

***THE 2001-02 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION EVALUATION REPORT***



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

JULY 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE 2001-02 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

FUNDING AND PURPOSE	The 2001-02 <i>Starting Points Preschool Program</i> was funded with \$4,758,336 from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Block Grant. These funds were used to serve children of low-income families in pre-kindergarten classes.
SCHOOLS, CLASSES, AND RESOURCES	By October 2001, 56 systems, 93 public schools, and three nonpublic schools enrolled children in 99 classes. Eighty-one of the 96 schools also served Starting Points children in school year 2000-01. Additionally, 83 classes and 72 teachers had participated in the previous school year. Of the 99 Starting Points teachers, 88.9% were fully certified in Nursery School, Kindergarten, or Early Childhood Education. Most frequently, Starting Points was reported as collaborating with the Title I Preschool Program and with programs funded through 8(g). Other education programs/groups, businesses, and community members also collaborated with this Program during 2001-02.
ELIGIBILITY AND CHILDREN SERVED	For the 2001-02 Program, 2,873 applications were received; 2,239 children (77.9%) were eligible. As the school year began, 1,570 children were enrolled, with an additional 378 children on waiting lists. According to the reported data, 84.2% of the children were free-lunch recipients, while 15.8% were able to purchase reduced-price lunches. In addition, 61.6% of these Starting Points participants were from single-parent homes. The October 1, 2001 <i>Student Information System (SIS)</i> record count for Starting Points was 1,459 children. These <i>SIS</i> records identified the majority of children as Black (59.2%) or White (36.6%).
PARENT/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT	The most frequently used techniques for involving parents were to inform parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms (67.9%); to hold individual parent/teacher conferences (60.7%); and to send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities (50.0%). Workshops/parent meetings were held in 50 (or 89.3%) of the participating systems; 17 coordinators indicated these workshops/meetings were frequently used parent involvement activities. However, less than 50% of the parents/guardians were reported as typically attending workshops/parent meetings in 30 (or 60%) of the systems that offered these activities.
HEALTH AND SAFETY FINDINGS	Changes in the use of certain health and safety practices were noted, but in more than 98% of the participating systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the state or city fire departments inspect the schools annually (98.2%); • vision screenings are provided to the Starting Points children (98.2%); • well-balanced meals are provided each day (98.2%); • the school has a breakfast program (98.2%); • hearing screenings are provided to the Starting Points children (100.0%); • Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills (100.0%); • the daily schedule includes planned, physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities (100.0%); and • the curriculum includes child-centered, developmentally appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety (100.0%).

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@doe.state.la.us
Barbara Abshire, (225) 342-1522, Babshire@doe.state.la.us

BACKGROUND

In 1992-93, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* was initiated 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 childcare services. A new funding source, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant, provided funds for continued implementation of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* during school year 2001-02. In Louisiana, the lead agency for administering the TANF funds is the Department of Social Services.

Beginning in 2001, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) was authorized to administer a portion of the TANF Block Grant funds for developing a program whose purpose is to assist low-income families by providing quality early childhood programs. LDE used TANF funds to help local school systems offer the *Starting Points Preschool Program*; in 2001-02 this program was modified to operate under guidelines, regulations, and eligibility criteria that are consistent with the new funding source.

As in previous years, the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program* was a pre-K program, administered by the LDE, Division of Student Standards and Assessments, Elementary Standards Section. In discussing the program philosophy, *Bulletin 1934, Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations* (June 2001) indicates that local programs were to “adhere to the developmental philosophy as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.” “Inherent in this philosophy is the provision of a child-centered program directed toward 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.” [*Bulletin 1934, Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Regulations* (June 2001)]

The participating schools were to provide quality pre-K classes designed for children who met three eligibility criteria. As stated in *Bulletin 1934*, each participating child (1) must be one year younger than the age eligible for kindergarten, (2) was to meet the requirements of law for immunization and documentation required for regular school enrollment, and (3) was to qualify for free or reduced-price meals pursuant to the *Federal Child Nutrition Program*. In 2001-02, a local program was expected to operate a full-day program that provided at least 360 minutes of instructional time per day, for a minimum of 177 days. In addition, *Bulletin 1934* specified the qualifications of the teachers, defined class size limitations, and required the curriculum to be developmentally appropriate and to address all areas of development, including social, emotional, cognitive, and physical.

Despite the changes in the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, efforts were made to continue useful practices as in previous years. For example, once funding for 2001-02 was available, LDE staff of the Elementary Standards Section (who are the state-level Program coordinators) prepared and distributed written application materials, guidelines, and regulation documents to schools or systems interested in securing funding approval. Furthermore, as the state-level Program coordinators learned more about TANF funding, they shared this information with the system-level coordinators. Also, the LDE processed applications from systems/schools that wished to implement local programs. As systems or schools received 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 2001-02 school year, 53 public school systems, two diocesan schools, and one nonpublic school had received Program approval. Thus, a total of 56 systems implemented local programs in 2001-02. While most of the participating school systems were offering the *Starting Points*

Preschool Program for the tenth consecutive year, some local programs were now located on different school campuses. Additional systems had opted to participate for the first time in 2001-02. Thus, there were both new sites and continuing sites.

In 2001-02, each site was to be monitored for compliance with federal regulations. The compliance monitoring of the sites was performed by the state-level Program coordinators. These individuals also provided other technical assistance such as sponsoring an annual early childhood conference, informing local administrators of other staff development opportunities, helping to train local program staff in using developmentally-appropriate techniques and/or the *Creative Curriculum*, and visiting selected Pre-K classes of Starting Points participants. During these class visits, the state-level Program coordinators examined the instructional environment, observed the teachers/aides, assessed the quality of the Program by using *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R)*, and recommended ways of improving the Pre-K classes.

The state-level Program coordinators also agreed to provide the Louisiana Department of Social Services with an evaluation of this Program. As in previous years, they requested these evaluation services from two LDE staff members, who are currently employed within the Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources. The purpose of evaluating this Program was to provide information to policy makers and program administrators.

Beginning in 2000-01, a new two-phase evaluation design was used, with the first phase focused on describing the implementation and participation characteristics associated with the *Starting Points Preschool Program* in 2000-01. In the second phase of the 2000-01 evaluation study, additional information was collected as a follow-up to prior years of the Program, with the main goal of studying how former participants were performing as they continued in Louisiana public schools. Procedures, instruments, and data sources used in the 2001-02 evaluation were revised from those of the previous evaluation study. For the most part, these revisions were needed because of the changes made to the Program's eligibility criteria, regulations, and guidelines. There was also a need to streamline the evaluation, since all involved LDE staff members assumed increasing duties. Descriptions of evaluation activities and the data sources used to prepare this Program Description Evaluation Report are included in the next section of this document.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES AND DATA SOURCES

In August of 2001, the state-level Program coordinators provided the evaluators with copies of *Bulletin 1934* (June 2001), the *Starting Points Preschool Program: Guidelines for SY 2001-02* document, and the program application package. All of these materials were reviewed in order to plan for the evaluation. In October 2001, the state-level Program coordinators also provided a list of the participating systems and schools, the names/contact information of the system-level program coordinators, the names of the Starting Points teachers, information on the certification status of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* teachers, the system-level initial roster enrollment counts, and the number of classes per system. As schedules permitted, both evaluators reviewed the information from the Elementary Standards Section.

In November of 2001, the evaluators revised the 2000-01 data collection instrument to prepare the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program, Program Description Survey (PDS)* instrument. Its accompanying cover memos were also written. A draft of the *PDS* instrument was given to the state-level program coordinators for their input. Where practical, the *2001-02 PDS* items were structured to be consistent with items utilized on the 2000-01 *PDS* instrument; thus, some comparisons with the previous Program year were possible. However, some items were eliminated from the *2001-02 PDS*, including items pertaining to the eligibility criteria that are no longer in use. New items were added as appropriate

replacements. Other revisions of the *PDS* instrument included minor modifications of the parental involvement items and adjustments to the health and safety items. By November 30, 2001, the 2001-02 *PDS* was finalized; a copy appears in the Appendix. The 2001-02 *PDS* instrument has five major sections as follows.

- I. Applicant, Eligibility Criteria, and Participant Information
- II. Program Collaboration
- III. Parental Involvement
- IV. Health and Safety Activities, Practices, and Policies
- V. Comments

In previous evaluations, the *PDS* was sent directly to the system-level coordinators. This procedure was altered in 2001-02 because public school Superintendents had requested that they receive all communications from the LDE in their central offices. Thus, a Superintendent's cover memo requested that 2001-02 *PDS* materials be forwarded to the system-level *Starting Points Preschool Program* Coordinator. An additional cover memo asked these coordinators to return the completed instruments to Barbara Abshire by January 11, 2002.

As in prior year studies, another data source was the *Student Information System (SIS)*; the ethnicity of the enrolled participants was to be described, based on data in the *SIS* records, reported by October 1, at the end of the first *SIS* data collection period. Since there is a continuing concern about the accuracy of the *SIS* pre-K records, the system-level *Starting Points* coordinators were also directed to provide their *SIS* coordinators with a roster of the *Starting Points* students.

Both the local Superintendent's and system-level coordinator's cover memos and the *PDS* instruments were mailed on December 3, 2001. By the January 11, 2002 deadline, 23 systems (41.1%) had returned a completed *PDS* instrument. Systems that had not returned the *PDS* instruments were contacted. By January 31, 2002, each participating system had returned a completed *PDS* instrument and both evaluators began reviewing the *PDS* data. The evaluators contacted the system-level coordinators when corrections and/or additional information were needed.

In addition, at the end of the 2000-01 school year, one state-level coordinator provided one evaluator with the *ECERS-R* data collected during the 2000-01 Program. In the previous follow-up study, *ECERS-R* information was used as a measure of the program quality. If sites and/or teachers that were assessed in 2000-01 continued in the current Program year, then the 2000-01 *ECERS-R* data may shed light on the anticipated quality of the 2001-02 Program. Therefore, one planned evaluation activity was to analyze the *ECERS-R* data and present the main findings in this report.

As data for this evaluation study became available, the evaluators shared the responsibility for data analysis. Beginning in January 2002, all information provided by the state-level Program coordinators, the responses to the *PDS* items, and some information extracted from the *SIS* Pre-K data were analyzed. The results were used to draft this report in February and March of 2002.

In April and May of 2002, the state-level Program coordinators reviewed the first draft of this report. The evaluators and state-level Program coordinators met to discuss findings and to recommend revisions to the *PDS* report. In June 2002, a subsequent draft report was prepared and transmitted for review; a few additional changes were made to the draft. Prior to the completion of the final report, additional LDE staff members reviewed the draft report. Recommended changes were made, and then the report was completed by July 2002.

The purpose of this Program Description Evaluation Report is to provide a description of the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program*. This report begins with a brief Executive Summary, describes the Program's background, and contains information describing the evaluation activities and the data sources. Data summary exhibits are then presented to provide statistics based on the analysis of *SIS* data, *PDS* data, and the other information supplied by the Elementary Standards Section.

Following the data summary exhibits, the report continues with a discussion section and conclusions about the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. After publication of this report, the local Superintendents, the state-level Program Coordinators, certain employees of the Louisiana Department of Social Services, and selected LDE employees will each have access to a copy of the full report. Other stakeholders will receive only the Executive Summary. There is also a plan to place the final report on the website of the Louisiana Department of Education.

PRESENTATION OF DATA SUMMARY EXHIBITS

Within this section of the report, 20 data summary exhibits are presented under the headings that are listed below:

- resources for implementing the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program*,
- applicant/enrollment data and other demographics,
- eligibility criteria,
- parental involvement,
- health and safety information, and
- additional comments on the Program.

Each data summary exhibit includes source references, while some exhibits also contain footnotes. Where necessary for clarity, additional discussion of specific data sources introduces the related exhibit. For example, Exhibits 1 through 3 were prepared based on information, documents, and the 2000-01 *ECERS-R* data, which were supplied by the Elementary Standards Section or on responses to the *PDS* instrument. Taken together, these three exhibits provide an overview of the resources available to the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program*. That is, Exhibits 1 through 3 summarize funds, program sites, teachers, and the anticipated quality of this Program year. The resources section is continued by providing other information on the schools participating in the 2001-02 Program year. Finally, the section is concluded by presenting the many ways in which the *Starting Points Preschool Program* collaborated with other programs and/or groups during 2001-02.

**RESOURCES FOR IMPLEMENTING
THE 2001-02 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

EXHIBIT 1. ALLOCATION, SYSTEMS, SCHOOLS, CLASSES, AND TEACHERS

TOTAL ALLOCATION	\$4,758,336		
PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS	Total of 56 systems, including 53 public systems, two dioceses, and one other nonpublic school.		
NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS PER SYSTEM ¹	NO. OF SYSTEMS	% OF SYSTEMS	
One	34	60.7	
Two	14	25.0	
Three	2	3.6	
Four	3	5.3	
Five	2	3.6	
Six	1	1.8	
NUMBER OF CLASSES ²	Total: 99	Continuing: 83	New: 16
NUMBER OF TEACHERS ²	Total: 99	Continuing: 72	New: 27

Source Reference:

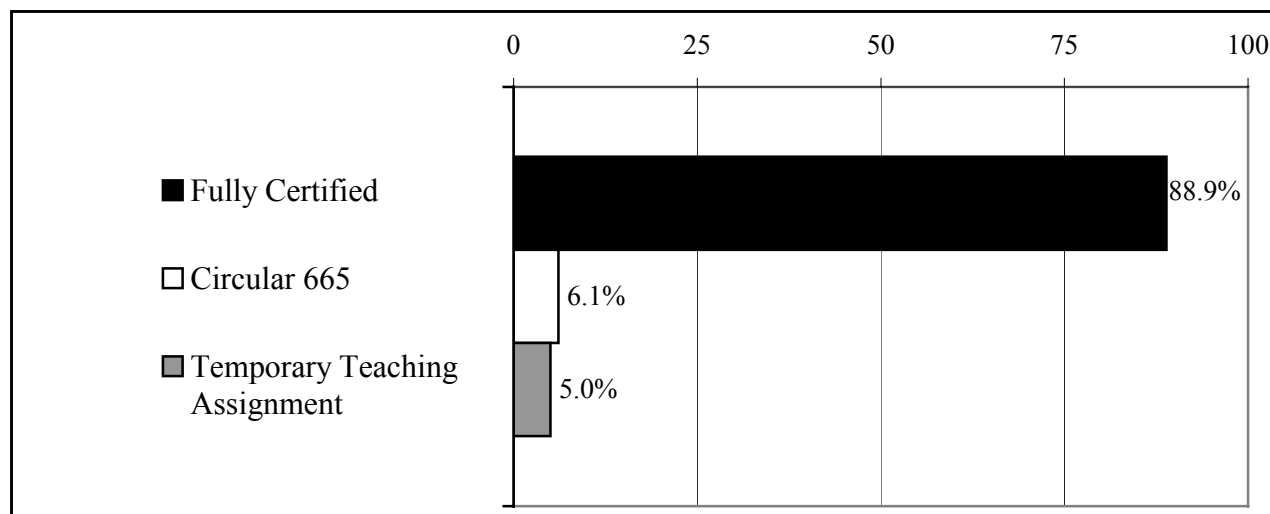
All information in Exhibit 1 is based on documents supplied by the Elementary Standards Section.

- ¹ A total of 96 schools served the Starting Points children, but most systems (60.7%) offered the Program at just one school.
- ² If classes or teachers participated in the 2000-01 Program, these are “continuing,” whereas “new” means the class or teacher did not participate in the 2000-01 Program. As shown in Exhibit 1, the majority of the classes and the majority of the teachers are “continuing.”

Of the 99 teachers who provided instruction to the Starting Points participants in 2001-02, 88 teachers (88.9%) were fully certified in Early Childhood Education, Nursery School Education, Kindergarten, or Early Intervention, as specified by the Program regulations. Six (6.1%) of the remaining 11 teachers were employed under special condition of Circular 665 and five (5.0%) held a Temporary Teaching Assignment. Therefore, the majority of the teachers were fully certified.

When system-level coordinators responded to Item V of the *PDS*, some coordinators made remarks about the teachers or about other school/system-level staff who were associated with the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program*. Exhibit 2 graphically shows the percent of teachers by their certification status and is followed by the coordinator comments regarding teachers or other staff.

EXHIBIT 2. PERCENT OF THE 99 STARTING POINTS TEACHERS
BY CERTIFICATION STATUS AND
COMMENTS ON TEACHERS/PROGRAM STAFF



Source Reference:

The *Percents* in Exhibit 2 were calculated by using certification information provided by the LDE, Elementary Standards Section, updated November 11, 2001. The following comments were made by seven system-level coordinators in response to Item V of the *PDS* instrument.

“Ms. (teacher’s name) is central to the overall success of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Ms. (teacher’s name) is receptive to change. She is innovative and exciting. Her students love and respect her.”

“The Parish has a wonderful teacher conducting an excellent program.”

“It has been a great service to our students to have the Starting Points Program available to them. Our pre-kindergarten teacher has been doing an outstanding job even before the inclusion of our school in the program.”

“Starting Points affords teachers and other school personnel with the opportunity to discover and explore facets of our community that affect the educational development of our students. With Starting Points, we can address the strengths and weaknesses of our participants and plan activities that will impact their achievement in physical, mental, social, and cognitive areas.”

“The Parish School System has a strong pre-kindergarten program. Teachers and paraprofessionals are provided the opportunity to attend staff development sessions to promote academic growth. Students attend a full-day program which provides a developmentally-appropriate academic program.”

“One of the schools this year is a school that is labeled ‘School in Academic Decline’ and the extra funds has allowed us to project new ideals and materials into the classroom. The teacher and aide were able to attend the State Early Childhood Conference and other professional development workshops.”

“If this program is going to be a 10 hour day, preschool paras should be able to run the before and after care if they choose to do so and not just a teacher.”

In general, these comments on teachers and staff are positive statements. Furthermore, as was shown in Exhibits 1 and 2, the majority of the teachers were continuing teachers and they were fully certified in the areas appropriate for instructing young children. Such qualified and experienced teachers should have been able to provide a quality Program for the 2001-02 Starting Points participants.

Many of the Starting Points teachers and their previous-year classes were assessed in 2000-01 with the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ECERS-R)*, which is an instrument authored by Harms, Clifford, and Cryer (1998). These authors indicated that the observations and ratings were developed to measure the quality of early childhood programs, for research or program improvement purposes (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998).

The *ECERS-R* consists of 43 items, which are rated by a qualified observer. Each item is given a 1 to 7 point rating, with each odd-numbered rating being anchored to a set of indicators. The observer is told to begin with the indicators under the rating of 1 (which is labeled as inadequate) and continue with one item until he/she can assign a rating score. (A rating of 3 is labeled as “minimal,” a rating of 5 is labeled as “good,” and the rating of 7 is labeled as “excellent.”) If indicators under an odd-numbered rating are scored “yes,” then the odd-numbered rating is assigned. Even-numbered ratings are assigned when all indicators under the preceding odd-numbered rating are scored “no,” and at least half of the indicators under the next odd-numbered rating are scored “yes” (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998).

In 2000-01, the state-level Program coordinators visited and assessed with the *ECERS-R*, a total of 50 local programs. One state coordinator tabulated the *ECERS-R* ratings, and she provided the tabulated results to the evaluators. Analysis of the tabulated results indicated that 14 of the assessed local programs were staffed by new teachers; that is, staffed by teachers who had not worked with the *Starting Points Preschool Program* before 2000-01. On the *ECERS-R*, the teacher-average ratings ranged from a low of 3.62 to a high of 6.87. Seven of the 50 teacher-average ratings were below 5.0, but only four of these seven teachers were identified as new teachers.

An average rating was also computed for 40 of the 43 items. All of these item-average ratings ranged from a low of 4.7 to a high of 6.8. Of these 40 items, only five items had an item-average rating of 5.0 or less; six other items had an item-average rating above 6.0 but less than 7. Exhibit 3 presents the five items with the lowest item-averages and the six items with the highest item-averages.

**EXHIBIT 3: 2000-01 EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE RESULTS
FOR LOWEST AND HIGHEST ITEM-AVERAGES**

Lowest Item-Average Ratings		Highest Item-Average Ratings	
Item Name	Item-Average Rating	Item Name	Item-Average Rating
Nature/Science	4.7	Indoor Space	6.1
Space for Gross Motor Play	4.8	Children Interaction	6.2
Music/Movement	5.0	Staff-Child Interaction	6.3
Child-Related Display	5.0	Disabled Children	6.5
Using Language to Develop Reasoning Skills	5.0	Greeting/ Departing	6.6
		Furniture for Routine Care, Play, and Learning	6.8

Source Reference:

Exhibit 3 is based on a summary of the 2000-01 *ECERS-R* ratings, which were supplied by the Elementary Standards Section.

Among the five items with item-average ratings of 5.0 or less, four items were also observed in a previous Program year, as areas in which improvement was needed. However, in the 2000-01 year, these items tended to have slightly higher item-average ratings than in the prior year.

In 2000-01, the Nature/Science item received the lowest item-average rating of 4.7. To assign a rating on this item, observers look for: collections of natural objects that are available to the children; living things to care for and work with; nature/science books, games, or toys; cooking activities; or simple “experiments” (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998). Lower ratings are likely to be assigned if nature/science materials are in short supply or when the nature/science materials are not accessible to the Pre-K children on a daily basis. Of the 25 programs rated less than 5.0 on Nature/Science, eight were staffed by new teachers.

The second lowest item-average rating was a 4.8 for the Space for Gross Motor Play item. This item includes assessment of both indoor and outdoor space, as well as the safety, adequacy, and accessibility of this space. A note in the rating instrument indicates the intent of this item is that “major causes of serious injury are minimized.” Other indicators considered under the rating of 7 address the surfaces, suitable for different types of play; protection from the elements; and whether or not the space has other convenient features (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998). In 2000-01, 10 local programs staffed by new teachers were among the 18 sites that were rated less than 5.0 on this item.

The remaining three items, with the lowest item-average ratings, were Music/Movement, Child-Related Display, and Using Language to Develop Reasoning Skills. Each of these items had an average rating equal to 5.0, which suggests that, on the average, these features of the assessed program sites were of good quality.

The Music/Movement item (item-average rating = 5.0) assesses how music, dance, or other movements are incorporated into the regular activities. Indicators under the rating of 5.0 are concerned with the accessibility of many music materials for children’s use and the extent to which various types of music are used (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998). New teachers staffed five of the thirteen program sites that were rated less than 5.0 on Music/Movement during the 2000-01 year.

The Child-Related Display item (item-average rating = 5.0) of the *ECERS-R* is concerned with the materials on display in the classroom setting. In a good or excellent program, the materials displayed are age-appropriate; the displays relate closely to the current activities of the children; items are displayed at the child’s eye-level; and the individualized work of the children is on display, including three-dimensional child-created works (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998). Twenty-two of the program sites that were observed were rated less than 5.0 on the Child-Related Display item. Ten of these sites were staffed by a new teacher.

Using Language to Develop Reasoning Skills had an item-average of 5.0. This item concentrates on staff discussing logical relationships, introducing concepts appropriately, using actual events and experiences as a basis for concept development, and encouraging children to explain their reasoning as they solve problems (Harms, Clifford, and Cryer, 1998). Twenty-two of the observed program sites (including eight sites that were staffed by new teachers) received ratings less than 5.0 on this item.

Of all 40 items scored for the 50 program sites, 29 items had average ratings between 5.1 and 6.0. Thus, for the majority of these items, the averages imply that the program features were rated as being of good quality. As also shown in Exhibit 3, six additional items were rated above 6.0, but less than 7.0. The average ratings for each of these six items were as follows: Indoor Space (6.1), Children Interaction (6.2), Staff-Child Interaction (6.3), Disabled Children (6.5), Greeting/Departing (6.6), and Furniture for Routine Care, Play, and Learning (6.8). In general, these higher ratings imply that the six specific program

features assessed by these items were of good quality, but the observers were also able to see some practices like those observed in programs of excellent quality.

If the assessed 2000-01 sites/teachers continued in 2001-02, it is reasonable to anticipate that the quality of the 2001-02 programs would be high. Even the features receiving the lowest averages on the *ECERS-R* in the previous year had average ratings that approached the good quality rating of 5.0. As was shown in Exhibit 1, 83 class sites and 72 of the Starting Points teachers were identified as “continuing,” with respect to their participation in the *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

In addition to continuing classes and teachers, another feature of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* which can be thought of as a resource is this Program’s collaboration with other programs, agencies, services, and groups of interested people. Two open-ended items of the 2001-02 *PDS* requested information about program collaboration. Although some system-level Program coordinators did not respond to these items, the comments that were given are summarized in Exhibits 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

EXHIBIT 4. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 41 Coordinator Responses)

NAMES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS THAT WERE COORDINATED WITH STARTING POINTS IN 2001-02	SYSTEMS	
	No.	%
Title I Preschool Program	29	70.7
Early Childhood Programs funded by 8(g)	28	68.3
Head Start	14	34.1
Program that serves a special population or is coordinated with Special Education	12	29.3
The Reading Excellence Act (REA) Program	2	4.9
Other (e.g., Even Start, Transitional Program, Child Search, Kindergarten Program, ECD, EEF, Early Intervention Classes, Student Enhancement, locally funded program, and program funded through the System’s General Fund)	11	26.8

Source References:

Information in Exhibit 4 is based on the specific programs that were named in response to Item II-1 of the *PDS* instrument. A total of 41 system-level Program coordinators named one or more specific collaborating programs. The percents in Exhibit 4 were calculated by using 41 as the total number of responding coordinators. Some additional coordinators responded to Item II-1, but they did not name specific programs.

As illustrated in Exhibit 4, Starting Points most often collaborated with a Title I Preschool Program or with a pre-K program funded through 8(g). The coordinators’ responses to Item II-1 tended to be very detailed. For presentation in this report, the comments were sorted into the four categories shown in Exhibit 5. The detailed comments to Item II-1 are then presented in Exhibit 6.

EXHIBIT 5. COLLABORATION WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 56 Systems)

THE COORDINATOR'S COMMENT:	SYSTEMS	
	No.	%
Indicated there were multiple forms of collaboration.	30	53.6
Stated one type of collaboration.	13	23.2
Was not specific about collaboration.	9	16.1
Did not explain program collaboration (or other response).	4	7.1
TOTAL	56	100.0

Source References:

Information in Exhibit 5 is based on responses to Item II-1 of the *PDS* instrument. The percents in Exhibit 5 were calculated by using 56 as the total number of responding coordinators.

EXHIBIT 6. DETAILED COMMENTS ON COLLABORATION
WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 56 Systems)

Multiple Forms of Collaboration (30 Systems)

“Our school system is the grantee agency for the Head Start Program. Starting Points teachers along with Title I and 8(g) Pre-K teachers participate in yearly parish staff development workshops. Also, Starting Points teachers participate in Curriculum Development training with Head Start teachers. Special Populations Pre-K teachers also participate with Starting Points.”

“All of our system’s preschool programs have met to share ideas, coordinate thematic units to Rigby’s Pebble Soup curriculum, and to develop benchmarks for our preschool program.”

“Preschool program coordinators meet in the spring prior to registration to coordinate registration efforts. Head Start children are selected first, then Starting Points, and the other preschool programs (Title I, 8(g), and Special Needs classes) select their students. The school system preschool coordinators provide for in-service training for all preschool programs.”

“There is another pre-kindergarten class on the premises. We coordinate with each other often on the themes, trips, and celebrations.”

“Work and play with two Title I programs. Have inclusion with Developmentally Delayed Preschool Program in school.”

“I collaborate weekly with pre-kindergarten teachers who are involved in the 8(g) Grant program and the Title I program. Also, once a month, we meet and collaborate with special education from our school and other schools. We plan daily activities, letters to parents, programs, and field trips that relate to this age group.”

EXHIBIT 6 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON COLLABORATION
WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 56 Systems)

Multiple Forms of Collaboration (30 Systems-Continued)

“A major goal regarding preschool education in the Parish is to promote opportunities for collaboration between all preschool programs within the school system. On the parish level, staff development is planned and executed to include all program teachers. The decision was made this year to utilize the *Creative Curriculum* in all programs. The State Department provided an exceptional inservice for all regular and special education preschool teachers. Prior to this year (January 2001), all teachers participated in Portfolio Assessment Training directed by the Region V Special Education Facilitator. Regular education preschool teachers were included in the Modeled Writing staff development during Fall 2000 that was conducted for kindergarten teachers. The rationale for involving preschool teachers in Modeled Writing was to provide preschool teachers with an understanding of the early childhood writing strategy and how preschool experiences could enhance language and writing development. Preschool teachers were informed as to their very important role in the state accountability program. Regular education and special education supervisors and teachers work productively and cooperatively to make inclusion a successful event. Teachers now more than ever before are cognizant that everyone is responsible for educating the children. Parish-mandated, parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year during the fall and spring to promote parent awareness and an understanding of the progress of their children. At the school level, a variety of activities and events are coordinated under the direction of Ms. (name of principal), principal at (name of school). Monthly grade level meetings provide collaborative training and networking among preschool teachers. Educational field trips and school events are scheduled at times that accommodate the majority of the children to nurture learning and social development. Daily scheduling designed to integrate all preschool children helps to promote interaction during recess, lunch, assemblies, and field trips. Teachers strive to collaborate and reflect upon areas that will cultivate the growth of the total child (social, emotional, physical, and academic.)”

“When enrollment is at maximum, or an applicant does not meet the criteria for Starting Points, then the applicant is placed in one of the other pre-kindergarten programs if he/she meets the criteria for those programs. All preschool programs at our school go on field trips together. Preschool children in our school are together at the bus area, lunch, and on the playground. Collaboration takes place with lesson planning and sharing materials. All preschool teachers in the parish meet together for grade level sharing and curriculum development.”

- “(1) The waiting lists are verified with area (name of system) Schools when openings are available.
(2) At (name of school) there are two programs, Starting Points & Title I. They meet one hour each week to collaborate. They discuss skills, instruction, homework, field trips, etc.
(3) (Name of a second school) pairs up with (name of a third school) for all field trips.”

“Head Start cooperates with the school system in the enrollment of students. All Pre-K teachers in the school system meet with the supervisors to discuss recent and important information.”

“The Starting Points program works closely with the other Early Childhood programs in the system. The teachers all use the *Creative Curriculum* as the basis of their instruction. Inservice is provided for all Pre-K teachers together. They all attend conferences together and share ideas that are learned.”

“The Parish has three early childhood programs, Starting Points, Title I, and 8(g). These programs follow the same guidelines and procedures. Staff development is held parish-wide for all preschool teachers.”

EXHIBIT 6 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON COLLABORATION
WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 56 Systems)

Multiple Forms of Collaboration (30 Systems-Continued)

“The Starting Points program will share waiting lists with other Pre-K funding sources [8(g) and Title I] in an effort to service the maximum number of eligible students. Parents of eligible applicants on the waiting lists will also be referred to and from Head Start throughout the school year. Eligible Starting Points applicants currently being served through Even Start and the Transitional Program (formerly Homeless Program) will be given priority to participate in the program. Children in need of speech services or additional screening will be referred to Child Search. If a student qualifies for speech, he/she will receive services at the school site. If additional screening/evaluation results indicate an alternative placement, the student will be placed by Child Search in a more appropriate school setting. Parents that have not completed the requirement for a high school diploma will be referred to Even Start for literacy training and additional services. Additionally, the Parish Public School System Pre-kindergarten program will collaborate with Head Start to plan the Annual Stand for Children Day. This event provides an opportunity to promote preschool services available in the community.”

“Two 8(g) Block Grant Preschool classes are housed at the same school as the Starting Points Preschool to create continuity between the grants. The teachers have collaborated in their use of the *Creative Curriculum* and development of lesson plans. Collaboration includes curriculum development, topics of study, field trips, parent workshops, weekly grade level meetings, professional development, and assessment of program needs.”

“Our system also has four Title I pre-kindergarten and one 8(g) preschool programs. Teachers and paraprofessionals all receive the same staff development and inservices; they have the opportunity to meet, discuss, and plan lessons, center activities, themes, and other developmentally appropriate activities for participating students and parents. Monthly staff development affords them the opportunities to develop and extend curriculum and standards appropriate for four-year-old children.”

“All pre-K programs (Starting Points, Title I, 8(g), & NCP) meet together five times per school year to participate in staff development activities and grade level meetings. In addition, all regular 4-year old programs [Starting Points, Title I, & 8(g)] have a summer workshop to assist in planning curriculum.”

“We collaborate with the other programs in our building by planning and scheduling our activities and meetings.”

“Title I, Head Start, and other grant funded pre-school teachers and directors along with social services, child welfare and attendance supervisor and the LEA nurses meet periodically to discuss interventions, unserved children, expanding services, child development, appropriate placement. We work collaboratively and keep an ongoing dialog regarding the needs of all 3- and 4-year-old children.”

“The School System has Pre-K programs funded by three sources – 8(g) Preschool/Early Childhood Block Grant, Reading Excellence Act (REA), and Starting Points. The Pre-K staff members attend professional development activities together. Educational field trips as culminating activities are jointly planned and inter-classroom visitations are encouraged.”

EXHIBIT 6 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON COLLABORATION
WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 56 Systems)

Multiple Forms of Collaboration (30 Systems-Continued)

- “(1) Starting Points and Title I personnel collaborate in identifying students, planning student activities, and conducting parental involvement opportunities.
(2) Personnel from Starting Points, Title I and Non-Cat preschools work and plan together, and attend parish workshops.”

“The Parish Starting Points Program works very closely with the school system’s Title I and 8(g) funded preschool programs. Teacher and parent workshops are held together, as well as parent/teacher conferences. Additionally, the *Creative Curriculum* is used for all preschool programs.”

“The school system administers all preschool programs including Head Start, Starting Points, EEF, 8(g), Title I and Early Intervention classes. One individual supervises all programs. Common practices are in place for all four-year-old programs.”

“The teacher employed with the Starting Points Program collaborates with locally funded, 8(g), Title I, and Head Start teachers. The teachers in the various programs attend local, regional, and state staff development inservices, institutes, conferences, and workshops.”

“Starting Points staff participate in workshops offered through the district’s Head Start Program. Starting Points children share field trips with Head Start children. They also participate in Head Start Kindergarten Transition activities, e.g., going to visit a Kindergarten class at their neighborhood school.”

“The Parish currently has thirteen preschool sites. Two of these sites are funded by Starting Points (TANF). All of these programs are coordinated and evaluated by assigned Instructional Specialists, Program Coordinators, and site principals. The *Creative Curriculum* for Early Childhood is used at each site to provide uniformity and consistency for instructional and evaluation purposes. The Special Education department provides pupil appraisal and health related services. In-service training opportunities and teacher resources are available to all staff members.”

“There is collaboration done with Early Intervention Programs, pre-K classes funded with EEF money, Title I funds, 8(g) funds, and ECD funds. There is also collaboration with local Head Start Programs. Some of this sharing includes staff development, planning together, going on field trips together, visiting other classrooms, and planning and participating in school programs.”

“Starting Points works collaboratively with 8(g) personnel, Title I Preschool and REA Preschool for staff development, planning curriculum and instruction, and participating in school-wide activities.”

“Parish-level workshops are held at least twice a year for Title I, 8(g), and Starting Points Pre-Kindergarten teachers and paraprofessionals. The Starting Points teacher and paraprofessional also work with other Pre-K teachers and paraprofessionals at this particular school site (name of school) in the planning of theme units to be taught.”

EXHIBIT 6 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON COLLABORATION
WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 56 Systems)

Multiple Forms of Collaboration (30 Systems-Continued)

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* works in collaboration with other preschools in the parish (Title I, 8(g), and Student Enhancement) through the collaboration of funds in order to minimize the number of four-year-olds on a waiting list. All preschool programs in the parish are under the direction of one coordinator. Therefore all preschools in the parish follow the same guidelines, curriculum, and calendars. Collaboration among teachers is enhanced through parish meetings.”

“The two Starting Points teachers (housed at two different schools) are included in all district PK staff trainings and/or other working or planning activities. The other PK programs include Title I, 8(g), and Non-Categorical.”

One Form of Collaboration (13 Systems)

“Staff development activities are a collaborative effort with 8(g) Early Childhood and LCAA’s Head Start.”

“Several times per year, Starting Points staff participate in staff development with staff from Model Early Childhood and Head Start.”

“The Parish’s pre-kindergarten classes are funded through several sources. Children are placed in classes according to criteria of each program. One coordinator completes the grants, develops budgets, and monitors each regular education funding source.”

“All Pre-K programs within the system use the same curriculum and follow the same guidelines. Head Start is the only other provider. A collaboration was planned earlier; they cancelled.”

“The children interact daily and go on field trips with the children in the Model Early Preschool Program, the Developmentally Delayed Preschool Program, and the kindergarten program.”

“We have three preschool classes on our campus that all follow the *Creative Curriculum* guidelines and interact frequently.”

“A thematic approach to learning is used in our Pre-Kindergarten program. We will also use *Creative Curriculum* as our curriculum guide.”

“The 8(g) Preschool Program and the *Starting Points Preschool Program* teachers plan and share information for these programs.”

“We have two Title I Pre-K programs at (name of school). Those children who aren’t able to enroll into the Starting Points program because of higher test scores or lack of space, are placed on the list with the applicants for Title I Pre-K. Students for Title I Pre-K are chosen by test scores only; income is not a factor.”

“Our Starting Points class is housed in the same facility as the parish’s largest special education preschool site. The applicants are basically recruited from the Head Start waiting list.”

EXHIBIT 6 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON COLLABORATION
WITH EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
(N = 56 Systems)

One Form of Collaboration (13 Systems-Continued)

“There are several different pre-kindergarten programs in the parish. Teachers are provided the opportunity to attend parish-wide inservice sessions, school-level grade level sessions and state conferences together.”

“Our system has three 8(g) classes, one Title I class, and one Starting Points class. Every child who wants to attend preschool at the Annex is enrolled. We have children who are on a waiting list.”

“Communicate/share ideas with other preschool programs in the parish.”

Not Specific About Collaboration (N = 9 Systems)

“The program collaborates with Title I. There are 20 children in each class- 13 are Title I and 7 are Starting Points.”

“Two sites, (named two early childhood centers), work collaboratively with Title I. These two classes are partially funded by Title I.”

“The Starting Points teachers collaborate bimonthly with other teachers in the 8(g) Student Enhancement, Early Childhood and Title I teachers in the parish.”

“The Parish Preschool operates in a consolidated preschool center which allows our Starting Points personnel to work collaboratively with 8(g), Title I, and Special Education teachers and services to meet the needs of our students.”

“Work with Head Start Program to ensure as many families as possible can receive preschool services.”

“At my school there are six preschool classes which consist of Title I, 8(g), special education, and Starting Points. We all work closely together to provide quality programs.”

“The Parish collaborates with other funding sources, Title I, 8(g), and the parish general fund, to serve 100 Pre-K children in the Parish at five sites.”

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* collaborates with the 8(g) and Title I Preschool Programs in an effort to meet the educational needs of all the preschoolers requesting early childhood education.”

“8(g) Preschool at same school. Noncategorical Preschool at same school.”

Did Not Explain Collaboration (or Other Response)

“We have only one pre-kindergarten class and Starting Points is our only program.”

Two coordinators wrote “None” and one replied with “Not Applicable.”

As illustrated in Exhibits 5 and 6, the majority of the coordinators indicated Starting Points collaborated with other early childhood or preschool programs in multiple ways. Frequent forms of collaboration included participating together in staff development, interaction of the children and/or their parents, coordinated planning, use of the same curriculum, and shared materials/facilities. In some systems, one coordinator supervised several of the collaborating programs.

Coordinators who responded to the second item on program collaboration (Item II-2) identified other programs or groups that collaborated with the system's *Starting Points Preschool Program*. The coordinators' responses to Item II-2 are summarized in Exhibit 7. The detailed comments to Item II-2 are provided in Exhibit 8.

EXHIBIT 7. COLLABORATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS OR GROUPS
(N = 56 Systems)

THE COORDINATOR'S COMMENT:	SYSTEMS	
	No.	%
Indicated collaboration with an education-focused group/program or with only one other type of collaborator.	22	39.3
Identified multiple types of collaborators. ¹	18	32.1
Did not identify any other collaborators.	16	28.6
TOTAL	56	100.0

Source References:

Information in Exhibit 7 is based on responses to Item II-2 of the *PDS* instrument. The percents in Exhibit 7 were calculated by using 56 as the total number of systems, but only 40 coordinators actually responded to the item.

¹ These responses included identification of (1) specific education programs, education-focused groups, colleges, or libraries; (2) businesses; (3) various community members/agencies; (4) health-oriented groups; and/or (5) foster grandparents.

EXHIBIT 8. DETAILED COMMENTS ON OTHER COLLABORATORS
(N = 56 Systems)

One Type of Collaborator (22 Systems)

“Even Start, sponsored by our school system, conducts group meetings in which Starting Points parents enrolled in Even Start will participate in.”

“8(g) Preschool (Model Early); Special Education Preschool Program; Education Field Trips and Resource Visitors.”

“8(g) Early Childhood; LCAA Head Start”

“8(g) Model Early Childhood, Title I, Head Start.”

“The Parish's *Starting Points Preschool Program* collaborates with local Head Start Centers; Learn Grant Project (GEM); Special Education/Child Search; Title I; and Family Literacy Coordinators.”

EXHIBIT 8 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON OTHER COLLABORATORS
(N = 56 Systems)

One Type of Collaborator (22 Systems-Continued)

“At (name of school) “Jump Start Kindergarten” works on M & W with 5 Pre-K children from 3:15 – 5:00.”

“Southeastern Louisiana University – Jumpstart Program.”

“Title I and Special Education”

“Even Start Program works closely with our Starting Points Program.”

“Albany High School Beta Club, 4-H Club, and Library Club. Springfield Middle School, Tangipahoa Parish Parent Resource Center, Southeastern Louisiana University.”

“The Delta Head Start Program is a separate entity from the public schools in this parish; there is a great deal of collaboration with this agency. We have formed a partnership that includes meetings, exchange of ideas, transitional activities for those students entering the kindergarten program, sharing of curriculum information, and addressing the strengths and weaknesses of both programs and the impact that it has on student development.”

“Title I, 8(g) Model Early Pre-K program, Head Start, Even Start, NSU.”

“Title I, Model Early Childhood Pre-K Program, Civitan, Early Childhood Development Program, TCA Head Start.”

“Louisiana College, LSU-A, Northwestern University, School Partners in Education.”

“8(g) Early Childhood and Title I Preschool Programs”

“Vernon Parish Head Start/Special Education, Developmentally delayed & Early Intervention Programs.”

“Head Start and First Baptist Church Preschool”

“We maintain a partnership with a wide variety of social agencies within and outside of St. Bernard Parish.”

“Our three Adopt-A-School sponsors, Neese Industries, Piggly Wiggly, and Eatel, are available to help our program when needed.”

“Louisiana Central Bank adopted our school and helps if needed.”

“Wal-Mart, McDonald’s, and Pizza Hut provide monetary donations or incentives to the program.”

“Brookshire’s”

EXHIBIT 8 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON OTHER COLLABORATORS
(N = 56 Systems)

Multiple Types of Collaborators (18 Systems)

“Tifton, Wal-Mart, Brookshire’s, Title I, Special Education, and General Fund.”

“One of the Starting Points classes (school) is located close to the ULM campus and works closely with the College of Education (student teachers, block students, observers, etc.) Both of the schools are pleased to have excellent business partners that contribute to their schools.”

“During the Fall semester of 2001, supervisors of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* met with supervisors of the local Day Care Providers, Head Start Programs, and supervisors of the Northeast Children’s Coalition to discuss strategies to benefit all children of preschool age.”

“The Parish Head Start Program provides vision, hearing, dental, and medical services for students enrolled in the program. Chevron/Phillips is the Adopt-A-School Partner.”

“School/Business sponsors-Lewis Odom Petroleum Land Service and Sharp Henry Law Firm. Public Library Visitation Reading Program.”

“Office of Social Services and Union Parish Health Unit.”

“One school site is participating in the Family Literacy Program. Each school site participates in the Character Counts Program sponsored by the county agency. The Parent Liaison provides services upon request.”

“Centenary College student workers, Highland Center, Caddo Sheriff’s Department, Shreveport Police Department, Shreveport Fire Department, Caddo Magnet High School, The American Legion Lowe McFarland #14, St. Luke’s Methodist Church, Caddo Career/Technology Center, Overton Brooks Employee Association.”

“Head Start, Title I, 8(g), non-categorical preschool, public library, Kiwanis Club, Micheal St. Martin – Attorney, Buquet Distributors, Barker Motor Company, Synergy Bank, Levett Mechanical Company, Regions Bank, Dalton LeBlanc – State Farm, Kevin Thompson – attorney, Grace Brown and Mike & Sharon Turner – members of the community.”

“WBR Library, Exxon, Enterprise Inc., LSU, Port Allen High Teacher Cadet Program”

“The District Attorney’s Office provides a Family Service Manager. The Community College sends students to observe in the Pre-K classes.”

“The Starting Points program collaborates with Success By Six-United Way, McNeese State University, Calcasieu Parish Extended Day Program, Adult Education, Regional V Early Childhood, Title I Parenting Center, LA CHIP, Child Search, and Steps to Success. The parish held an Agency-Agency Fair and teachers are made aware of a number of programs throughout Southwest Louisiana.”

“The University of Louisiana at Monroe-Librarian- Jane Jackson; LSU Ag. Center-Wendy Travis, Council on Aging-Bonnie Canterbury, Haven Health Systems- Susie Johnson.”

EXHIBIT 8 (CONTINUED). DETAILED COMMENTS ON OTHER COLLABORATORS
(N = 56 Systems)

Multiple Types of Collaborators (18 Systems-Continued)

“Head Start, The Tooth Bus-Dental Program, New Orleans Zephyrs, Healthy Lifestyle Choices, Child Search, JPPSS Community Education Department, Even Start, and Tulane Infant-Toddler Program.”

“Adult Ed. Center, Vocational Technical College, Office of Family Service, LSU Cooperative Extension, LA CHIP”

“Title I, pre-K, 8(g) programs, Head Start, social services agency, Holy Cross College, and the LEA Special Education Department.”

“Title I program provides us with some supplies. The Diocese provided computer equipment. The Foster Grandparents program provides us with volunteers.”

“Foster grandparents, Title I Parent Involvement Staff, Head Start.”

Identified No Other Collaborators (16 Systems)

Seven coordinators left the item blank, five coordinators wrote “None,” and four coordinators responded with “N/A.”

Recommendations for quality early childhood programs often call for many different types of providers and other community groups to meet the needs of young children by collaborating. Based on the above data, it is evident that the participating systems and schools have been very successful in their efforts to collaborate Starting Points with other helpful programs, groups, and/or interested individuals. Past evaluation studies of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* have also indicated that the Program is thought to have many strengths, it is generally well-received by parents/guardians and the local community, and there is some evidence indicating that the Program has sustained positive effects on its former participants.

Furthermore, in past years there has been interest in the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, as evidenced by the two to three thousand applications received annually for the Program. However, not all applicants have met the eligibility criteria. In some systems, space was so limited that this Program could not accommodate every eligible applicant, but efforts were made to provide services to as many eligible children as possible through placement in other Pre-K programs. The current evaluation study also included collection of information regarding applicants, eligibility, children enrolled, the number of children on waiting lists, and other demographic data. A summary of these findings is presented in the next section of this report.

APPLICANT/ENROLLMENT DATA AND OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS

EXHIBIT 9. EXTENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS (N = 56 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	43	39	36	0
Ascension	34	21	20	3
Assumption	31	16	16	0
Avoyelles	67	37	20	2
Beauregard	45	25	20	0
Bienville	26	21	18	0
Bossier	35	35	28	7
Caddo	62	55	48	13
Calcasieu	109	86	60	53
Caldwell	22	20	20	0
Catahoula	22	17	17	0
Claiborne	54	43	20	0
Concordia	51	48	20	0
DeSoto	72	68	20	12
East Baton Rouge	161	121	105	30
East Feliciana	34	23	20	3
Evangeline	56	44	31	2
Iberia	45	36	37	9
Iberville	25	24	20	4
Jefferson	164	155	100	30
Lafayette	70	47	40	7
Lafourche	99	27	24	3
LaSalle	137	82	16	0
Livingston	66	26	20	0
Madison	25	20	16	0
Morehouse	30	30	30	NA
Natchitoches	26	20	20	4
Orleans	104	102	100	4
Page Subtotals	1,715	1,288	942	186

Source References:

Numbers of applicants, eligible applicants, and children on the waiting list are from the PDS instrument. Numbers of children enrolled are from the October 1, 2001 roster information that was submitted to the Elementary Standards Section.

EXHIBIT 9 (CONTINUED). EXTENT OF SERVICES PROVIDED
TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
(N = 56 Systems)

SYSTEM NAME	STARTING POINTS CHILDREN			NO. OF CHILDREN ON WAITING LIST
	TOTAL NO. OF APPLICANTS	NO. OF ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	NO. OF CHILDREN ENROLLED	
Ouachita	87	50	25	20
Plaquemines	23	23	20	3
Pointe Coupee	22	20	18	NA
Rapides	68	41	36	0
Red River	20	20	20	0
Richland	26	26	20	3
Sabine	40	40	20	20
St. Bernard ¹		44	20	24
St. Helena	19	19	20	0
St. James	15	15	15	0
St. John the Baptist	32	30	20	8
St. Landry	46	40	39	9
St. Martin	70	61	21	1
St. Mary	84	42	20	15
St. Tammany	88	57	40	17
Tangipahoa	45	41	20	7
Terrebonne	101	77	35	18
Union	32	20	20	12
Vermilion	26	24	24	0
Vernon	30	25	19	10
Washington	35	20	20	10
Webster	24	24	20	4
West Baton Rouge ²	48	48	12	6
Winn	25	20	20	0
Monroe City	95	79	39	5
Brighter Horizon of Baton Rouge	15	9	9	0
New Orleans Archdiocese	20	20	20	0
Shreveport Diocese	22	16	16	NA
Page Subtotals	1,158	951	628	192
Totals ^{3,4}	2,873	2,239	1,570	378

¹ “The school system operates 18 preschool classes using federal and state dollars. There is a centralized application process. Students are placed according to program guidelines.”

² “We have 8(g) and Starting Points and use the same application.”

³ Among the 2,873 applicants for the 2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program, 77.9% (or 2,239) were determined to be eligible for participation; 1,570 children were enrolled in classes by October 2001. An additional 378 children were on waiting lists in 34 of the participating systems as the school year began. By January of 2002, there were only 206 children on waiting lists in 28 of the systems and the Program had enrolled 1,586 children.

⁴ Table 10 provides additional demographic information relative to the beginning of the 2001-02 Program year.

EXHIBIT 10. CLASS AND CHILD DEMOGRAPHICS
(N = 56 Systems)

CLASSES AND CHILDREN	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
NUMBER OF CLASSES PROVIDED¹		
One	34	60.7
Two	13	23.2
Three	1	1.8
Four	5	8.9
Five	2	3.6
Six	1	1.8
NUMBER OF CHILDREN ENROLLED¹		
Fewer than 20	11	19.6
20 – 39	38	67.9
40 – 59	3	5.4
60 – 79	1	1.8
80 or more	3	5.4
OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS	PARTICIPANTS	
	NO.	%
ETHNICITY²		
Black	864	59.2
White	534	36.6
Hispanic	33	2.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	15	1.0
American Indian/Alaskan Native	13	0.9
Total Reported	1,459	100.0
CHILDREN FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES³	967	61.6
CHILDREN RECEIVING:⁴		
Free lunches	1,323	84.2
Reduced-Price lunches	249	15.8

Source References:

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

Ethnicity data are from *SIS*, but the remaining data are from the *PDS* instrument.

- ¹ Starting Points children were enrolled in a total of 99 classes, with 60.7% of the participating systems providing only one class. The majority of these systems (67.9%) had enrolled 20 to 39 children in the 2001-02 *Starting Points Preschool Program*, by October of 2001.
- ² At the end of the first data collection period, *SIS* records indicated that the 2001-02 *Starting Points Preschool Program* funded 1,459 Pre-K participants. Three public systems had not entered records on Starting Points children; the three nonpublic schools do not submit data to *SIS*. The majority of the children who did have a *SIS* record were identified as Black (864 or 59.2%), while 534 (or 36.6%) were classified as White.
- ³ Of the 1,570 enrolled participants, 61.6% of the children were from single-parent homes.
- ⁴ These percents were calculated by using 1,572 as the total number of participants; 84.2% of the children received free lunches.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

As previously noted in this report, the eligibility criteria and guidelines for implementing the *Starting Points Preschool Program* were changed for the 2001-02 school year. In Item I of the *PDS* instrument, information was requested about the new eligibility criteria and about the impact that the Program changes had (e.g., on the number of applicants, enrollments, or on the selection of the children who were participants). Several coordinators also made comments about the eligibility criteria when they responded to Item V of the *PDS*. The information provided by the system-level Program coordinators is summarized in Exhibits 11 and 12.

EXHIBIT 11. ELIGIBILITY CRITERION THAT WAS MOST DIFFICULT TO MEET
(N = 56 Systems)¹

CRITERION IDENTIFIED BY COORDINATOR	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Free or reduced price meals criterion ²	31	55.4
Immunization and regular school enrollment documentation criterion	22	39.3
The age criterion	8	14.3
No Criteria were checked. ³	2	3.6

Source Reference:

Eligibility criterion data are from Item I of the *PDS* instrument.

- ¹ Some coordinators checked more than one criterion, thus the sum of percents exceeds 100%.
- ² Based on the coordinators' responses, it was most difficult to meet the eligibility criterion relating to free or reduced price meals.
- ³ One coordinator did not check any of the criteria, but indicated that registration was completed before the system received information about changes to the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Another coordinator indicated there were "no problems" with the criteria, and did not respond to a follow-up item. But this coordinator gave a comment in Item V, regarding the impact of changing the Program criteria.

The follow-up item requested comments about significant impacts of the changed criteria or program regulations. Fifteen coordinators left this item completely blank or responded only with the word "no;" two other coordinators made a statement that indicated there was no impact on the Program. The remaining coordinators provided specific comments to indicate how changes had impacted the local programs. In addition, when responding to Item V of the *PDS*, several coordinators also commented on eligibility criteria or on the attendance requirement that is associated with reimbursement by TANF funds. These comments to Item V and other comments about the impacts on the Program are summarized in Exhibit 12.

EXHIBIT 12. SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR
OTHER PROGRAM CHANGES
(N = 56 Systems)

THE COORDINATOR:	SYSTEMS	
	No.	%
Did not identify any Program impacts.	17	30.4
Reported increased applicants and/or children eligible for enrollment.	16	28.6
Specifically addressed the Free/Reduced-Priced Meals Criterion.	14	25.0
Discussed a problem with reimbursement that is related to an Attendance Requirement.	9	16.1
Implied something was easier.	7	12.5
Remarked it was "First Year For"	4	7.1
Made some other comment.	4	7.1

Source References:

Information in Exhibit 12 is based on responses to the *PDS* instrument. The percents in Exhibit 12 were calculated by using 56 as the total number of responding systems. While some coordinators left the items blank or just wrote "No," other coordinators gave more than one comment. All comments regarding how a Program was impacted by a change were tallied to prepare Exhibit 12.

As shown in Exhibit 12, when coordinators identified an impact on the Program, the majority reported increased applicants and/or an increase in the number of eligible children. Exhibit 13 lists the detailed comments. The Item V detailed responses are enclosed in brackets [] and are attached to other relevant comments of the same coordinator.

EXHIBIT 13. COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR
OTHER PROGRAM CHANGES

Did Not Identify Any Program Impacts (17 Systems)

Five coordinators left the item blank, and 10 coordinators just wrote the word "No."

"No, there was not a significant impact."

"No, the change in eligibility criteria did not have a significant impact on the number of families who applied, enrollment of children, or selection of participants."

Increased Applicants and/or Children Eligible for Enrollment (16 Systems)

"Yes, the number of applicants was greater."

"Yes. By eliminating the both parents out-of-house requirement, we increased both our applicant and enrollment population."

"More parents applied with the removal of the "employment" criteria from the application."

EXHIBIT 13 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR
OTHER PROGRAM CHANGES

Increased Applicants and/or Children Eligible for Enrollment (16 Systems-Continued)

“Yes, the change in the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program* Eligibility Criteria did have a significant impact on the number of families who applied and were selected for participation in the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. There was an increased number of applicants for the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program*, which we believe is attributed to the removal of the stipulation that parents of children enrolled in the *Starting Points Preschool Program* must be working or enrolled in an educational training program.”

“More families applied for the program because they were not required to work or go to school.”

“A few more families have applied this year due to the change in eligibility criteria. As the public becomes more aware of the eligibility criteria change, I expect the number of applications to increase even more. More children have enrolled this year due to this change.”

“The change in eligibility criteria had a significant impact on the enrollment of eligible children. More at-risk students were able to apply because parents/guardians who have low incomes, do not work or attend school.”

“The number of eligible children increased.”

“Yes, by changing the criteria 50% more families are eligible at two of the three sites.”

“The change in eligibility criteria made it possible for more students to be eligible to participate in the Starting Points program.”

“Yes, by eliminating the work/school requirement, more applicants were eligible for the program.”

“The relaxation of the work requirement for parents allowed us to service more students in need.”

“ The selection/number of participants was greater due to the change in criteria.”

[“New criteria now make it possible for more children to meet eligibility requirements.”] “There was an increase in the number of eligible children.”

“We were pleased with the fact that 8(g) and Starting Points have consistent criteria. More students were eligible for this year.”

[“The change in eligibility criteria made it possible for more students to participate in the program. This was a positive change for parents. The parents get very upset when their child is not accepted in the program.”]

EXHIBIT 13 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR
OTHER PROGRAM CHANGES

Specifically addressed the Free/Reduced-Priced Meals Criterion (14 Systems)

“The Parish enrolled students on March 20, 2001 under the old criteria for Starting Points. We continued to enroll students through July using the same criteria. The new criteria were applied to the selection of students. We had to turn away many parents who were working and making just a little too much to qualify for free or reduced lunch. The change in program criteria is a total change in philosophy. The program was started to encourage parents to attend school to increase their work skills or for parents who were working but making just a little too much money to qualify for Head Start. It was part of the initiative to assist parents in getting off the welfare rolls. The change in criteria totally changes the philosophy of the program.”

“We did not have the changes in Eligibility Criteria at Spring Round-Up Registration; therefore, teachers had to review registration criteria to address the free/reduced lunch requirement when school started in August.” [“We may need some assistance/direction on qualifying of students for Spring Registration – the problem being that Lunch Applications are not available at that time. My understanding is that these Federal Forms are changed/revised each year and are not available until after Spring Registration – usually June or July.”]

“Took longer to receive eligibility verification of free/reduced lunch from local food service officials.”

“The change this year had a significant impact on the number of families who applied because they were not free and reduced lunch families and selections had been made before regulations were out. Because we have preschool round up in the Spring, we had to drop and add students after selection process had been made so students would meet the requirements. Luckily, we had another preschool program at the same school to transfer the dropped students into.”

“The free and reduced priced meal criterion made it very difficult to select students. In most areas of the parish, the four-year-olds needing services are not the same students that are on free or reduced lunch; therefore, making it difficult to fill the available spots.”

“Yes. Head Start serves the majority of free lunch or reduced lunch criterion eligible four-year-olds in the Parish. This qualifier has created a real problem in securing and keeping a full class.”

“We had already accepted the applicants for 2001-02 when we received notification about the change. All applicants who had been selected met the free and reduced meals criterion.”

“We did not have a problem with free or reduced eligibility requirements because both schools are located in Title I zones.”

“No—removing the criteria for parents working or in school was negated by the fact that children must be eligible for free or reduced lunch.”

“It did not impact the number of families who applied to the program. Our district has a high percentage of free/reduced meal families.”

“The “free/reduced lunch” criteria has made eligibility simpler. As a result the class flow has been smoother and more stable.”

EXHIBIT 13 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR
OTHER PROGRAM CHANGES

Specifically addressed the Free/Reduced-Priced Meals Criterion (14 Systems-Continued)

[“The guidelines to qualify students on free/reduced lunch has helped greatly.”]

“More were eligible for free or reduced lunch so this did increase the number of students qualified.”

“Yes, it made it easier for students who need the Pre-K education to attend school. If a parent lost his/her job or was laid off and could not find another one, the child could not continue in the program. Now with free and reduced lunch qualification, no child is turned away unless they don’t qualify and most do qualify. However, this year one student qualified at the time of registration in March, but did not qualify after school started-parent got a better job.”

A Problem With Reimbursement That Is Related to an Attendance Requirement (9 Systems)

“Having Starting Points funded through TANF posed a problem in relation to the 74% daily attendance on each student. Students are not allowed to submit doctor’s excuses for having missed over five days within the monthly attendance period.” “Because we were told in November that each student had to attend with a 74 percentage attendance rate per month, we were penalized because this was retroactive back to the beginning of school. [“It is the opinion of the entire Starting Points staff and administration that funding should be provided, if possible, through the state because of the TANF requirements. If TANF funding is to continue, then our only suggestion would be to change the 74% daily attendance rate of each individual student.”]

[“We are very pleased to have the opportunity to service twenty more Pre-Kindergarten students in our parish through this program. However, it is very difficult to plan and budget effectively for this program when reimbursement is dependent on student attendance.”]

[The monthly applying for monies based on attendance is a nightmare. Programs can also be penalized financially if there is an outbreak of some contagious disease. Young children get sick often and to curtail monies due to this hurts the program and the system. Systems do not have monies to pick up the differences in these programs. This payment policy should be re-visited.”]

“Reimbursement according to attendance may affect the selection of participants in the future.”

“The attendance requirement has been stressful on both staff and parents.” [“The LEA is unjustly penalized by the Starting Points attendance policy. The school system has no control over illnesses of children and the duration of absences each month. The attendance policy also hurts the LEA when a child moves and is dropped from the program. It often takes several days to contact and enroll another student. Salaries and benefits must be paid to teachers and aides even if students are absent. Three of the sites have not received money for materials and supplies because of the attendance policy.”]

[“The change in funding that took place after the program had been in effect four months will present problems. The system will have to pay the difference if students are not in attendance the prescribed number of days. With four-year-old students, this is very difficult since they tend to spread the various illnesses to each other causing a large number of absences. We need to ask the question – are we serving the needs of students at risk of being unsuccessful learners? Or are we just following program funding guidelines that may cause systems to reject future programs because of uncertain funding?”]

EXHIBIT 13 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR
OTHER PROGRAM CHANGES

A Problem With Reimbursement That Is Related to an Attendance Requirement (9 Systems-Continued)

[“We do have a concern with regard to the TANF guidelines pertaining to reimbursement of funds to the school district. At the present time reimbursement is based on daily attendance of each individual student. This policy places the school district in a difficult position. A student could have chicken pox, a case of head lice, or any number of other medical conditions resulting in a long term absence, and the district would be penalized by losing funds for each student having greater than a 26% absence rate. In a second scenario, due to the fact that many of our students come from at-risk home environments, a number of social problems could occur, presenting our social worker with a dilemma. ... the child, through no fault of his own, is forced to miss school time. At this point the social worker may have to decide whether it is in the best interest of the child to maintain him on the class roster while working with the family (even though the district will not be reimbursed), or drop him from the roster after pressure from the district’s business manager because it is in the district’s best interest to replace the child with another student in order to receive payment of funds. In either case, the social worker is caught in the middle. Our recommendation would be to base reimbursement on the percentage of total attendance of all students in the program. This practice would negate the effects of one or two student’s excessive absences on the reimbursement for the entire program. Consequently, the budget would not be negatively affected as easily.”]

[“The paperwork for this program is overwhelming. The 74% attendance rule should be revisited or more clearly stated. We have students who have significant illnesses and childhood diseases. Are there any considerations for these types of absences?”]

[“Due to changes in the program, we were not able to request reimbursement funds until the end of December. (We have not received our first monies yet.) This factor has prohibited us from making the investment that we anticipated into this program, so far. We hired one additional teacher and one full time aide for the Starting Points program. We bought classroom and lunchroom tables and chairs, as well as other classroom furnishings, at sizable expense. We have been able to pay the salaries of our employees, but are not able to purchase the extra teaching materials for our centers and other “extras” for this class, so far. This factor has slowed and frustrated the potential development in this class. Though, and a big though, we sincerely appreciate the opportunity to participate in this program and anxiously look forward to developing it to its fullest potential.”]

EXHIBIT 13 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA OR
OTHER PROGRAM CHANGES

Implied Something Was Easier (7 Systems)

“Yes, the eligibility criteria made it easier for families to apply.”

“Made it easier for parents to qualify.”

“Eliminating the income eligibility made the enrollment process easier for new enrollees.”

“This year’s changes in eligibility criteria made it much easier for the administration to gather information, therefore the selection of students for Starting Points moved at a faster pace.”

“The changes in eligibility criteria make it much easier to enroll students. Less time had to be spent in constant contacts to get all necessary information from parents. Also, some parents are reluctant to release income information.”

“The change in requirements did make it easier for parents to meet the regulations without having to provide proof of employment.”

[“I especially appreciate the simplification of the Starting Points criteria for eligibility. I’m not sure about the TANF billing yet.”]

First Year For: (4 Systems)

“The remaining students were able to be served by other programs. This year, the system is providing transportation; this, more than any other factor, led to an increase in applications.”

“This is the first year that I have ever had a waiting list (3 children as of October 1). This change did not initially affect my selection of the participants, as I had exactly 20 to qualify at the close of registration. The three students on my waiting list applied after the first week of school.”

“This is the first year of implementation of the Starting Points Program. Therefore, the selected school site did not encounter any significant problems with the eligibility criteria or program regulations.”

“NA. This is our first year to have this program.”

Other (4 Systems)

“Yes, the classes filled up and mastery lists had to be started. Also, not having to spend time on keeping up with the income of the parents gave the teachers more time to spend on planning and normal teaching activities.”

“No. The change in eligibility criteria did not impact the number of students registering. It did impact the amount of paperwork required.”

[“The new eligibility requirements have been an asset for serving at-risk children.”]

“No, changes were received after registration was completed.” [“We would like to receive any information concerning changes in Starting Points prior to school closure.”]

While the free/reduced lunch criterion was NOT always easy to use for the 2001-02 Program, the majority of the comments lead to an impression that all the new criteria will help more children to qualify. Thus, it may be possible to expand the Program to a larger number of children if it becomes very easy to fill a class. However, there may be some difficulties with the free/reduced lunch criterion, if the practice of Spring registration is followed within the systems.

One Program change that was problematic for several systems is the new attendance regulation that is associated with TANF reimbursement. Since it appears the attendance requirement is producing unstable funding, re-examination of this policy is recommended. Young children, especially those of poverty backgrounds, do become ill. Obviously, it is not very helpful to needy families to make parents send an ill child to class so that the child's place in the Program is not lost. Furthermore, the ill child who does attend class probably reaps little benefit from that day's activities and is likely to make the other children ill, thus causing more absences. Low attendance of children that is due to other reasons would need to be addressed in different ways, to ensure that a class is as full as possible. However, the Program should not deny services to a needy child who has been ill, given the intent of the TANF legislation.

Besides delivering the *Starting Points Preschool Program* to children who meet the new eligibility criteria, the involvement of the parents/guardians is no longer required. Nevertheless, parental involvement is still desired since the parents/guardians are their child's first teachers. Under the old criteria, parents/guardians were also required to work or be in some educational or job training program. Because of that requirement, parents/guardians were not always able to attend activities when these conflicted with their work/training/school hours. Various techniques for involving the parents/guardians were implemented in each previous Program year, with about half of the participating systems feeling the level of parent involvement was a Program strength. We wished to continue collecting similar parent involvement data in order to compare Program year 2001-02 with Program year 2000-01. The next section of this report presents the parent involvement data, which is based on the coordinators' responses to the *PDS* items of III-1, III-2, and V.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

EXHIBIT 14. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES OR SPECIAL PROVISIONS
FREQUENTLY USED IN PARTICIPATING SYSTEMS
(N = 56 Systems)

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES/PROVISIONS USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Inform parents of activities through calendars, newsletters, or other formal communication mechanisms	38	67.9
Hold individual parent/teacher conferences	34	60.7
Send frequent messages to parents relating to each child's activities ¹	28	50.0
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)	26	46.4
Hold parent workshops or meetings	17	30.4
Request that parents help child with at-home learning activities	17	30.4
Allow parents to visit the classroom at their convenience	17	30.4
Provide a parent handbook that includes the program philosophy, policies, and procedures	14	25.0
Hold open house	13	23.2
Inform parents of ways they may contribute to their child's development	12	21.4
Schedule the parent involvement activities to accommodate the work/training schedules of parents/guardians	9	16.1
Encourage parents to volunteer in classroom to help with daily activities	6	10.7
Work with other agencies or programs to provide assistance to our participating parents ²	5	8.9
Offer alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation ³	5	8.9
Involve parents by using other activities ³	4	7.1
Provide a parent's bulletin board and/or message center	4	7.1
Conduct home visits	3	5.4
Provide childcare assistance for workshop/meeting events	3	5.4

Source Reference:

Parental involvement data are from the *PDS* instrument. In Item III-1, system-level coordinators were asked to check the **three most frequently used** activities/provisions. Some coordinators checked more than three activities/provisions, thus the sum of the percents exceeds 100%.

¹ One coordinator added, "through curriculum newsletters."

² Assistance was provided by other programs as indicated by the following comments.

- "Title I home visiting paraprofessionals will conduct home visits with parents."
- "Head Start"
- "Special services for students needing referrals for deficiencies. (example, speech)"
- "Even Start, Right Start, Head Start, Title I, and Special Education."
- "Parents are invited to participate in the Character Counts Program at the school with their child."

³ Other parental involvement activities and alternatives that were listed are summarized in Exhibit 15.

EXHIBIT 15. OTHER WAYS PARENTS/GUARDIANS
WERE INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM
(7 Coordinators)^{1,2}

PARENTS/GUARDIANS WERE INVOLVED BY	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Alternatives for workshop attendance or classroom visitation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Alternate times for meetings before and after school.” • “Parents are notified that any time they can meet will be arranged. Parents have teacher’s personal home number.” • “Scheduled parent visits are provided to allow parents the opportunity to support the classroom instruction.” • “V. I. P. meetings (Parent-Teacher)” • Parents receive a monthly calendar of activities they are asked to do with their child each day.” 	5	8.9
Other Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Field trips.” • “Each child takes home a book every night. Parents are requested to read book and document with signature and name of book read.” • “School plays. Participate in Drug-Free Schools Red Ribbon Week and Even Start’s Annual Literacy Week.” • “Seasonal parties sponsored by parents. Seasonal and year ending programs highlighting the students.” 	4	7.1

Source Reference:

These additional methods of parent involvement are from seven coordinators who responded to the *PDS* instrument, Items III-1p and/or III-1r.

¹ Each bullet in Exhibit 15 contains one coordinator’s complete response. The percents in Exhibit 14 were computed by dividing the total number of systems per item by 56 systems and then multiplying by 100.

² In response to Item V, five additional coordinators (or 8.9%) made the following comments concerning the parents/guardians of the Starting Points children.

- “The parents are very appreciative that their child is being provided with this type of school setting and are very supportive of this program.”
- “The participants and especially the parents are exposed to many and varied activities that are instrumental in a child’s growth and development. A majority of the parents are young, with limited education and residing in low-economic conditions. Starting Points allows them to become actively involved in their child’s educational experiences. It gives them an insight into what is expected in today’s society as it relates to standards, student performance, and academic growth.”
- “Parental involvement is fairly high, especially at (name of school). The key to effective family involvement is having many varied activities and communicating with the families on a daily/weekly basis.”
- “This program is an excellent program. Parents are given trips and materials to help their children, cost-free. The parents end up being life-long supporters of the school. They tend to volunteer for years to come.”
- “Parental Mid-Year questionnaires, parents state that their children are becoming more independent, have the ability to work in a group, and are learning the rules of the school. As one parent stated, ‘Allows my child to adjust to the BIG school.’ All parents have had one individual conference and will have another one before school ends. Parents are given many opportunities to participate in other activities at the school.”

EXHIBIT 16. THE PERCENT OF PARENTS
WHO TYPICALLY ATTEND THE PARENT WORKSHOPS
(56 Systems)¹

THE PERCENTAGE OF PARENTS TYPICALLY ATTENDING WORKSHOPS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Less than 25% of parents ²	15	26.8
25-49% of parents ³	15	26.8
50-74% of parents ⁴	11	19.6
75% or more of parents	7	12.5
Percent of attendance varies ⁵	2	3.6
No response	2	3.6
This system does not offer workshops for parents/guardians. ⁶	4	7.1
TOTAL	56	100.0

Source Reference:

These *parent attendance data* are from the *PDS* instrument, Item III-2.

- ¹ Fifty-four, system-level coordinators responded to Item III-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 percents in Exhibit 16 were computed by dividing the number of systems per category by 56 systems and then multiplying by 100.
- ² One coordinator also stated, “Parent workshops are offered through the parish Title I Parent Center in Hammond, Louisiana. Hopefully, the attendance will be better at the parent workshop to be held at the Starting Points school site (name of school) scheduled for this Spring.”
- ³ Two coordinators also wrote,
 - “A Dad’s For Children Symposium is held annually.”
 - “Parents are provided an opportunity to attend two Title I Parent Institutes conducted in the parish and one conducted in Region 3 at N.S.U.”
- ⁴ One of these coordinators added, “There appears to be a large percent of parents attending activities at the beginning of the year. As the school year progresses, attendance declines.”
- ⁵ The following statements may clarify parental workshop attendance for the two systems coded in this category.
 - “The parents in my Starting Points program work, attend school, or job training and sometimes cannot attend day workshops. Night workshops show more involvement from my parents.”
 - “(Name of school) reports that 50-74% of their parents are involved. (Name of another school) reports only 25% or less. This could be due to the large Hispanic and non-English speaking population.”
- ⁶ One of these coordinators explained, “We have not had workshops this year. However, it is our plan to schedule at least two before the end of the year.”
- ⁷ Based on the coordinators’ responses, parent workshops were offered in 50 or 89.3% of the participating systems. In 30 systems, less than 50% of the parent/guardians were reported as attending the parent workshops, which represents 60% of the systems offering such workshops. However, 50.0% or more of the parents/guardians were said to attend the parent workshops in 18 systems (or 36.0%).

Exhibits 14 through 16 provide findings for 2001-02, demonstrating that the parent involvement component of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* is still in place, despite other changes to the Program. This finding is encouraging since a quality preschool program has a great amount of parental involvement, both at the class/school level, as well as parents/guardians or other family members working with the children at their homes. (See Note below.)

Quality programs also attend to the health, safety, and nutritional needs of the participating children. For several years, the Starting Points evaluation studies have collected information on health/safety practices and policies, thus it was of interest to obtain similar data for 2001-02. The next section of the report provides a summary of the coordinator responses to Items IV-1 and IV-2 of the *PDS* instrument. The summary exhibits will reflect any comments that coordinators added to Items IV-1 and IV-2. However, coordinator comments about the children's illnesses, which were presented earlier, will not be repeated. (See Note below.)

Note: Following the final Exhibit of this report, the Discussion section and the Conclusions will describe the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program*, based on the evaluation data collected to date. Certain components of this Program (e.g., enrollment, parental involvement, and health/safety practices) will be compared with the findings pertaining to the 2000-01 Program year.

HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION

EXHIBIT 17. ACTIVITIES/POLICIES USED TO PROVIDE A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT (N = 56 Systems)

ACTIVITIES/POLICIES USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
The Starting Points children participate in fire/safety drills on a regular basis.	56	100.0
The state or city fire department inspects the school sites on an annual basis.	55	98.2
The schools serving Starting Points children have a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications.	54	96.4
All equipment is maintained in good working condition. ¹	54	96.4
The outdoor play area provides at least seventy-five square feet of space per child, at any one time.	50	89.3
Outdoor play areas are enclosed. ²	45	80.4
Schools serving Starting Points children are inspected annually by the Office of Public Health.	40	71.4
Soft surfaces are placed under any equipment upon which the children might climb.	33	58.9
Excluding space for the furniture and shelving, classrooms are large enough to provide at least thirty-five square feet of space per child.	32	57.1
Outdoor sandboxes (sand areas) are covered when not in use. ³	22	39.3
Program staff are trained annually in child CPR procedures. ⁴	22	39.3

Source Reference:

These data are from the *PDS* instrument, Item IV-1. The sum of the percents exceeds 100% because the coordinators were instructed to “check all that apply.”

- ¹ One coordinator left Item III-1g blank, but wrote “most” to the side, while another added, “Very little equipment is located on playground.”
- ² One system-level coordinator said of the outdoor play areas, “One site is; one site is fenced on two sides with a plan for further improvements.”
- ³ Five coordinators reported that Item IV-1h was not applicable within the system.
- ⁴ Regarding the training of Program staff in CPR, one coordinator added, “Several at each school site.”

EXHIBIT 18. ACTIVITIES/PRACTICES USED TO PROMOTE
THE HEALTH OF STARTING POINTS PARTICIPANTS
(N = 56 Systems)

ACTIVITIES/PRACTICES USED BY SYSTEMS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
The curriculum includes child-centered, developmentally appropriate instruction on health, good hygiene, and safety.	56	100.0
The daily schedule includes planned physical exercise and/or outdoor play activities.	56	100.0
Hearing screening is provided to Starting Points children.	56	100.0
Well-balanced meals are provided each day.	55	98.2
The school has a breakfast program.	55	98.2
Vision screening is provided to Starting Points children.	55	98.2
By system policy, children who have contagious health conditions may not attend class until they are well.	54	96.4
Procedures are in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits.	53	94.6
Classroom materials, mats, and furniture are sanitized on a regular basis.	52	92.9
Nutritional snacks are provided on a daily basis.	49	87.5
Parents/guardians receive helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety.	48	85.7
Starting Points children are referred to other agencies for health services.	46	82.1
The staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse.	45	80.4
Health services are provided at the school site by a physician/nurse to Starting Points children. ¹	42	75.0
Immunizations are provided to Starting Points children. ²	30	53.6
The school system is a Kid-Med Provider. ³	27	48.2

Source Reference:

These data are from the *PDS* instrument, Item IV-2. The sum of the percents exceeds 100% because the coordinators were instructed to “check all that apply.”

¹ When responding to Item IV-2p, one coordinator wrote the name of a school, another commented “Limited,” and a third said “Nurse only.” A fourth system-level coordinator reported:

- “The parish has a school-based health center that is located on another campus, but students at this site have access to all the services being provided by the SBHC.”

² Regarding the provision of immunizations to the children (Item IV-2o), seven coordinators added:

- “Provided by the Health Unit Office School Nurse.”
- “Through the Parish Health Unit.”
- “By parish health unit.”
- “Only through the local Health Unit.”
- “Parents responsible.”
- (the name of one school was written to the side.)
- “Students must have shots to attend program.”

³ Two additional coordinators marked NA next to Item IV-2j and one coordinator wrote, “Forms available from local pediatrician.”

COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Item V of the *PDS* instrument invited the system-level coordinators to make any additional comments about the local *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Twenty-one coordinators did not write any remarks in this space, and two coordinators only wrote “NA.” However, 33 coordinators did respond to Item V. In many cases, the coordinators gave long responses, commenting on more than one aspect of the local program. Comments were sorted into categories, based upon the topic of each sentence or group of related sentences. Exhibit 19 provides a summary overview of all the Item V, responses. Earlier sections of this report included several coordinator comments to Item V; thus, these will not be repeated in this section, but Exhibit 20 will present the Item V comments, which were not previously presented in this report.

EXHIBIT 19: COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROGRAM
(N = 54 Comments From Coordinators in 33 Systems)¹

TYPES OF ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM COORDINATORS	SYSTEMS	
	NO.	%
Identified the impact of the Program	11	33.3
Made a statement about the attendance requirement or program change affecting funding ²	9	27.3
Discussed teachers/staff involved in the Program ³	7	21.2
Gave a comment pertaining to the eligibility criteria ⁴	6	18.2
Described the parents and/or their involvement ⁵	5	15.1
Referred to state assistance	4	12.1
Expressed gratitude for the Program/serve more children	4	12.1
Other comment on funding	4	12.1
Other coordinator statements	4	12.1

Source Reference:

These data are based on 33 coordinator responses to Item V from the *PDS* instrument.

- ¹ The 33 coordinators provided a total of 54 comments. Twenty coordinators gave one comment, while seven coordinators commented on two aspects of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, four coordinators discussed three aspects of the program, and two additional coordinators remarked on four program aspects. The comments are on pages 38-40, or in earlier sections of this report. The percents in Exhibit 19 were computed by dividing the number of comments in each category by 33 systems, and then multiplying by 100.
- ² The coordinator comments about the attendance requirement or program change affecting funding were presented in Exhibit 13, pages 27-28.
- ³ Comments discussing the teachers and staff were presented after Exhibit 2, page 6.
- ⁴ Comments addressing eligibility criteria were presented in Exhibit 13, pages 24-29.
- ⁵ Comments describing the parents and their involvement were presented in Exhibit 15, page 32.

EXHIBIT 20. COMMENTS ON THE *STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM*Comments Identifying the Impact of the Program (11 Systems)

“The *Starting Point Preschool Program* is a plus for our community; it enables at-risk children the opportunity to participate in an educational environment that is developmentally appropriate for four-year-olds. Starting Points provides an avenue of intervention with strategies, theme units, learning center and other techniques that allow our students the chance to develop those readiness and social skills so necessary to perform in kindergarten and beyond. Starting Points helps prepare our students to become better academically and socially. Participants and parents are encouraged to develop a love for learning in an atmosphere conducive to learning. Routines, schedules, hands-on activities, and fine/gross motor activities all contribute to students learning how to complete tasks, build concentration habits, learn responsibility, sharing and cooperation, outside their home environment. These experiences contribute to students’ success in school. The Starting Points program enables this parish to provide services to the children in our community who otherwise would come to school without the much-needed preparation, personal, and social skills necessary for success.”

“I feel that the *Starting Points Preschool Program* provides an excellent beginning for four-year-olds to help them prepare for kindergarten.”

“Starting Points is a very successful program in our parish for at-risk, four-year-old students. Each year the students enter kindergarten with the necessary skills needed for academic success.”

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* has afforded parents the opportunity for their children to receive quality early childhood development that goes beyond basic child care. The Starting Points program addresses the needs of our at-risk families and their young children. Because Starting Points and Title I programs collaborate, we are able to service more children, thus ensuring a higher student success rate in kindergarten.”

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* is an excellent program because it provides quality childcare for working parents. Each child is engaged in active learning experiences to explore the areas of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development.”

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* has been an asset to this community. Children now have the opportunity to benefit from a quality child development program.”

“Our *Starting Points Preschool Program* continues to flourish. The needs of these 4-year-olds presently being served are being successfully met in a developmentally appropriate and loving way.”

“Our Starting Points program has greatly enhanced our school system’s ability to provide a successful developmentally-appropriate learning experience for all four-year-old children in the parish. Starting Points is an important integral component of the Parish Early Childhood Educational Program.”

“The *Starting Points Preschool Program* in operation at (name of a school) has a wonderful reputation for providing a vast array of childhood experiences that serve to prepare children to be successful throughout school. Preschool is the most effective intervention for preventing failure in school. Research solidly supports intervention programs in lieu of retention or labeling.”

EXHIBIT 20 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON THE *STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM*

Comments Identifying the Impact of the Program (11 Systems-Continued)

“Starting Points is very important to the schools. At all three schools, kindergarten teachers have stated that they can see the difference in students that attend the program. They feel the children do exceptionally well on academics and have positive attitudes about school.”

“We are very proud of the accomplishments that Starting Points has helped provide for our 4-year-olds in the parish. We’re looking forward to many more years of dedicated service with this program.”

Comments About the Attendance Requirement or Program Change Affecting Funding

Nine coordinators commented on the attendance requirement or a program change affecting funding. These comments were presented in Exhibit 13, pages 27-28.

Comments Discussing Teachers/Staff Involved in the Program

The seven coordinator comments on the teachers and/or staff involved in the Program were presented after Exhibit 2, page 6.

Comments Pertaining to the Eligibility Criteria

The six coordinator comments on eligibility criteria were presented in Exhibit 13, pages 24-29.

Comments Concerning the Parents and/or Their Involvement

The five coordinator comments describing the parents and their involvement were presented in Exhibit 15, page 32.

Comments Referring to State Assistance (4 Systems)

“We are extremely pleased with our *Starting Points Preschool Program* and the support and assistance we have received from the staff at the State Department.”

“The administrative staff of the State Department has been very helpful. They are to be commended for the assistance provided us by telephone and on-site visits.”

“However, having the funds to support the hiring of an aide, having the specific guidelines that accompany the program, and having the guidance of the professionals who have come to do the evaluation have all been of great value to us.”

“I would like for the pre-monitoring and post-monitoring of Starting Points classrooms completed by the same person.”

EXHIBIT 20 (CONTINUED). COMMENTS ON THE *STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM*Comments Expressing Gratitude for the Program/Serve More Children (4 Systems)

“The Parish school system is grateful for the opportunity to have a *Starting Points Preschool Program*.”

“At (name of school) we greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Starting Points program. It has allowed (name of school) to service more children.”

“The Parish public pre-kindergarten program (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.”

“We feel fortunate to have been funded for a Starting Points Program. We have also been fortunate to have a certified teacher.”

Other Funding Comments (4 Systems)

“The increase in funding has allowed teachers more supplies for various centers such as literacy and dramatic play that had been damaged through the years. We are using some of the additional money to buy playground equipment that is developmentally appropriate and needed in the pre-K classes.”

“Our Starting Points preschool offers a high quality early childhood development program. We wish that the program could be expanded to other school sites within our district. Additional funding is necessary to continue providing the necessary supplies and supplemental classroom materials that enhance appropriate developmental activities. Presently, our entire budget allocation is dedicated to salaries and benefits of our employees. Therefore, no funds are available for resource materials and activities.”

“Our program would benefit if we received more funds to operate the program. With salary increases we do not have enough money to buy needed materials, supplies, and equipment to effectively operate our *Starting Points Preschool Program*.”

“Hopefully, we will have the opportunity to apply for additional funding for the next school year.”

Other Coordinator Statements (4 Systems)

“The community is supportive of the program. The class is filled to the maximum capacity each year.”

“We incorporate a Louisiana unit into instruction. It has been well received by parents, teachers, and the community.”

“Student Assessment in the Starting Points Program is based upon the individual student’s developmental needs. As such portfolio assessment is used which includes work samples in the following domains: cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical.”

Note: One other comment, which requested earlier information on Program changes, was presented in a previous section of this report.

DISCUSSION OF THE 2001-02 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

In 2001-02, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Block Grant provided \$4,758,336 for developing a program whose purpose is to assist low-income families by providing quality early childhood programs. With these funds and with modifications to the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, the number of systems serving Starting Points participants increased from 52 in 2000-01 to 56 in 2001-02. Parents/guardians were interested in the 2001-02 Program, as evidenced by the 2,873 applications that were received. The number of eligible children for the 2001-02 Program was 2,239, which was an increase over the 1,874 children, who were eligible in 2000-01.

The 96 schools (i.e., 93 public schools and 3 non-public schools) housing Starting Points in 2001-02 placed the 1,570 enrolled children in 99 classes. It was found that 88.9% of the teachers who provided instruction through the *Starting Points Preschool Program* were fully certified in the areas required by Program regulations. In addition, 72 of these teachers had provided instruction through this Program during the 2000-01 Program Year, but 27 teachers were considered to be new teachers since they had not taught in the 2000-01 Program. It is a practice of this Program for the state-level Program coordinators to visit every new teacher as well as selected continuing teachers during each year. These visits are for the purpose of assessing the local program with the *ECERS-R* instrument, which is a measure of program quality. Because many of the teachers/program sites that were assessed in 2000-01 continued in 2001-02, the 2000-01 *ECERS-R* data were examined as an indicator of the program quality that was anticipated for the 2001-02 Program year. (The 2001-02 *ECERS-R* data will not be available until after this report is published.)

Features of the program sites which were assessed in 2000-01 were often rated as 5.0 or above, indicating that the 2000-01 Program was of good quality or of a higher quality. The exceptions were on the *ECERS-R* items that assessed Nature/Science (average rating of 4.7) and the Space for Gross Motor Play (average rating of 4.8). While these average ratings are almost at the 5.0 rating, program sites that received very low scores on these items may benefit if the staff members receive additional training in the developmentally appropriate practices associated with these two program features.

In addition to implementing local programs of good quality and having a high percentage of fully-certified teachers, evaluation data suggested that the *Starting Points Preschool Program* enjoys the resource of collaboration. That is, the system-level Program coordinators reported that Starting Points collaborates with other early childhood programs, such as the Title I Preschool Program, Early Childhood Programs funded by 8(g), and Head Start Programs. Other types of collaborators were also identified, as was documented by the numerous comments presented in Exhibit 8.

Part of this evaluation study also sought to determine how the implementation of the 2001-02 Program might have been impacted by the changes in eligibility criteria, regulations, and other guidelines. When responding to the *PDS* instrument, the system-level coordinators provided relevant data. First, some system-level coordinators indicated they were informed of Program changes after conducting a spring registration. When this was the case, the local program staff needed to determine if children who were eligible under the former criteria were still eligible under the new criteria. Difficulties arose when children who were previously eligible did not meet one or more of the new eligibility criteria. Decision-makers should fund early childhood programs and decide on the eligibility criteria as quickly as possible to allow adequate time for communicating the criteria, regulations, and guidelines in advance of any spring Pre-K registration periods.

The comments of the coordinators also indicated that the new eligibility criteria impacted systems in different ways. That is, the largest number of coordinators reported increases in number of applicants

and/or in the number of children who were eligible. Seven coordinators stated that something about the Program was easier with the new criteria, but 55.4% of the coordinators identified the free/reduced price meals criterion as the most difficult criteria for the applicants to meet. Furthermore, one coordinator reported that it might not be possible to know in the spring whether or not the applicants will be eligible under this criterion, since there are annual changes to the free/reduced meals programs. Apparently, eligibility for free/reduced meals programs is not determined in the spring of a school year.

Some coordinators also reported that once the 2001-02 Program year had begun, an attendance policy was implemented which seems to be adversely affecting reimbursement. A previous follow-up study (LDE, October 2001) of recent Starting Points former participants found the children of Program years 1997-98 through 1999-2000 had high attendance rates, but it is possible that individual children may have many more absences than is indicated by a state-wide attendance rate. Attendance may also vary greatly during a Program year, depending on factors such as flu epidemics, outbreaks of childhood diseases, or other community conditions affecting everyone's health. Furthermore, any local program serving one or more children who have chronic or serious medical conditions may have far greater absences, because such children may require hospitalization. Under the current attendance policy, a child with health problems may not be allowed to be a participant at all, if the system feels they will not be reimbursed for serving the child. If a program goal is to expand pre-K or preschool services to the children of needy families, then the rationale which created the attendance/reimbursement policy needs to be re-examined, since it seems to lead to funding problems for the participating systems.

The first phase of the 2001-02 evaluation study also gathered data about the children who were enrolled at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year. Initial roster enrollments that were reported to the Elementary Standards Section indicated 1,570 children were enrolled by October 1, 2001. This enrollment is slightly greater than the initial roster count of 1,556 children who were enrolled at the beginning of the 2000-01 Program year. In both of these two recent Program years, the majority of the participating systems were able to enroll 20 to 39 children in the *Starting Points Preschool Program* as the school years began. However, systems offering Starting Points at only one school may not have been able to serve every eligible child, since classes are limited to a maximum of 20 children. In fact, in both the previous and the current Program years, some children were on waiting lists. By January 5, 2001, the number of children on waiting lists for the 2000-01 Program was reduced from 153 (in 25 systems) to 78 in only 17 systems. For the 2001-02 Program, the number of children on waiting lists in October of 2001 was reported as 378 in 34 systems; by January 5, 2002, a total of 206 children in 28 systems remained on waiting lists for the 2001-02 Program.

It was found that the October 1, 2001 *SIS* record count was 1,459 Starting Points participants for the 2001-02 Program year. The *SIS* count is less than the roster count because (1) the three nonpublic schools do not report to *SIS*, (2) no *SIS* enrollment records were reported by three participating public school systems, and (3) at least seven additional public school systems had many less *SIS* records than the number of children reported through the initial roster counts. When *SIS* is incomplete, it has limits as a data source, but it does provide a way to track the majority of former program participants in follow-up studies, as well as ethnicity data.

As was shown in Exhibit 10, most of the 2001-02 Starting Points participants were identified as either Black (59.2%) or White (36.6%), but small percentages were identified as Hispanic (2.3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.0%), or as American Indian/Alaskan Natives (0.9%). Based on the previous year's *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. Thus, the ethnicity of the 2001-02 participants was similar to that of children served in 2000-01.

In previous Program years, it has been found that the majority of the children served were from single-parent homes. For example, 1,170 of the 2000-01 Starting Points children (or 74.9%) were from single-parent homes. Due to the modification of the eligibility criteria, it was of interest to find out what proportion of the 2001-02 participants came from single-parent homes. System-level coordinators reported that 967 of the children were from single-parent homes. This number equates to 61.6% of the 1,570 enrolled children, which is a smaller proportion of children from single-parent homes than in the previous Program year.

The 2001-02 participants can also be described, with reference to their participation in the free/reduced lunch programs. Researchers consider the percent of students who participate in a school's free/reduced lunch program to be a proxy measure for the socioeconomic status of a school's students. In general, students from low-income families qualify for free/reduced lunches, while those of high-income families do not qualify. Thus, information on the free/reduced lunch participation was requested, because Starting Points is now designed to serve low-income families. In fact, one eligibility criterion for 2001-02 requires each Starting Points child to be eligible for one of these lunch programs before the child is placed in the local program.

In Louisiana, students who participate in either of these lunch programs do come from low-income families. Typically, more than half of the state's public school students participate in the free/reduced lunch programs [approximately 58.2% in the 2000-01 school year, as reported in the *2000-01 Louisiana State Education Report*, (March 2002)]. However, based on reported *PDS* data, the system-level coordinators indicated that 1,323 (84.2%) of the 2001-02 participants were receiving free lunches, while 249 (15.8 %) were purchasing lunches at a reduced price, suggesting that the enrolled children were from low-income families.

In addition to the lunch programs, other *PDS* data reported in this study leads to the conclusion that this Pre-K program also attends to the nutritional needs of the Starting Points participants. For example, 98.2% of the participating systems (55 of 56 systems) reported that well-balanced meals were provided each day. The same percentage of systems indicated that the participating schools had a breakfast program. Nutritional snacks were provided on a daily basis in 87.5% of the systems. Parents/guardians also received helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety in 85.7% of the systems.

Also, a number of other health and safety practices were utilized within the majority of the participating systems. For example, each system that offered the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program* reported the following practices: 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; hearing screening was provided to the Starting Points children; and the Starting Points children participated in fire/safety drills on a regular basis. Furthermore, 55 systems (98.2%) reported that the state or city fire department inspects the participating schools on an annual basis. In 71.4% of the systems, the Office of Public Health also 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. Additional environmental practices used in the Starting Points schools included maintaining all equipment in good working condition (in 96.4% of the systems) and sanitizing the classroom materials, mats, and furniture on a regular basis (in 92.9% 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 57.1% of the systems. In 89.3% of the systems, the outdoor play areas provided at least 75 square feet of space per child. Furthermore, outdoor play areas were enclosed in 80.4% of the systems; outdoor sandboxes (or sand areas) were covered when not in use in 39.3% of the systems.

Reported *PDS* data suggested that several methods were used to deliver health or medical services in the schools which served the Starting Points children. For example, 27 coordinators (representing 48.2% of the systems) indicated the school system is a Kid-Med Provider. Immunizations were provided to the children in 53.6% of the systems. In 42 systems (or 75.0%), health services were provided at the school site, whereas in 46 systems (82.1%), the Starting Points children could be referred to other agencies for health services. Vision screenings were provided to Starting Points children in 98.2% of the systems.

Fifty-four participating systems (96.4%) also had a policy concerning the administration of first aid and/or medications. In 96.4% of the participating systems, there was also a policy that did not allow children with contagious conditions to attend class until they were well. In 39.3% of the systems, Program staff were trained annually in child CPR procedures, and in 80.4% of the systems, the staff members have been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse. Procedures were in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits in 94.6% of the systems.

Besides addressing the health, safety, and nutritional needs of participants, an important goal of the *Starting Points Preschool Program* has been to involve the parents/guardians in the education of their children. In the past Program years, such involvement was difficult for the parents/guardians because a previous federal regulation required the parents/guardians of the Starting Points participants to be either employed or enrolled in educational/job training programs. Since this eligibility criterion has been eliminated from the 2001-02 Program year, it was of interest to compare the current year and previous year parent involvement data. Parent-involvement *PDS* items were phrased similarly in both Program years 2000-01 and 2001-02 to ensure that the resulting summary statistics could be compared in a valid manner.

Based on these comparisons, it was found that the systems which participated in the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program* used a wide-variety of activities to facilitate parental involvement, just as had been the case in 2000-01 and in all previous Program years. In both recent Program years, half or more of the participating systems frequently used the same three activities to involve parents, which were to hold individual parent/teacher conferences, to send frequent messages to parents, and to keep parents informed through formal communication mechanisms such as calendars or newsletters.

The two-year comparison of parent-involvement data revealed that the percentage of systems frequently holding individual parent/teacher conferences increased from 51.9% in 2000-01 to 60.7% in 2001-02. 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 to 67.9% of the systems in 2001-02. The percentage of systems frequently sending messages to parents relating to each child's activities also decreased from 55.8% of the systems in 2000-01 to 50.0% in 2001-02. Other parental involvement activities reported as frequently used in 2001-02 included encouraging parents to help with activities outside the classroom (46.4% vs. 34.6% in 2000-01), requesting that parents help the child with at-home learning activities (30.4% vs. 32.7% in 2000-01), and allowing parents to visit the classroom at their convenience (30.4% vs. 26.9% in 2000-01).

Fifty participating systems (or 89.3%) offered parent workshops/meetings in 2001-02, with 30.4% of the system-level coordinators indicating the workshops were frequently used to involve the parents/guardians in the Program. Unfortunately, among 30 of the 50 systems offering workshops, the parent-attendance of workshops was less than 50%. However, 50.0% or more of the parents/guardians were said to attend the parent workshops in 18 systems (or 36.0%). Comparing parent-attendance findings with those of the previous year suggests that the 2001-02 parent workshops/meetings were offered in a much smaller proportion (89.3%) of the participating systems than in 2000-01 when 98.1% of the systems offered workshops. Furthermore, in 2001-02, 15 systems indicated that less than 25% parents/guardians

typically attended the workshops, whereas in 2000-01 only 11 systems indicated this lowest level of parent workshop attendance.

An optional open-ended *PDS* item provided the coordinators an opportunity to make comments on the 2001-02 Program. Thirty-three of the coordinators responded to this optional item, offering 54 distinct comments. Most frequently, coordinators made statements reflecting the impact the *Starting Points Preschool Program* was having within the school system and/or the community. Comments also made reference to the attendance/reimbursement policy, which was discussed earlier. Some coordinators also gave other comments, including remarks about the teachers/staff associated with their local programs and other topics, as shown in Exhibits 19 and 20.

The body of this report has included all the coordinator comments, as well as detailed findings about the *2001-02 Starting Points Preschool Program* and information about the children, teachers, and schools that participated. The final section of this report presents conclusions about the *Starting Points Preschool Program*, based on additional comparisons of the 2001-02 Program data to the 2000-01 Program data.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on evaluation findings, the *Starting Points Preschool Program* has resources such as its developmental philosophy, multiple forms of collaboration with many interested groups, and recognition that the Program has a positive impact. In addition, most teachers (88.9%) were fully-certified in 2001-02. Unfortunately, the attendance requirement is making it difficult for systems/schools to receive reimbursement of their expenditures, thus resulting in unstable funding for the Program.
2. Although there were more applicants in 2000-01 than in 2001-02, the number of school systems offering Starting Points expanded from 52 in 2000-01 to 56 systems in 2001-02. In 2001-02, the systems identified more eligible children, enrolled slightly more children than in 2000-01, and had more children on the waiting lists. Factors resulting in longer waiting lists may have included the increased number of eligible children, a decrease in the number of schools (98 vs. 96 schools), and a decline in the number of classes (105 vs. 99 classes) from 2000-01 to 2001-02.
3. Among the new eligibility criteria for 2001-02, 55.4% of the system-level coordinators reported that it was most difficult for the applicants to meet the free/reduced price meals eligibility criterion. However, several coordinators felt that removing the former criterion which required parents/guardians to be employed or to be enrolled in a job training/educational program increased the number of eligible children and/or the number of children who were enrolled. In some systems, the Program was easier to implement because families did not have to supply as much information, and/or the system has many free/reduced lunch students.
4. Although participating schools served an ethnically diverse group of children in 2001-02, the majority of participants were either Black (59.2%) or White (36.6%). While a smaller proportion of children came from single-parent homes in 2001-02, the majority (84.2%) of the children were from such low-income families that they received free lunches.

5. Since quality early childhood programs stress the importance of parental involvement, many methods were used to include parents/guardians in the 2001-02 Program. Three techniques used on a frequent basis were that the systems: (1) kept the parents informed of activities (67.9%), (2) held individual parent/teacher conferences (60.7%), and (3) sent frequent messages to the parents (50.0%). Unfortunately, there was a decrease in the percent of systems indicating parent workshops/meetings were offered and 30 systems reported that less than 50% of the parents/guardians typically attended these workshops/meetings in 2001-02.

6. Most systems (60.7%) offered the 2001-02 Program at only one school; 81 schools were continuing sites. Fifteen schools had not served Starting Points children in 2000-01. Features of these new participating schools may not be like those of continuing sites, where prior year ratings on *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R)* suggested the local Starting Points programs were of good quality. The 2001-02 *ECERS-R* data is not yet available, but the *Program Description Survey (PDS)* data did reveal changes in the desired health and safety practices. From 2000-01 to 2001-02, the following practices were reported by smaller proportions of the participating systems:
 - schools were inspected by the Office of Public Health (from 76.9% to 71.4%).
 - outdoor play areas provided 75 square feet of space per child (from 92.3% to 89.3%).
 - outdoor sandboxes (sand areas) were covered when not in use (from 40.4% to 39.3%).
 - soft surfaces were placed under equipment upon which the children might climb (from 61.5% to 58.9%).
 - classroom mats, materials, and furniture were sanitized on a regular basis (from 98.1% to 92.9%).
 - staff members had been trained to recognize the signs of child abuse (from 90.4% to 80.4%).
 - health services were provided at the school site by a physician/nurse to Starting Points children (from 80.8% to 75.0%).
 - parents/guardians received helpful information on nutrition, health, and safety (from 88.5% to 85.7%).
 - nutritional snacks were provided on a daily basis (from 88.5% to 87.5%).
 - well-balanced meals were provided each day (from 100.0% to 98.2%).

7. However, from the 2000-01 Program to the 2001-02 Program, there was an increase in the percent of systems reporting the following services or practices:
 - hearing screenings were provided to Starting Points children (from 98.1% to 100.0%).
 - the school system was a *Kid-Med Provider* (from 44.2% to 48.2%).
 - Starting Points children were referred to other agencies for health services (from 78.9% to 82.1%).
 - procedures were in place to assess/evaluate participants who continue to exhibit growth and development deficits (from 92.3% to 94.6%).
 - program staff were trained annually in child CPR procedures (from 36.5% to 39.3%).
 - outdoor play areas were enclosed (from 76.9% to 80.4%).
 - all equipment is kept in good working condition (from 94.2% to 96.4%).

This report has focused on implementation and participation findings for the 2001-02 Program year. The evaluators are currently designing a follow-up study, pertaining to the children who were served in several of the previous Program years.

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APPENDIX

**LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
DIVISION OF PLANNING, ANALYSIS AND INFORMATION RESOURCES
2001-02 STARTING POINTS PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION SURVEY
(Revised 11/09/01)**

The Louisiana Department of Education is conducting an evaluation of the *Starting Points Preschool Program*. Early Childhood Coordinators in participating school systems/schools 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 2001-02 Program Description Survey form.

SYSTEM COORDINATOR: _____

SCHOOL SYSTEM NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ FAX NUMBER: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

SUPERINTENDENT VERIFICATION:

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

Superintendent's Signature

Date

Return by **January 11, 2002** to:
Barbara Abshire
Louisiana Department of Education
Division of Planning, Analysis and Information Resources
Data Management
3455 Florida Boulevard
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806
Telephone: (225) 342-1522
Fax: (225) 342-4365

III. 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 below.)

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

 - r. Involve parents by using other activities, such as: (Please specify.)

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 below.)

IV. 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. Immunizations are provided to Starting Points children.
 - p. Health services are provided at the school site by a physician/nurse to Starting Points children.

V. Comments

Please use the space on this page to make any additional comments about your local *Starting Points Preschool Program*.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED COOPERATION AND SUPPORT.
BEST WISHES FOR YOUR 2001-02 PROGRAM**