

**Jan 19, 2006**

## **Louisiana's Pre-K Program shows strong progress for 4th year**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 19, 2006

CONTACT: Meg Casper, (225) 342-3600

### ***Louisiana's Pre-K Program shows strong progress for 4th year***

BATON ROUGE, LA -For the fourth year in a row, Louisiana's nationally acclaimed pre-kindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds, LA 4, showed strong and consistent progress in language, print and mathematics. Results from the 2004-2005 school year were presented to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education during its January meeting. LA 4 served 6,522 students statewide in 2004-2005.



The report was presented to BESE by Dr. Craig Ramey, Director of the Georgetown Center on Health and Education. Ramey has teamed with representatives of the Lloyd J. Rockhold Center for Child Development, The Center for Child Development at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the University of Alabama Center on Education Accountability to evaluate the LA 4 program annually. The findings show:

- LA 4 students enter the program far behind their peers across the country. But after one year, they made consistent and strong gains, and performed at or above the national average for Pre-K students.

- For 2004-2005, students improved from the 10th percentile in the pre-test to the 50th percentile in language, matching the last two years' performance.

- For 2004-2005, students improved from the 11th percentile to the 59th percentile in print, the highest score to date.

- For 2004-2005, students improved from the 5th percentile to the 52nd percentile in math, marking the first time math scores reached and surpassed the national average.

"You are literally unsurpassed in the country," said Dr. Craig Ramey. "This has never before been done in the country-such a long range study of children and the effect of education in their lives. These are changes that are very dramatic. These are scores that people are paying attention to all around the country. Those who need it the most are gaining the most," Ramey noted.

"Taking these young children and placing them in powerful academic settings is making a huge difference," said Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, who was in attendance for the report. "I believe this is the beginning of the cure for poverty. I believe education is the mortal enemy of poverty."

"This is just another indication that Pre-K works," said State Superintendent of Education Cecil J. Picard. "If we can continue LA 4, I believe we will begin to see outcomes including improved student attendance, improved graduation rates, reductions in the number of special education students and reductions in the number of students retained. Pre-K is that powerful," Picard said.

"I have always supported our efforts to implement and expand LA 4 in our state because I believed we would quickly see significant and powerful results, and we have," said State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education President Linda Johnson. "These results prove that we should continue our support of LA 4 and expand it so that every child has the opportunity to benefit."

Districts that participated in LA 4 during the 2004-2005 school year included Lafayette, St. Martin, Vermilion, DeSoto, LaSalle, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, St. Tammany, St. Bernard, Jefferson, Orleans, Evangeline, Iberia, Natchitoches, Rapides, Tangipahoa, Iberville, City of Bogalusa, Washington, City of Baker and Zachary Community.

The Louisiana Department of Education staff conducted the ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised) in a random sample of classrooms participating in the program. This assessment takes into account seven areas related to program quality. A compilation of the assessment scores for 63 classrooms rated the LA 4 classrooms "good to excellent," with an overall score of 6.0 on a scale of 1 to 7. This score is higher than the average rating of other prekindergarten programs in other states. Evaluators determined the scores

based on factors including certified teachers, a child-to-adult ratio of no more than 10 to 1, and use of a research-based and developmentally appropriate Pre-K curriculum.

Ramey also evaluated the state's Starting Points Pre-K program, which serves 814 students and has had comparable outcomes to that of the LA 4 program. Starting Points is a program that also serves students who are eligible for free and reduced-priced meals and has the same program quality indicators as used for LA 4.