



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF

Early Childhood Education



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Issued: July 1, 2021

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR



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STATE OF ALABAMA

July 1, 2021

Dear Friends,

I am proud to serve as Alabama's 54th Governor and lead our great state. One of the areas of state government that I am most proud of is the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE).

Ensuring our youngest learners have a strong start to their educational journeys is important now, more than ever. The programs administered by the ADECE are critical components of our workforce development system. I want to do everything possible to make sure that our citizens can enter the workforce prepared for 21st century jobs. With volumes of research which prove that 95% of brain development occurs by age 5, the programs of the ADECE are valuable investments in our state's future.



Alabama continues to set the nationwide bar through our success with the Alabama First Class Pre-K program. In April 2021, we welcomed the news that Alabama continues to be a national leader in pre-k for the 15th consecutive year. On May 21, 2021, the ADECE was featured as one of four states in the Rutgers University publication "Effective Early Learning State Offices."

The Strong Start, Strong Finish initiative continues to move our state forward. Through the Pre-K – 3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning, we can provide more tools for teachers and school leaders so they can continue providing students with the best models for learning in the critical early years.

On July 1, 2020, I was glad to select Dr. Barbara J. Cooper as the newest Secretary of the ADECE. She is an outstanding leader in my cabinet and continues to do an excellent job leading the department. This annual report highlights progress made with many of the department's initiatives.

Because of the work of the ADECE, Alabama's future for children and families is bright! I urge everyone to join with us to improve access to the department's valuable programs so that all children in our state can flourish.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Ivey".

Kay Ivey
Governor

Dear Friends,

When Governor Ivey appointed me as Secretary of the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE), she emphasized the priority to ensure the Alabama First Class Pre-K program remained the highest quality, while providing access for more children. One of the values that drives my work is ensuring an equitable education for all children. Each day, I work to lead our team in being accountable for making our organization better and stronger through high-quality learning opportunities for all.

When children aren't afforded positive early experiences, gaps begin emerging and the gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children are visible as early as 9 months of age. By 18 months, toddlers from low-income families can already be several months behind in language development and other milestone indicators. These gaps continue to widen, leaving disadvantaged children up to two years behind by age five. The most productive way to close achievement gaps is to keep them from occurring by providing high-quality early childhood programs. The achievement gap neither originates nor can it be closed by schools alone. After all that we have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, earlier support for families and children is even more critical.

Investments provided to the ADECE allow us to prevent disparities by working with families to provide a strong early start for children. The programs we administer provide everything needed for both a strong family foundation as well as the education Alabama's children need to enter the K-12 school system ready to learn.

Before a child enters pre-k, social connections and important brain-building work is happening between caregivers and parents of young children. Again, the pandemic made clear the need for supporting families as their child's first teacher through the First Teacher Home visiting program.

The ADECE continues to implement evidence-based, nationally researched programs for parents and children, which data show are effective at increasing school readiness and improving child and family outcomes. We also realize that a child's early education does not end in pre-k. Through Governor Ivey's Strong Start, Strong Finish Initiative, we are intentional in our partnering with local school systems and others in our mixed delivery system to ensure what is learned in early childhood continues through the child's third-grade year and beyond. We also continue our efforts in workforce development in multiple ways including an apprenticeship program. Investments in the workforce support our commitment to having highly qualified teachers serving and teaching our youngest children. Weaving through all our work is Alabama Family Central, a website with a broad range of resources for parents and families to access as they navigate the many early childhood programs across the state. Alabama Family Central was developed throughout 2020 and launched in January of 2021.

This report serves as an update of where we are focusing our efforts and identifies how we are moving forward. Thank you to my team and to everyone who has contributed tirelessly to making the ADECE a national leader in early childhood education and a key to the success of Alabama's future.

Educationally,



Dr. Barbara Cooper, Secretary
Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education



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ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT

The Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education (ADECE) is an executive, cabinet-level state agency, principally established to enable the Governor to effectively and efficiently coordinate efforts and programs to serve families and children throughout the state. The Department is the state designee for the federally mandated Early Childhood Advisory Council (designated as the Alabama Children's Policy Council in 2015), home of the Alabama Head Start Collaboration Office, administrator of the Children First Trust Fund, the lead agency for early learning and home visiting programs, and developer and operator of the nationally-recognized Alabama First Class Pre-K program. The Department receives and disburses any funds appropriated by state and federal sources for the establishment, operation, and administration of its programs.

The ADECE was created in 2015 to expand upon the duties of the former Department of Children's Affairs to include the development of a cohesive and comprehensive system of high-quality early learning and care experiences for Alabama's families and children, aged birth through eight. The Department consists of the **Office of School Readiness**, **Office of Family Support**, **Head Start Collaboration Office**, and the **Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support**.

FISCAL YEAR 2020 HIGHLIGHTS:

As the COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on educational institutions throughout Alabama and the country, the ADECE responded so that Alabama's children and families continued to receive benefits from the programs that it operates. Over 20,000 backpacks with supplies and educational materials were distributed to First Class Pre-K students throughout the state. First Teacher Home Visiting programs conducted over 54,000 in-person and virtual visits in all 67 counties.

On July 1, 2020, Governor Kay Ivey appointed Dr. Barbara J. Cooper to be the new Secretary of the Department of Early Childhood Education, replacing Jeana Ross who retired in May 2020.

Alabama was one of 23 states awarded a three-year Preschool Development Grant Birth to 5 (PDG B-5) renewal grant for almost \$11.2 million annually designed to implement the strategic plan developed with the 2018 PDG B-5 planning grant.

National Recognition:

- More than 30 presentations to national audiences
- 3 published research articles
- 78 news stories about the ADECE and its success

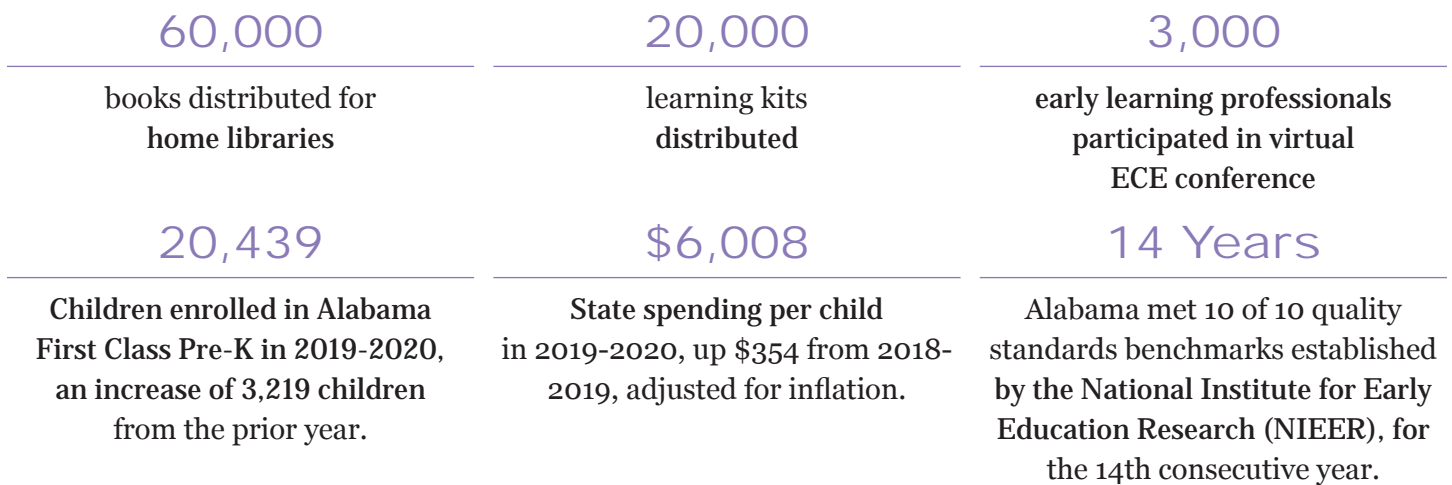
Covid-19 Response

The ADECE responded to the disruptions in the education system caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by first listening to the needs of educators and families to develop and implement an intentional, comprehensive plan. Alabama’s strategy was nationally recognized, and Secretary Barbara Cooper was invited to share our plan with other states.

To ensure that children and families had supplies that supported learning in their homes, the ADECE team distributed more than 20,000 backpacks full of materials to complement virtual learning. These learning kits contained activity cards, crayons, paint, manipulatives, playdough, and other materials that support the domains of learning in the Alabama Standards for Early Learning and Development.

Teachers who had to navigate the most challenging learning environment in more than a generation were constantly supported through virtual small groups and one-on-one reflective coaching. The ADECE continuously innovated to meet the needs of those we serve during this difficult period.

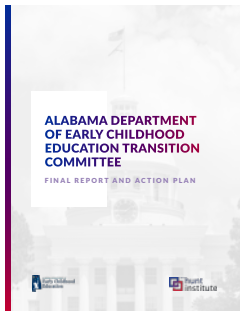
NUMBERS:



Continuum of Services

Program	Age of Population Served										Workforce Supports				
	Prenatal	Birth	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-18	Pay Parity	Apprenticeship & CTE	Scholarships	Professional Development
First Class Pre-K						Age 4						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
First Teacher Home Visiting	Prenatal - Age 5													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Nurse Family Partnership Model	Prenatal up to Age 2													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Parents as Teachers Model	Prenatal - Age 5													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
HIPPY Model				Age 2 - Age 5											<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Head Start Collaboration Office		Birth - Age 5													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health		Birth - Age 5													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support		Birth - Age 8													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Birth to 5 Foundation Sites		Birth - Age 5										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership		Birth - Age 3													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Family Engagement Project		Birth - Age 5													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Challenging Behaviors Project		Birth - Age 5													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Conscious Discipline Project		Birth - Age 8													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Preschool to Third Grade Integrated Approach						Age 4 - Age 8									<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Children's Policy Council	Prenatal - Age 18													<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

TRANSITION REPORT



After the leadership changed in July 2020, a committed group of education leaders and advocates, chaired by Governor Kay Ivey and Representative Terri Collins, met from October 2020 to January 2021 to help chart the future course for the ADECE.

Their work is complete and the seven priorities and twenty-eight key actions that they identified will become a critical part of the strategic plan department leaders will use to guide their work.

See the full report by visiting www.bit.ly/adece-report.

PRIORITIES AND KEY ACTIONS	
Collaboration and Coordination	1. Adopt a systems approach to collaboration and coordination across state and local jurisdictions, structures, and departments.
	2. Increase public awareness of the prenatal to five developmental period and the benefits to families, communities, and the public.
	3. Develop and implement inclusive decision-making practices as the Department approaches planning, funding, policy, and program implementation.
	4. Explore opportunities for program consolidation/co-location that might allow for a more streamlined and coordinated approach to early childhood governance in Alabama.
Generational Poverty	5. Promote a comprehensive, statewide approach to addressing generational poverty.
	6. Enhance family engagement across programs.
	7. Increase access to parenting education and home visiting programs.
	8. Promote state and local coordination between public schools, child care, and Head Start and Early Head Start to enhance comprehensive services and two generational approaches.
	9. Provide access to early childhood mental health consultation services for children, families, and educators.
Program Access	10. Provide professional development across child care, First Class Pre-K, public schools, and Head Start on trauma-informed approaches and social-emotional development.
	11. Increase access to First Class Pre-K.
	12. Increase access to parenting education and home visiting programs.
	13. Analyze data on infant toddler child care deserts to develop strategies for increasing access such as Early Head Start Child Care Partnerships, increasing child care subsidy payments, and supporting family child care homes.
Early Childhood Workforce	14. Increase subsidy payments prioritizing infant and toddlers.
	15. Increase awareness of the value of the early childhood workforce and their social, educational, and economic importance to our communities.
	16. Implement realistic and supported workforce pathways for early childhood professionals by enhancing Alabama Pathways.
	17. Increase public awareness of First Class Pre-K pay parity, seeking to extend this practice elsewhere.
	18. Partner with NAEYC to pilot the Power to the Profession framework.
Data Collection and Systems	19. Develop a pay structure that supports tiered, equitable compensation based on credentials, certifications, and lived experiences.
	20. Expand access to early childhood coaches.
	21. Develop a coordinated and compatible data system to collect and connect existing data across multiple agency providers.
Developmental Screening and Early Intervention	22. Expand the Alabama Family Central website.
	23. Enhance Help Me Grow Alabama .
Early Literacy	24. Increase access to early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities.
	25. Grow and support local grade level reading campaigns and Reach out and Read Alabama .
	26. Engage and empower families on early literacy.
	27. Provide professional development on evidenced-based early literacy practices.
	28. Partner with Alabama Partnership for Children, Alabama Department of Human Resources, and the Alabama Department of Mental health to promote Talk With Me Baby .

Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education Transition Committee

Dr. Barbara J. Cooper, Secretary

Co-Chairs:

The Honorable Kay Ivey, Governor

The Honorable Terri Collins,
Alabama House of Representatives

Elected Members:

The Honorable Will Ainsworth,
Lieutenant Governor

The Honorable Vivian Davis Figures,
Alabama Senate

The Honorable Tim Melson,
Alabama Senate

The Honorable John Merrill,
Secretary of State

The Honorable Bill Poole,
Alabama House of Representatives

The Honorable Greg Reed,
Alabama Senate

The Honorable Rod Scott,
Alabama House of Representatives

The Honorable Bobby Singleton,
Alabama Senate

The Honorable Randall Woodfin,
Mayor of Birmingham

Appointed Members:

Commissioner Nancy Buckner,
*Alabama Department of Human
Resources*

Dr. Scott Harris, State Health Officer,
Alabama Public Health Department

Dr. Eric Mackey,
State Superintendent of Education

Alabama Leaders:

Ms. Katie Britt,
Business Council of Alabama

Ms. Tequila Smith,
Alabama Power Company

Ms. Mary Sibert Davis,
*Alabama Association for
Early Care & Education (AALECE)*

Mr. Matthew Durdin,
Alabama Farmers Federation

Dr. Alethea Fletcher Hampton,
*Dean, College of Education,
Alabama State University*

Dr. Peter Hlebowitsh,
*Dean, College of Education,
University of Alabama*

Mr. Ryan Hollingsworth,
School Superintendents of Alabama

Ms. Liz Huntley,
*Attorney,
Lightfoot, Franklin & White*

Ms. Amy Marlowe,
Alabama Education Association

Mr. Nick Moore,
Governor's Education Policy Advisor



ALABAMA FIRST CLASS PRE-K

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) administers Alabama’s voluntary state pre-kindergarten program known as Alabama First Class Pre-K. OSR, originally established in the 2000 legislative session, provides leadership for the enhancement of school readiness for Alabama’s youngest residents. The First Class Pre-K program is nationally recognized for quality, and research shows that the positive effects of Alabama First Class Pre-K persist through middle school and beyond.

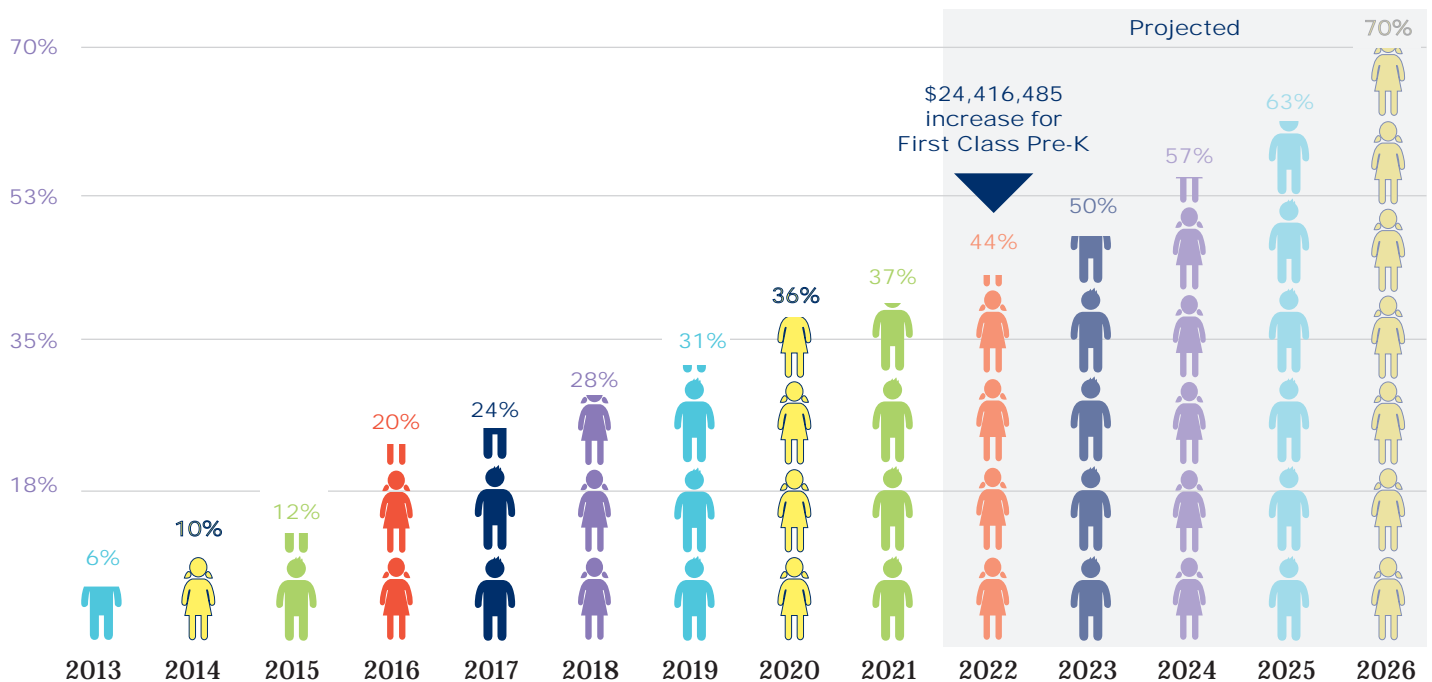
Through partnerships with advocates and the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) at Rutgers University, Alabama’s Office of School Readiness established a plan to incrementally increase funding for pre-k in Alabama, while ensuring equity and protecting the quality for which the program is recognized. From 2013 through the 2021 school year, the program has grown from 217 classrooms to 1,248 classrooms in a diverse delivery system, including public schools, Head Start centers, private childcare centers, private schools, faith-based

child care centers, and university child care centers. Figure 1 below illustrates the growth of the program.

The primary goal of the Office of School Readiness is the expansion of First Class Pre-K while ensuring that the highest quality is maintained. Alabama’s voluntary pre-kindergarten program served approximately 37% of the state’s population of 4-year-old children and their families in the 2020-2021 school year.

First Class Pre-K provides the highest level of education by also serving as a workforce development initiative of the state. Each classroom funded by OSR is required to employ two teachers – a lead and an auxiliary teacher – each of whom are fully credentialed in early childhood education and/or child development. The lead teacher is required to have at least a bachelor’s degree, while the auxiliary teacher must have a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or comparable education. The workforce development efforts do not end with the qualifications; programs receive funding from

Children with Access to First Class Pre-K





the OSR to pay the teachers comparable salaries to K-12 teachers and paraprofessionals in school systems. The education and compensation efforts support pay parity and intentional tools that ensure continuity and expertise in the First Class Pre-K program and ensure the highest quality learning for the participating children.

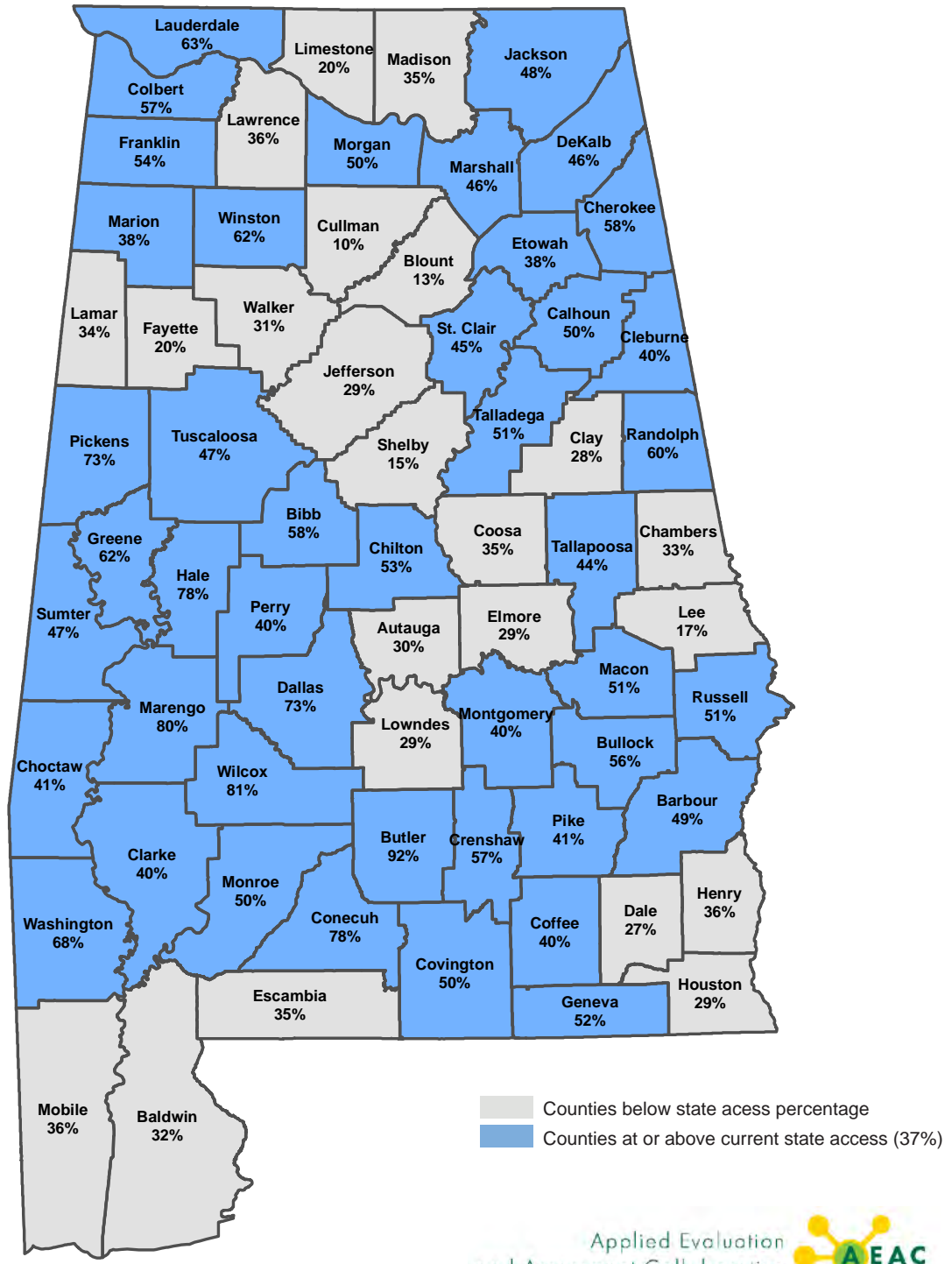
The OSR staff provide coaching, monitoring, and professional development for all programs receiving funding. The laser focus on classroom quality supported by the OSR staff has proven effective in the short term and long term outcomes for First Class Pre-K students.

The NIEER benchmarks that Alabama has a long history of meeting are as follows:

Early learning and development standards	Comprehensive, aligned with state infant and toddler and K-3 or college and career ready standards, aligned with child assessments, supported, and culturally sensitive
Curriculum supports	Supports for curriculum selection
Teacher degree	Lead teacher should have at least a bachelor's degree
Teacher specialized training	Lead teacher should have educational background specializing in pre-k
Auxiliary teacher qualifications	Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or equivalent
Staff professional development	At least 15 hours per year per teacher; individual coaching and professional development plans
Maximum class size	20 or fewer
Staff-child ratio	1:10 or better
Screening and referral	Vision, hearing, and health screenings and referrals
Continuous Quality Improvement system	Structured classroom observations; data used for program improvement

ALABAMA FIRST CLASS PRE-K – ACCESS MAP

Percentage of four-year-olds with access to First Class Pre-K
2020 – 2021



PRE-K THROUGH 3RD GRADE INTEGRATED APPROACH TO EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVE

STRONG START, STRONG FINISH

The goal of Governor Kay Ivey's education initiative "Strong Start, Strong Finish," launched in July 2017 is to support a comprehensive approach of collaboration that improves education from birth to the workforce. This initiative focuses on and prioritizes three critical stages of education: early childhood education, computer science in middle and high school, and workforce preparedness. Through Strong Start Strong Finish, the ADECE is implementing Alabama's nationally-recognized First Class Pre-K model as a bridge to develop and expand a birth to 8 continuum, creating an alignment spanning Pre-K to 3rd grade ("P-3") and prenatal to age 3. Additionally, the ADECE is supporting the governor's call to action by supporting five pilot counties, Marshall, Macon, Monroe, Jefferson, and Randolph, in implementing local Campaigns for Grade-Level Reading to support children in being proficient readers by the third grade.

Alabama Pre-K- 3rd Grade Integrated Approach to Early Learning

The ADECE and the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) are working together to align instructional practices, assessment, and leadership from pre-K to 3rd grade ("P-3"). This collaborative partnership for the P-3 project will develop and implement a strong teaching and learning continuum unique to the needs and expectations of Alabama children and families.

The Alabama P-3 Integrated Approach to Early Learning works to ensure student success and achievement gap closure by expanding access to the high-quality First Class Pre-K program model and taking the most successful parts of K-3 initiatives to establish a strong foundation of early learning experiences that promote student achievement and success. In 2019-2020 the program expanded to serving 125 classrooms, and in 2020-2021 supported 181 classrooms statewide. By the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, the P-3 program will have expanded from an original 35 classrooms in the 2017- 2018 school year to approximately 218 classrooms statewide.

The goal of the P-3 program, moving into its fourth year in 2020-2021, is to expand the early learning continuum from First Class Pre-K through 3rd grade. A high-quality early education provides the foundation for student success in school. Having a seamless learning continuum from pre-K through 3rd grade will align and integrate a comprehensive educational approach to student learning during the years when children have the greatest growth potential. By applying their knowledge of child development, subject matter content, and pedagogical approaches to align educational experiences along the P-3 continuum, educators ensure that children enter classrooms that promote their ongoing educational progress by building on what they learned during the previous year.

Alabama P-3 Leadership Academy

The first collaborative initiative of its kind in the nation, the P-3 Leadership Academy is provided in partnership with the Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). This high-quality professional learning and resource program meets the needs of elementary principals to lead P-3 learning communities. By partnering together, we can provide a high-quality professional learning and resource program to meet the needs of elementary principals and pre-k directors serving our children in their most critical age groups. The year-long program cumulates in a Capstone Project that provides participants with an opportunity to apply what they have learned in their current setting.

This is the first program offered through a collaborative partnership with a national principal's organization, and the only such program that participants, upon successful completion of the program, receive a national certification credential. In June 2018, the first-ever such cohort in the country to complete this national pilot program received their Alabama P-3 Leadership Credential.

BIRTH THROUGH FIVE

The initial Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) grant was a federally funded effort for states to conduct a comprehensive statewide needs assessment and strategic planning. The ADECE was one of five states and the District of Columbia to receive the largest of the federal awards. This federal grant program, jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education, is designed to support states in creating and implementing a statewide strategic plan for early childhood. The “Alabama Connections for Early Care and Education” PDG B-5 grant lays out a vision that all Alabama children are healthy and emotionally ready to enter kindergarten, particularly low-income and disadvantaged children, and that strong supports are provided to assist families in making informed choices. This vision recognizes that the birth to 5-year-old window is a unique time in a child’s development. With more than 95% of brain development occurring before a child’s 6th birthday, the ADECE recognizes that the needs are cognitive as well as social, emotional, and health-related, and we must take advantage of this

time to positively impact brain development.

The comprehensive needs assessment completed in FY20 through the initial PDG B-5 grant was the product of a review of 59 existing needs assessments and information from more than 450 key informants and stakeholders. The Alabama Connections for Early Care and Education Steering Committee developed a comprehensive strategic plan based on the identified strengths and needs of Alabama’s early care and education system. This plan guides our work in collaborating and coordinating the work across Alabama’s early childhood systems.

While Alabama’s First Class Pre-K and First Teacher Home Visiting programs are nationally recognized for quality, a concern was raised in the needs assessment about the lack of program accessibility statewide. Program delivery of pre-k, as well as all other types of early care and education, are challenges in rural areas throughout Alabama. The greatest needs identified through the needs assessment quantitative and qualitative data collection are as follows:

Identified Needs

- Access to high quality early learning programs, particularly in high poverty and rural areas
- Lack of data about children ages birth to three and their participation and needs for early care and education
- High cost of childcare
- Transportation to early care and education programs and services
- Child and family-focused data on programs and services
- Aging buildings and physical structures housing ECCE programs and services
- Increased funding for programs that have proven success such as First Teacher Home Visiting, including HIPPIY and Parents as Teachers
- Coordination and collaboration in the distribution of funding
- Transition from ECCE to K-12
- Collaborative data systems to measure quality and accountability.

Strategies Underway

- Supporting Birth through Five Foundation sites around the state where the Alabama Reflective Coaching model is being implemented in infant and toddler classrooms;
- Improving the quality of classrooms through enhancement of the learning environment;
- Increasing the number of teachers with early childhood credentials through professional development opportunities, stipends for teachers, and pay parity with K-12 for degreed teachers;
- Development and launch of the Alabama Family Central Website as a centralized resource for programs and services in partnership with the Alabama Partnership for Children; and
- Launch of the Born Ready Movement to raise awareness among parents and to provide resources they need to help children learn and be prepared for kindergarten;
- Born Ready University for parents and babies was piloted and will expand.



COLLABORATION SUCCESS

James Rushton Early Learning Center

The ADECE is in a unique partnership with the James Rushton Early Learning Center (JRELC) which opened its doors in 2017 in the Woodlawn community of Birmingham. The JRELC is the entry point to Woodlawn's cradle to career education pipeline serving children and families in Woodlawn and surrounding communities. Through the PDG B-5 grant program, the ADECE provides funds for coaching and professional development support for teachers. The PDG B-5 initiative continues to allow the ADECE to work with partners such as the James Rushton ELC to provide the highest level of care and education to infants, toddlers, and preschool children as well as to support the Rushton Center's efforts to improve the lives of



children and families. The JRELC has such a great reputation and most recently attracted the attention of and a visit from First Lady Dr. Jill Biden in 2021.

W.C. Handy School

An active participant in the First Class Foundation Preschool Program, the W. C. Handy School added four new classrooms to its thriving campus. Florence City School's newest Falcons included infants and toddlers who range from six weeks to three years of age. This expansion was made possible through Alabama's PDG B-5 grant through the ADECE. The school's principal, Dr. Michael South, said, "the funding and support will



allow us the opportunity to provide a strong start for more children and more time with our preschool-age children."

First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa

First Presbyterian Church in Tuscaloosa is one of many faith-based organizations in our mixed delivery system. Their birth through five program has ten First Class Foundation classrooms where children are learning through play. As the children are climbing on the playground, they are developing hand strength that will help them as they learn to write. They are developing language and social skills as they play with jungle animals in the green sand with a friend. With these same jungle animals, the children gain a better understanding of and appreciation of the beauty of wild animals in nature.



Pre-literacy skills are being learned as babies explore the properties of a board book. Visual tracking that will later aid in reading is developing as babies admire their reflection in mirrors. Through using developing fine motor skills as they cut, children are also gaining a better understanding of parts of a whole as they manipulate the paper.

The Coleman Center for Early Learning

The Coleman Center for Early Learning is located on the Troy University – Dothan campus. The Coleman Center provides early learning and care to children from birth to age eight. This program is an excellent place to pilot the ADECE apprenticeship project. The program design is modeled after the ECE Unifying Framework and incorporates the most current NAEYC standards and competencies. All apprenticeships involve two types of learning—on-the-job learning (OJL) with a mentor and related technical instruction (RTI) with a teacher. With the related technical instruction aligned and clearly mapped



out, the pilot group began Spring semester of 2021, with three apprentices. Next steps include expanding the pilot to other B-5 sites and then other employers and educational partners, including high schools.

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James Rushton Early Learning Center – Birmingham

4

W.C. Handy - Florence City Schools

10

First Presbyterian Preschool - Tuscaloosa

5

Coleman Center – Troy University – Dothan Campus

FIRST TEACHER HOME VISITING



The ADECE is the designated lead state agency for home visiting in Alabama. Through the First Teacher Home Visiting Program, the ADECE provides home visiting in all 67 counties with the following funding sources: Federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting funds from HRSA (MIECHV); Alabama Medicaid Agency; Department of Human Resources (DHR); Governor Kay Ivey’s Infant Mortality Reduction Initiative (ADPH), and the state’s Education Trust Fund (ETF). The First Teacher Home Visiting Program focuses on 6 priority areas:

- Improving maternal physical and mental health
- Reducing physical abuse
- Improving treatment of children (including health and nutrition)
- Promoting economic self-sufficiency for families
- Educating families on how to use the resources that are available to them in their area
- Promoting school readiness

Home visiting in Alabama has improved the coordination of services with other local agencies, advisory boards, and children’s policy councils. The models used, Parents as Teachers (PAT), Nurse

Family Partnership (NFP), and Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), have been successful in improving breastfeeding rates, increasing school readiness, and enhancing the ability to address mental health and behavioral needs of families utilizing the infant and early childhood mental health consultation (IECMHC) program.

Some programs may enroll pregnant women and continue to serve the family until the child enters kindergarten. Through regular visits, trained home visitors assess families’ mental and physical health, children’s development, and social support needs and make referrals to services available in their area, while also providing education and support to promote positive health and social outcomes on the home visits.

While the home is the primary setting for service delivery, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, First Teacher Home Visiting programs pivoted to provide remote visits utilizing technology, including cell phones and iPads. This alternative way of “visiting” with parents was especially beneficial for safety due to COVID-19. During the pandemic, First Teacher Home Visiting was able to continue services for families and continue connecting families with the resources available in their community.

During the 2019-2020 First Teacher Home Visiting Program year, over 3,400 families were served, and over 54,000 home visits were conducted throughout the entire state of Alabama. First Teacher serves some of Alabama's most vulnerable families. Nearly two-thirds meet the federal definition for poverty and the majority of those are in extreme poverty, 50% or less of the poverty threshold. 65% of families served by First Teacher Home Visiting are single-parent homes.

According to the 2020 MIECHV Needs Assessment, 19 of Alabama's 67 counties meet the threshold definition for "at-risk communities." Two of these counties have three at-risk domains, with the remaining 17 having two at-risk domains. An additional 28 counties have one at-risk domain. The Needs Assessment used five domains to determine each county's "risk." Those domains were: low

socioeconomic status, adverse perinatal outcomes, child maltreatment, crime, and substance abuse.

Alabama has enhanced the quality of home visiting services to mothers and families through Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). CQI is defined as a systematic approach to improving processes and outcomes through regular data collection, examination of performance relative to pre-determined targets, review of practices that promote or impede improvements, and application of changes in practice that may lead to improvements in performance. Since 2014, the Alabama First Teacher Program has participated in CQI to improve measures related to priority topics in home visiting, such as tobacco cessation, well-child visits, and maternal depression.

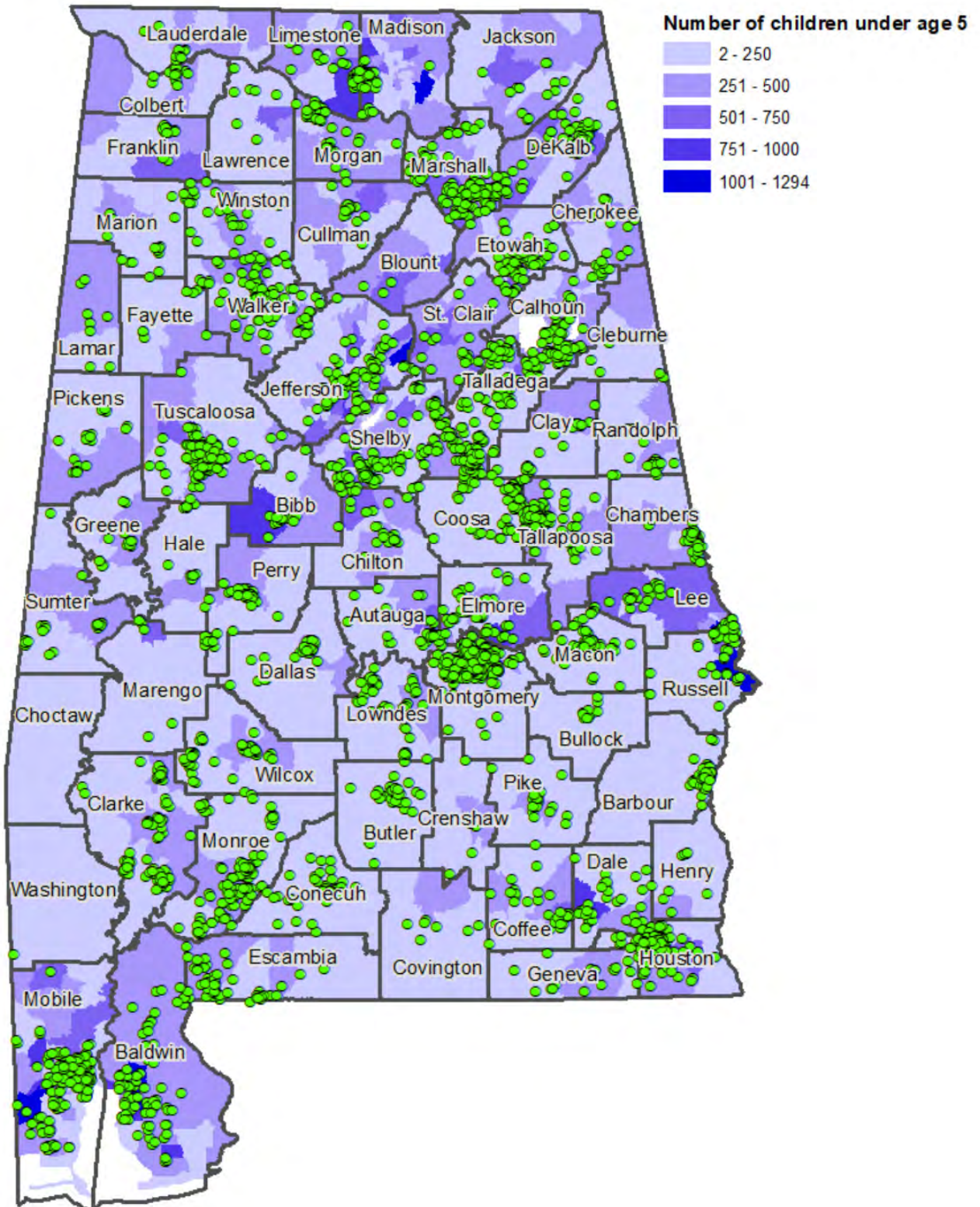
Our Parent Educator has been a total Godsend and I was so thankful to have her as our home teacher. With my first pregnancy, I struggled with postpartum depression. And now being a stay-at-home mom, I was afraid of that being the case with my daughter. It was the complete opposite. I breastfeed my daughter and it was comforting knowing that our Parent Educator was so knowledgeable in breastfeeding due to her experience. She has been able to provide so much information and resources not just for my breastfeeding journey but different learning activities to do with my 4-year old. I try to find as



many activities as I can on my own but as a mom, I'm telling you, it is refreshing to have someone help you along the way. I have discussed my goals and concerns about each of my children and our Parent Educator has helped me reach those goals and work through any of the concerns I have had. When I say I highly recommend this program, I mean it literally! My children and I go on hikes and trips to the park weekly and every time I meet a mom with children, I tell them about the program and pass along the contact information.

FIRST TEACHER HOME VISITING

Families Served by First Teacher Home Visiting Program, 2020



INFANT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

The ADECE works in tandem with the Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) to support collaborative efforts between state and non-profit agencies serving children birth to eight years old through the role of the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) State Coordinator position. The IECMH State Coordinator serves as part of the core leadership team working to create and sustain a culturally sensitive system that promotes positive early experiences through collaborative partnerships, empowering families, and building capacity across communities. In order for a comprehensive IECMH system of care to exist, there needs to be a trained workforce in place at every level of the state system with funding streams to support that workforce. Therefore, policies that create barriers to resources need to be identified with new policy development that will enhance and expand culturally sensitive evidence-based practices across disciplines. The IECMH Policy Team, consisting of the core leadership team and members from Alabama Medicaid, work to address gaps in access to mental health services for infants and young children, birth to five. Alabama is one of 20 states that is supported by the ZERO TO THREE National Policy Center through technical assistance activities supporting IECMH policy development on a promotion-prevention- early intervention continuum. This creates a comprehensive system of care that addresses the mental health needs of infants, young children, and families leads to improved overall well-being, academic success, and a healthier Alabama.

Additionally, the ADECE continues to serve as a founding partner and state agency representative on the First 5 Alabama Board of Directors. First 5 Alabama, Alabama's IECMH association, serves as the holding space for the collective representing eight state agencies, higher education, community mental health, and home visiting. This dynamic group works to promote workforce capacity and endorsement activities. Because of our shared vision and mission for the children and families in Alabama, we are able to join forces to leverage funding to create a pathway to long-term sustainability.

Over the last year, the global pandemic changed the way we think about the delivery of professional development for professionals and services to families. Mental health was the number one issue identified in the 67 counties through the Children's Policy Council Needs Assessment. Throughout this year we continued to press onward and march forward for a better tomorrow – together. We commit to stop blaming and start healing.

- **100 Crisis Response Comfort Kits** were created to be distributed throughout the year in the face of natural disasters or other extreme adversity
- Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in First Class Pre-K was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic – IECMH Consultants responded to **71 requests for mental health guidance** in classrooms
- The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Counselor Graduate Certificate through Troy University was launch this year with **11 professionals** from multiple disciplines completing the program in the first cohort
- The ADECE is a founding partner of First 5 Alabama supporting Endorsement® for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Focused Practice Promoting Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health as a multidisciplinary group of professionals with a total of **70 endorsees** to date:
 - 8 – Alabama Early Intervention System
 - 39 – Early Care & Education
 - 4 – First Teacher Home Visiting
 - 12 – Alabama Department of Mental Health
 - 3 – Institutions of Higher Education
 - 4 – Policy
- **23 mental health clinicians** trained in Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)
- **160 professionals** across disciplines trained in infant mental health theory and diversity informed practices
- **65 professionals** across disciplines received Reflective Supervision/Consultation from endorsed supervisors as part of their professional development

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

The quality of early care and education is vital to the healthy brain development of young children. The ADECE's Office of Early Childhood Development and Professional Support (OECDPS) provides coaching, support, and resources to child care centers across the state. In partnership with the Alabama Department of Human Resources, OECDPS works to support and grow child care quality in Alabama by providing supports directly to child care center teachers, directors, support staff, children, and their families.

Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships (EHS-CCP) Project

ADECE Quality Specialists provided specialized coaching and mental health support for the federally funded EHS-CCP classrooms in partnership with Alabama's Department of Human Resources (DHR). Services provided to classrooms included:

- Curriculum assistance
- Professional development
- Support in child assessment administration

By the numbers:

566 Total number of children service slots

810 Total number of children served from October 1, 2019-September 30, 2020

43 Total number of Center-Based Classrooms served

36 Total number of home and group home providers served



Family Engagement Project

The ADECE staff provided technical assistance to 52 licensed center-based child care providers to increase family and community engagement. Specialized coaches worked with child care directors to implement a family engagement rubric, a central component of child care quality, to help centers prepare for participation in Alabama's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The Family Engagement Project partner is the Alabama DHR.

Challenging Behaviors Project

In support of teachers of children ages birth to five years old, the ADECE implemented a program designed specifically for assisting with and preventing challenging behaviors in the classroom. The project utilizes a data-informed approach that focuses on the social-emotional well-being of children and teachers.

Total Participants in 2020

100

Child care sites served
in 38 counties

2,123

Total Technical
Visit Hours

3,299

Consultation Hours

Conscious Discipline State Implementation Project

The Conscious Discipline approach is a nationally recognized and evidence supported program that provides structures and strategies within early childhood classrooms to facilitate the

social emotional learning for children, classroom management for teachers, and problem solving for families and children. This research-based program was delivered virtually as well as in-person throughout 2020.

By the numbers:

178

Conscious Discipline
Action Team (CDAT)
teachers in 89 First
Class Pre-K classrooms

54

CDAT teachers in 22
EHS-CCP classrooms

47

ADECE Coaches
observed by Conscious
Discipline Coaches

2,314

teachers and coaches
participated in CDAT
training

3,000

More than 3,000
educators attended
virtual session
with Dr. Becky
Bailey, developer of
Conscious Discipline,
at the annual Early
Childhood Education
Conference

HEAD START COLLABORATION OFFICE



Head Start in Alabama provides comprehensive, high-quality early childhood education, health, and nutrition services to low-income children (prenatal through age five) and their families. This federally funded program promotes school readiness and success by fostering parental engagement and involvement in their children's education. Head Start uniquely strengthens families by connecting them to community-based resources they need to improve the family's overall well-being and quality of life.

The Head Start Collaboration Office is located within the ADECE and is federally funded to support local Head Start grantees as they partner with other early childhood education agencies and organizations to deliver services that focus on childcare, school readiness, transitions, physical and mental health, education, welfare, disabilities, teacher development, homelessness, community and family engagement, and literacy.



Alabama Early Head Start and Head Start grantees have received a total of \$12,463,363 in federal funding from the Cares Act, administered through the Office of Head Start to help combat COVID-19. With this funding, some programs offered summer learning programs to 4-year-olds transitioning to Kindergarten. Head Start agencies that provided summer learning programs include Cheaha Regional – Ashland and Talladega and Tuskegee/Macon Co. Head Starts.

CHILDREN'S POLICY COUNCILS & CHILDREN FIRST TRUST FUND

The state and local Children's Policy Councils (CPC) are vehicles for collaboration throughout the state. The work of the Children's Policy Council system is to address community needs by facilitating children and family service providers' collaborations to develop a community service plan inclusive of the health, early care and education, parent/family engagement, education, safety, and economic security needs of children from birth to 19. The county-level Children's Policy Councils (CPC) are actively developing plans and solutions to address their community's most pressing needs. The ADECE supports the work through grant funding and staff involvement in collecting data, facilitating meetings, and supporting efforts to address community needs.

Each year, the local CPCs conduct a needs assessment of their counties, and those needs assessments inform the work of the state's Children's Policy Council that also serves as the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council. The ADECE CPC staff assemble the local needs assessments, analyze the data, and work with the state CPC to create a report of the unmet needs of children across the state. This report is presented each year to the state Children's Policy Council to inform the work of the Children First Trust Fund. Additionally, the ADECE facilitates the annual data gathering for the Erin's Law report in cooperation with the Governor's Task Force for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse.

In recent years, the state Children's Policy Council and the local Children's Policy Councils have met together to share resources and facilitate communication about needs and plans. The most recent meeting was a virtual event in October of 2020, and brought together nearly 800 members of local CPCs and community members as well as members and representatives of the state CPC. This annual conference was the result of county CPC needs assessments that indicated a desire to bring state and



local resources together once a year for idea sharing and collaboration to address needs at the state and local levels.

The most recent collaborative effort of the CPCs involves a focus on literacy across the state. Five county CPCs are working with the ADECE as part of the Alabama Campaign for Grade-Level Reading to build upon existing efforts of supporting parents as a child's best and first teacher through First Teacher Home Visiting; promoting school readiness in First Class Pre-K; preparing quality teachers through early literacy professional learning; combatting chronic absenteeism and the summer learning slide with the Alabama Summer Achievement Program; and addressing childhood poverty by integrating and aligning supports with the Alabama State Departments of Mental Health, Public Health, Medicaid, Human Resources, and Education. The five counties are Jefferson, Macon, Marshall, Monroe and Randolph. Their work and the data collected by the ADECE will inform funding and implementation for all counties in Alabama. A concerted focus on literacy and grade-level reading is not just an education issue but involves a collaborative focus on how best to achieve outcomes.

ALABAMA FAMILY CENTRAL

To address a need identified by the Governor's Children's Cabinet, the Alabama Family Central (AFC) website was collaboratively created by state agencies and other partners to support Alabama families as a compilation and link to available resources to assist with issues related to health and well-being of children and families. The Alabama Family Central website is a free, comprehensive, easy-to-use website with mobile access that offers parents and caregivers, families, and teachers a one-stop connection to programs and services in Alabama. Programs, tools and information on childcare, education, family services and health services can all be found on the site.

Governor Ivey highlighted the history of the website's development and its purpose during a press conference on January 22, 2021. The press conference video was shared across many partner agencies' social media accounts and a press release was submitted to multiple media stations and released across Alabama. Additionally, there was a marketing campaign that included digital banners, billboards (both digital and static), radio advertisements, video commercials on social media, Google pay-per-click advertisements, and audio streaming apps (i.e., Pandora and Spotify). All regions of Alabama were targeted with the marketing campaign. Finally, a webinar that informed attendees on how to submit their services to the website was held.

The Alabama Family Central website is managed by the Alabama Partnership for Children and includes the following agency partners:

- Office of the Governor of Alabama
- A+ Education Partnership
- Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention
- Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education
- Alabama Department of Education
- Alabama Department of Human Resources
- Alabama Department of Mental Health
- Alabama Department of Public Health
- Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Alabama Medicaid
- Alabama Office of Information Technology

The launch activities and marketing campaign efforts led to 2,888 website users (2,858 new users) on Launch Day, January 22, 2021. In addition to other activities, a media tour was conducted with six interviews with news stations across Alabama. Within the first week after launch, there were 6,539 users, 6,476 new users, and 18,317 pageviews.

What's next:

- Increasing site functionality, data integrity, and improving user experience within the site
- Adding a platform for partner social channels, Google mapping, and dual search functionalities (preserves the Google-like experience while offering the capability to simultaneously search across both programs and resources)
- Including translation services in Spanish and Korean
- Surveying families to determine how to improve



Excerpt from an email received through the AFC site from a parent looking for help:

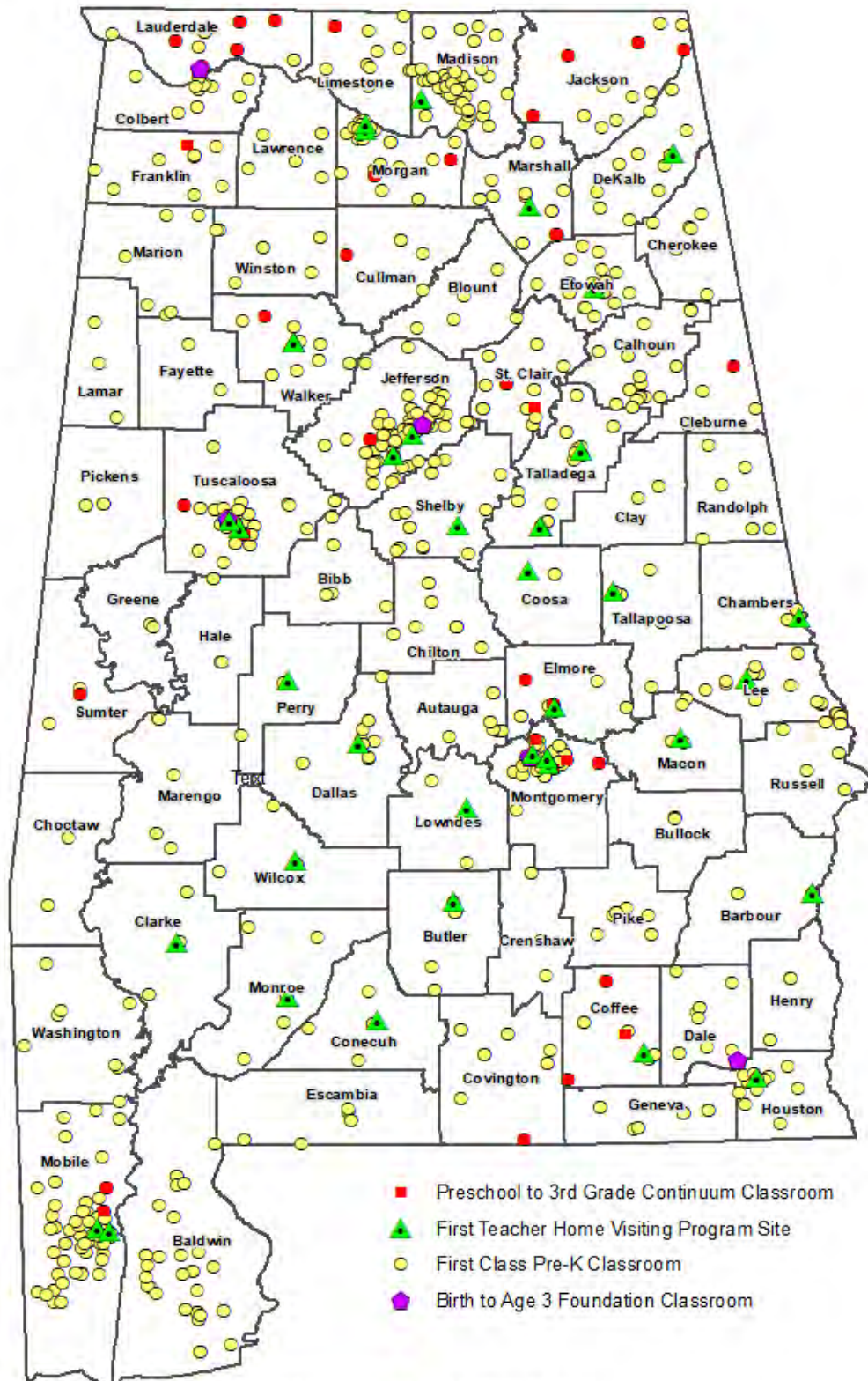
Hello,
My name is XXXX & I have a 2-year-old little girl & a 17-year-old boy. I am a newly single parent & am seeking out all my options for childcare due to financial issues. I was looking into getting my daughter into the Daycare at a discounted price and sometimes at no cost. I was reaching out in hopes that someone could point me in the right direction on where to go for this program or if I could get an application sent over? If that is an option, let me know where to bring it/send it back. Thank you for all your help.

Response from the Help Me Grow Care Coordinator who provided assistance:

Good Morning,
I was able to connect the family to HMG. During intake, mom stated that she was a single parent, and she needs support after getting over the divorce. Intake is complete and the family has been assigned a Care Coordinator. Thank You!

MAP OF SERVICES

Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education Funded Programs 2020 – 2021





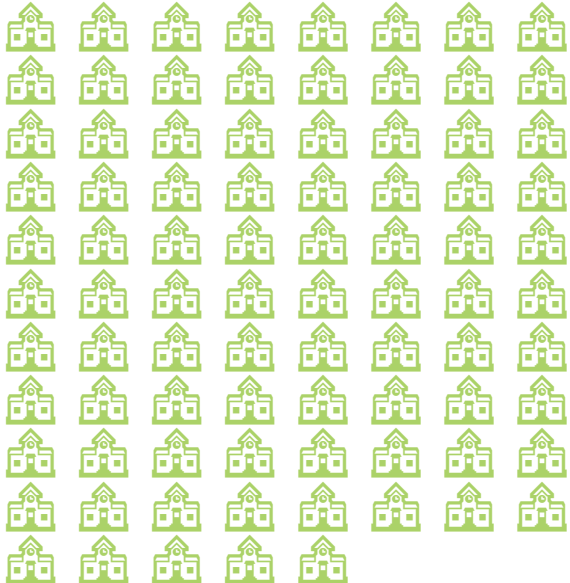


Map prepared by the UAB Applied Evaluation and Assessment Collaborative, 2021

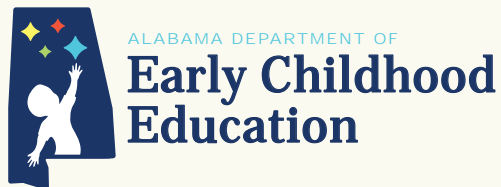
FINANCIALS

ADECE Uses of Funds, FY 2020

	STATE EXPENDITURES		FEDERAL & OTHER EXPENDITURES		TOTAL EXPENDITURES	
	Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage	Amount	Percentage
Personnel Costs & Employee Benefits	\$11,006,185	8%	\$1,911,646	10%	\$12,917,831	9%
Operations	\$1,372,341	1%	\$204,527	1%	\$1,576,869	1%
Services	\$5,161,264	4%	\$1,581,020	8%	\$6,742,284	4%
Supplies & Materials	\$815,100	1%	\$827,418	4%	\$1,642,519	1%
Program Funding	\$115,855,497	86%	\$14,187,771	76%	\$130,043,268	85%
TOTALS	\$134,210,388	100%	\$18,712,382	100%	\$152,922,770	100%

	Amount	Percentage	
Personnel Costs & Employee Benefits	\$12,917,831	9%	
Operations	\$1,576,869	1%	
Services	\$6,742,284	4%	
Supplies & Materials	\$1,642,519	1%	
Program Funding	\$130,043,268	85%	
Total	\$152,922,770	100%	





Dr. Barbara J. Cooper, Secretary

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