

REBUILDING AFTER COVID-19: DOES SCHOOL-BASED PRE-K HOLD PROMISE?

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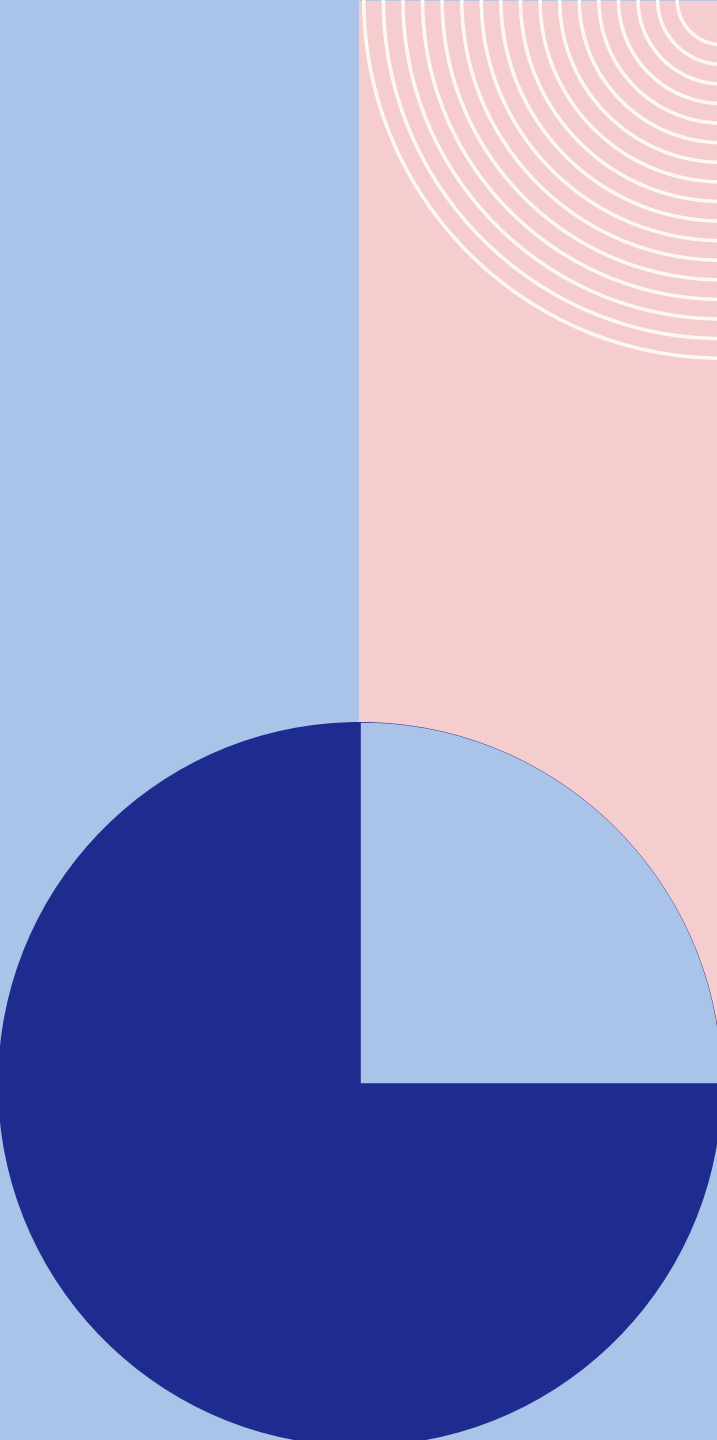
INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

**WHAT PROPORTION OF FOUR-YEAR-
OLDS IN THE U.S. ARE ENROLLED IN
ECE PROGRAMS?**



**HOW DOES THAT PERCENTAGE
COMPARE WITH OTHER OECD MEMBER
COUNTRIES?**





**THE U.S. INVESTS A SMALLER
PERCENTAGE OF ITS GROSS
DOMESTIC PRODUCT IN CHILDCARE
AND EARLY EDUCATION THAN
ALMOST EVERY OTHER DEVELOPED
ECONOMY ON EARTH.**



**WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION
RATES FOR WOMEN WITH YOUNG
CHILDREN COST THE U.S. AN
ESTIMATED \$122 BILLION EACH
YEAR IN LOST EARNINGS AND
ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY**

(Aizer et al., 2022; Council for a Strong America, 2023; OECD, 2023;
NWLC, 2021)



**EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION IN THE U.S.**

A PATCHWORK OF PROGRAMS

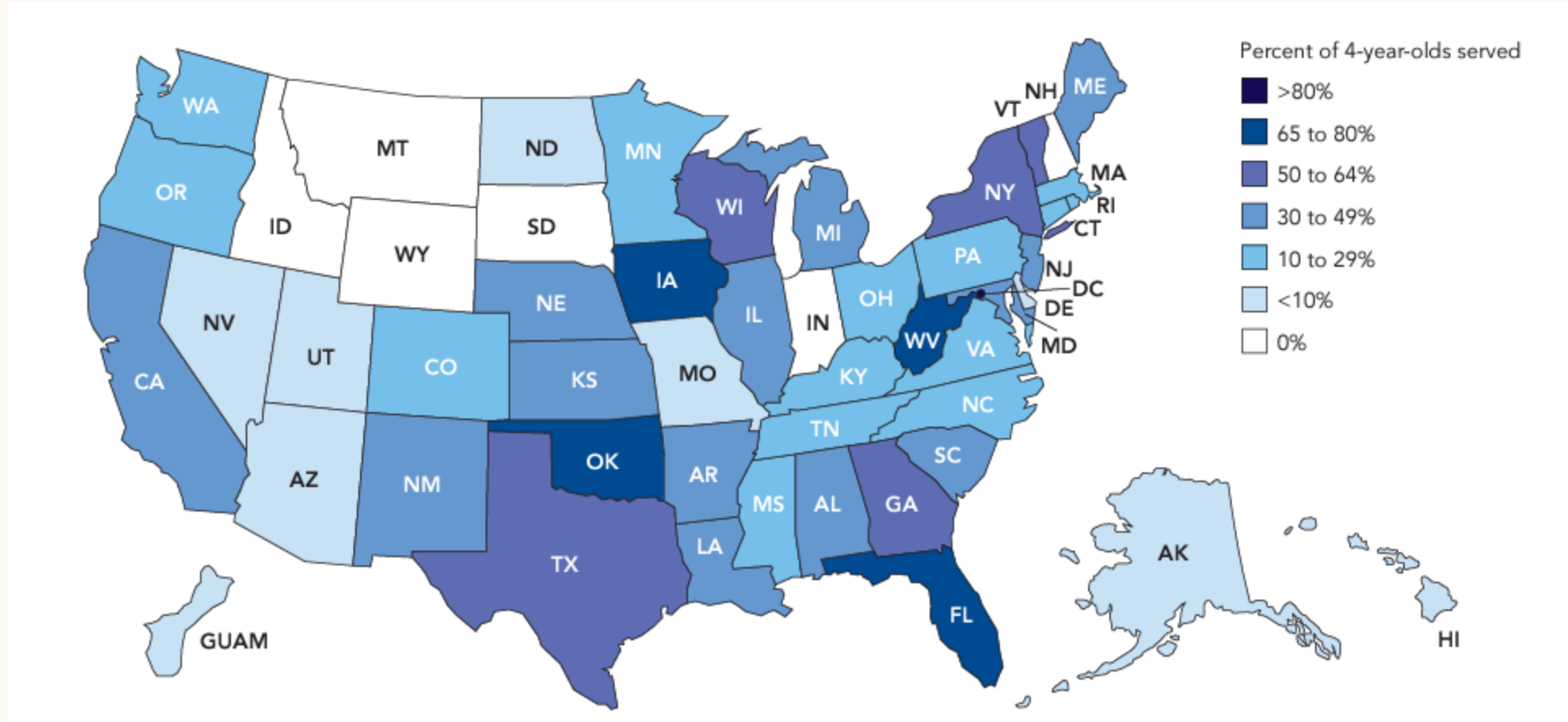
The public pre-K sector, wherein attendance is paid for in full or part by federal, state, and/or local funds, is often referred to as a “mixed delivery system,” with most communities doing “remarkabl[y] different things” and serving children in an array of settings including school districts, Head Start agencies, childcare centers, private schools, and family childcare homes (e.g., Farran & Lipsey, 2016; Garver et al., 2023).

WIDE VARIATION

Program features vary widely, as do their costs (Karoly et al., 2021).

PERCENT OF FOUR-YEAR-OLDS SERVED IN STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

(SOURCE: NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EARLY EDUCATION RESEARCH, 2024)



PANDEMIC-ERA FEDERAL INVESTMENTS

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) provided families and providers with much-needed support (DHHS, 2022; Center for Law and Social Policy, 2023).

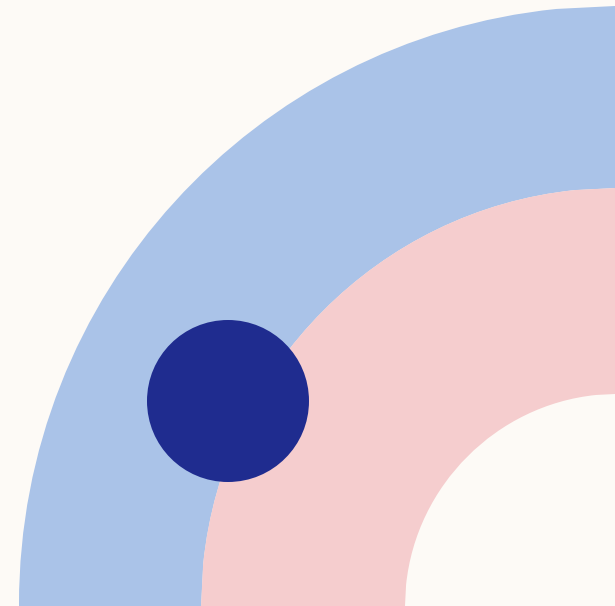
Still, less than half the states enroll more children in preschool today than they did prior to the pandemic, inadequate funding is a nearly universal problem, and eight states fail to meet even half of quality benchmarks (Friedman-Strauss et al., 2024).



WITHERING PANDEMIC-ERA FEDERAL INVESTMENTS

The federal relief dollars expired this past summer.

Across the country, state and local governments are grappling with how to shore up the ECE sector and fill in budget holes left by the expiring COVID-era federal investments.



CONGRESS FAILED TO PASS THE AMERICAN FAMILIES PLAN

leaving the average American family with children a price tag of approximately \$13,000 per year.



With no federal investments on the horizon, some states like CA, CO, and NM are making decisions to invest and others are not – a phenomenon likely to exacerbate the disparities in ECE that already exists across the country.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION DESERTS

Rural communities are especially impacted.

Jessen-Howard and colleagues (2018) found that there are nine children for every childcare slot in rural counties compared to five per slot in more urban counties (see also Davis et al., 2019; Malik et al., 2020; Sipple et al., 2020). The pandemic seems only to have exacerbated the problem.



**WHAT'S KNOWN ABOUT
THE IMPACTS OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
POLICY IN THE U.S.?**

Pre-K Participation

LONG-TERM BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Lower rates of crime and teen pregnancy
- Higher lifetime earnings
- Better health outcomes

PRE-K PARTICIPANTS ARE ALSO MORE LIKELY TO:

- Go to a doctor, receive immunizations and screenings
- In programs that facilitate it, get dental care
- Make cognitive and social emotional gains children make in Pre-K are associated with improved health in adulthood.

(Source: National Institute of Early Education Research & CityHealth, 2021)



All told, studies have demonstrated estimated returns on investments in pre-K of up to 13.7% per annum, depending substantially on program quality (Deming, 2009; García et al., 2013; Karoly et al., 2005).

IN TERMS OF THE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES OF PRE-K FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLDS,

- there are immediate significant and positive impacts of attending Pre-K on school readiness indicators, including literacy, numeracy, and executive functioning;
- Pre-K program quality is critically important;
- The enhanced skills of Pre-K attenders converge with non-attenders by the end of kindergarten, on average.

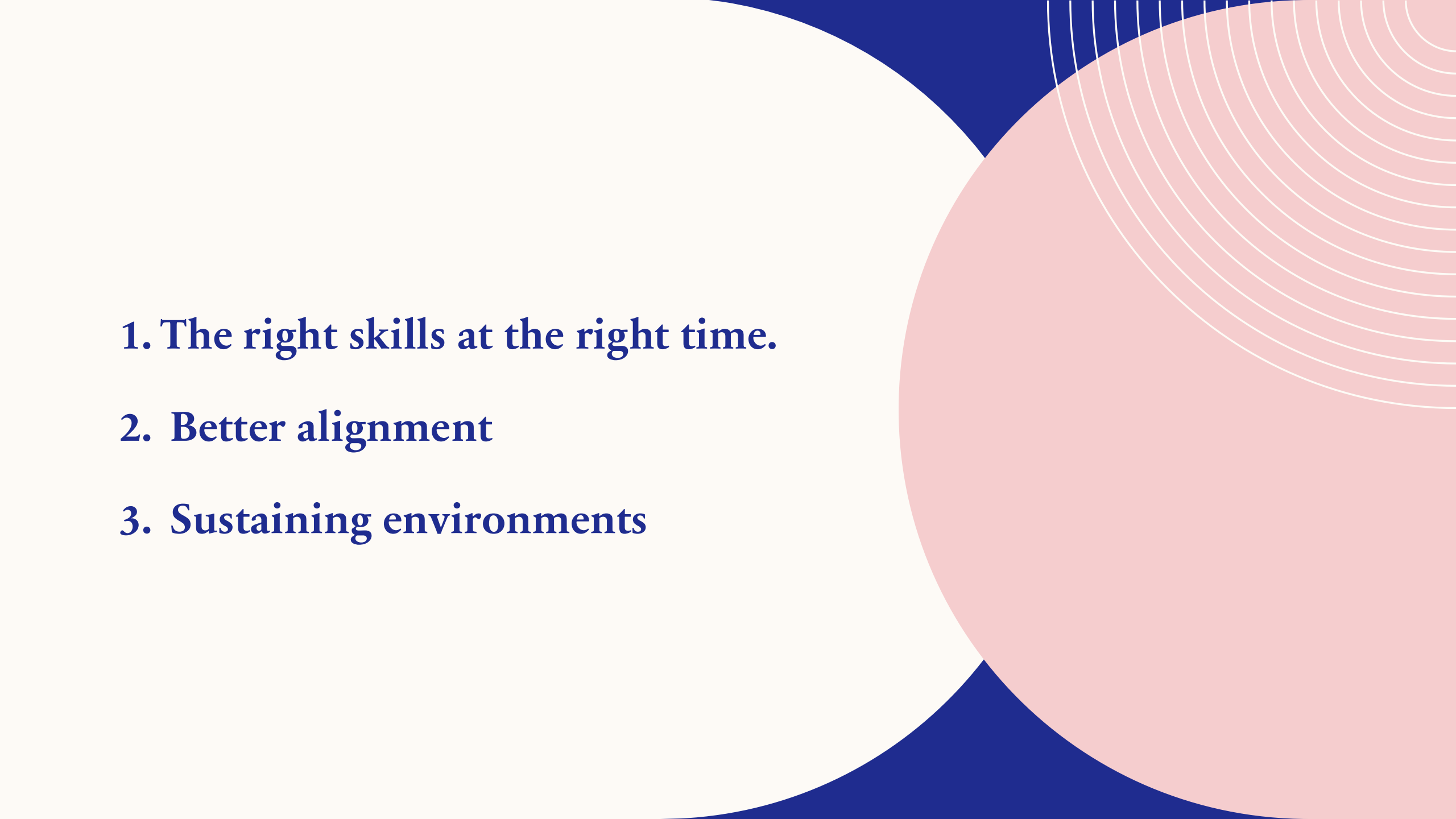
CONVERGENCE

The impact of quality Pre-K programming on the academic skills of subpopulations that have historically been marginalized in the U.S. persist the longest. We find they continue for about another year through at least 1st grade.

EXTENDING THE IMPACT

How do we maintain early learning success into and beyond elementary school?



- 
- 1. The right skills at the right time.**
 - 2. Better alignment**
 - 3. Sustaining environments**

IMPROVEMENT IDEAS

Among them is School-Based Pre-K (SBPK).





**SCHOOL-BASED
PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

WHY MIGHT WE THINK SBPK HOLDS PROMISE?



The background features a large white circle on the left and a large light pink circle on the right, both overlapping a dark blue background. The pink circle contains several thin, white, concentric circular lines.

**SBPK IS HIGHER RESOURCED AND
MORE LIKELY TO OFFER HIGHER
QUALITY EXPERIENCES THAT
TRANSLATE INTO BETTER OUTCOMES.**



**SBPK CAN ELIMINATE AT LEAST ONE
TRANSITION POINT FOR CHILDREN.**



**SBPK ENCOURAGES VERTICAL
ALIGNMENT WITHIN THE INSTRUCTIONAL
TRIANGLE** (STANDARDS, TEACHING PRACTICES, CURRICULAR
DECISIONS) **AND MORE** (DAILY SCHEDULES AND BEHAVIORAL
NORMS).

MOTIVATING FRAMEWORK



- Lower-resourced Pre-K
- Two transitions
- No opportunities for vertical alignment



- Higher-resourced Pre-K
- Two transitions
- Some opportunities for vertical alignment



- Higher-resourced Pre-K
- One transition
- More opportunities for vertical alignment

WHO HAS ACCESS TO SBPK AND WHO DOES NOT?

We use data from a long-running national study of children who were kindergarteners in 2011 and are graduating high school this year.

WE FIND FOUR NOTABLE PATTERNS

1. State-funded pre-K programs are big drivers of SBPK; nationwide, about six in every 10 students who were enrolled in state-funded pre-K attended the program in an elementary school.

NOTABLE PATTERNS

2. Children attending SBPK were more likely to be **Hispanic** and living in **households where the primary language spoken was something other than English**. Notably, however, SBPK did not disproportionately reach others whom the education system has historically left behind (i.e., African American children and children experiencing poverty).

NOTABLE PATTERNS

3. With only about half of children staying in the same school for Kindergarten, SBPK **does not appear to eliminate an extra transition (to a new building for Kindergarten) for everyone equally.**

NOTABLE PATTERNS

4. Schools were more likely to offer a pre-K program when they were **larger**, enrolled proportionally **more students who qualify for free- or reduced-priced lunch**, and were located in **urban areas**.

Why were elementary schools with larger proportions of FRPL-eligible students more likely to offer a pre-K program and, at the same time, no more likely to enroll pre-K children experiencing poverty?

WHAT TO DO

- provide outreach to families experiencing poverty, educating them about the options available in their communities, including those in elementary schools.
- consider locating more SBPK options in rural communities.
- develop protocols to ensure that spots in SBPK classrooms are allocated in ways that guarantee fair and equal access to marginalized children and provide them an opportunity for a continuity of education that expands beyond the Kindergarten year.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SBPK AND ATTENDANCE?

PRELIMINARY FINDING

Children who attend Pre-K (center-based or school-based) have lower absenteeism in kindergarten through grade 5 compared to children who did not attend Pre-K.

However, we find no differential benefit for school-based Pre-K attenders, in particular.

PRELIMINARY FINDING

Additionally, there were no differences in absenteeism rates for SBPK attenders who also went to elementary school in that same school immediately after Pre-K.



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SBPK AND FUTURE SPECIAL ED SERVICES?

PRELIMINARY FINDING

SBPK attendance is associated with higher rates of disability diagnosis and IEPs in early elementary grades (K-2), suggesting that SBPK settings may offer better resources for identifying and supporting children with disabilities.



**WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE
RELATIVELY EFFICACY OF SBPK ON
ACHIEVEMENT?**

PRELIMINARY FINDING

School-Based Pre-K, relative to Center-based Pre-K, is not associated with differences in academic and executive function skills, but it is **positively associated with approaches to learning, self control, interpersonal skills, and externalizing problem behaviors.**

PRELIMINARY FINDING

However, we find **no differential and sustained benefit** among the school-based Pre-K attenders that stayed in the same school building after Pre-K.

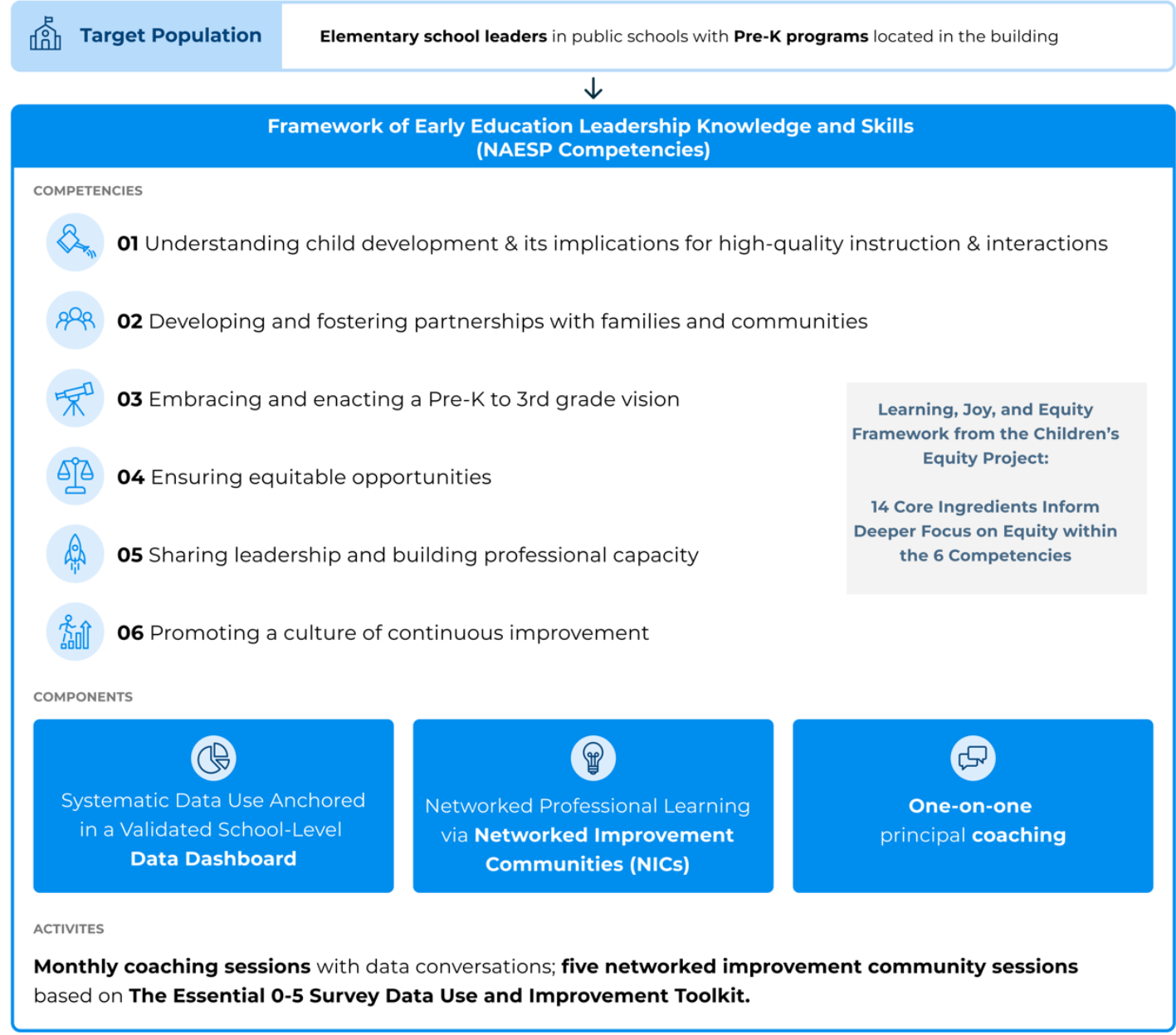


WHY MIGHT SBPK NOT BE MEETING ITS FULL POTENTIAL?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATION

- vertical misalignment between preK and K-3 instructional standards.
- that about 37% of the language, literacy, and math content covered in kindergarten is redundant with content covered in pre-K, and that the highest rates of redundancy seem to occur for basic skills. We also find that children from families who live at or below the poverty line experience significantly higher rates of redundant content.
- that the majority of elementary principals in North Carolina report feeling un- or under-prepared to support the teaching and learning that goes on in the Pre-K classrooms in their buildings.

The Leadership for Early Education Development System (LEED)



THANK YOU!

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