

R2LP opens preschool to serve families that have lost child-care subsidies

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READY TO LEARN PROVIDENCE

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R2LP is a program of
The Providence Plan

I had to pull my kids out of child care and quit my job when I lost my subsidy," says Taina Lee, whose daughter, Tatiana, is now enrolled in Ready to Learn Providence's new preschool, which opened in late October. "This is a wonderful program."

R2LP created the program to help some of the families who have lost all or part of their state-funded child-care subsidies. It will also serve as a professional development site for early-care educators.

The *Ready to Learn Providence Early Learning Center at CCRI,*

Liston Campus, located in South Providence, can accommodate as many as 16 three- to five-year olds. Open five days a week from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., the program is free to families who meet certain criteria. Spaces are currently available and eligible families are encouraged to apply.

The program is supported by R2LP's U.S. Department of Education Early Reading First (ERF) grant. Since 2004, R2LP has received two ERF grants (totaling nearly \$7 million) to create centers of educational excellence at eight existing preschool centers in Providence. With the child-care subsidy cuts that began in September 2007, many of these centers have seen dramatic drops in their enrollment.

"The cuts had a serious effect on the number of children we were serving through Early Reading First," explains Christine Chiacu-Forsythe, ERF director at R2LP. "The R2LP preschool is one step we can take to meet the commitment we made to the Department of Education while also addressing the needs of some of the families."

"I was desperate when I lost my subsidy," says Jessica Martinez, whose son Francis is now enrolled



Teacher/Director Desiree Manley talks with Francis and Tatiana in the classroom's dramatic play center.

in the R2LP program. Martinez, who works as an assistant manager at a Spanish radio station, says there was no way she and Francis' father could afford to pay \$150 a week for child care. "Thank God they created this program. I didn't know what I was going to do."

To enroll their children in the R2LP preschool,

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Preschoolers Khalia (l) and Kenyonria sort and count materials at the manipulative center.

From the Director

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In a preliminary analysis of the data gathered last year in our Early Childhood Educator Professional Development (ECEPD) program, I was delighted to see the gains made by participating center-based and family-care providers in implementing a literacy-rich curriculum and environment into their settings. Using two highly regarded measurements – the Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) and the Child/Home Early Language and Literacy Observation (CHELLO) tools – our external evaluator found statistically significant gains among program participants on the critical measures of early literacy in the classroom.

Participants in our ECEPD program take two college-level courses over the course of a year – *HeadsUp! Reading* and *Early Literacy Curriculum*. Coupled with these courses are six visits from mentors who help providers implement what they are learning in their classes. Data from last year’s program show that these interventions had a significant impact on the teaching practices and the classroom environment of the participants. Measuring their growth against a control group of providers who didn’t receive this professional development, the evaluator found the gains to be “statistically significant.”

I think the real story here is that these providers made these changes during a period of enormous stress and turmoil in the field of early care and education. The child-care subsidy cuts that went into effect last year – and the resulting drop in enrollment – forced many centers to close classrooms, lay off staff and cut budgets. Many home-care providers faced the prospect of shutting down their businesses.

But despite all of this stress, these providers came to our classes week after week, working tirelessly to do the right thing for the children. Many told us that they derived enormous comfort from coming here and being with their peers. It helped them, they said, to keep their eyes on the prize – the ability to make a difference in a young child’s life. They have my utmost respect for the perseverance they demonstrated and their devotion to their work.

We are now in our third year of the ECEPD program, with a new group of more than 130 early-care providers and educators currently participating. By the end of this three-year grant, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, we will have provided over 250 providers with this intensive professional development. These providers – in centers, Head Start and family home-care programs – will touch the lives of thousands of young children over the course of their careers.

Leslie Gell, Director

R2LP preschool

Continued from Page 1

families must be able to document a recent loss of the child-care subsidy administered by the Department of Human Services. Children must be Providence residents and/or former students at an Early Reading First center. (They cannot, however, be currently enrolled in a child-care program in Providence.) Priority is given to the children of

CCRI students, staff or faculty who meet all of these criteria.

Staff at the preschool includes Teacher/Director Desiree Manley, Head Teacher Samantha McCormack, and a trained R2LP AmeriCorps member, Ana Vargas. With the many years of experience Manley and McCormack bring to their work, the center will become a model of “best practices” that can serve as a demonstration space for those in the field of early care and

education.

Instruction in the classroom will revolve around the same programs and curricula used in all ERF classrooms, with early literacy playing a central role throughout the environment and in the many activities. Parents seeking additional information on the new preschool and the eligibility requirements should call Samantha McCormack at (401) 490-9960.

R2LP's AmeriCorps program receives check for three years of funding

At a ceremony attended by U.S. Senator Jack Reed, U.S. Representatives Patrick Kennedy and James Langevin and Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts, Ready to Learn Providence received a check that will fund its AmeriCorps program for three years. The program, which is now one of the largest in the state, supports 35 members each year. Holding the check in the photo are members of this year's AmeriCorps team. The federal funds are distributed through Serve Rhode Island, formerly called the Rhode Island Service Alliance.



Members of the 2008/2009 AmeriCorps team and their assignments

Clarissa Aleman	Urban League
Yojahiris Aleman	Friendship Head Start
Francisco Baque	Central Library
Vielka Batista	Cianci Head Start
Veronica Burgos	South Providence Library
Jeily Carreras	Salvation Army
Jonathan Castillo	R2LP (Ready Families)
Seferina Denis De Roche	Blackstone Valley Head Start
Grimary Gonzalez	R2LP (AmeriCorps)
Alex Karoff-Hunger	South Providence Library
Maria Lahoz	Dean Head Start
Linda Mangum	Mt. Pleasant Library
Jose Martinez	Friendship Head Start
Ely Mateo	Genesis Center
Maria Moya	R2LP (Community Learning)
Wilnelia Ortiz	John Hope Child Care Center
Dianiri Paulino	Knight Memorial Library
Maria Perez	Knight Memorial Library
Ana Pimentel	R2LP (Community Learning)
Adriana Price	R2LP (Data & Evaluation/Admin.)
Quintin Prout	Central Library
Glorayma Ramos	Brown/Fox Point Early Ed. Center
Rafelina Rosario	Mt. Pleasant Library
Estela Santos	Central Library
David Torres	Smith Hill Library
Ana Vargas	R2LP Early Learning Ctr. at CCRI
Evelin Vasquez	R2LP (Community Learning)
Milagros Weber	Beautiful Beginnings
Mikaelah Wilhelm	East Side YMCA
Gregory Wright	Federal Hill House

R2LP uncovers positive trends in the well-being of our city's children

Childhood injuries are down and immunization rates are up, according to data analyses conducted by Ready to Learn Providence.

These are two of eight indicators R2LP recently updated from its *How Ready Is Providence?*, a report released in 2004 addressing 24 indicators of child and family well-being in the city of Providence.

Fewer children, both in Providence and statewide, required hospitalization as a result of unintentional injuries in 2005 than in 2002. In Providence, these injuries dropped from a rate of 3.74 per 1,000 children to 2.89 per 1,000. The largest number of these hospitalizations (36 percent) were a result of accidental falls, followed by poisonings (24 percent).

Rates of immunization appear to have increased in Providence. An analysis of immunization data for children enrolled in the Providence public schools (PreK through Grade 2) in the 2007-2008 academic year found that of those whose data were available and valid, 87 percent received the third dose of the Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DTaP) vaccination on time and 79 percent received the fourth dose on time. With very few exceptions, nearly every Providence neighborhood experienced an increase in rates of immunization since 2004.

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Childhood well-being

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The data in other updated indicators also revealed some positive trends:

▶ Childhood lead poisoning in Providence decreased 4 percentage points between 2003 and 2007, and an impressive 14 points since 2000. In 2000, 17 percent of all children in Providence who were screened tested positive for elevated blood lead levels; in 2007, that figure fell to 5 percent.

▶ The citywide percentage of births to mothers with 12 or more years of education increased slightly – from 66 percent in the years between 1998 and 2002 to 68 percent between 2003 and 2007. With few exceptions, the relationship between parent education and child poverty is evident in the city's neighborhoods, with child poverty tending to fall as education levels rise.

Analysis on other indicators, however, found some continuing challenges:

▶ Children in Providence are the most likely in Rhode Island to have a parent in prison. Between 2004 and 2007, the total number of children in Providence with a parent serving a sentence increased by 24 percent, rising to 1,300 by April 2007. This is an increase of 255 children since 2004 and represents a rate increase of 5.6 per 1,000 children. It means that an estimated 1 in every 35 children in the city has a parent currently serving a sentence.

▶ While local wages for child-care professionals have increased slightly since 2003, the disparity between their earnings and those of public school teachers has grown significantly. The mean wage for a child-care professional in 2007 in the Providence metropolitan area was \$21,050-\$27,893, while the mean wage for a public school kindergarten teacher was \$60,680.

You can download a full analysis of the updated indicators in PDF format at www.r2lp.org.