

RCSD Policy Perspectives: Looking at Literacy Initiatives, Ages 0-6

**Key principles in creating the best Pre-K
system in the U.S.**

How we did it – and how it points the way

What literacy measures are now in place

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Improbable Success: America's Finest Prekindergarten Program

- ▶ Rochester's Pre-K System ranked first in the U.S. and Western Europe for six consecutive years.
- ▶ There are key principles we used - and stuck with - to create this improbable success.
- ▶ Much of what we learned could be applied to our literacy endeavor.

Poverty and our Kindergartners

Through the 1980s, the condition of our entering kindergartners declined - but then a turnaround:

	<u>One or more problems</u>	<u>Multiple problems (subset)</u>
1990:	61%	33%
2000:	38%	9%

This turnaround took place as the demographics deteriorated – unprecedented.

How did Rochester's Pre-K system help meet New York State's new higher standards?

English Language Arts, grade 4

	<u>1999</u>	<u>2005</u>
Meeting Standards	24.4%	57.3%
Scoring in Lowest Level (1)	18.6%	7.9%

Comparable gains in Science and Social Studies

We could not have accomplished this without the massive infusion of Pre-K resources - both funding and quality.

Demographics

Poverty in Rochester's public schools:

1970: 12.8%

1980: 22.4%

1990: 72.1%

2000: 86.5%

2005: 88.4%

Today, most RCSD schools are over 90% poverty

Demographics

- ▶ Rochester children are 11th in per capita poverty, ahead of NYC, Washington, DC, Chicago, Los Angeles.
- ▶ High racial isolation – Most children of color in Monroe County attend RCSD, where they have little exposure to non-minority students.
- ▶ Yet there are many pockets of excellence within the RCSD, including Pre-K, Wilson, SOTA, Schools No. 33, 15, 20, 7, among others . . .

How data moved policy in Pre-K

- ▶ Look at entering Kindergarteners 1990 – present
- ▶ These data galvanized our community
- ▶ Convergence of a partnership in 1992, with an insistence on a robust evaluation component

(“We’re spending millions . . . Does it work?” – RACF)

- Local governments
- Private enterprise system (*What did Joe U. report . . .?*)
- Public education
- Parochial education
- Higher education
- Especially our local foundations (RACF, UWGR, DMJ, HHF)

Joe U. Posner kept saying . . .

“I know business leaders who really want to contribute to early childhood education, but they are insisting that some kind of system tracking the results be created . . .”

(Early/mid-1990s)

Note: Howard Mills wrote the Rochester Universal Pre-K Plan

1992 - 1997: Four guys in a room

Don Pryor, *Center for Governmental Research*

Dirk Hightower, *Children's Institute, Inc*

Andrew MacGowan, *Rochester City School District*

Milt VanDusan, *ABC/Head Start*

*Meeting every two weeks without letup; creating what is
now RECAP*

Funding did not arrive until later

The first three funders were:

- United Way of New York
- Rochester Area Community Foundation
- County of Monroe

Today, RCSD accounts for most of the RECAP funding, through UPK; in the long-run, public funding is needed.

Key convergence of events, 1997-98

- ▶ Series of pivotal evaluations released by RECAP
- ▶ State creates Universal Pre-K
- ▶ Howard Mills leads hearings, Rochester's plan
- ▶ Insist on robust evaluation
- ▶ **Public schools, parochial schools, Head Start, local foundations, business leaders and higher education in a “jewel box phase” - all gears mesh**

Key Principles that got us to No. 1

- ▶ “Check your ego at the door”
- ▶ “Low stakes assessment” - everyone gets the chance to improve; no one gets exposed
- ▶ Robust evaluation based on the continuous improvement model
- ▶ Data drives policy
- ▶ Customers: Parents, Providers, Policy-makers
- ▶ Rapid feedback to customers (ten days)

Pre-K evaluation today

- ▶ RECAP spends over \$300,000 per year.
- ▶ Thanks to foundations (esp. RACF, UWNY), we achieved “economies of scale,” did work up front, spend a fraction of what the feds would have us spend (we do 3.3%).
- ▶ Federal guidelines – no less than 10% on evaluation, often much more.
- ▶ Foundations expect robust evaluations.

What are the available literacy measures?

- ▶ Pre-K and kindergarten (age 3–5):
 - Child Observation Record (COR)
 - PACE literacy indices

- ▶ Grades 1-2:
 - SAT-9 (2000–2006)
 - Terra Nova (May 2007)
 - Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA)

- ▶ Grades 3–8
 - State English Language Arts Tests
 - Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA)

- ▶ High school – assortment of Regents tests, GPA, etc.

A word on Pre-K and K and Literacy Measures

- ▶ All centers that are RECAP affiliates, including all RCSD and RCSD-UPK partners, use the same measures.
- ▶ It is imperative to operate under “*one community, one common set of measures*” – or you cannot know what is working and what is not.
- ▶ This is true at school age as well: one reading series, one report card, etc. significantly reduces impact of student mobility.

Pre-K RECAP Provider Participants

- ▶ ABC/Head Start
- ▶ Charles Settlement House
- ▶ City of Rochester Catholic Parochial Schools
- ▶ Early Childhood Education Quality Council
- ▶ Family Resource Centers of Rochester
- ▶ Family Resource Centers of Crestwood
- ▶ Monroe Community College Childcare Center
- ▶ Rochester Children's Nursery Family Childcare Sat. Network
- ▶ All Rochester City School District Pre-K programs (5)
- ▶ YMCA of Rochester

Student Health Process - PACE - paved the way for literacy measures

- ▶ Conducted by the Children's Institute, funded in large part by RCSD; founded in 1996 by:
 - ▶ Andrew Doniger, MD - *his office was our HQ*
 - ▶ Dirk Hightower - *Principal Author of PACE*
 - ▶ Andrew MacGowan
 - ▶ Jane Holl, MD, Nancy O'Mara, Suzanne Peer
- ▶ Similar to the Pre-K RECAP structure of creation
- ▶ Up and running since September, 1998

What do parents want for their Pre-K children?

- ▶ To learn to be successful in school (*academic skills*)
- ▶ To learn to get along with other children (*social skills*)
- ▶ To learn to work with a teacher (*social skills*)
- ▶ To learn to share and take turns (*social skills*)
- ▶ To learn to think for themselves (*critical thinking skills*)

So what are our Pre-K problems?

- ▶ Too few attend – we’re only catching 55%. Many leave Rochester.
- ▶ Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) – not fulfilled –
 - 100% all-day Pre-K
 - Transportation
- ▶ We don’t know benefits of three year-old participation
- ▶ Kindergarten a “bifurcated” population
 - Well-prepared
 - Not well-prepared

PACE trend data on entering kindergartners, 1998–2004

- ▶ 43% of entering kindergartners: both parents did not initially finish high school.
- ▶ 17%: parents did receive a GED, but this is critically different from finishing high school.
- ▶ 10%: both parents were in special education.

Therefore, nearly half of parents did not have a positive education experience themselves.

PACE data on violence and stress on entering kindergartners

- ▶ 21%+ have witnessed violence in their neighborhoods
- ▶ 14%+ have witnessed violence in their homes
- ▶ High stress rates among our kids:
 - 90% - one or more stressful event
 - 48% - more than two stressful events

Additional information on statistics

- ▶ At the Children's Institute web site:

www.childrensinstitute.net

Look under RECAP studies, in the Research Library, in "Early Childhood"

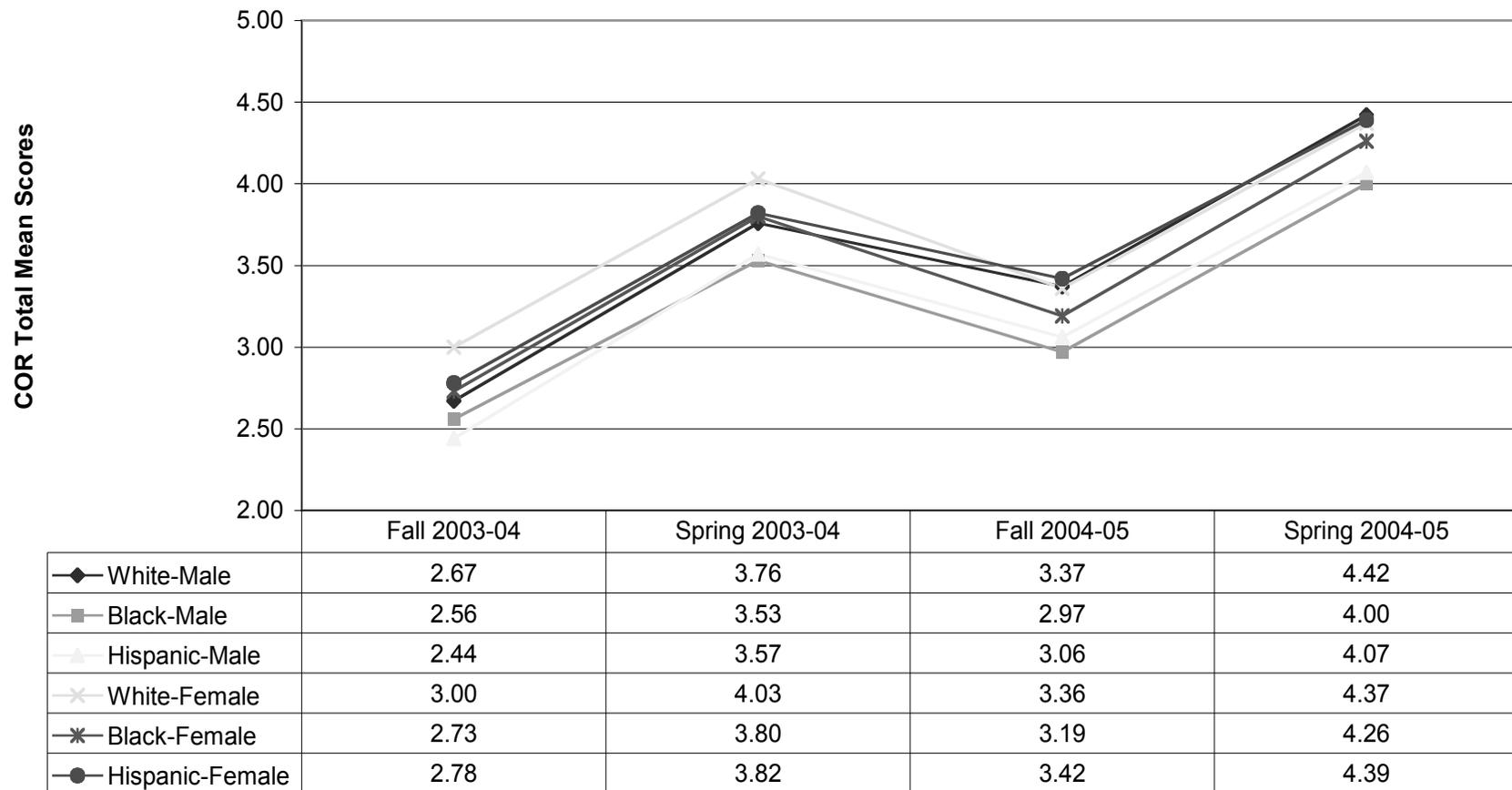
For PACE, look under "School Age," *Community Report on Children Entering Kindergarten*

What are the other issues?

- ▶ The boy-girl gap (see your slide)
- ▶ Summer drop-off (see slide)
- ▶ Social-emotional issues
- ▶ Declining high achievers
- ▶ Pre-K can only do so much . . .
- ▶ Six hours a day, 180 days, assuming 100% attendance (Pre-K = 2 ½ hours/day)

Gender/Ethnic trends from Pre-K to K

Tracking 2003-04 RECAP Students
 Prekindergarten COR Total Scores and Follow-up Kindergarten COR Total Scores
 Means Shown by Gender and Race/Ethnicity
 (Approx. size of N by subgroup: W-M n=68, B-M n=371, H-M n=102, W-F n=76, B-F n=351, H-F=72)



High Achievers need help, too

- ▶ Pre-K is a compensatory mechanism and not aimed at high achievers.
- ▶ Federal NCLB is aimed at teaching the lowest achieving schools.
- ▶ NY is the same way – no credit for moving students from Level 3 to Level 4.
- ▶ Large clusters of students who are “declining high achievers.”

Evaluation Structure Recommendations

- ▶ Start small
- ▶ Go slow
- ▶ Aim for quality
- ▶ Build a robust evaluation system
- ▶ Stay with common measures
- ▶ Build on some existing systems *already in place*