 721 children (or 48.1%) were males.

² The percentage of children from single-parent/guardian homes was calculated by using 1,562 as the total number of Starting Points participants.

³ *Family size* is the number of adults and their dependent children, residing in or being part of the same household as the Starting Points participant.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

TABLE 4. SCREENING INSTRUMENTS USED TO IDENTIFY AT-RISK STUDENTS
(N = 52 Systems)

NAMES OF SCREENING INSTRUMENTS USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
<i>Brigance Preschool Screen for Three- and Four-Year-Old Children</i>	28	53.8
<i>Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning</i>	14	26.9
<i>The Learning Accomplishment Profile – Diagnostic Screen for Four-Year-Olds</i>	5	9.6
<i>Batelle Developmental Inventory</i>	2	3.9
<i>Denver Developmental Screening Test</i>	2	3.9
<i>Early Recognition Intervention System</i>	1	1.9

Source Reference:

Data on the *Screening instruments* used by the systems were supplied by the LDE, Elementary Standards Section.

TABLE 5. EMPLOYMENT/ENROLLMENT STATUS OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS
(N = 1,929 Parents/Guardians)

PARENTS/GUARDIANS WHO WERE REPORTED AS	PARENTS/ GUARDIANS	
	NO.	%
Working full-time	1,693	87.7
In school or job-training full-time	138	7.2
Part-time working and part-time in school/job training	60	3.1
In 30-day grace period while seeking employment or educational opportunity ¹	36	1.9
Disabled parents/guardians ²	2	0.1
Total parents/guardians	1,929	100.0

Source Reference:

This information on the parents/guardians is from the *PDS* instrument.

¹ After the Program year begins, parents/guardians who become unemployed are allowed a 30-day grace period to find a new job or to enroll in a job training/education program.

² Two parents/guardians were reported as disabled, according to the system-level coordinators.

TABLE 6. MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND NUMBER IN HOUSEHOLD
 THE 2000-01 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
 (N = 1,562 PARTICIPANTS)

NO. IN HOUSE	INCOME RANGES ¹																			
	\$0 TO \$1,996		\$1,997 TO \$2,465		\$2,466 TO \$2,935		\$2,936 TO \$3,405		\$3,406 TO \$3,874		\$3,875 TO \$3,962		\$3,963 TO \$4,050		\$4,051 TO \$4,139		\$4,140 TO \$4,227		\$4,228 TO \$4,315	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
2	279	17.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
3	433	27.7	52	3.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
4	284	18.2	76	4.9	82	5.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
5	134	8.6	32	2.0	31	2.0	37	2.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
6	57	3.6	11	0.7	11	0.7	6	0.4	5	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
7	13	0.8	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1	2	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
8	8	0.5	1	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
9	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
10	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
11 OR MORE	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
N	1,209	77.4	173	11.1	126	8.1	44	2.8	7	0.4	2	0.1	1	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Source References:

Family size and income data are from the PDS instrument.

¹ In Table 6, any child recorded in the cells below the bold lines was reported as meeting the income eligibility criterion. All 1,562 children who were reported as participants of the 2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program did meet this criterion.

TABLE 7. COORDINATORS' COMMENTS ABOUT THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
(N = Three Systems)

When responding to Item IV of the PDS instrument, three coordinators gave comments that pertain to the eligibility criteria. These comments are listed below.

- “The program has had three students to move out of the parish. Finding students who meet the criteria for Starting Points is the reason why the three slots have not been filled.”
- “There were several other students who would have qualified for this program if the income guideline would have been slightly higher. Only one student living with both parents qualified for the program. The other 11 students who qualified live in single parent homes. Most parents who did qualify for the program work at minimum wage jobs.”
- “The problem of getting check stubs from parents still is present. However, because of site change, it is better.”

Source Reference:

These comments are from the *PDS* instrument.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

TABLE 8. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES OR SPECIAL PROVISIONS
FREQUENTLY USED IN PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS
(N = 52 Systems)

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES/PROVISIONS USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Inform parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms	36	69.2
Send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities	29	55.8
Hold individual parent/teacher conferences	27	51.9
Encourage parents to help with activities that are outside of the classroom (e.g., assist in cafeteria, make materials/snacks, or help with field trips)	18	34.6
Request that parents help child with at-home learning activities	17	32.7
Inform parents of ways they may contribute to their child's development	16	30.8
Hold parent workshops or meetings	16	30.8
Provide a parent handbook that includes the program philosophy, policies, and procedures	15	28.9
Hold open house	15	28.9
Allow parents to visit the classroom at their convenience	14	26.9
Encourage parents to volunteer in classroom to help with daily activities	13	25.0
Schedule the parent involvement activities to accommodate the work/training schedules of parents/guardians	9	17.3
Involve parents by using other activities ¹	6	11.5
Work with other agencies or programs to provide assistance to our participating parents ²	5	9.6
Conduct home visits	4	7.7
Provide a parent's bulletin board and/or message center	2	3.9
Provide childcare assistance for workshop/meeting events	2	3.9
Offer alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation ³	2	3.9

Source Reference:

Parental involvement data are from the *PDS* instrument. System-level coordinators were asked to check the **three most frequently used** activities/provisions.

¹ Other parental involvement activities that were listed are summarized in Table 9.

² Assistance was provided by the following agencies (*Child Welfare/Social Services, Parish Health Unit, LEA* provides speech services) and Programs (*Family Literacy, Title I, Even Start, Right Start, Head Start, and Special Education*).

³ These alternatives are listed below.
 "Alternate times for meeting before and after school"
 "Informational pamphlets sent home."

TABLE 9. OTHER WAYS PARENTS/GUARDIANS
WERE INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM
(6 Systems)^{1, 2}

PARENTS/GUARDIANS WERE INVOLVED BY	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Sending materials home to the parents. “A book or poem is sent home each night with the child; the parent is asked to read it to the child and discuss and sign a form stating that the book was read.” “‘Help Me Kits’ are sent home to parents to help with skills. ‘Read to Me’ books are sent home, ‘Character Critters’ - building good character traits.” “Video of a child’s activity is sent home to parent.”	3	5.8
Helping with a group, a project, or an activity. “Community Helpers” “Parents are a part of the school and will work with any special projects or activities that are scheduled.” “Performance events (plays), graduation”	3	5.8
Assisting with field trips.	2	3.8

Source Reference:

These additional methods of parent involvement are from the *PDS* instrument.

¹ Six coordinators responded to Item II-1r. When necessary, the coordinator’s response was recorded in more than one category. The percentages in Table 9 were computed by dividing the number of systems per category by 52 systems and then multiplying by 100.

² In response to Item IV, coordinators made the following comments concerning the parents/guardians of the Starting Points children.

“Parents support the program by participating in Parent/Teacher Conference Day and other activities sponsored by the district and the school.”

“The program provides many experiences for both children and parents. Field trips are provided regularly for both students and parents to attend.”

TABLE 10. THE PERCENT OF PARENTS
WHO TYPICALLY ATTEND THE PARENT WORKSHOPS
(52 Systems)¹

THE PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS TYPICALLY ATTENDING WORKSHOPS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Less than 25% of parents	11	21.2
25-49% of parents ²	19	36.5
50-74% of parents	10	19.2
75% or more of parents	7	13.5
Percent of attendance varies ³	4	7.7
No response	1	1.9
TOTAL	52	100.0

Source Reference:

These *parent attendance data* are from the *PDS* instrument.

¹ Fifty-one system-level coordinators responded to Item II-2. Their responses were recorded in one category. When a coordinator marked more than one option, the response was coded in the “Percent of attendance varies” category. The percentages in Table 10 were computed by dividing the number of systems per category by 52 systems and then multiplying by 100.

² One of these coordinators also wrote, “Moved to two new sites. We may get an increased number to attend workshops in January.”

³ The following statements may clarify parental workshop attendance for the four systems coded in this category.

In a system with five participating schools, the coordinator wrote “2” next to the 25-49% category and also by the 75% or more category. The coordinator wrote “1” next to the option indicating the system does not offer workshops.

In a system with two participating schools, the coordinator marked the less than 25% category and the 25-49% category, as well as the option indicating the percent of attendance varies. The coordinator also wrote, “One site reports less than 25% and the other site over 25%.”

In a system with one participating school, the coordinator marked the 25-49% category and also the option indicating the system does not offer workshops.

In a system with one participating school, the coordinator marked the option indicating the percent of attendance varies and added “Orientation attendance 100%.”

⁴ Based on the coordinators’ responses, parent workshops were offered at least at one school in 51 or 98.1% of the participating systems. The most frequently reported parent attendance range was “25-49% of parents” (among 19, or 36.5% of the systems). However, 50.0% or more of the parents/guardians were said to attend the parent workshops in 17 systems (or 32.7%).

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

TABLE 11. ACTIVITIES/POLICIES USED TO PROVIDE
A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT
(N = 52 Systems)

ACTIVITIES/POLICIES USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
The schools serving Starting Points children have a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications.	52	100.0
The Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills on a regular basis.	52	100.0
The state or city fire department inspects the school sites on an annual basis.	51	98.1
All equipment is maintained in good working condition.	49	94.2
The outdoor play area provides at least seventy-five square feet of space per child, at any one time.	48	92.3
Schools serving Starting Points children are inspected annually by the Office of Public Health.	40	76.9
Outdoor play areas are enclosed. ¹	40	76.9
Soft surfaces are placed under any equipment upon which the children might climb. ²	32	61.5
Excluding space for the furniture and shelving, classrooms are large enough to provide at least thirty-five square feet of space per child. ³	30	57.7
Outdoor sandboxes (sand areas) are covered when not in use. ⁴	21	40.4
Program staff are trained annually in child CPR procedures.	19	36.5

Source Reference:

These data are from the *PDS* instrument.

- ¹ Two system-level coordinators indicated the outdoor play areas are enclosed at only one of the system's school sites.
- ² One coordinator stated Item III-1f was not applicable within the system, while another indicated the characteristic was true for only one of the system's sites.
- ³ To Item III-1i, one coordinator indicated "the room is too small."
- ⁴ Three coordinators reported that Item III-1h was not applicable within the system.

TABLE 12. ACTIVITIES/PRACTICES USED TO PROMOTE
THE HEALTH OF STARTING POINTS PARTICIPANTS
(N = 52 Systems)

ACTIVITIES/PRACTICES USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
The curriculum includes child-centered, developmentally-appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety.	52	100.0
Well-balanced meals are provided each day.	52	100.0
The daily schedule includes planned physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities.	52	100.0
Classroom materials, mats, and furniture are sanitized on a regular basis.	51	98.1
The school has a breakfast program.	51	98.1
Vision screening is provided to Starting Points children.	51	98.1
Hearing screening is provided to Starting Points children.	51	98.1
By system policy, children who have contagious health conditions may not attend class until they are well.	49	94.2
Procedures are in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits.	48	92.3
The staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse.	47	90.4
Nutritional snacks are provided on a daily basis.	46	88.5
Parents/guardians receive helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety.	46	88.5
Health services are provided at the school site by a physician/nurse to Starting Points children. ¹	42	80.8
Starting Points children are referred to other agencies for health services.	41	78.9
The school system is a Kid-Med Provider.	23	44.2

Source Reference:

These data are from the *PDS* instrument.

¹ One system-level coordinator indicated a school nurse serves many schools. When the nurse is on site, she serves the Starting Points children. If she is not on site, the coordinator wrote, "We call parent to let them know of the situation."

COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

TABLE 13: COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM
(N = 19 Comments From Coordinators in 15 Systems)

TYPES OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM COORDINATORS ^{1, 2}	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Discussed personnel involved in the Program	4	26.7
Gave a comment pertaining to the eligibility criteria ³	3	20.0
Commented on coordination with other programs	2	13.3
Identified the impact of the Program	2	13.3
Indicated Program has moved to a new site	2	13.3
Described the parents and their involvement ⁴	2	13.3
Made a statement about the supplies, materials, or resources for the Program	2	13.3
Other coordinator statements	2	13.3

Source Reference:

These data are from the *PDS* instrument.

- ¹ Table 13 is based on the responses to Item IV and one coordinator's cover letter. The coordinators employed by 15 systems (28.8%) provided a total of 19 comments. Eleven coordinators gave one comment, while four coordinators commented on two aspects of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. The comments are on pages 18-19, or in other tables of this report.
- ² The percentages in Table 13 were computed by dividing the number of comments in each category by 15 systems, and then multiplying by 100. If necessary, the coordinator comments were recorded in more than one category.
- ³ Comments addressing eligibility criteria were presented in Table 7, page 11.
- ⁴ Comments describing the parents and their involvement were presented in Table 9, page 13.

COMMENTS ON THE *STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM*

Comments Discussing Personnel Involved in the Program

“The school nurses are available for all students including Starting Points.”

“There is a speech teacher at school. She does speech screening on the children.”

“We have a wonderful program with a great teacher.”

“The Superintendent and Program director fully support this program and hope this program continues.”

Comments Concerning the Eligibility Criteria

Three coordinators commented on eligibility criteria. These three comments were presented in Table 7, page 11.

Comments Concerning Coordination with Other Programs

“The Parish public pre-kindergarten programs (*Starting Points*, *8(g)*, *Title I*, and *Special Education*) and the Parish *Head Start Program* work collaboratively in order to serve as many children as possible. Application procedures are conducted as joint efforts.”

“Collaboration is the main strength of the Starting Points Program in the parish. Professional development involves *Starting Points*, *Title I*, *8(g) Early Childhood* programs, as well as *non-categorical preschool* classes.”

Comments Concerning the Impact of the Program

“Our local Starting Points program has significantly enhanced our school system’s ability to provide a developmentally appropriate learning experience for every four-year-old child in the parish. Starting Points has become an integral component of the Parish Early Childhood Education Program.”

“Our Starting Points Program has truly been beneficial to parents and children.”

Comments Indicating the Program Has Moved to a New Site

“Due to a move from Ferriday Kindergarten Center, which was closed in May 2000, to Ferriday Lower Elementary School in August 2000, we are in the process of moving our playground equipment and our fence.”

“The program was moved to two new sites this year. We are getting calls already from parents who are interested for next year.”

COMMENTS ON THE *STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM*
(CONTINUED)

Comments Concerning the Parents and Their Involvement

Two coordinators commented on the parents and their involvement. These two comments were presented in Table 9, page 13.

Comments Concerning the Supplies, Materials, or Resources for the Program

“The Starting Points Program continues to be an asset to our school system. Our curriculum, supplies, materials, and equipment enhance the achievement of our program goals and objectives.”

“Limited funds for materials and supplies create a major concern.”

Other Coordinator Statements

“Pupil/teacher ratio is still too high. Fifteen should be the maximum number with teacher and aide to allow for more one-to-one attention on crucial readiness skills.”

In a cover letter, one coordinator said,

“We had twenty (20) students enrolled in the Starting Points class at the beginning of the 2000-2001 school year. In October, one child moved with her mother, who is in the service, to Germany. After reviewing monthly income verification, one student’s mother did not qualify for Starting Points. He was transferred to another pre-kindergarten class.

At the present time we are attempting to locate two additional students to be placed in the Starting Points class.”

**CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS OFFERING
THE 2000-01 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

Ninety-six public schools and two nonpublic diocesan schools housed the 105 classes that served the Starting Points children during the 2000-01 Program year. Table 14 summarizes the certification status of those teachers who instructed the Starting Points children in the 2000-01 school year. As illustrated, the majority of the teachers (90.4%) were fully certified in the areas required by Program regulations.

TABLE 14. CERTIFICATION STATUS OF TEACHERS WHO PROVIDED
INSTRUCTION TO THE STARTING POINTS CHILDREN
(N = 105 Teachers)

CREDENTIALS OF TEACHERS SERVING STARTING POINTS CHILDREN	TEACHERS	
	NO.	%
Fully certified in Nursery School, Kindergarten, or Early Childhood Education	95	90.4
Employed under special conditions		
Circular 665	7	6.7
Temporary Teaching Assignment	3	2.9
TOTALS	105	100.0

Source Reference:

Numbers of teachers by credentials are from the LDE, Elementary Standards Section, October 23, 2000.

The participating schools also had other faculty members and students. By matching information collected on the 1999-2000 Program with the 2000-01 list of participating school sites, it was determined that 89 of the 98 schools (90.8%) also provided the *Starting Points Preschool Program* in 1999-2000. It may be enlightening to present a description of the 98 schools that served Starting Points children in 2000-01. A school-level database was established for the purpose of analyzing data on the 98 participating schools. The following sources provided data elements for the school-level database.

- For each school participating in 2000-01, the *Louisiana School Directory (Bulletin 1462)* presents a total faculty count, a total enrollment count, and the school's grade configuration for the 1999-2000 school year. (Similar information for the 2000-01 school year will not be available for several months.)
- The LDE web site provided access to school-level data on all schools that received a school performance score (SPS) in 1999 and/or in 2000. From this web site, the 1999 SPS, the 2000 SPS, the percent towards the school's growth target, the percent of students on free/reduced lunch, the school-type classification (i.e., elementary, middle, high school, or combination school), and the community type were selected as data elements for the school-level database. Since the first cycle of the *Accountability Program* does not include every Louisiana school, some Starting Points schools have not received a SPS.

Analysis of data in the school-level database provided statistics about the schools that served Starting Points children in 2000-01: for example, in the previous school year, the total number of teachers employed by the 98 participating schools ranged from 12 to 102 teachers. The majority of these schools (50.0%) had a faculty of 30 to 49 teachers in 1999-2000. Approximately 24.5% of the 98 schools had between 12 to 29 teachers, while the remaining 25.5% had more than 50 teachers on the faculty in the 1999-2000 school year.

During the 1999-2000 school year, the total number of students at each of the 98 schools ranged from a low of 150 to a high of 907 students. Fifteen of the 98 schools (15.3%) had a total student enrollment count of fewer than 300 students during the prior school year. The majority of the participating schools (59.2%) had enrolled 300 to 599 students in the 1999-2000 school year. Of the remaining schools, 23.5% served 600 to 899 students and 2.0% enrolled more than 900 students in the previous school year.

The 98 schools housing Starting Points Programs in 2000-01 varied greatly in terms of grade-levels served on the campuses. Eighty-four of the participating schools are described as being elementary schools; but seven early childhood or kindergarten centers, six combination schools, and one high school served Starting Points children in 2000-01. The seven early childhood/kindergarten centers (7.1%) did not serve students beyond kindergarten. However, in 35 (or 35.7%) of the participating schools, the highest grade-level is grade 1, 2, 3, or 4. An additional 31 schools (31.6%) provided educational services for students in Preschool through grade 5 classes, while in 18 schools (18.4%) the highest grade-level is grade 6 or grade 8. Seven of the participating schools (7.1%) were on campuses that also served high school students. Furthermore, 49 of the schools (50.0%) also provided instruction for nongraded students, seven schools (7.1%) also served infants, and two schools (2%) educated some special education students.

Because the schools had these grade levels, most of the Starting Points schools are participating in the *School Accountability Program*. In September 1999 and in October 2000, the LDE released school performance scores for some public schools and a web site for these schools was made available. Ninety-one of the 98 schools housing Starting Points Programs in 2000-01 received a SPS in both September of 1999 and in October of 2000. For the 1,173 Accountability Schools, the average SPS (October 2000) was 77.3, whereas for the 91 Starting Points schools, the average SPS (October 2000) was 69.1. Five schools with Starting Points Programs received October 2000 school performance scores that were above 100; thus these schools have exceeded the 10-year performance goal set by the *Accountability Program*. An additional 24 of the Starting Points schools scored above the state average, with a SPS ranging from 79.1 to 97.7.

No school was assigned a new performance category label in October 2000, but a percentage was computed to indicate the improvement (or decline) in a school's SPS with reference to the growth target that a specific school is expected to achieve by the time the 2001 school performance scores are issued. This percentage was calculated only when the school had a 1999 and a 2000 SPS, as well as a growth target. Seven of the 98 Starting Points schools did not have a percentage towards growth target statistic, but the remaining 91 schools did.

When a school's percentage towards growth target statistic is *negative*, the school's 2000 SPS was less than the 1999 SPS. If the percentage is *zero*, the 2000 and 1999 school performance scores were equal. Schools with either negative or zero percentages towards their growth targets have not demonstrated any improvement during the first year of the first Accountability cycle.

However, when a school's percentage towards growth target statistic is *positive*, the school's 2000 SPS was greater than its 1999 SPS. A positive percentage indicates the students of a school are improving in their test performance and/or in their participation. (Participation improves when the student attendance rate has increased and/or the dropout rate has decreased). Any positive percentage is a sign that a school has made some progress, but the October 2000 SPS does not change the school's performance category.

Nevertheless, the positive percentages can be useful in assessing the amount of progress a school has made. A school that has a positive percentage towards growth target equaling 100% received a 2000 SPS that improved on the 1999 SPS by the amount of growth expected of that school by the end of the first Accountability cycle. When the positive percentage is greater than 100%, the school's improvement in SPS exceeded the amount of growth expected of that school by the end of the first cycle.

Of the 91 Starting Points schools that received school performance scores, the percentage towards growth target was negative for 29 schools and zero for one additional school. These findings imply that 30 of these 91 Starting Points schools had not improved during the first year of the first Accountability cycle. However, 61 (or 67%) of these 91 Starting Points schools, had improved their school performance scores, as evidenced by the schools' positive percentages towards their growth targets. Each of these 61 Starting Points schools had made progress towards their growth targets. While 19 of these 61 Starting Points schools had a percentage towards growth target statistic ranging from 6.2% to 45.5%, 12 of these schools had a percentage between 52% and 88.9%; and 30 of these schools had a percentage above 100%. These accountability findings provide some evidence that most of the schools now offering the *Starting Points Preschool Program* have found ways to improve the test performance of the students and/or the school participation of the students enrolled at the school. Although the evaluators cannot identify what helped these schools to improve their school performance scores, it is encouraging to find that 67% of the current Starting Points schools have improved their school performance scores.

The LDE web site also provided additional information about 91 of the schools that served Starting Points participants in 2000-01: for example, a community-type classification was available from the LDE web site. The analysis of the community-type classification data revealed that 24 of the Starting Points schools were in small towns, 20 schools were in rural communities, and 11 schools were located in a mid-sized city. An additional 20 schools were on the urban fringe of a mid-sized city and 11 more were classified as on the urban fringe of a large city. Finally, five Starting Points schools were located in large cities.

One characteristic of Louisiana public schools of interest to researchers is the percent of students who participate in the free/reduced lunch program at their school. This percent is considered to be a proxy measure for the socioeconomic status of the children attending a particular school, because students from low-income families qualify for the free/reduced lunch program, while those of high-income families generally do not qualify. In research studies, the percent of students on free/reduced lunches has been used as a predictor of student test scores because it has been found that, when this percent is high, the academic performance of the school's students has often been low.

In the 1999-2000 school year, approximately 58.8% of all Louisiana public school students participated in the free/reduced lunch program. Of the Accountability schools, the schools with lower school performance scores tended to have a high concentration of free/reduced lunch students [*1999-2000 Louisiana State Education Report, (February 2001)*].

Of the 98 schools serving Starting Points children, the free/reduced lunch percent was not available for seven schools because these schools were not listed on the LDE web site. Of the remaining 91 schools, the following summarizes the number of Starting Points schools, according to the percent of students receiving free/reduced lunch during the 1999-2000 school year.

- 48 schools had 76% to 100% of the entire student population receiving free/reduced lunches.
- 40 schools had 51% to 75.9% of the entire student population receiving free/reduced lunches.
- Three schools had 26% to 50.9% of the entire student population receiving free/reduced lunches.
- No Starting Points schools had between 0% and 25.9% of the entire student population receiving free/reduced lunches.

From these findings, it is concluded that 88 of the Starting Points schools had more than half of the entire student population participating in free/reduced lunch programs in the previous school year. Although the majority of Starting Points schools served many students who come from low-income families, it has been noted that 61 Starting Points schools (67%) have increased their school performance scores, as evidenced by the positive percentages towards their growth targets in October 2000.

If these schools had served students in Starting Points during previous Program years, then it is possible that Starting Points may be one of the services that have helped the at-risk former participants succeed in the regular education program. All previous longitudinal studies have provided evidence that the former participants of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* progressed through regular education grade levels more successfully than a group of comparison children who had received more limited Starting Points services. When the former Starting Points participants (and a small number of the comparison group children) were assessed through the *1997-98 Louisiana Educational Assessment Program*, their attainment rates were greater than the attainment rates of the entire grade 3 population. Furthermore, the 1997-98 assessments of grade 4 students, with the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*, indicated the majority of the Louisiana grade 4 population tended to score in Quartiles 1 or 2. However, the majority of the former Starting Points participants and the comparison group children tended to score in Quartiles 2 or 3 if they were assessed during the 1997-98 school year.

While these previous longitudinal studies provided interesting results to suggest that the *Starting Points Preschool Program* should be continued, a number of methodological problems exists when there is a delay between the participation in the program and the follow-up study. LDE staff are attempting to re-design the follow-up study in order to assess how the children changed during the year in which they were served by this Program. It is also important to continue collecting information about a program year to detect alterations in the way the program is implemented by the systems. Detailed findings about the *2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program* and information about the children, teachers, and schools that are participating has been presented in this report. In the next section of this report, the findings are discussed as the 2000-01 Program is described and/or compared to the previous Program year.

DISCUSSION

Funding for the *Starting Points Preschool Program* decreased to \$5,019,000 and the number of systems serving Starting Points children decreased from 53 in 1999-2000 to 52 in 2000-01. Parents/guardians were interested in the 2000-01 Program, as evidenced by the finding that 3,074 applications were received. However, the number of children determined to be eligible for the 2000-01 Program was 1,874, which is less than the 2,098 children who were eligible in 1999-2000. In selecting children who were eligible for the *2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program*, 53.8% of the systems used the *Brigance Preschool Screen for Three- and Four-Year-Old Children*; and 26.9% used the *Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning* as the Pre-K screening instruments. All systems were required to serve children whose parents/guardians were gainfully employed or enrolled in educational/job training programs and the families were required to meet an income criterion.

Three different data sources were used to count the number of children enrolled in the available classes. For Program year 2000-01, the Elementary Standards Section provided an October 1, 2000 enrollment count of 1,556 children. At a later date, *SIS* records showed that 1,498 children were enrolled in classes offered by the public school systems. The *SIS* enrollment count did not include children who were in the two nonpublic schools. Furthermore, one public school system did not enter records for Starting Points children during the first *SIS* data collection period. Analyses of the available *SIS* data indicated that 51.9% of the participants were females and that 48.1% were males. Based on the *SIS* records, the ethnic composition of the 2000-01 Program participants was as follows: 61.2% Black

children, 35.4% White, 1.8% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 0.7% American Indian/Alaskan Natives.

In November or December of 2000, system-level Program coordinators reported family size and income data for 1,562 children, indicating each enrolled child was from a family that met the 2000-01-income requirement. The monthly income reported for the majority of the families was less than \$1,997 for 1,209 (or 77.4%) of the children; 766 children (or 49.0%) were from families with four to six people residing in the household. System-level Program coordinators also reported that 1,170 of the Starting Points children were from single-parent homes.

All three of the 2000-01 enrollment counts were below the initial roster count, which was reported for the 1999-2000 Program year. However, 59.6% of the systems were able to enroll 20 to 39 children in the 2000-01 *Starting Points Preschool Program* as the school year began. In addition to children who were enrolled in the Pre-K classes, the coordinators of 25 systems reported that 153 children were on waiting lists as the Program year began. By January 5, 2001, the number of children on waiting lists was reduced to 78 in only 17 systems. In 2000-01, most systems (57.7%) offered the Program at just one school, thus Starting Points services may not have been readily available to some of the eligible applicants. During the 2000-01 Program year, Starting Points children were served in 98 schools and in 105 classes. Of the teachers staffing the 105 classes, 90.4% were fully certified in Nursery School, Kindergarten, or Early Childhood Education, as required by Program regulations. The remaining teachers were employed under the special conditions of a temporary teaching assignment or Circular 665.

Eighty-nine of the 98 schools had also served Starting Points children in the 1999-2000 school year. Except for those cases in which the classes had moved to new campuses, it is likely that most of the school communities were familiar with the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Analyses of school-level data suggested that the majority of the schools housing the 2000-01 Starting Points children were elementary schools. Several Starting Points schools are in small town communities or in rural areas; about 59.2% of the participating schools enrolled a total of 300 to 599 students in 1999-2000.

Regarding health and safety practices, 51 systems (98.1%) reported that the state or city fire department inspects the participating schools on an annual basis. Furthermore, 76.9% of the systems indicated the Office of Public Health conducts inspections of the schools on an annual basis. Such inspections should ensure that the school facilities provide a relatively safe and healthy environment for children. Other environmental practices used in the Starting Points schools included maintaining all equipment in good working condition (in 94.2% of the systems) and sanitizing the classroom materials, mats, and furniture on a regular basis (in 98.1% of the systems). As for the physical characteristics of the school sites, the system-level coordinators reported that the classrooms were large enough to provide at least 35 square feet of space per child in 57.7% of the systems. In 92.3% of the systems, the outdoor play areas provided at least 75 square feet of space per child. Furthermore, outdoor play areas were enclosed in 76.9% of the systems; outdoor sandboxes (or sand areas) were covered when not in use in 40.4% of the systems.

Evidence exists that several methods were used to deliver health or medical services in the schools, which served the Starting Points children. For example, 23 coordinators (representing 44.2% of the systems) indicated the school system is a Kid-Med Provider. In 42 systems (or 80.8%), health services were provided at the school site, whereas in 41 systems (78.9%), the Starting Points children could be referred to other agencies for health services. Vision and hearing screenings were provided to Starting Points children in 98.1% of the systems.

Certain practices were identified as having been used within each system that offered the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. These were as follows: the daily schedule included planned physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities; the curriculum included child-centered, developmentally-appropriate

instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety; and the Starting Points children participated in fire/safety drills on a regular basis. All 52 participating systems also had a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications.

In 94.2% of these systems, there was also a policy that did not allow children with contagious conditions to attend class until they were well. In 36.5% of the systems, Program staff are trained annually in child CPR procedures and in 90.4% of the systems, the staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse. Procedures are in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits in 92.3% of the systems.

Services addressing the nutritional needs of the participants must also be available. All 52 coordinators reported that well-balanced meals were provided each day. Furthermore, the schools had a breakfast program in 98.1% of the systems; nutritional snacks were provided on a daily basis in 88.5% of the systems; and parents/guardians received helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety in 88.5% of the systems.

In addition to providing for the health, safety, and nutritional needs of participants, an important goal of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* is to involve the parents/guardians in the education of their children. Such involvement may be difficult for these parents/guardians because they appeared to be very busy. A Federal regulation requires that parents/guardians of the Starting Points participants must be either employed or enrolled in educational/job training programs. In 2000-01, it was found that 87.7% (or 1,693 of the 1,929 parents/guardians) were reported as employed on a full-time basis; 7.2% (or 138) were said to be enrolled in educational/job training programs on a full-time basis; and 3.1% (or 60 parents/guardians) were enrolled part-time in an educational/job training program and were also employed on a part-time basis. At the time of reporting, the remaining parents/guardians were in a 30-day grace period or they were disabled parents/guardians.

In previous Program years, the systems that participated in the *Starting Points Preschool Program* used a wide-variety of activities to facilitate parental involvement. Assuming these activities were continued, the State-level Program Coordinators wanted to know which activities were most frequently used in 2000-01; they had also asked for this same information in 1999-2000. Because the parent-involvement *PDS* items were phrased similarly in both Program years and the parent involvement component is considered to be very important, comparisons between the two most recent Program years were made.

In both Program years, more than half of the participating systems frequently used the same three activities to involve parents. Data analyses revealed that the percentage of systems frequently sending messages to parents relating to each child's activities increased from 54.7% of the systems in 1999-2000 to 55.8% in 2000-01. However, informing parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms was frequently used in 69.2% of the systems in 2000-01, declining from 71.7% of the systems in 1999-2000. The percentage of systems frequently holding individual parent/teacher conferences also decreased from 64.2% in 1999-2000 to 51.9% in 2000-01. Other parental involvement activities reported as frequently used in 2000-01 included encouraging parents to help with activities outside the classroom (34.6% vs. 11.3% in 1999-2000), requesting that parents help the child with at-home learning activities (32.7% vs. 28.3% in 1999-2000), and informing parents of ways they may contribute to their child's development (30.8% vs. 20.8% in 1999-2000).

Fifty-one systems (98.1%) offered parent workshops/meetings in 2000-01, with 30.8% of the system-level coordinators indicating the workshops were frequently used to involve the parents/guardians in the Program. The most frequently-reported parent-attendance range was "25-49% of parents" (among 19, or 36.5% of the systems). However, 50.0% or more of the parents/guardians were said to attend the parent workshops in 17 systems (or 32.7%). Comparing these parent-attendance findings with those of the

previous year suggests that the parent workshops/meetings were offered in two additional systems. Furthermore, three systems increased the percentage of parents/guardians who attended these activities over what was reported for 1999-2000.

Some activities were not reported so frequently used by many of the systems. For example, activities reported as frequently used in only 3.9% of the systems during the 2000-01 Program year were: to provide childcare assistance for workshop/meeting events and to offer alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation. In addition, there were large decreases in the frequent use of a parent bulletin board or message center (3.9% of the systems in 2000-01 vs. 17.0% in 1999-2000) and in allowing the parents to visit the classroom at their convenience (26.9% vs. 39.6%).

Finally, an optional open-ended *PDS* item provided the coordinators an opportunity to make comments on the Program. Only 15 coordinators responded to this optional item, offering approximately 19 distinct comments. Four comments discussed personnel who were involved with the Program and three comments pertained to the eligibility criteria. Other comments addressed additional aspects of the Program.

The final section of this report presents conclusions about the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, based on comparing the 1999-2000 Program to the 2000-01 Program. Most comparisons are based on data collected with the *PDS* instruments used in Program year 1999-2000 or 2000-01.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on data collected for this report, the *2000-01 Starting Points Preschool Program* did not expand over the previous year. In 1999-2000, 53 systems and 99 participating schools received 3,317 applications for the Program, the systems found that 2,098 children were eligible, and 1,686 children were enrolled by October 1999. In 2000-01, 52 systems and 98 participating schools received 3,074 applications for the Program, the systems found that 1,874 children were eligible, and 1,556 children were enrolled by October 2000. However, in 2000-01, a smaller number of children were on the waiting lists and funding was \$500.00 less than in the 1999-2000 Program year.
2. Several participating schools had not served Starting Points children during the 1999-2000 school year. If a school had not participated in 1999-2000 or in any previous year, it may have taken longer to establish a Pre-K class for the eligible children. When the coordinators reported the family-size and income data, information was provided on 1,562 children, suggesting that additional children were enrolled after the count of 1,556 was reported to the Elementary Standards staff and after information was entered into the *Student Information System*.
3. Among the 98 participating schools, the percent of systems indicating that classrooms provided at least 35 square feet of space per child increased from 52.8% in 1999-2000 to 57.7% in 2000-01 and the percent of systems reporting that outdoor play areas were enclosed rose from 75.5% in 1999-2000 to 76.9% in 2000-01. Unfortunately, the percent of systems having a physician/nurse who provided health services at the school site dropped from 83.0% in 1999-2000 to 80.8% in 2000-01; and the percent of systems reporting that outdoor play areas provided at least 75 square feet of space per child declined slightly in 2000-01.
4. The percent of teachers who were fully-certified in the areas specified by the Program regulations decreased from 93.6% in 1999-2000 to 90.4% in 2000-01. However, from 1999-2000 to 2000-01, the percent of systems reporting that Program staff were trained annually in child CPR procedures increased from 35.8% of the systems to 36.5% of the systems and the percent of systems indicating that staff members trained to recognize the signs of child abuse increased from 86.8% of the systems to 90.4% of the systems.
5. From the 1999-2000 Program to the 2000-01 Program, there was an increase in the percent of systems reporting the following health/nutritional services:
 - vision and hearing screenings were provided to Starting Points children (96.2% vs. 98.1% of the systems);
 - the school system was a *Kid-Med Provider* (43.4% vs. 44.2% of the systems);
 - parents/guardians receive helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety (84.9% vs. 88.5% of the systems); and
 - the school has a breakfast program (94.3% vs. 98.1% of the systems).
6. The systems served an increasing proportion of children from single-parent homes and the percent of parents/guardians employed on a full-time basis increased slightly. Nevertheless, the systems continued efforts to involve the parents/guardians in the Program activities. On a frequent basis, the systems kept the parents informed of activities (69.2%), sent frequent messages to the parents (55.8%), and held individual parent/teacher conferences (51.9%). There was an increase in the number of systems indicating parent workshops/meetings were offered; three systems reported a higher percent of parents/guardians who attended these workshops/meetings in 2000-01 versus in 1999-2000.

REFERENCES

Louisiana Department of Education Web Site at <http://www.doe.state.la.us>.

Louisiana School Directory, (Bulletin 1462). (2000-01). Baton Rouge: LA. Louisiana Department of Education, Office of Communications and Legislative Services.

1999-2000 Louisiana State Education Progress Report. (February 2001). Baton Rouge: LA. Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources, Planning and Analysis Section.

1999-2000 Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Description Evaluation Report (July 2000). Baton Rouge: LA. Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources.

2000 School Accountability Data. (October 2000). Baton Rouge: LA. Louisiana Department of Education.

Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations (Bulletin 1934). (Revised June 1998). Baton Rouge: LA. Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Student Standards and Assessments, Elementary Education Section.

APPENDIX
LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PLANNING, ANALYSIS AND INFORMATION RESOURCES
2000-2001 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
PROJECT DESCRIPTION SURVEY
 (Revised 10/00)

The Louisiana Department of Education is conducting an evaluation of the Starting Points Preschool Program. Early Childhood Coordinators in participating school systems are asked to provide the following information relative to preschool classes either totally or partially funded by the Starting Points Preschool Program. Data previously collected through the use of the Starting Points Student Application Forms and Student Rosters can be used in completing the 2000-2001 form.

PROJECT COORDINATOR: _____

__ SCHOOL SYSTEM NAME: _____

___ PHONE NUMBER: () _____ FAX NUMBER: () _____

 E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

SUPERINTENDENT VERIFICATION:

I verify that the information contained in this *Project Description Survey* is accurate and complete.

 Superintendent's Signature

 Date

Return by **November 10, 2000** to
 Barbara Abshire
 Louisiana Department of Education
 Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources
 3455 Florida Boulevard
 Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806
 Telephone: (225) 342-1522
 Fax: (225) 342-4365

ALL SURVEY ITEMS RELATE TO THE STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM ONLY.

I. Applicant, Participant, and Parent/Guardian Information (Please refer to the Starting Points Student Application Forms to provide these aggregate data.)

1. How many applicants did you have for the Starting Points Preschool Program? _____

2. How many of these applicants were eligible for the Starting Points Preschool Program? _____

3. If your system had a waiting list, how many children who were eligible for the Starting Points Preschool Program were on the waiting list as of October 1, 2000? _____

4. How many of the children who are participating in the Starting Points Preschool Program live with only one parent/guardian? _____

5. Please indicate the total number of parents/guardians in the appropriate work or school-training categories. **Remember to account for both parents/guardians, if a Starting Points child lives with both, and for one parent, if the child lives with only one parent/guardian.** (In other words, if you have twenty Starting Points children and fifteen of these children live with single parents, while five live with both parents, the number of parents you must account for is twenty-five.)

a. Number parents/guardians working full-time _____

b. Number parents/guardians in school or job training full-time _____

c. Number parents/guardians part-time working and part-time in school/job training _____

d. Number parents/guardians in 30-day grace period while seeking employment or educational opportunity _____

Total number of parents/guardians _____

II. Parent Involvement

1. From among the following activities, or special provisions, check the **three most frequently used** activities/provisions in your system that involve the parents/guardians.

- a. Hold individual parent/teacher conferences
- b. Hold parent workshops or meetings
- c. Provide a parent's bulletin board and/or message center
- d. Send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities
- e. Provide a parent handbook that includes the program philosophy, policies, and procedures
- f. Conduct home visits
- g. Inform parents of ways they may contribute to their child's development
- h. Encourage parents to volunteer in classroom to help with daily activities
- i. Encourage parents to volunteer to help with activities that are outside of the classroom (e.g., assist in cafeteria, make materials/snacks, or help with field trips).
- j. Hold open house
- k. Inform parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms
- l. Request that parents help child with at-home learning activities
- m. Allow parents to visit the classroom at their convenience
- n. Provide child care assistance for workshop/meeting events
- o. Schedule parent involvement activities to accommodate the work/training schedules of parents/guardians
- p. Offer alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation (Please specify.) _____

- q. Work with other agencies or programs to provide assistance to our participating families (Please specify.) _____

- r. Involve parents by using other activities, such as: _____

2. If your system offers parent workshops, check **one of the following** to indicate the percentage of parents/guardians who typically attend these workshops.

- a. Less than 25% of parents/guardians
- b. 25 - 49% of parents/guardians
- c. 50 - 74% of parents/guardians
- d. 75% or more of the parents/guardians
- e. This system does not offer workshops for parents/guardians.
- f. Percentage of attendance varies greatly among the program sites. (Please explain.) _____

III. Health and Safety Activities, Practices, and Policies

1. In your local Starting Points programs, what activities/policies are used to provide a safe and healthy environment for the participants? (Check **all that apply** to your program sites.)
 - a. Schools serving Starting Points children are inspected annually by the Office of Public Health.
 - b. The state or city fire department inspects the school sites on an annual basis.
 - c. The Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills on a regular basis.
 - d. The schools serving Starting Points children have a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications.
 - e. Program staff are trained annually in child CPR procedures.
 - f. Soft surfaces are placed under any equipment, upon which the children might climb.
 - g. All equipment is maintained in good working condition.
 - h. Outdoor sandboxes (sand areas) are covered, when not in use.
 - i. Excluding space for the furniture and shelving, classrooms are large enough to provide at least thirty-five square feet of space per child.
 - j. The outdoor play area provides at least seventy-five square feet of space per child, at any one time.
 - k. Outdoor play areas are enclosed.

2. In your local Starting Points programs, what activities/practices are used to promote the health of the participants? (Check **all that apply** to your program sites.)
 - a. Well-balanced meals are provided each day.
 - b. Nutritional snacks are provided on a daily basis.
 - c. Classroom materials, mats, and furniture are sanitized on a regular basis.
 - d. The curriculum includes child-centered, developmentally-appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety.
 - e. Parents/guardians receive helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety.
 - f. The daily schedule includes planned physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities.
 - g. The staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse.
 - h. Procedures are in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits.
 - i. Starting Points children are referred to other agencies for health services.
 - j. The school system is a Kid Med Provider.
 - k. By system policy, children who have contagious health conditions may not attend class until they are well.
 - l. The school has a breakfast program.
 - m. Vision screening is provided to Starting Points children.
 - n. Hearing screening is provided to Starting Points children.
 - o. Health services are provided at the school site by an physician/nurse to Starting Points children.

IV. Comments

Please use the space below to make any additional comments about your local Starting Points Preschool Program. If more space is needed, you may continue on the back of the page.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED COOPERATION AND SUPPORT.
GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR 2000-2001 PROGRAM.