

# **Executive Summary**

## **Assessing the Value of 4K in Wisconsin: A Study of 4K Community Approach Districts (2005-06)**

Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership

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## Acknowledgements

This research study on 4-year-old kindergarten was a team effort, with the early design of research questions done in consultation with Rachel Schumacher and Danielle Ewen from the Center for Law & Social Policy, Paula Evenson and Jon Peacock of the Wisconsin Council on Children & Families, and Jill Haglund from the Department of Public Instruction.

The Research Partnership team exhibited focused attention to detail in conducting this research. Mary Roach, Diane Adams, and Jason Bierbrauer created the instruments and sampling system needed to gather information from school districts, individual schools offering 4-year-old kindergarten, parents, and collaborating site partners in local communities. Deb Zeman helped design the system for mailing surveys, reply envelopes, and packets to teachers and parents in districts. Angie Fisher aided in many stages of recording receipt of questionnaires, and making follow-up contacts with non-respondents, as well as in summarizing the qualitative data on parent and teacher attitudes toward 4K. Chavameth (Jack) Vinijtrongjit designed the on-line version of the surveys to teachers and parents, so that data could be recorded electronically. Allen Robinson designed and sent the e-mail survey instrument to all 416 elementary school districts in Wisconsin, designed Access databases for each group in the study, entered all data, and did many of the analyses for this report. It is only because of the staff's persistent efforts that we were able to achieve a 100% return from the e-mail survey, 100% return from the district sites involved in "community approach" 4K for the 2005-06 school year, as well a 100% return from the random sample of districts with 4K in a school setting. Dave Edie, Alan Sweet, and Dave Riley provided feedback on both the survey methodology and return results.

We are grateful to the enthusiastic participation of school district superintendents, school principals, child care and Head Start directors, mothers and fathers of 4-year-old children, and teachers of pre-kindergarten in helping us gain greater understanding of the movement known as "4K" in Wisconsin. We learned much from their responses, summarized in Report A (Parents), Report B (Baseline Communities), Report C (Mini-grant Communities), Report D (Updating Community Approach Districts, and Report E (Teachers), as well as an Executive Summary ([www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/ece/wccrp/eem.html](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/ece/wccrp/eem.html)).

Funding for this research came from a partnership grant with the Wisconsin Council on Children & Families from The Joyce Foundation. We are glad to have had this opportunity, using our talents in research and evaluation to gain more comprehensive data about the "community approach" to 4K. Though several readers made comments and suggestions about early drafts of the reports, the authors take responsibility for any errors or omissions. We turn now to a report on parent satisfaction with 4K.

- Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, March, 2006.

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**A. Description**

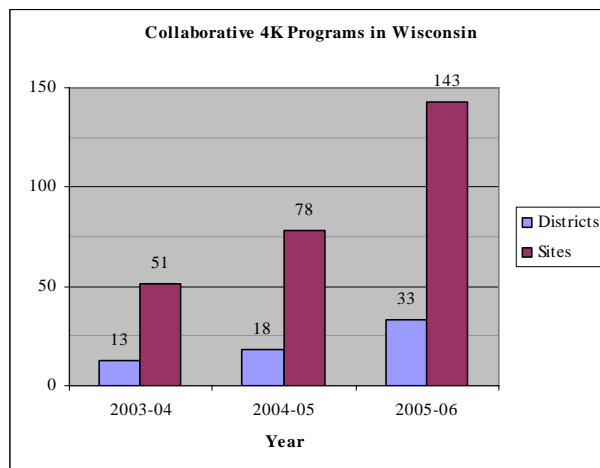
There has been a sharp increase in the number of Wisconsin school districts that offer free, universal pre-kindergarten for 4-year-old children (4K), documented by a recent study of 4K conducted by the Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, as a partner in the Early Education Matters (EEM) two-year project. The fall, 2005 study surveyed all 416 elementary school districts via e-mail asking whether or not the district offered 4K, and if they did, if it was offered in collaboration with Head Start or child care. These responses were then used to update the list of documented “4K community approach” districts from the previous year, as well as to randomly select a sample of comparison 4K districts that offered 4K in the schools, without collaborations. 4K parents and teachers in a portion of both the community approach and school 4K programs were also surveyed. Follow-up responses were actively sought: eventually 100% of the 4K community approach district administrators (n=33) and 100% of the randomly-selected sample of comparison district administrators (n=32) responded to questionnaires.

**B. Growth of 4K since the start of the EEM project in 2003-04**

Figure 1 shows the overall growth in the number of districts offering 4K since the start of the EEM project. In 2003-04, 180 districts offered 4K (out of 416, or 43%). In 2004-05, that number rose to 190 districts, and in 2005-06, it rose to 198 districts, or 48% of all elementary districts.

Growth was also found among the “community approach” districts, which contract with community-based child care or Head Start programs to collaboratively offer 4K. In 2003-04, there were 13 community approach districts, in 2004-05, there were 18 (a 38% increase), and in 2005-06, there were 33 districts (a 61% increase in districts). There has also been a large increase in the number of sites in which 4K is collaboratively offered: from 51 sites in 2003-04, to 78 sites in 2004-05, to 143 sites in 2005-06 (an increase of 64% in the two years of this project). A list of current community approach districts, number of sites, and number of children enrolled is found on page 7.

**Figure 1: Growth of Collaborative 4K Programs in Wisconsin**



### C. Update of Community Approach Districts (2003-05)

In the first year of the EEM grant (2003-04), the 13 “baseline” 4K community approach districts had collaborative arrangements for 4K services with child care centers or Head Start centers, with varying formal and informal agreements. Figure 2 shows changes within those 13 original “pacesetter” districts over the two years of the project.

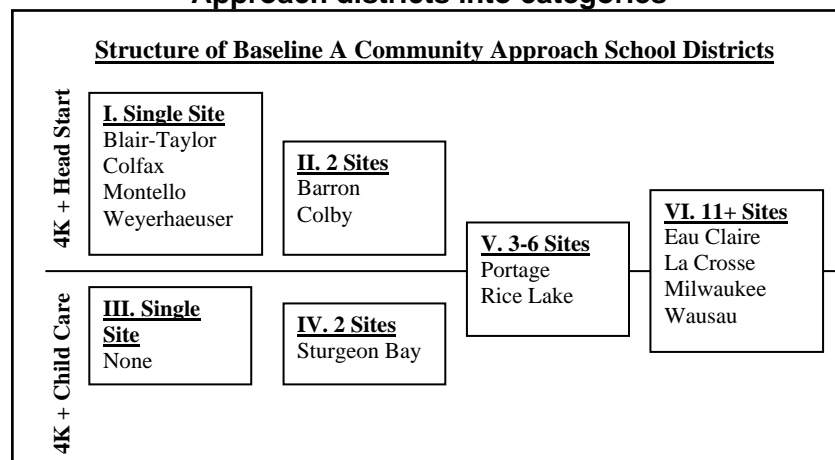
**Figure 2: Changes over time in 13 baseline 4K community approach districts: sites, classes, and number of children served**

School District	Sites			Classes			Children		
	2003	2005	% Change	2003	2005	% Change	2003	2005	% Change
<b>Barron</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>99%</b>
Blair-Taylor	1	1	0%	2	3	50%	28	38	36%
Colby	2	2	0%	5	5	0%	83	64	-23%
Colfax	1	1	0%	2	2	0%	33	43	30%
<b>Eau Claire</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>667%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>278%</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>388%</b>
<b>La Crosse</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>27%</b>
Montello	1	1	0%	4	3	-25%	63	33	-48%
<b>Portage</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>29%</b>
Rice Lake	4	3	-25%	7	7	0%	121	124	2%
Sturgeon Bay	2	0	-100%	4	0	-100%	76	0	-100%
<b>Wausau</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>72%</b>
Weyerhaeuser	1	1	0%	1	1	0%	6	6	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>1605</b>	<b>2269</b>	<b>41%</b>

### D. Categorizing 4K Community Approach Districts

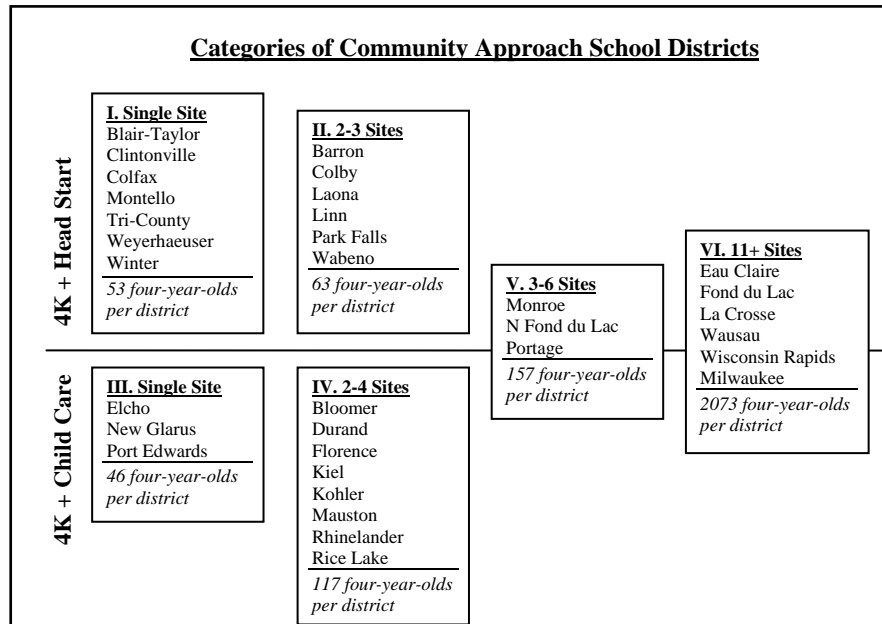
There were six different categories for grouping the 13 original 4K community approach districts: by the number of sites and the type of partner collaborating entities. Figure 3 illustrates this way of organizing the districts, with 1 and 2-site arrangements with Head Start as one cluster (Groups I and II), 1 or 2-site arrangements with child care as another cluster (Groups III and IV), and small and large community arrangements that involve child care and Head Start, as well as public school 4K classrooms (Groups V and VI).

**Figure 3: Organizing 13 Baseline 4K Community Approach districts into categories**



In Figure 4, we illustrate the strength of this organizing model, because with the data for 2005-06, it is now more apparent that the multi-site 4K community approach districts are different in terms of population, number of potential partners, and average number of 4-year-old children.

**Figure 4: Community Approach Categories for 2005-06**



**E. Parents Using 4K: Community Approach and Comparison Districts**

We randomly selected about half of the district and child care administrators from the 2004-05 community approach sites to distribute a “4K Parent Questionnaire” to all parents of children enrolled in their 4K classrooms. Family demographics are important for gaining more understanding of the value of 4K, especially to low-income children who may need pre-kindergarten in order to find success in regular kindergarten the next year. In Figure 5, we illustrate basic demographic data on families, both in collaborative (community approach) districts and in the non-collaborative (comparison) districts. There were very few parent responses from Milwaukee, and we therefore recognize the bias found in these data, which may be skewed toward higher income families.

**Figure 5: Parent Responses to Family Demographic Questions (n = 300)**

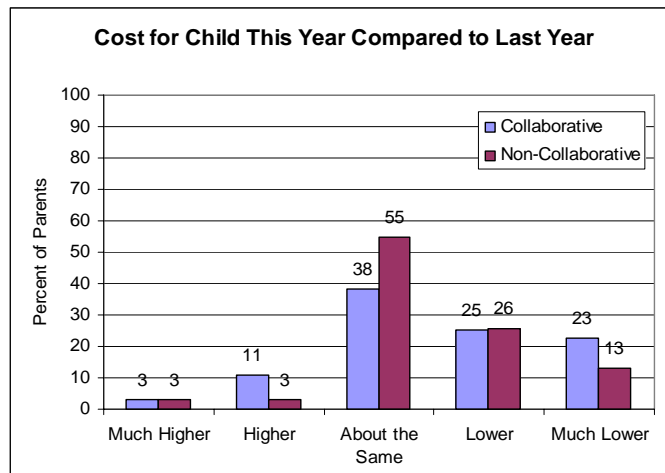
	Overall	Collaborative	Non-Collaborative
Two Parent Family:	88%	88%	90%
Parents Employed:	88%	88%	86%
Mother:	79%	80%	78%
Father:	97%	97%	95%
Hours Employed*:			
Mother:	34 hrs/wk		
Father:	43 hrs/wk		
Education Level**:			
Mother:	57%	45%	60%
Father:	51%	45%	53%

\* employed parents only

\*\* percent of parents with at least a bachelor's degree

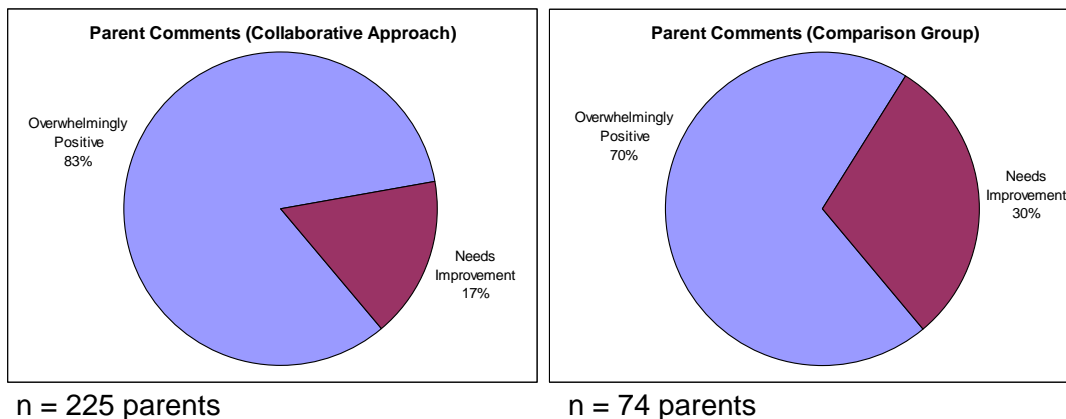
Parents reported the value to their families of having 4K offered as universal, free pre-kindergarten this year, compared with child care costs they paid last year for their (then) 3-year-old child, as shown in Figure 6. While 4K is offered at no cost to parents, many – because of employment schedules – pay for additional child care hours; still, the cost is less this year than last because of 4K.

**Figure 6: Comparative costs**



Parent satisfaction with 4K overall was determined by analyses of open-ended questions about what parents like best about 4K, their suggestions for improvement, and how well the 4K program met family schedules. Parents in both groups were overwhelmingly positive about their 4K experience (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Parents' Comments on 4K**



**E. Teachers in 4K**

Of the 16 2004-05 community approach districts, 86% had teachers who responded to a teacher questionnaire (n = 41 teachers); another 32 teachers responded from the comparison districts. Analyses shows that over 50% of teacher respondents were over age 35, with 65% of them having more than 10 years of teaching experience. Of all the teachers responding, 75% had a bachelor's degree or above; they were 99% female and 100% of respondents were white. Salaries were higher than for the early childhood workforce as a whole: 68% earned more than \$30,000/year among the salaried employees.

**F. Increases in community approach districts**

Twenty-one communities/districts received mini-grants from the EEM project, to help with community planning and/or implementation of 4K during the two-year grant period. Seven of these EEM districts either start new community approach 4K programs, or greatly expanded their sites. Figure 8 is a complete listing of the 33 community approach districts, showing the new ones for 2005-06 in bold and the EEM mini-grant districts with an "X." There were 17 new community approach districts in 2005-06, plus 16 continuing from 2004-05.

**Figure 8. Summary of districts with “community approach” for 2005-06 \*\* (n=33)**

District	Sites	Classroom Groups	# 4-yr.old children
Barron Area	3	9	141
Blair-Taylor	1	3	46
<b>Bloomer X</b>	3	5	74
<b>Clintonville</b>	1	6	100
Colby	2	5	85
Colfax	1	2	43
Durand	2	4	62
Eau Claire X	23	34	454
<b>Elcho** X</b>	1	1	13
<b>Florence</b>	2	4	61
<b>Fond du Lac</b>	13	24	355
<b>Kiel Area X</b>	3	5	106
<b>Kohler**</b>	2	4	94
La Crosse	17	28	449
<b>Laona</b>	2	2	42
<b>Linn J6**</b>	2	3	48
<b>Mauston</b>	3	9	156
Milwaukee X	6	17	323
<b>Monroe X</b>	4	10	136
Montello	1	3	33
<b>New Glarus X</b>	1	1	16
<b>North Fond du Lac</b>	3	3	50
<b>Park Falls X</b>	2	2	29
<b>Tri-County Area</b>	1	3	39
Port Edwards	1	1	20
Portage	6	9	156
Rhineland	4	5	74
Rice Lake	3	7	124
<b>Wabeno Area</b>	2	2	46
Wausau	16	33	498
Weyerhauser Area	1	1	6
<b>Winter</b>	1	1	19
Wisconsin Rapids	10	17	279
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>4177</b>

\*\* Three districts (Kohler, Linn J6, and Elcho) collaborate internally with their own child care or early learning centers, at the same location.

In addition, Nekoosa and Stanley Boyd districts are reported to have collaborations, but no data were collected for this survey. All data are considered preliminary until audited figures are available from the Department of Public Instruction.

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This Executive Summary was prepared by: Wisconsin Child Care Research Partnership, Room 301, 432 N. Lake Street, Madison, WI 53706. Telephone: (877) 637-6188; Fax: (608) 263-7969. The full set of reports on "Assessing the Value of 4K in Wisconsin: A study of 4K Community Approach Districts (2005-06)" is posted on the Research Partnership web site at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/wccrp/eem.html>. This research was funded by the Early Education Matters Project, Wisconsin Council on Children & Families, under a grant from The Joyce Foundation.

