

# Early Childhood Education Council

## Recommendations Prepared For:

Governor John Hoeven

*and the*

North Dakota Legislative Assembly

*and the*

North Dakota Commission on Education Improvement

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3-4</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>NEEDS ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>5-13</b>
	Early Head Start.....	6
	Head Start .....	7-8
	Child Care .....	8-11
	Pre-Kindergarten .....	12
	Early Childhood Costs.....	12-13
<b>III.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
	<b>Capacity Growth .....</b>	<b>14</b>
	Child Care Grant & Loan Program .....	14
	Pre-K Facility Incentive .....	14
	<b>Program Incentives.....</b>	<b>15</b>
	Gearing Up For Kindergarten .....	15
	<b>Educator Development.....</b>	<b>16-17</b>
	Continuing Education Grants .....	16
	CDA Grants .....	16-17
	<b>Program Accountability.....</b>	<b>18</b>
	Child Identification.....	18
	Head Start Data Sharing Agreements.....	18
<b>IV.</b>	<b>EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FUNDING.....</b>	<b>19</b>

# INTRODUCTION

The 2009 Commission on Education Improvement and the Legislative Assembly established the Early Childhood Education Council to understand and address the needs of early childhood education, which is defined as all education activity prior to the kindergarten year. Early childhood education includes many programs that range from child care, federal programs such as Head Start, private and publicly funded pre-kindergarten, and the professional development that is needed to ensure quality instruction.

The Early Childhood Education Council is comprised of twenty-one members and chaired by the Lt. Governor. The Council has divided into three subcommittees: Development of Early Childhood Educators; Quality Assurance and Participation; and Needs Assessment. Each subcommittee was given a specific area to review for policy and program improvements. The Development of Early Childhood Educators reviewed the topics of professional development and higher education through the approach of a career ladder plan. The Needs Assessment committee reviewed the three areas of pre-school offerings, child care offerings, and other early childhood services for pregnant women, infants and toddlers. The committee also reviewed the information to identify sources of information that could be inputted into the North Dakota Longitudinal Data Collection. Finally the Participation and Quality Assurance Committee was charged with identifying how to increase the public awareness of early childhood programs, increasing the availability of quality programs through state funded facility improvement and expansion grants and reviewing the quality rating program for early childhood programs.

Each subcommittee met throughout the course of January 2010- August 2010 to address the needs of early childhood education. The issues discussed were numerous and very diverse. However the committees focused on the ages of birth to five years old with recommendations that centered

around four themes: capacity growth, program incentives, educator development, and program accountability.

The findings of the needs assessment and the recommendations of the council are for the consideration of the Governor and legislative assembly to address and use to guide the advancement of early childhood education in North Dakota. For the purpose for this document the term pre-k will be used in reference to preschool activities.

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The North Dakota Early Childhood Education Council was charged with conducting a needs assessment for the State of North Dakota. The needs assessment committee was comprised of Carol Olson, Nancy Langseth, Sharon Hanson, Linda Rorman and Cheryl Masset-Martz.

Currently the early childhood care and education options within the state include the following main categories: child care; Early Head Start; Head Start; and Pre-kindergarten(Pre-K). The needs assessment reports on facts and data for the state of North Dakota. The following questions guided the committee's search for information: Who is not being served due to lack of resources? What is the number of parents with childcare needs? How many legal unlicensed childcare providers operate in the state? Where is double counting occurring? Who is affected the most when a pre-school is started? Who is partnering and who are they partnering with?

According to 2009 data from North Dakota Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) there are a total of 47,419 children age of five and under in the state of North Dakota. The breakout is as follows:

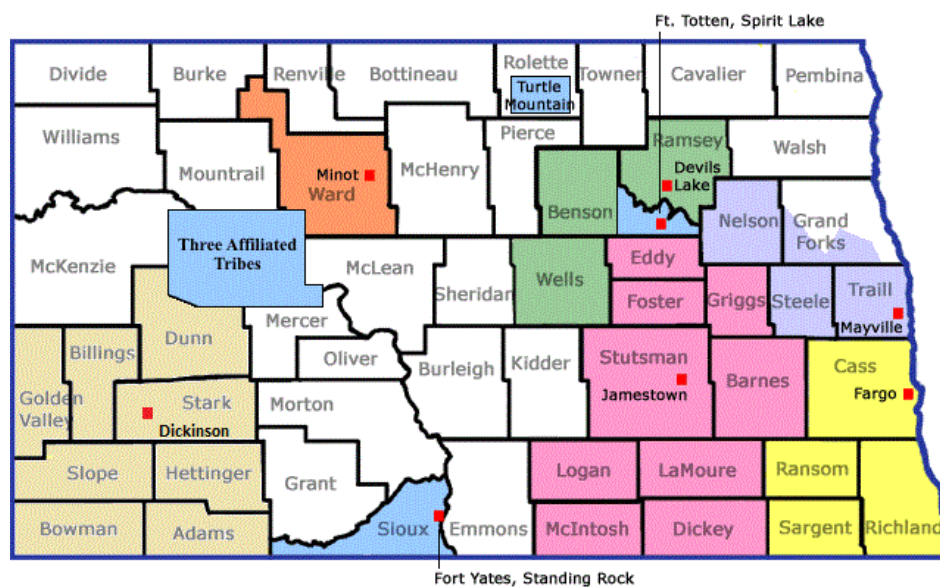
24,682 children	0-2 years
7,791 children	3 years
14,946 children	4-5 years

In the 2009 legislative session, the state of North Dakota invested a total of \$2,070,000 in new funds into Early Childhood Education. The Department of Commerce received \$1,820,000 in general funds for matching funds to establish or expand childcare options in communities. The North Dakota State University Extension Service received \$250,000 to support Parenting Resource Centers.

## *Early Head Start*

Early Head Start is a comprehensive child development program serving infants, toddlers, pregnant women and their families. Early Head Start is a year round program that enhances children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; assist pregnant women to access comprehensive prenatal and postpartum care; support parent efforts to fulfill their parental roles and help parents move toward self-sufficiency. Children and families are eligible to participate in Early Head Start programs if they are from families with low-incomes. Early Head Start follows the same federal poverty guidelines as Head Start programs.

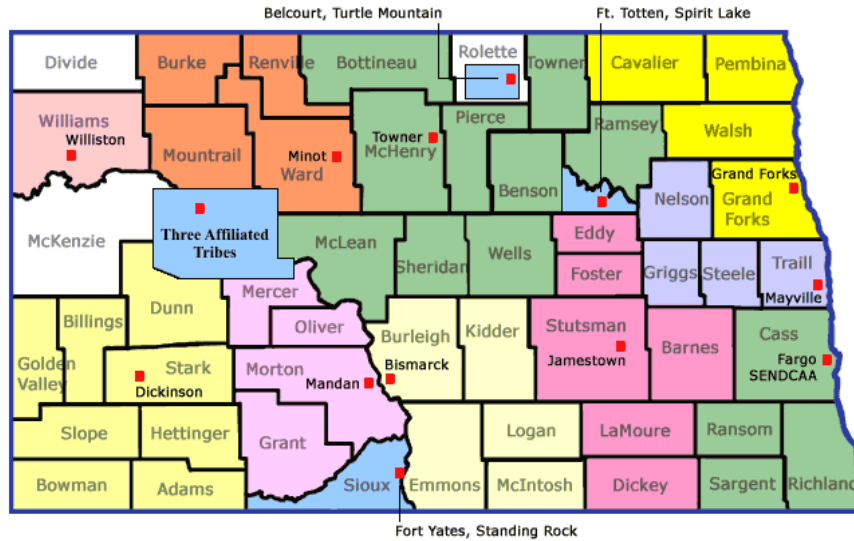
The North Dakota Head Start State Collaboration Office (NDHSO) is within the Division of Children and Family Services in the North Dakota Department of Human Services. As of July 2010, the NDHSO reported Early Head Start served 565 infants, toddlers and pregnant women. There are twelve Early Head Start sites in the state. Participant numbers include Head Start sites and children on the reservations in the state of North Dakota. The counties that are not served by Early Head Start include: Divide, Williams, McKenzie, Burke, Mountrail, Renville, Bottineau, McHenry, Peirce, Towner, Cavalier, Pembina, Walsh, McLean, Mercer, Oliver, Sheridan, Burleigh, Kidder, Morton, Grant, Emmons, and Rolette County. The following map of shaded areas depicts the locations of the Early Head Start sites in North Dakota.



## ***Head Start***

All Head Start programs in North Dakota are 80 percent federally funded and 20 percent locally funded. The Head Start grantees provide comprehensive services designed to benefit children three to five years of age and their families with low incomes (at or below 100% of the federal poverty guidelines). Head Start is a comprehensive child development program regulated through the federal Head Start Performance Standards. These regulations establish performance standards and minimum requirements with respect to health, education, family services, and parent involvement. Upon enrollment each child completes required screenings to determine if he or she is in good health and is appropriately developing. Screenings help to identify possible areas of concern and result in referrals for additional services and assessments in health and developmental domain areas. Ongoing assessment continues throughout the child's enrollment using appropriate observation and researched based assessments. Each Head Start program uses research based curricula and follows the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. Each Head Start program is required to facilitate alignment of curricula and assessments with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and as appropriate, State early learning guidelines (standards) and kindergarten curricula. The Head Start programs promote and support appropriate curricula for limited English speaking children and expand partnerships with local education agencies that include partnerships with pre-kindergarten and transitions to kindergarten.

As of July 2010, the NDHSO reported that Head Start serves 2,946 children. There are sixty-one Head Start sites in the state. Participant numbers include Head Start sites and children on the reservations in the state of North Dakota. The counties that are not served by Head Start include: Divide and McKenzie counties. The following map of shaded areas depicts the locations of the Head Start sites in North Dakota.



***Child Care:***

North Dakota State requires the licensing of all people who care for more than five children. Anyone caring for more than four infants or six or more children without a state license is operating against the law. Licensed providers have one inspection each year and renew their childcare license depending upon application either annually or every other year, and receive licensing study at that time. North Dakota Department of Human Services, Early Childhood Services Division, establishes state early childhood licensing standards and issues licenses to providers of early care and education. The types of licenses include:

Licensed Family/Group Child Care: In family child care, the provider is the owner/operator of a home-based business. Normally, children of all ages are together in a family setting, but providers are limited to no more than seven children. The exceptions are 1) if a provider chooses to care for four children under two years old, no older children may be included and 2) two additional school-age children can be enrolled during, before and after school hours. Family providers are required to include their own children under age 12 in the adult-child ratios.

Licensed group child care providers with a group license may be home-based or in a public or privately owned building. The maximum group size is 18, but the program may be restricted to a

lesser number if space is limited, or if local ordinances are more restrictive. Providers with group licenses will have additional staff when the number of children in attendance exceeds required adult-child ratios.

Licensed Child Care Center: Programs caring for more than 18 children must be licensed as centers. Some centers are owned by private, for-profit businesses and some are operated by nonprofit entities such as religious groups, parent boards, or hospitals. The number of children a center can provide care for at any given time is based on square footage and adult-child ratios.

Licensed School-age Care: Licensed school-age programs provide care exclusively for school-age children before and after school, during school holidays and summer vacations.

Licensed Pre-K Programs: Licensed Pre-Ks are part-time programs for 2-to 5-year-old children for the purpose of educational and social experiences. Hours are limited to three hours a day.

Unlicensed Care in North Dakota: In accordance with state law, individuals caring for more than five children must be licensed and inspected twice per year by county social service offices.

Caring for five or fewer children is legal and falls into two categories:

- 1) Self-declared Providers: Providers must sign a document promising to follow limited rules and agree to background checks on abuse and neglect. Becoming a self-declared provider allows them to enroll children whose care is subsidized by federal financial assistance programs. Their connection with county social services is minimal, and county social service staff does not inspect their programs. Social services will, however, investigate complaints if appropriate.
- 2) Legal-unlicensed Providers: Providers who are caring for five or fewer children have no legal obligation to follow state child care licensing rules or have any contact with county

social services offices. County social service staff does not inspect their homes or investigate complaints.

There can be multiple licensure including two or more licenses.

CCR&R reported that licensed childcare in the state of North Dakota serves a total of 38,699 children between the ages of 0-5 years of age. The breakout by provider category and accompanying chart that follows.

Licensed Family Child Care – 2,569

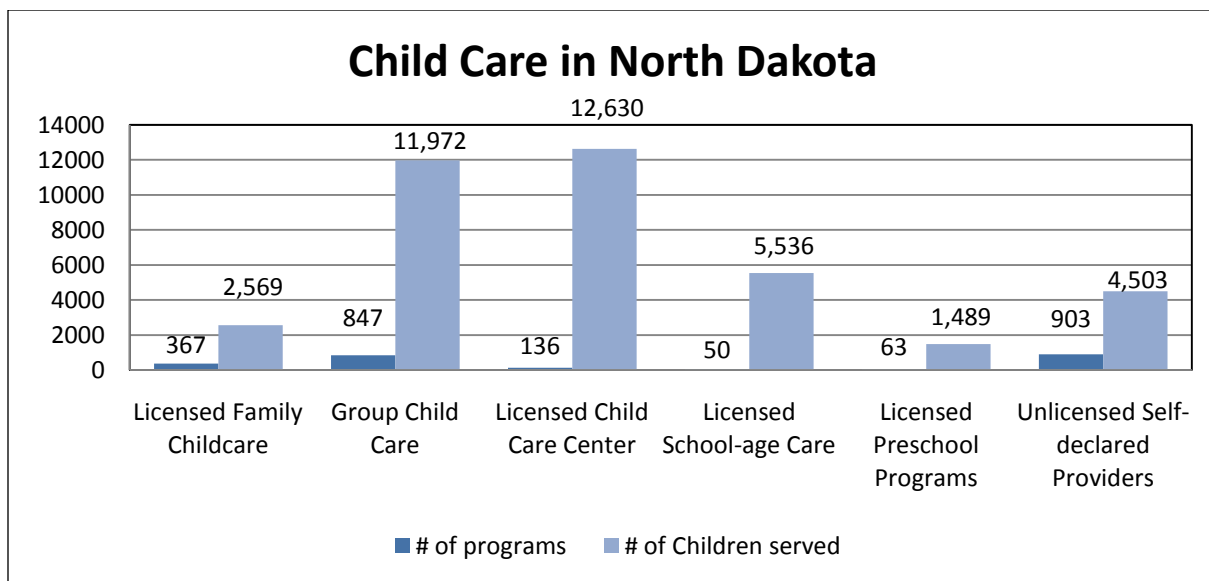
Group Childcare – 11,972

Licensed Childcare Center – 12,630

Licensed School-age Care – 5,536

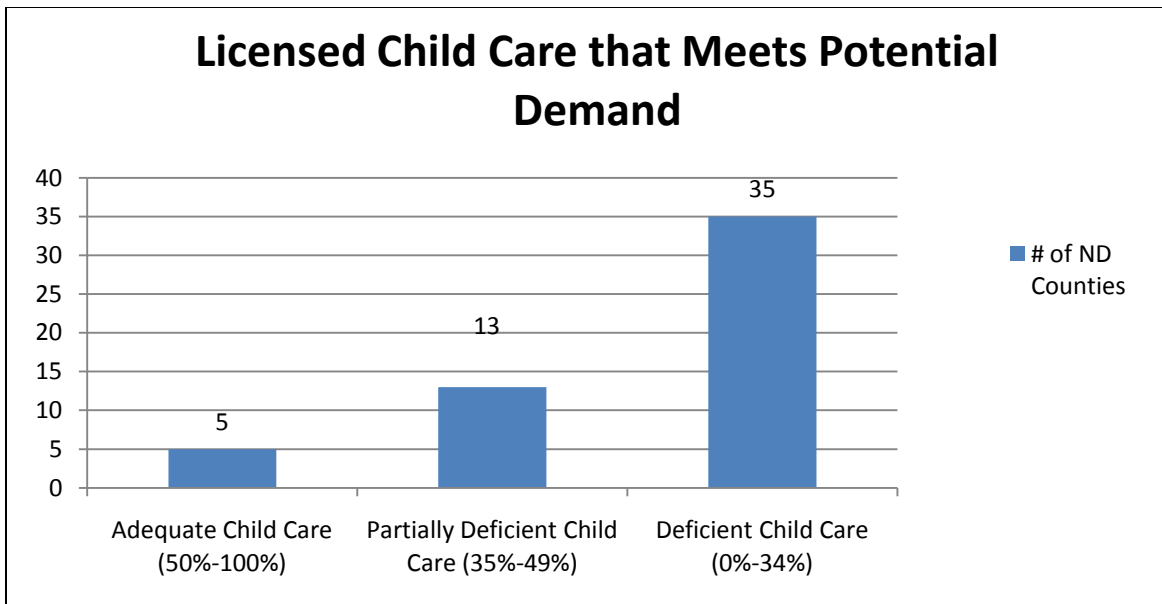
Licensed Pre-K Programs – 1,489

Unlicensed Self-declared Providers – 4,503



According to the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, NACCRRA, the industry standard for adequate childcare is a program capacity over 50% of the child population ages 0-12. North Dakota CCR&R reported that only five counties provide adequate (50%-100%) child care: Adams, Cass, Grand Forks, Ramsey, and Sheridan. There are 13

counties that are partially deficient (35%-49%) in child care: Bottineau, Burleigh, Dickey, Eddy, Griggs, Hettinger, Logan, Pembina, Richland, Stutsman, Towner, Trail, and Wells. There are 35 counties that are deficient (0%-34%) in child care: Barnes, Benson, Billings, Bowman, Burke, Cavalier, Divide, Dunn, Emmons, Foster, Golden Valley, Grant, Kidder, Lamoure, McHenry, McIntosh, McKenzie, McLean, Mercer, Morton, Mountrail, Nelson, Oliver, Pierce County, Ransom, Renville, Rolette, Sargent, Sioux, Slope, Stark, Steele, Walsh, Ward, and Williams. CCR&R reported that potentially 80,646 children ages 0-12 are in need of care in North Dakota while capacity exists for 32,707 children.



According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the 2009 hourly wage for child care workers in North Dakota was \$8.38. This resulted in child care workers making approximately \$17,440 a year. The North Dakota Employment and Projects data reported that child care workers are projected to grow from 4,283 to 4,446 between 2008-2018.

### ***Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K):***

Currently the state of North Dakota does not provide state funded Pre-K. However there are Title I and private Pre-Ks across the state. An accreditation of a Pre-K requires a license from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI). There are three criteria that need to be met for a Pre-K to be approved by DPI: 1) is taught by individuals who are licensed to teach in early childhood education by the education standards and practices board; 2) follows a state required developmentally appropriate curriculum; and 3) is in compliance with all municipal and state health, fire, and safety requirements. {ND 15.1-37-01} A Title I Pre-K has to follow specific federal guidelines which include teacher qualification, parent involvement, and aid/paraprofessional qualifications. A North Dakota Department of Human Services licensed pre-school has to follow specific state guidelines which include teacher qualification, facility requirements, staff ratios, and minimum sanitation and safety requirements. The breakout of pre-schools licensed and approved by DPI and DHS are as follows:

DPI Title 1 Pre-K – 25

DPI – 44

DHS – 122

### ***Early Childhood Costs***

- It currently costs approximately \$15,000 to fund one child in Early Head Start for twelve months.
- It currently costs approximately \$8,000 to fund one child in Head Start for nine months.
- It currently costs approximately \$8,000 to fund one child in a child care center for twelve months.
- It currently costs approximately \$5,000-\$6,000 to fund one child in a home child care setting for twelve months.

- It would cost approximately \$800-\$1,600 to fund one child in a state and local funded Pre-K program.

According to the North Dakota Vital record statistics, North Dakota resident live birth rates have increased since 2001. The breakout is as follows:

2001 – 7664 children (age 9 now)

2002 – 7755 children (age 8 now)

2003 – 7976 children (age 7 now)

2004 – 8179 children (age 6 now)

2005 – 8381 children (age 5 now)

2006 – 8616 children (age 4 now)

2007 – 8818 children (age 3 now)

2008 – 8931 children (age 2 now)

2009 – 8974 children (age 1 now)

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## CAPACITY GROWTH

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**Issue:** For a community to have adequate or above adequate supply of child care facilities, industry standards report that counties should have identifiable services for at least 50% of the demand for child care services. Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) reports that in 2009, only 5 of 53 counties demonstrated satisfying 50% of demand; which translates to a statewide estimated need of 80,646 children ages 0-12 potentially needing childcare with licensed childcare capacity only 32,707. The 2009 session enacted a grant and loan program administered from the Department of Commerce to improve the safety and capacity of child care in North Dakota. After two rounds of funding, 316 facilities have received grants in 75 communities.

**Recommendation:** Continue funding for childcare grant program (\$500,000) and childcare loan program (\$1,250,000) to expand and initiate new child care facilities.

**Issue:** Private pre-k, child care companies, and public schools have expressed interest in expanding the capacity of pre-k options in North Dakota. One of the challenges that exist is the lack of physical space, or the ability to meet the state safety requirements of hosting Pre-K classrooms. To rehabilitate a classroom space to be conducive for a Pre-K classroom is very cost intensive considering the specialized equipment such as furniture and plumbing fixtures.

**Recommendation:** Create an incentive for schools to make safety compliant spaces available for new Pre-K classes. A grant of \$5,000 per classroom, for up to 25 classrooms should be made available to school districts to be used for the costs of providing space. Grant criteria should include efficiency of space and cooperation with existing programs (\$125,000).

## PROGRAM INCENTIVES

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**Issue:** Early childhood education research supports a number of programs yielding significant impacts that improve a child’s potential for success throughout their school experiences and beyond. The NDSU Extension Service has developed, piloted and researched a school readiness program that is making a difference with young children. The “Gearing Up for Kindergarten” program is unique because it involves a series of 10 or 16 educational experiences for the four year old and their parents. A licensed kindergarten teacher conducts the program during after school hours with four year olds and their parents. A parent educator also spends time with parents to provide research-based educational information that enhances their child’s growth and development. The Gearing Up for Kindergarten program was developed with input from the early childhood education community and is aligned with the ND Early Learning Guidelines, Ages 3-5 Years. It was also developed with consideration for the Content and Achievement Standards established by the ND Department of Public Instruction, grades K-12.

**Recommendation:** Support and expand the NDSU Extension program, “Gearing Up for Kindergarten”. Costs include statewide program coordination (\$330,000); reimbursable grants of \$2000 for each session that serves 15 children and families (covers cost of kindergarten teacher and parent educator) (\$500,000).

The Council also recommends funding for expansion of the Parent Resource Centers (PRC) to serve all 8 regions in the state. The PRC Network will provide all training and support for implementing the Gearing Up for Kindergarten program throughout the state. (\$500,000) (Total recommendation: \$1,330,000).

## EDUCATOR DEVELOPMENT

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**Issue:** 87% of Head Start Pre-K teachers on North Dakota reservations meet the Pre-K teaching experience requirement (Standing Rock, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indian Tribe, 3 Affiliated Tribes and Spirit Lake). In September 2013 this standard will increase, requiring 50% of all Head Start Pre-K teachers to hold a bachelor's degree. If this requirement is not met, federal funding will be jeopardized. Currently, 63% of North Dakota Pre-K teachers obtain this credential; however, only 16% of the Pre-K teachers on the reservations meet this requirement. Under provisions of House Bill 1400, passed by the 61st Legislative Assembly, North Dakota residents may receive a \$1,200 continuing education grant towards an advanced education degree. Legislative requirements for the grants include: 1) Be licensed to teach by the education standards and practices board; 2) Have taught in this state during each of the last three school years; and 3) Be enrolled at an institution under the control of the state board of higher education in either a master of education program in educational leadership or a program leading to a specialist diploma in educational leadership; 4) Be pursuing the requirements for a certificate in career development facilitation; or 5) Be pursuing a school counselor credential. This grant program has been successful with 65 students receiving grants to date.

**Recommendation:** Sustain the continuing education grant program with revisions for eligibility and enhanced funding to cover the increased demand by Pre-K teachers to achieve a bachelors of science or bachelors of arts degree. The Council also recommends that student teaching requirements should be covered by supervised work experience for pre-k teachers with some experience (\$150,000).

**Issue:** There is a need to support individuals who want to improve their proficiency in the child care and early childhood education field. The Child Development Associate credential is recognized for

degree earning credits by the board of higher education programs, and is likely to increase the quality of the educational environment in child care programs. The North Dakota Growing Futures Advisory Committee represents a wide variety of early care and education interests across the state, including state government and county licensing, higher education, Head Start, CCR&R, state professional associations such as NDAEYC and NDCCPI, and representatives of various child care program settings. This advisory committee has developed a professional development system that strives to grow the knowledge and competencies of early childhood practitioners, promotes the development of successful careers in early care and education, and strengthens early childhood programs to support healthy developmental and learning outcomes for children.

**Recommendation:** Fund grants for Child Development Associate earners. This as a beginning educational strategy that supports professional development in the early childhood care settings. This Growing Futures plan is adopted as a professional development system for individuals working in early childhood care and education settings (\$1200 x 125 grant recipients to be administered by CCR&R.) (\$150,000 total).

The Council also recommends the University System coordinate and facilitates degree earning credits for successful completion of CDA test completion.

## PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

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**Issue:** To determine a program's effectiveness and resource management, there is a need for the ability to track students from birth (or first contact) to workforce. This information will provide program administrators and policy makers the information needed to make effective and timely decisions for early childhood care and education.

**Recommendation:** The State Longitudinal Data System should establish child identification at the earliest age possible.

**Issue:** The Head Start program collects valuable information that can measure program effectiveness based upon student outcomes, if student's data is transitioned into K-12 systems. Currently the state of North Dakota is not aligning the information with the state education system. The opportunity to align data that currently exists presents an opportunity to make programmatic and policy decisions.

**Recommendation:** Through the establishment of data sharing agreements, input Head Start and Early Head Start educational information into the SLDS statewide data system. In the future other programs receiving state support should also provide input.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FUNDING

1. Child Care Grant Program	\$500,000
2. Childcare Loan Program	\$1,250,000
3. Pre-K Classroom Incentive	\$125,000
4. Gearing Up for Kindergarten	\$1,330,000
5. Continuing Education Grants	\$150,000
6. Child Development Associate Grants	\$150,000

**Total:** **\$3,505,000**