



## COALITION FOR LA4

### OUR PURPOSE

The ACT Now! Louisiana Coalition for LA4 is a group of organizations and individuals across the state who have joined together to raise public awareness of the necessity and benefits of early childhood education in Louisiana, particularly the state's LA4 Pre-Kindergarten program. We are committed to this purpose because:

- Investment in LA4 is needed to close the achievement gap and to ensure that *all* children, especially children in poverty, are ready for school.
- Funding for LA4 is a cost-effective, strategic investment that will help to lift families out of poverty.
- Investment in LA4 is vital to Louisiana's economic growth and to our capacity to sustain a healthy, fiscal environment.

### THE FACTS

- Louisiana's Pre-Kindergarten program, the Cecil J. Picard LA4 Early Childhood Program, began in eleven pilot parishes with the passage of Senate Bill 776 during the 2001 Legislative session. LA4 is available in participating school districts at no cost to children eligible for free or reduced lunch services.
- Currently, LA 4 serves 15,762 "at-risk" four-year old children in Louisiana. An additional 25,643 at-risk four-year old children are served in other programs, including Head Start, 8(G), Title I and other sources. It is estimated that as many as 5,000 at-risk four-year old children are not receiving Pre-K services from any program source.
- LA4 is a high quality Pre-K program that is offered almost exclusively on public school sites. By contrast, a best practice across the country is the expansion of Pre-K programs through a "diverse delivery model," offering publicly funded Pre-K in high quality private child care or Head Start settings. Across the nation, over 30% of all publicly funded Pre-K children are in private child care settings, saving tax payers money and providing greater options to families.

- Funding for LA4 over the last three years has declined from \$82.7 million in 2008-2009 to \$75.9 million in 2010-2011. Federal TANF funds account for 90% of LA4 funding. The balance comes from State General Funds and Statutorily Dedicated Funds. Funding reductions were due in part to nearly \$13 million of LA4 appropriations not being spent in 2006 and 2007. This was due to administrative issues at the state and district levels, not because of reduced demand for LA4 services. The administrative issues have since been resolved.
- The average reimbursement to districts per LA4 student is \$4,578, down from \$5,000 several years ago. This compares to the \$5,044 average per pupil revenue provided through the MFP for K-12 students. Given the total costs of funding LA4 classrooms, many school districts and charter schools are supplementing LA4 with local funds.

### **BENEFITS OF LA4**

- Participation in LA4 better assures school readiness.
- Four-year old at-risk children who participate in the LA4 Pre-Kindergarten program show significant gains in academic achievement year after year.
- The LA4 program significantly reduces the number of students placed in special education and reduces grade retention.

### **WHAT SHOULD LOUISIANA DO?**

- Louisiana should ACT NOW! to close the funding gap by fully funding the LA4 program for all at-risk four-year old children. This means increasing LA4 per pupil funding to the Minimum Foundation Program level or a minimum of \$5,044 per student and providing funding for the 5,000 at-risk four-year olds who are not served by any Pre-K program. This should be new funding, not revenue resulting from cuts to other education programs and services.
- Louisiana should ACT NOW! to fully embrace and implement a diverse delivery system as part of LA4, creating a system of school-based and other Pre-K programs by offering LA4 in Head Start, child care, and faith-based centers working together to provide high quality public pre-kindergarten services to all four-year old children in a community. A diverse delivery system will create opportunity by increasing access to the LA4 program, providing high quality choices for families, and promoting quality and accountability across settings.

## **FISCAL IMPACT (COSTS AND BENEFITS)**

- The annual cost to fill the funding gap by increasing the LA4 per student reimbursement from \$4,578 to \$5,044 is \$7.3 million. Additional funding will be needed to fund the at-risk four-year olds who are un-served when those figures are confirmed at the district level.
- Research indicates that for every \$1 invested in Louisiana's high-quality Pre-K program, the state will receive returns ranging from \$2.25 to \$11.00 in future savings and increased tax revenue.
- The reduction in special education placement and grade retention resulting from increased participation in LA4 will free-up dollars within the Minimum Fund Program (MFP) to implement an aggressive intervention program for those students performing poorly at midyear. This could include spending on reading coaches, interventionists and other literacy initiatives.
- Expansion and increased participation in LA4 can potentially result in tremendous savings in the criminal justice system, healthcare, and social services.

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## **INFORMATION SOURCES**

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<http://www.minneapolisfed.org>[http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications\\_papers/pub\\_display.cfm?id=3832](http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications_papers/pub_display.cfm?id=3832)

ACT NOW! Louisiana is sponsored by Education’s Next Horizon, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to PreK-12 improvement. To join the movement to sustain and expand LA4, contact any of the Coalition members or contact Education’s Next Horizon at (225) 383-3844, by email at [jsmith@lanexthorizon.org](mailto:jsmith@lanexthorizon.org), or visit the website at [www.ednexthorizon.org](http://www.ednexthorizon.org).