

Rhode Island

Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment



LISC

November 2019

The facility assessment study was conducted between March 1, 2019 and September 30, 2019. Report published, November, 2019.



This publication was made possible by Grant Number 90TP0027 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The assessment was conducted by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, www.lisc.org, under the leadership of its Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund Team, www.rilisc.org.

LISC project team leads:

Cindy Larson, *Project Director*
Anne Connery, *Program Officer*
Erin Cox, AIA, *Program Officer*
Megan Ressler, *Assistant Program Officer*

Lead consultants:

Market Research Partners, Toms River, NJ
– Cheryl Christiansen, *Principal*
studioMLA Architects, Brookline, MA
– Mike Lindstrom, *Principal*

Report design:

CrossTrainer®, Pawtucket, RI
– Brian Boyle, *Founder*

Copy editor:

Amy Cola

Table of Contents



INTRODUCTION
PAGE 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PAGE 6

Section
1 | THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS
PAGE 11

Section
2 | INFRASTRUCTURE
PAGE 19

Section
3 | REGULATIONS AND SPACE REQUIREMENTS
PAGE 27

Section
4 | EXPANSION
PAGE 37

Section
5 | CONSTRAINTS
PAGE 43

Section
6 | SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES
PAGE 49

Section
7 | PATHWAYS TO QUALITY SPACES
▪ PROJECT EXAMPLES
PAGE 53

Section
8 | RETHINKING SPACE
PAGE 99

APPENDIX* | ONLINE SURVEY OUTCOMES
FOCUS GROUP REPORT

**available in the online version for review and download at www.ricelfff.org*

Assessment Background and Introduction



Since 2001, Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the nation's largest community development financial intermediary, has operated a robust child care and early learning facilities fund in Rhode Island. This fund, a public-private partnership, offers facilities financing coupled with intensive technical expertise and training to the early learning field. Despite facilitating more than \$50 million of investment in this sector and offering support to more than 200 organizations, much work remains.

Rhode Island joins most of the nation in its struggle to improve quality and access within its early learning system. Nationally it is estimated that it will take more than \$10 billion to improve the basic health, safety and quality of existing early learning infrastructure. At LISC, we recognize fully the financial constraints of the early learning industry and of the Rhode Island state budget. We know that creative solutions are needed for

this very complex problem. However, in conducting this assessment we have maintained a firm grounding in the understanding that space profoundly impacts the daily experience of children and teachers in these programs.

This assessment was commissioned by the State of Rhode Island as part of its strategic planning process, funded by a federal Preschool Development Grant. The assessment focuses on fully understanding and describing facility conditions, capacity and challenges. More importantly it is designed to lay out a series of actionable recommendations designed to address the facility component of the overarching goal of improving quality and access in the early learning system. Recommendations are made with a lens on specifically growing access to quality programming. Throughout the study we have worked to understand and better articulate access issues and further explore the ways in

which space is impeding the growth of quality slots in the Rhode Island early learning system. This has included mapping existing infrastructure against estimated need to better quantify access issues and has included a deeper dive into aspects of space that impact program quality and child health and safety.

Working within the framework of Rhode Island’s mixed delivery model for early learning programs, LISC placed a high priority on understanding the unique challenges of each provider type and component of the existing mixed delivery system to ensure that recommendations made would lead to support for the system expanding in this continued mixed format. For the purposes of this study we prioritized a look at center-based child care, Head Start, private preschool/nursery school (licensed by DCYF) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs), while also considering the ways that family child care impacts access and quality within our system.

Data shows that LEAs are most likely to have available space (due to declining enrollment) or have the ability to free up space (by re-configuring other grades, for example). LEAs also have the only current access to public (state and municipal) capital resources so particular attention was paid to exploring how those resources might be maximized to build quality access. However, since LEAs currently represent only a very small number of the system’s current full-day (6+ hour) quality slots and offer no services to infants and toddlers, much greater time and attention was paid to how to provide similar resource access and equity for community-based providers as it relates to infrastructure.

Throughout this document we make reference to “high quality” programs. Child care and early learning programs across all of Rhode Island’s mixed delivery system receive voluntary ratings by the quality rating and improvement system, BrightStars. Programs are required to participate in BrightStars if they accept state subsidized children or participate in the state’s pre-k program. Assigned ratings range from one to five stars. Four and five star ratings are considered to be “high quality” benchmarks. Not all programs in Rhode Island are rated.

We explored information through a variety of methodologies that included: surveying, focus groups, site visits, interviews, financial reviews and modeling, case study development and data reviews. Across all methodologies, information from 275 distinct programs, representing various program types, sizes, geographies and quality levels was used to inform findings and recommendations. We are incredibly grateful to the many programs who graciously took the time to respond to surveys, spent time talking with us, welcomed us into their programs and willingly provided detailed project and financial information. The deep commitment these many providers show to Rhode Island’s youngest children and their families is noteworthy.

Space matters. While it is obvious that a lack of space will impact growth within an early learning system, the many impacts space has on the quality of programs, health and safety of children and the wellbeing of teachers and staff are often less acknowledged or understood. Rhode Island leaders should be commended for their forward thinking approach in prioritizing the need to learn more about early learning infrastructure and to understanding strategies and solutions to improve and expand facilities.



Executive Summary

The report that follows, in its entirety, represents a summary of key learnings gleaned through the many and varied avenues explored in conducting the 2019 Rhode Island early learning facilities assessment. The assessment was orchestrated to build upon an extensive [early learning facilities study](#) completed by LISC in 2014, as well as a comprehensive Department of Education school buildings report, [State of Rhode Island Schoolhouses](#), released in 2017. The primary objective of the 2019 assessment was to capitalize on prior learnings and identify unique solutions and strategies to increase access to quality early learning opportunities that help all children achieve their full potential. The report builds to a set of future-focused recommendations—*laid out in Section 6 of the report*—that if taken in their entirety can begin to shift the quality and access trajectory within Rhode Island’s early learning system. What follows here, in the Executive Summary, is a calling out of a few high-level learnings. These overarching themes and the data points form the foundation for the conclusions and corresponding recommendations.

INFRASTRUCTURE QUALITY AND ACCESS

Rhode Island struggles across the board with an aging infrastructure. Many of its existing community-based early learning centers and public school buildings are no exception, suffering from deferred maintenance and poor overall building conditions that impact children’s health, safety and quality in programming. In fact, LISC’s 2014 assessment found that more than 60% of buildings housing early learning classrooms are in “poor” condition, while over 90% of outdoor play spaces used by early learning programs pose significant safety concerns. Meanwhile, in *State of Rhode Island Schoolhouses*, more than 50,000 deficiencies totaling more than \$2 billion were identified in the state’s public school infrastructure. Although 80% of early learning programs report having made physical space improvements since 2014, few meaningful changes to the overall condition of Rhode Island’s early learning spaces were noted during site visits conducted as part of the 2019 assessment process.

All children deserve high quality, developmentally appropriate early learning environments designed not only to keep them healthy and safe but also to support their physical, behavioral and cognitive development. The physical configuration of early care and education spaces directly impacts interactions between teachers and children, the way teachers feel about their roles as professionals and the perception of families and communities about the value society places on young children

and early learning. It should be noted that in 2019, as was the case in 2014, it is substantially more likely that child care facilities serving all or most state subsidized children will be in worse condition than those serving families predominately paying for care themselves. It is essential that Rhode Island take measured steps to create more equitable quality opportunities for all young children.

Rhode Island has a *bold* and *ambitious* plan to roll out and offer high quality, universal pre-k for every family. Doing so, however, will require the infrastructure to support the objective.

Therefore, a key task in this assessment was examining and understanding the current capacity of Rhode Island’s early learning facilities to seat these children. LISC found that there is in fact already enough licensed physical space to house the state’s four year old population likely to attend a preschool program. However, this space comes with several limitations: many existing facilities do not house high quality programs, most facilities have physical space issues that need to be addressed to improve health, safety and quality and while some communities have far more spaces than children residing there, other communities have insufficient space – an impediment since Rhode Island currently requires that state funded pre-k programs can only be offered in a child’s school district of residence. A focus on improving the quality of existing spaces and programs while simultaneously reconsidering the district of residence policy would provide for far better utilization of already built infrastructure. Doing so is vital in growing the system in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Another key objective of the assessment, to quantify the state’s ability to meet the need for quality infant and toddler care, shows a true crisis for Rhode Island’s youngest children. Of the state’s 39 municipalities, 24 have more than three infants and toddlers currently needing care for every licensed slot available. Additionally, 18 municipalities have *no* high quality *care available* for infants and toddlers. In order to prioritize growth of this underserved need, all policies and supports designed to improve the quality and capacity of Rhode Island’s

early learning infrastructure should include a focus on better supporting the development and operation of infant and toddler programming.

EXPANSION IN A MIXED DELIVERY SYSTEM

A robust exploration yielded findings that point to limited potential for substantial expansion within existing community based early learning settings. Notably:

- 77% of programs report having a wait list
- 64% of programs report being fully enrolled
- Most openings for centers not fully enrolled are for the 3-5 age group

According to the Rhode Island Department of Education, public school enrollment has been declining in many districts over the last two decades. The result is open space within some buildings and in some districts. However, as reported in *State of Rhode Island Schoolhouses*, broadly speaking, when exploring optimal space utilization levels, there is little-to-no excess capacity at the middle and high school levels with overcrowding at the elementary school level, pointing to limited expansion potential within public school infrastructure as well. The study included a deep dive into available space for expansion. In considering this, LISC looked at a combination of factors including; actual space available on site at community based early learning centers, operator interest in expansion and readily available funding for expansion. The results showed that only eight existing high quality early learning centers in the state have the desire, adequate and appropriate space and sufficient funding to expand immediately. The expansion space available within these eight centers would yield only 216 new slots. *This exploration of expansion potential is detailed on page 38 of the report.*

It is essential to emphasize that **any efforts to expand the number of successful, quality child care facilities will require not only appropriate locations and buildings but also sufficient funding and operators with both interest and capacity to grow.** This report identifies and details that there are unique challenges in each of these areas in Rhode Island. Effective real estate projects take planning, with timelines for new, quality early learning facilities often spanning four to five years. While many providers indicate that they have contemplated expansion, most also indicate having failed to successfully find or be able to afford new space in which to expand. To position itself for quality growth, Rhode Island should focus now on bolstering the organizational and financial capacity of high quality providers as well as on supporting a

robust facility expansion planning process in order to create a viable pipeline of expansion projects in the future.

Expanding quality early education facilities within Rhode Island's mixed delivery system will require creativity, commitment, funding, strong partnerships and a multi-faceted approach that includes capitalizing on existing space in community-based early learning centers and Head Start locations; capitalizing on existing space in public schools as well as funding streams available for public school infrastructure; facilitating partnerships between high quality early learning providers who are ready to expand and community-based organizations with available and appropriate spaces; facilitating strategies that connect high quality early learning providers who are ready to expand with available and appropriate spaces in state and municipal buildings; and initiating funding strategies and innovative partnerships that build a strong pipeline of new construction projects. There is no one size fits all approach. *Section 7 of this report details pathways to quality growth and offers insights into project examples that can help guide the state in its planning.*



Executive Summary

FUNDING

While many community-based early learning providers in Rhode Island express interest in improving quality, opening new facility spaces and/or operating additional programs, nine in ten (88%) lack the financial resources to do so.

In Rhode Island's densely built environment, with a robust real estate market, timing also works against community-based providers looking to purchase or lease sites. Most do not have readily available cash to secure and hold property while assembling the necessary capital to make required improvements to the space.

In a mixed delivery system, it should be expected that the dollars that support infrastructure growth will also be mixed. However, there is currently no dedicated source of public funding for community-based early learning infrastructure. Effectively fueling expansion requires an infusion of public capital. Public dollars can also be used to attract private investment with mechanisms such as general obligation bonding, loan guarantee programs and tax incentives that entice growth in a mixed delivery model. These challenges and possible solutions are detailed throughout the report.

Further, to succeed, the focus cannot be on infrastructure capital alone. Most providers report struggling financially, with few reporting having sufficient resources to address an unanticipated emergency. Converting possible surplus preschool spaces to serve younger children is often viable from a physical space standpoint but comes with significant financial burdens to providers, ones most cannot afford to take on. In fact, based on current ratio and group size standards, space requirements and state subsidized reimbursement rates, re-purposing a single preschool classroom to infant or toddler use comes with an estimated annual net revenue loss of \$24,000 *per toddler room* and \$56,000 *per infant room converted*, financially devastating for providers. In addition, high quality providers who have explored opening new sites have found that not only are they lacking the necessary infrastructure funds, but ramp up of operations often comes with operating losses, sometimes multi-year losses that they simply cannot bear. Bolstering operating supports for quality community-based providers is vital to successful system growth.

REGULATIONS

Quality early learning space not only takes time and funding, it also has unique requirements that are accompanied by a vast number of regulations. Another key objective of the assessment was to evaluate whether regulations were impeding the creation of new quality space. So, as part of the assessment LISC undertook a robust review of facility related program regulations, various building and fire code requirements and best practice guidance with standards assessed for any potential inconsistencies, lack of alignment or especially onerous requirements. This technical review was accompanied by extensive interviewing of providers, regulators and leaders. The review indicated that overall regulations are well aligned and inherently designed to protect children, a concept supported by all. However, more specific, measurable, incremental, logical, enforceable and enforced (SMILEE) regulations as well as multi-faceted tools to support operators in better navigating the process would in fact better lay the foundation for a quality system and reduce barriers to expansion. *Refer to section 3 of the report for additional information on regulations.*



NATIONAL LEARNINGS

Improving quality and access within the early learning system and ensuring all children have equitable access to quality opportunities is an issue being grappled with across America. It is estimated that it will take more than \$10 billion to improve the basic health, safety and quality of our nation's existing early learning infrastructure, but the good news is that places like neighboring Massachusetts as well as Detroit, Philadelphia, California and Washington, DC, have begun to make inroads and we can learn from their experiences. Interviews with individuals leading facility projects in these and other market areas who have demonstrated an ability to effectively add new, quality early learning space illuminated a strong and consistent theme: inclusivity.

In order to *successfully* increase the number of children who have access to quality facilities all brought new partners to the table from outside the early learning system.

Partners included private developers, business and philanthropy. Further, all geographies demonstrating success launched new funding streams, often blending private with public dollars. *These stories are told on page 48 of the report.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenge in many ways seems daunting. However, solutions do exist. This report features a summary of the key findings identified during the assessment process, but, more importantly, incorporates recommendations for action, available beginning on page 50. Increased funding is certainly a critical area but changes in policies, practices and priorities are equally vital. Strengthened administration of regulations along with new and varied program supports are also identified as equally important considerations. Despite the many challenges identified, and in spite of the many struggles early learning leaders describe, providers overall indicate a strong desire to improve and, in many cases, expand, if only the needed funding and supports were in place to do so.



The Facility Challenge in a Nutshell

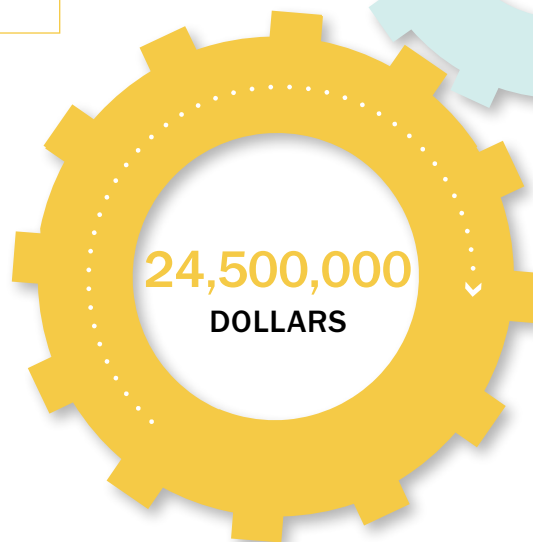
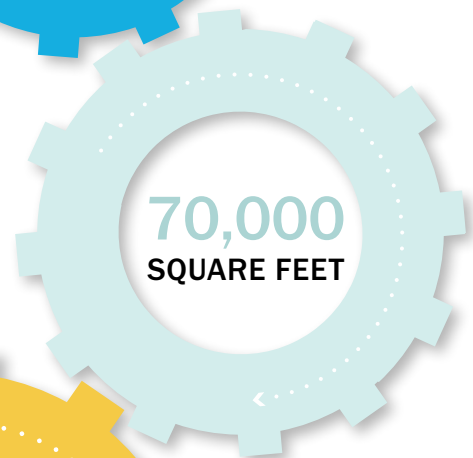
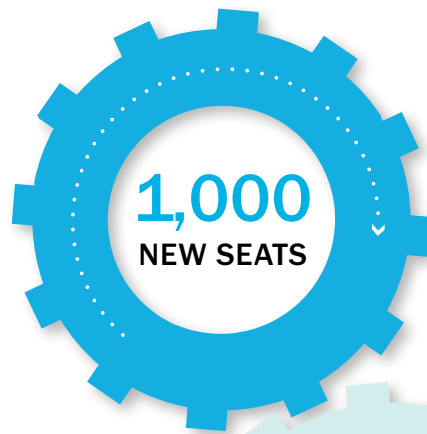
The following concepts and numbers can be used for general planning purposes

Site and project specific numbers vary widely, however, utilizing the information below can help state leaders to very generally think about, plan for and identify the resources needed for system growth. These estimates were derived from a thorough review of actual Rhode Island project data across the mixed delivery system.

Lack of space overall
IMPACTS ACCESS

Lack of suitable space
IMPACTS QUALITY

Cost to add suitable space
IMPEDES GROWTH



*In a mixed devliery system
not all of these dollars will
be public funds.*

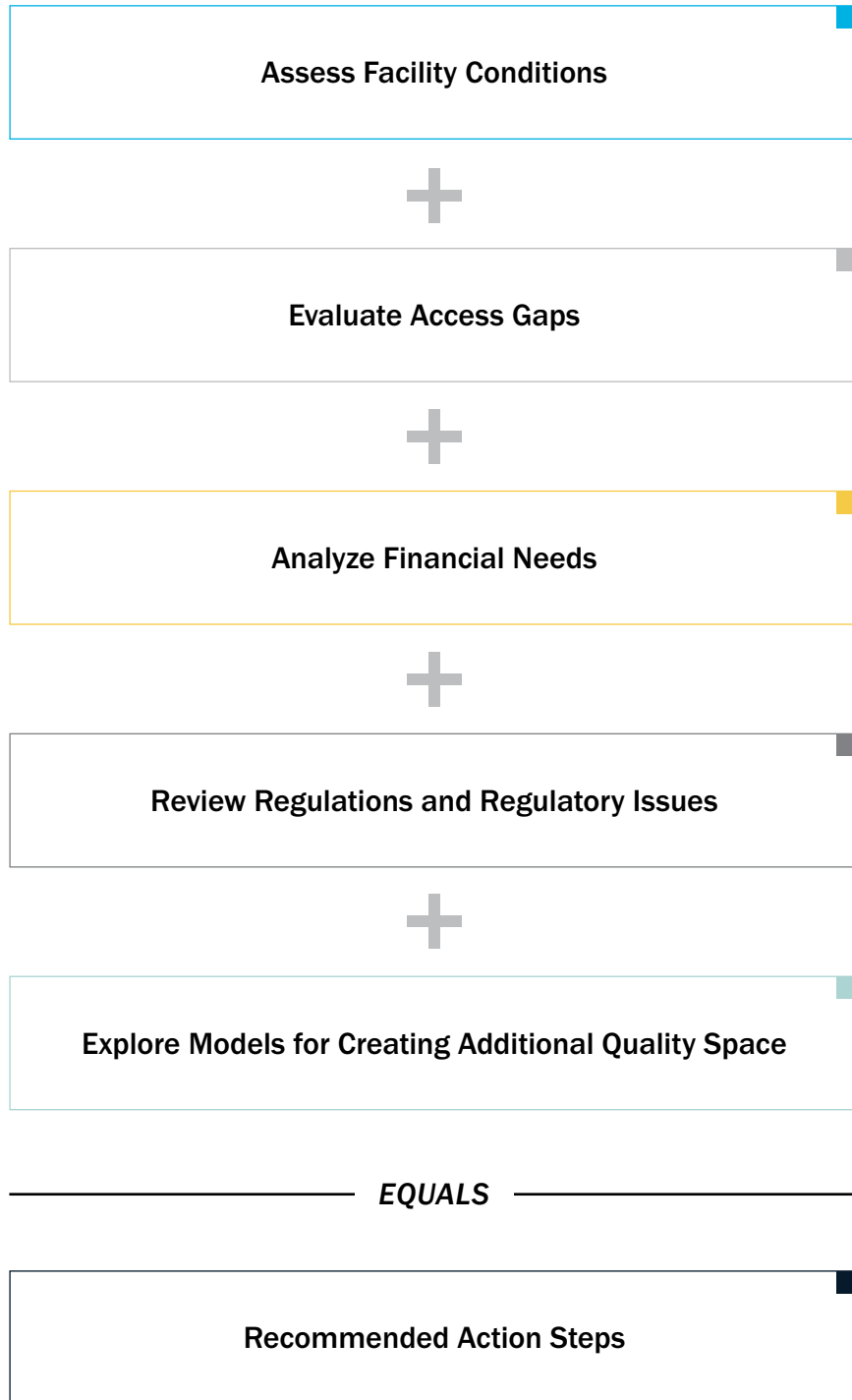
*There is currently **NO** dedicated source of public funding for infrastructure
in community-based early learning settings.*



EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 1 - The Assessment Process

The Assessment Was Designed to Meet Several Goals





*“It is a natural impulse to nurture our young
– let that impulse extend to the places where young people learn.”
– Bruce Mau and Elva Rubia, *The Third Teacher**

The Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment Includes Six Program Types

All are Essential Components of Rhode Island's Mixed Delivery Early Learning System

Program Type	Description	Ages Served	Total Children served:		Regulated/Monitored by:	
			Number	High Quality Providers (Rated 4 or 5 Stars by BrightStars)	DCYF	RIDE
Community-based Early Learning (child care center, private preschool/nursery schools)	Child care or part-day preschool (nursery school) programming provided in non-residential settings by non-profit organizations and small businesses.	0-5	16,072	21%	X	
Family Child Care Homes	Child care provided for one or more unrelated children in a provider's home setting. The children can be in a mixed age group with a low adult to child ratio.	0-5	3,061	1%	X	
Head Start/Early Head Start Providers	Federal program that provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low income families. The program is designed to support children's cognitive skills so they are ready to succeed in school.	0-5	1,935	33%	X	
Title I Preschool in Local Education Authorities (LEAs)	Public school based preschool programs occur in school facilities. Every school district in Rhode Island serves children 3-5 who have developmental delays. The program is free and may include typically developing children.	3-5	1,312	22%		X
RIDE Funded State Pre-k Classrooms in Community-based Settings	The RI state pre-k program serves children in select RI communities who are age four by September 1. The high quality preschool program is free and open to families of all incomes, with priority given to low income families. Applications are selected by lottery during the summer before the program year starts.	4-5	1,026	65%	X	X
RIDE Funded State Pre-k Classrooms in LEAs	The RI state pre-k program serves children in select RI communities who are age four by September 1. The high quality preschool program is free and open to families of all incomes, with priority given to low income families. Applications are selected by lottery during the summer before the program year starts.	4-5	378	44%		X

Facility Projects Funded with:

US Administration for Children and Families (ACF)	State Funding	Municipal Funding	Loans	Small Business Products	Fundraising/ Grants	Owner Equity	Organizational Equity	Federal ACF Funding
			X	X	X	X	X	
			X	X		X		
X			X	X	X	X	X	X
	X	X						
			X	X	X	X	X	X
	X	X						

The Assessment Included Six Distinct Areas of Exploration

Surveying	Focus Groups	Site Visits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% of licensed center-based settings and LEAs surveyed ▪ 36% return rate – 59% return rate from high quality centers ▪ Privately funded small grant opportunity for survey participants <p>Refer to Online Survey Outcomes in Appendix, available for review and download at www.riccelff.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal focus groups held for state leaders, early learning providers and real estate developers ▪ Informal focus groups at existing association meetings including Head Start Association, Business Owners for Child Care, LEA Early Learning Coordinators and Child Care Directors' Association ▪ Focus groups as part of family child care training programs <p>Refer to Focus Group Report in Appendix, available for review and download at www.riccelff.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% of 2019 pre-k applicants ▪ 100% of community-based settings and LEAs indicating space available to expand and/or interest in expanding ▪ New spaces under consideration for expansion

Site visits were guided by the use of LISC's proprietary Early Learning Facility Self-Assessment Tool available for download at www.riccelff.org/resources/tools.

Data Review	Interviews	Project Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2014 Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment Data ▪ 2017 State of Rhode Island Schoolhouses Report ▪ All applicable regulations and standards ▪ Construction cost data (See <i>Project Examples</i> in Section 7) ▪ DCYF classroom size measurement sheets ▪ Detailed center level financial data ▪ Child Care Deserts Report ▪ Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook data ▪ Rhode Island Department of Education school enrollment trends ▪ Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Early Learning Fact Sheet: Focus on Pre-K for Four-Year-Olds 0-4 population data ▪ Family child care property ownership records ▪ Data from facility financing projects in other geographies ▪ Commerce RI commercial properties listings ▪ Rhode Island public libraries space analysis ▪ Rhode Island Efficiency Commission final report ▪ Analysis of BrightStars ratings in Exceed database 	<p>Local interviews with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Licensing Leadership ▪ State Fire Marshall ▪ RIDE Pre-K Leadership ▪ RIDE Building Authority ▪ DHS Leadership ▪ Children’s Cabinet Leadership ▪ Key Advocates ▪ Key Provider Leaders ▪ Commerce RI ▪ Chamber of Commerce Leadership ▪ State Properties (Efficiency Committee) Leaders ▪ Real Estate Developers <p>National interviews with leaders from facility projects in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Massachusetts ▪ Washington DC ▪ California ▪ Philadelphia ▪ Connecticut ▪ Detroit ▪ New Jersey <p>Interviews with leadership from the Bi-Partisan Policy Institute and the National Children’s Facilities Network</p>	<p>Project Examples conducted to model pros, cons, costs and time frames of varying building and project types:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project cost and feasibility modeling conducted for a variety of building types by professional architectural firms ▪ Project data reviewed and summarized for a variety of actual project types constructed over the past decade <p>Project types considered include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New construction ▪ Major rehabilitation of existing structure for early learning use ▪ Use of space in existing community-based setting ▪ Use of space in existing municipal building ▪ Public school space ▪ Single classroom renovation ▪ Out of the box strategies <p>See <i>Project Examples</i> in Section 7</p>



“The physical environment sets the stage and creates the context for everything that happens in any setting—a classroom, a play yard, a multipurpose room. It is a place where children and staff spend long hours each day; where routine needs are met; where relationships develop, skills are learned, abilities are enhanced and attitudes toward school and learning are formed. For all these things to happen well, program planners must carefully design the physical environment.”

- National Association for the Education of Young Children



EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 2 - Infrastructure

Rhode Island's Existing Infrastructure Poses Challenges to Quality Growth

Rhode Island struggles across the board with infrastructure that is aging and in many cases suffering from deferred maintenance. Additionally, due in large part to its industrial and textiles production history, much of Rhode Island's available land and buildings in urban areas are contaminated, making it challenging to add new early learning facilities in a cost-effective manner.

Many existing community-based early learning centers and public school buildings also suffer from deferred maintenance and issues with overall building condition that impact health, safety and quality in programming.

Over the past three years Rhode Island has seen a strengthened commercial real estate market with declining space vacancies, increasing lease rates and active development of vacant land.

Rhode Island is the smallest state in the nation by geographic area, but is the second most densely populated, offering little open space for development.



Rhode Island's Early Learning Infrastructure is in need of Significant Attention

78%	High quality centers that own the building where they operate their program
41%	Lower quality/nonrated centers that own the building where they operate their program
>75%	Family child care providers who own the home where they operate their program
<25%	Centers able to house more than 100 children (key benchmark for baseline fiscal stability)
12%	Community-based early learning centers built since 2000
40%	Community-based early learning centers built before 1975
2%	Community-based centers in spaces provided for free by municipalities
>60%	Buildings housing early learning classrooms in poor repair
>90%	Outdoor play spaces used by early learning programs with significant safety concerns
10x	Likelihood that a center serving >90% CCAP (state subsidized) children will have building repair issues versus a center serving no state subsidized children
46%	Existing preschool classrooms with at least 700 square feet available (minimum requirement to serve 20 children)
37%	Existing preschool classrooms with less than the 630 minimum square feet required to serve 18 children (current minimum number of children for a state pre-k classroom)

Rhode Island Already Has Enough Built Space for its Four Year Old Population, Though Not Always in Community of Residence

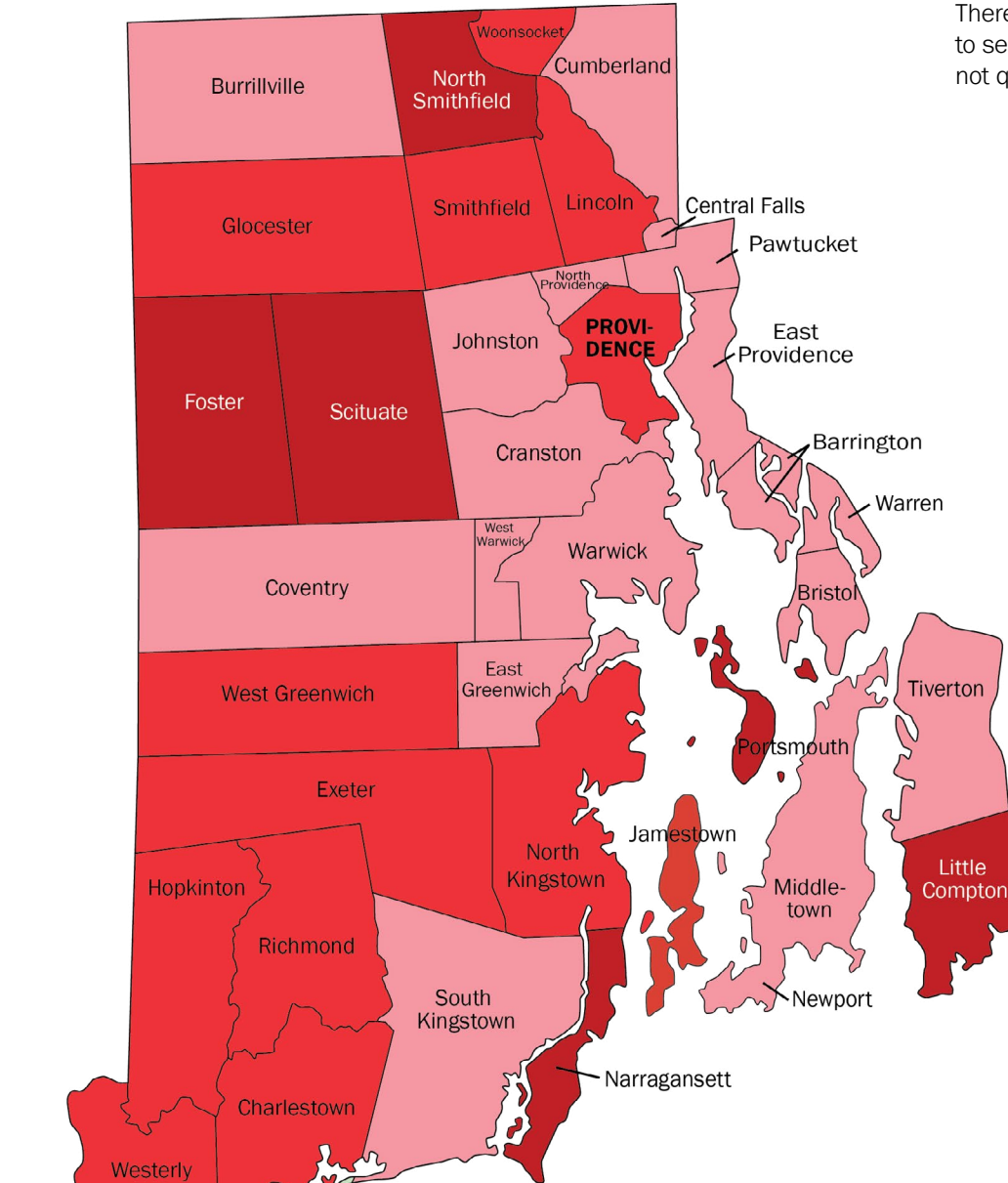
Disparities in the location of current four year old slots in Rhode Island minimize the ability for a “one size fits all” solution to work well across the entire state. Rhode Island’s requirements that state pre-k programs can only be offered in a child’s town of residence is a challenge, particularly in municipalities that are child care deserts.



- Communities where there are more licensed slots (all quality levels) than the number of children estimated to need care
- Communities that have enough licensed slots (all quality levels) for the number of four year old children estimated to need care
- Communities where there are not enough four year old slots to meet the demand for the estimated number of children in that district

Rhode Island has Enough Built Space for its Four Year Old Population, However, Not Enough Quality Spaces

There are enough licensed preschool slots to serve 7,000 four year olds, but they are not quality slots.



Communities where there are no highly rated four year old child care and early learning providers

Communities where 25% or less of licensed four year old child care and early learning providers are high quality

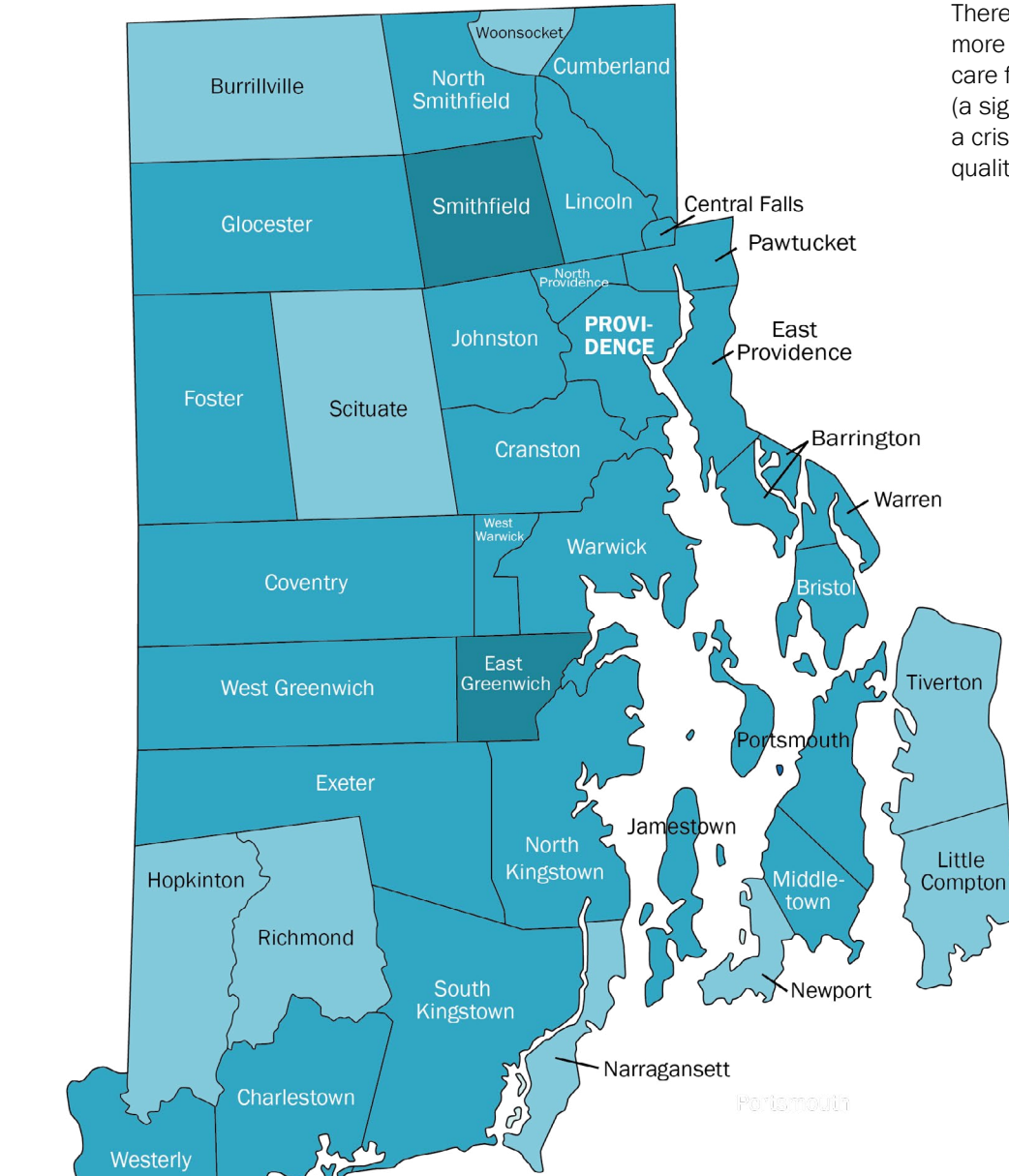
Communities where only 26-56% of licensed four year old child care and early learning providers are high quality*



*No communities exceeded 56% in how many existing four year old child care and early learning providers were highly rated at the time of the study

Rhode Island Does Not Have Enough Licensed Spaces for its Infant and Toddler Population in Need of Care

There are 24 cities and towns that have more than 3 infants and toddlers needing care for every 1 licensed slot available (a sign of a child care desert). There is a crisis in infant/toddler care, especially quality care.

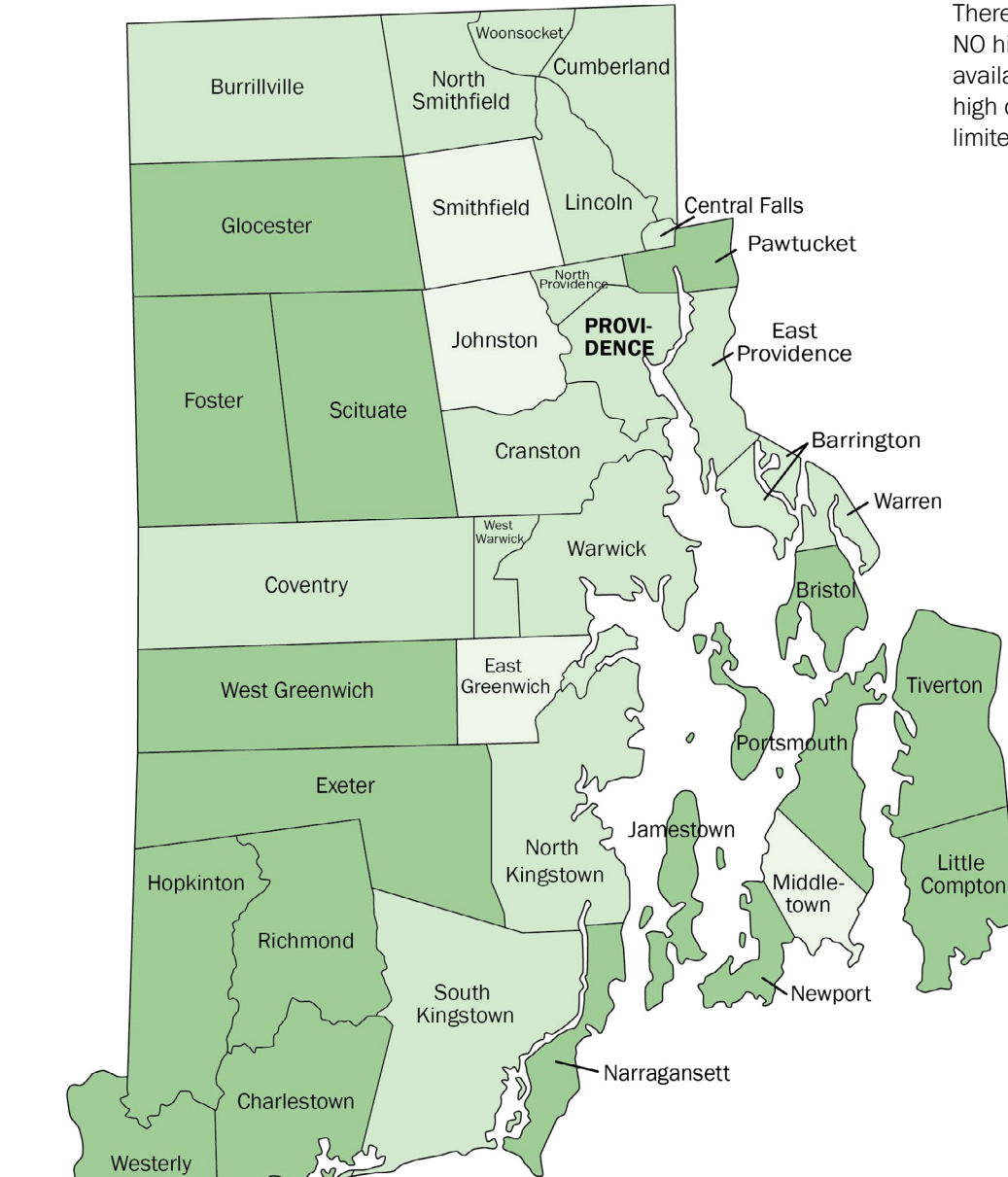


- Communities that have enough licensed slots (all quality levels) for the number of children ages 0-3 estimated to need care
- Communities where there are between 2-10 children ages 0-3 estimated to need care for every licensed slot available
- Communities where there are more than 10 children ages 0-3 estimated to need care for every licensed slot available



Rhode Island has 18 Communities with no High Quality Infant/Toddler Care Slots at All

There are 18 cities and towns that have NO high quality infant and toddler care available. In the remaining communities, high quality infant and toddler slots are limited.



Communities where there are no highly rated infant/toddler child care slots

Communities where highly rated infant/toddler child care slots meet the need for less than 10% of the infant/toddler population estimated to need care

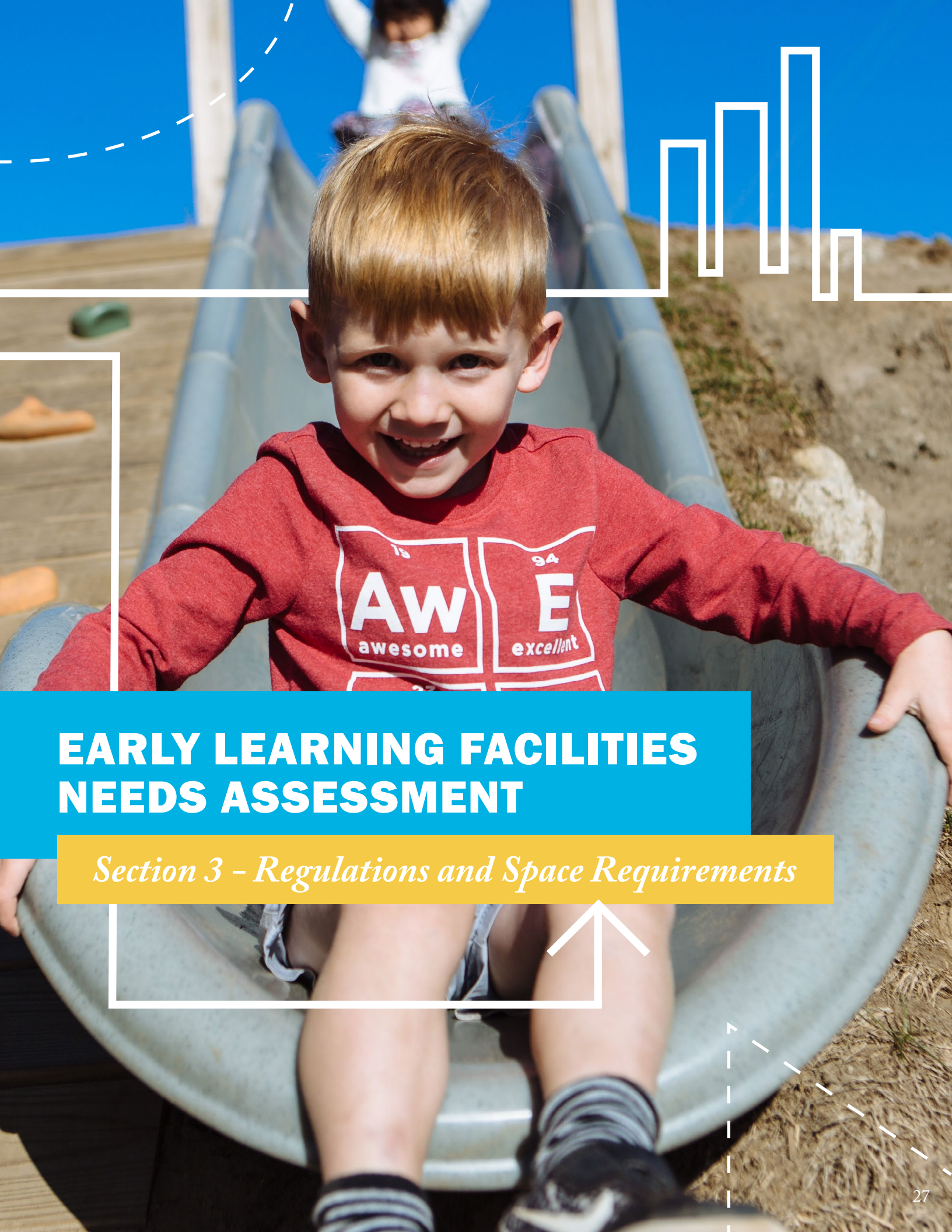
Communities where highly rated infant/toddler child care slots meet the need for 11-32% of the infant/toddler population estimated to need care





“The improvements we have implemented to the outside spaces as well as the inside have had a dramatic impact on our program, and our ability to operate a high quality school for young children. We’ve been able to improve outside activities so that children can not only enjoy gross motor play, but also engage in higher level thinking... Inside, something that seems simple but has a huge impact is the overall layout of our space. Improving access to sinks and bathrooms has increased the amount of time teachers can teach and children can play – we spend less time taking ‘trips’ to the sink and bathroom. We’ve also improved access for teachers, which enhances their teaching practices.”

– Heather Grocott, Director at The Children’s Workshop, on how facility investments have impacted children and teachers at her center



EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 3 – Regulations and Space Requirements

Quality Early Learning Space has Unique Requirements and Comes with a Vast Number of Regulations

The unique design requirements for early learning facilities present challenges because spaces previously designed for other purposes (including commercial properties, retail centers, municipal buildings and health facilities) all require significant renovation to customize the space to early learning use. Yet, focusing on meeting these unique design requirements is essential to creating an environment that supports quality programming.

Regulations related to the development of early learning facilities (the vast number across various agencies, the lack of a centralized place to find all applicable requirements and a lack of specificity that allows for too much interpretation) present further challenges in creating new quality space.

These space and regulatory challenges can be overcome with sufficient funding to appropriately improve, modify and acquire spaces and hire a professional design and development team to support the process. But, most early learning providers lack the resources to do either.



The Physical Environment Will Support or Impede Quality, Directly Impacting Interactions between Children and Teachers

“Accidental” research findings

School for Young Children, St. Joseph College, Hartford, CT

Research shows the way teachers interact with children is crucial in determining how children develop over time. We know that, but, are we focusing on all the right things to improve interactions?

ORIGINAL BUILDING

- Management and teachers identical to new building
- Ratios and group size identical to new building
- Curriculum identical to new building
- Classrooms sized to minimum square feet
- Bathrooms down hall
- Small closet down hall

Teachers interact with children **3%** *of the time*



NEW BUILDING

- Management and teachers identical to original building
- Ratios and group size identical to original building
- Curriculum identical to original space
- Oversized classrooms
- Bathrooms directly in classroom
- Good storage directly in classroom

Teachers interact with children **22%** *of the time*



Early Learning Facilities have Unique Design Requirements that Ensure the Health and Safety of Vulnerable Populations and Support Delivery of Quality Programming



According to a report published by the National Institute for Early Education Research, a facility's layout, size, materials and design features can improve program quality and contribute positively to child development, while a poorly adapted and overcrowded environment undermines it. The physical configuration of early care and education spaces directly affects adult/child interaction and influences how children grow and learn. Good early learning spaces support teachers in their roles as professionals and send a message to families and the community about the value placed on young children and early learning.

Effective Early Learning Sites:

- Are located in areas easily accessed by families
- Provide sufficient space both indoors and outdoors to support program quality
- Offer opportunities for long-term site control by the program operator, either through ownership or very long-term, below market lease arrangements
- Are on sites and in buildings that minimize exposures to environmental hazards
- Offer safe and secure environments for very young, often non-ambulatory children

When Khadija Lewis Khan opened the [Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center](#) in Providence, Rhode Island, to serve low-income families, she used the only available space she could afford — a former clothing store in a strip mall. Four-foot-high shelving units were all that separated classrooms in the cavernous room. Bathrooms were a long walk from learning areas. The open plan magnified sound and visual distractions. Behavior issues were chronic. Bathroom trips and the quirky layout resulted in lost class time; the center failed accreditation. Teachers suffered from headaches and stiff necks. Khan measured the stress of the day by how quickly the aspirin bottle ran out.

In 2005, with help from [Local Initiatives Support Corporation](#) and government funds, Beautiful Beginnings re-opened in a light-drenched building with thoughtfully designed classroom space and a place for parents and teachers to meet. The very same group of kids went without a behavior problem for almost a year. Now, with similar help, the center is expanding to accommodate a long waiting list of working families.

Beautiful Beginnings speaks to what a quality environment can do. Abundant research backs that up: [Carnegie Mellon University found young kids were more likely to be off-task when exposed to excessive visual stimulation](#). A study of schools in Finland suggests children's cortisol levels, a stress barometer, were lower in schools designed with age in mind.

Brick and mortar are only part of the picture. Quality directors, teachers, materials and parent involvement are a must. But even the best efforts will fall short in a building that ignores the needs of its littlest learners.

Above from: [Why are we sending children to pre-k programs in converted salons, bars and turkey coops? The Hechinger Report](#)



Early Learning Environments Should be Designed and Equipped to Help Young Children Thrive

These Seven Elements Support Child Development and Promote Quality Programming

Sufficient space in classrooms

There is a large body of research that shows that the amount of classroom space per child is the single most important environmental factor affecting the quality of child care programs and the welfare of children and staff. The well-being, constructive behavior and social integration of preschool children in group settings are highly dependent on the size of the classroom. The research has consistently confirmed that 35 SF of classroom space per child (measured wall-to-wall) is inadequate and that about 50 SF is required. The research dates back over 25 years. Some of the earliest research was done in the late 1970's for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop quality standards for Army child development centers. That study recommended a standard of 42 SF of activity area as adequate per child and 50 SF as optimum (Moore 1994).

Bathrooms and activity sinks in or adjacent to classrooms with child height fixtures

Even without considering ideal configurations of plumbing features, meeting just minimal requirements for numbers of fixtures per child creates unique design challenges to spaces. Plumbing features in or immediately adjacent to classrooms, playgrounds and other key activity areas support the critical development of autonomy in children while allowing teachers to easily provide direct supervision at all times, ensuring child safety. Specialized child-height features and fixtures build competence and independence in children while at the same time promoting good hygiene.

Child height windows in classrooms and common areas with a direct view of the outdoors

Extensive research has shown that access to natural light improves mental and physical health, improves focus, productivity and learning. Enabling children to see outside throughout the day helps orient them to the outdoor world, time of day and weather, all essential for growing minds. In many settings having a direct visual outside allows children to observe the natural world, which has been proven essential for child well-being.

Appropriate acoustics

Good acoustics have positive impacts on memory, learning and well-being. Very young children need low amounts of background noise in order to perceive speech at optimal levels; children's use of, and understanding of, language is poorer in loud classrooms. Research has demonstrated a link between chronic noise levels and pre-reading skills in preschool children (Maxwell & Evans 2000). High levels of noise increase stress and behavioral issues, and have negative impacts on learning. Classrooms open to other spaces, old buildings, incompatible shared uses and poor locations can all negatively impact noise levels.

Safe and engaging outdoor play spaces

Hospital and insurance company data shows that the vast majority of serious injuries that take place in early learning settings occur on playgrounds. Therefore, it is essential that the safety of outdoor play spaces be prioritized. Moving beyond safety, it is vital that the environment offers opportunities for children to get outside frequently throughout the day. Active play can help to significantly combat growing concerns with childhood obesity and for children spending significant portions of the day in early learning settings, they need access to these opportunities while at the centers. Access to nature and the natural world have significant benefits to child well-being. Outdoor play in appropriately designed spaces has been shown to improve attention deficit disorder and combat depression – both growing issues even in very young children.

Durable materials that encourage active and messy exploration but enable easy clean up

Early learning settings receive high use from many active young children. Having the ability to easily clean floors, walls and furnishings is essential to offering an environment that invites exploration while also enabling that environment to be maintained in safe and hygienic ways.

Sufficient storage

Effective early learning curriculums are hands-on in nature. Robust sets of materials that are varied throughout the week, month and year are essential. Thus, having adequate storage both directly within classrooms and within centers is essential to supporting access to sufficient materials, without creating spaces that are cluttered and at times unsafe. In addition to storage of learning materials, consideration must be given to sufficient space for things such as children's belongings, teacher's personal belongings, medications, cots, food, records, cleaning supplies and teacher resources. All of these items require thoughtful planning and sufficient space.

“You have to meet square footage amounts, have windows in specific spaces where children spend their time, make sure the layout of the room is developmentally appropriate, that the noise level will not go past a certain volume, that there are a certain amount of sinks and toilets in the room.

Lighting is also a different consideration in a classroom [than other spaces].”

– Mary Varr, Executive Director of the Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association, in Navigating the Childcare Gap in Rhode Island by Susan Fitter-Harris

There are a Vast Number of Regulations and Standards to be Navigated Across Rhode Island’s Mixed Delivery Early Learning System

A robust review of facility related program regulations, various building and fire code requirements and best practice guidance was conducted with standards assessed for any potential inconsistencies, lack of alignment, or especially onerous requirements. An online survey, focus group discussions, interviews with regulators and assessors and site visit interviews conducted with operators provided additional insights.

Robust Regulatory Review Doesn’t Indicate that Regulations Present Barriers to Growth

GUIDING REGULATIONS/BEST PRACTICE QUALITY STANDARDS

Community-based Child Care

General Building Regulations	Civil Law	Mandatory Regulations	Higher Quality Standards, Certifications & Accreditations	Best Practice/ Quality Guidance
RI State Building Code (SBC-1, SBC-3 Plumbing, SBC-4 Mechanical, SBC-5 Electrical, SBC-8 Energy Conservation, etc.)	Department of Justice ADA Standards for Accessible Design	RI DCYF Child Care Program Regulations for Licensure	BrightStars/ Environmental Rating Scales	Caring for Our Children
NFPA 1 and 101 (State Fire Marshal’s Office)	US Consumer Product Safety Commission Public Playground Safety Handbook (ASTM Standards)	<i>Child Care Center and Family Child Care</i>	RI Department of Education Comprehensive ECE Program Standards	US EPA Healthy Child Care Guidelines
City/Town Ordinances (Local Authority having Jurisdiction)		Head Start Facility Standards <i>Head Start Grantees and EHS Partnership Sites Only</i>	National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	Best Practice Research on Impact of Space

GUIDING REGULATIONS/BEST PRACTICE QUALITY STANDARDS

RIDE Regulated Preschool Facilities

General Building Regulations	Civil Law	K-12 Regulations	Higher Quality Standards, Certifications & Accreditations	Best Practice/ Quality Guidance
RI State Building Code (SBC-1, SBC-3 Plumbing, SBC-4 Mechanical, SBC-5 Electrical, SBC-8 Energy Conservation, etc.)	Department of Justice ADA Standards for Accessible Design	Remediation of Hazardous Materials Releases	BrightStars/ Environmental Rating Scales	Caring for Our Children
NFPA 1 and 101 (State Fire Marshal’s Office)	US Consumer Product Safety Commission Public Playground Safety Handbook (ASTM Standards)	BEP 2009 Regulations	RI Department of Education Comprehensive ECE Program Standards	US EPA Healthy Child Care Guidelines
City/Town Ordinances (Local Authority having Jurisdiction)		RIDE 2007 School Construction Regulations Rules and Regs for School Health Program	National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	Best Practice Research on Impact of Space

Note: Not all buildings/programs will have to meet every listed regulation or standard. Compliance will vary based on a number of items, such as if the building is new or existing, type of construction, location, CCAP accepting, Head Start, RIDE or DCYF licensed, etc.

Early Childhood Education Serves a Vulnerable Population and Therefore is a Highly Regulated Industry

Early learning facility operators are supportive of regulations that protect children and promote quality, but indicate the regulations are difficult to navigate due to their own lack of expertise in real estate development, a lack of clarity and specifics in many regulations, the number of entities that regulate the industry, inconsistencies in regulatory interpretation within and between agencies and a lack of one centralized place to find all requirements and contact information in an easily navigated format.

REGULATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

Those developing new classrooms in community-based facilities and public schools would benefit from an easier way to access all of the regulatory requirements for this type of space, while operators would benefit from a better understanding of the specific regulations that will be evaluated during ongoing inspections.

- **All buildings, including early learning facilities, are subject to regulations and codes designed to protect their occupants**
These include building and fire inspections
- **In Rhode Island, each municipality has its own set of regulations connected to facilities and approval of the construction process, including things such as zoning, parking and permitting**
- **Early learning facilities have additional, unique regulations and are also required to meet “best practice” standards to achieve high quality ratings**
Regulations and best practice guidance provided by licensing agencies, BrightStars quality assessors and the Department of Education are generally very well-aligned and consistent in written form, but, due to the intentionally open ended nature of most standards, are frequently interpreted differently within and across agencies
- **Other highly regulated industries serving non-ambulatory populations (such as hospital systems) typically have someone on staff with expertise in facilities, building codes and regulations to assist with new construction**
This is unlikely to be the case with early learning providers, whose primary expertise is child development
- **Because Rhode Island utilizes a mixed delivery system, regulations and standards and regulatory bodies vary between program types**
This creates a unique challenge in providing one clear and distinct regulatory pathway for all providers in the system
- **Research shows most operators are not concerned with the regulatory process per se**
Only 29% of operators view building regulations as a barrier to opening new classrooms and even fewer (18%) indicate they would need help navigating the regulatory process if they were upgrading their existing facilities
- **Rather, the concern appears to be regulations and standards that are ambiguous, for example “must be in good condition”**
This lack of specificity allows for too much and too varied interpretation of regulations and standards

What We Found

Operators Say Less Ambiguous Regulations as well as Tools to Help Them Better Navigate the Process Would Reduce Barriers to Expansion

Rhode Island's early learning providers would benefit from:

SMILEE Regulations

Specific

Using terminology like “enough” leads to varied interpretations – offering defined minimum numbers allows both regulators and those being monitored to understand criteria in an objective way. For example, instead of saying something like “enough materials” provide specific lists of minimum required materials

Measurable

Using terminology like “near” leads to varied interpretations – offering defined measurements allows both regulators and those being monitored to understand criteria in an objective way. For example, instead of saying something like “no clutter near emergency exits” say “provide clear, 2-foot pathway around emergency exits”

Incremental

The aligned system of regulations and standards should clearly support an ongoing pathway of quality improvements where even programs currently operating at the first quality levels clearly understand the pathway forward and have a quality improvement plan that aligns to incremental progress – base licensing should have a strong focus on building a health and safety foundation with quality components layered on as programs progress

Logical

Research based regulations and standards should continue to be prioritized

Enforceable

Items that provide undue burdens to enforce and create unnecessary confusion should be reviewed and reconsidered in next revision to standards

Enforced

Failure to provide robust and ongoing monitoring at any level of the system creates a weakness in the system as a whole – a strong focus on staffing and systems that support monitoring and enforcement is essential

Regulatory Tools

that guide assessors in their work and are available to the field for self-evaluation of their space

Note: LISC has developed a robust tool to guide programs in assessing their space across all of the various regulations and requirements and devising a quality improvement plan, but it is not required that programs use this tool in any way

Clearinghouse

of all regulations and regulatory contacts in a centralized online location



EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 4 - Expansion



Rhode Island has Limited Potential for Expansion Within its Existing Community-based Early Learning Settings

90 centers self-identified as having room to expand as determined by the assessment survey, recent LISC technical assistance requests, and state pre-k applicants who were not awarded classrooms

Through an interview and site visit process with these 90 centers, programs were narrowed down to those with feasible space and an interest in expansion. The reasons for omitting some self-identified programs are as follows: space would not meet regulations (ex: third floor), owner is retiring and/or selling building, misunderstood question, not maximizing square footage due to group size regulations, no space but declining enrollment, no current space but actively seeking out new space or building addition, or displacement issues.

32 centers were found to have adequate space for at least one additional classroom *and* a desire to expand

20 centers are lower quality (rated 1, 2, 3 or non-rated by BrightStars)

12 centers are high quality (rated 4 or 5 by BrightStars or are otherwise providing high quality programming such as Head Start or state pre-k)

468 lower quality/non-rated slots

300 high quality slots

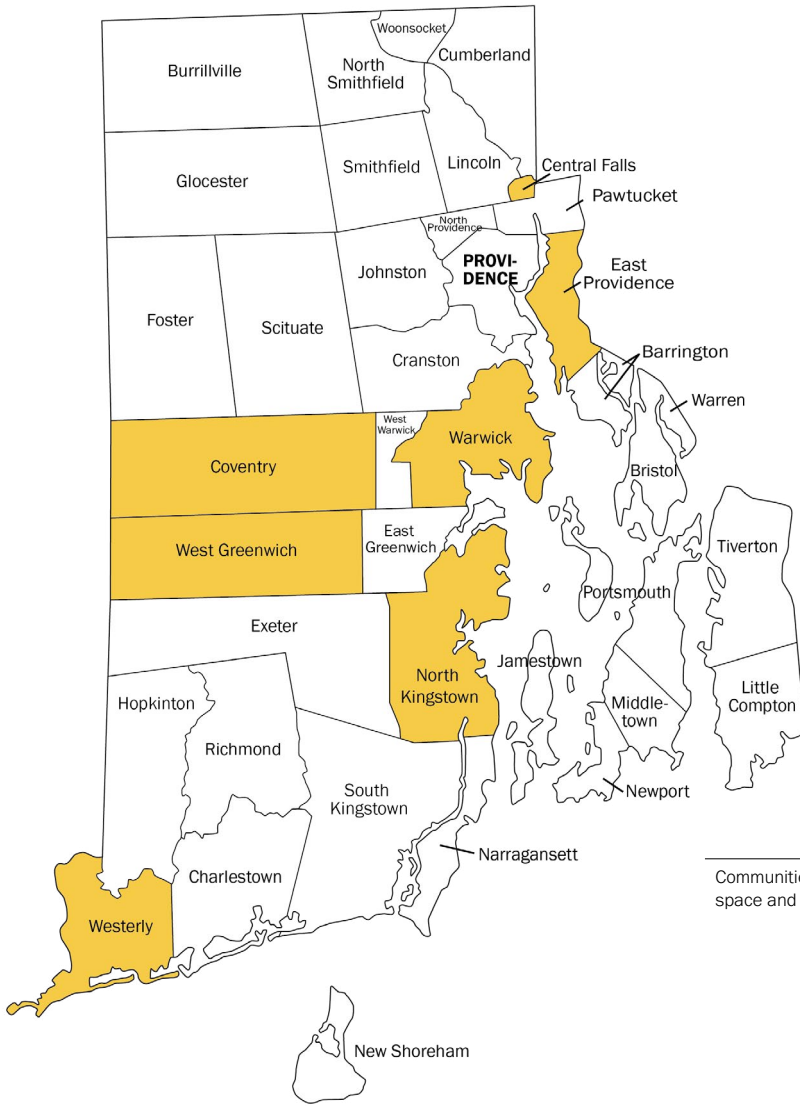
14 centers/306 slots where funding for expansion is not available (See Map 1D)

6 centers/162 slots where funding for expansion is available (See Map 1C)

4 centers/84 slots where funding for expansion is not available (See Map 1B)

8 high quality centers/216 slots with room, a desire, and funding to expand immediately (See Map 1A)

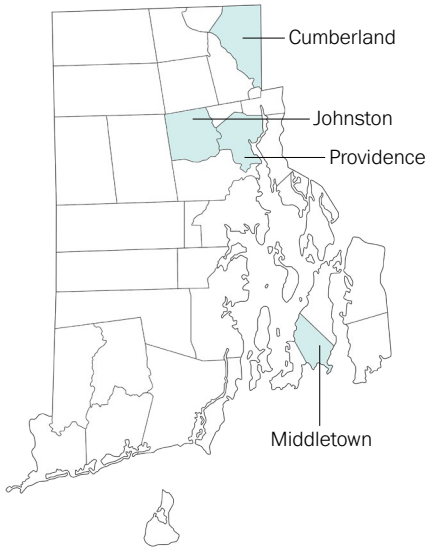
MAP 1A



There is limited quality space and financial ability to expand within the existing system. Eight high quality centers have room, a desire and funding to expand, which would add approximately 216 slots across seven communities.

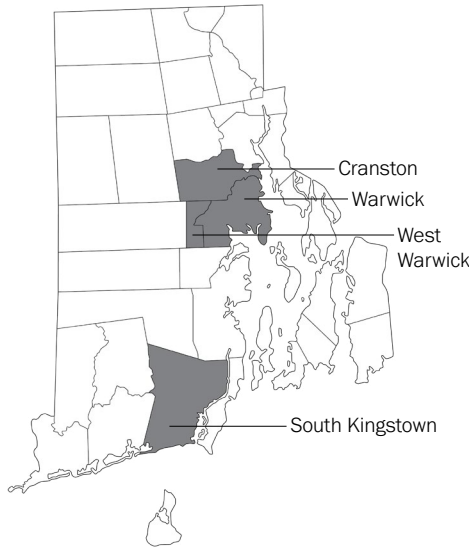
Communities with a high quality program with space and resources to expand

MAP 1B



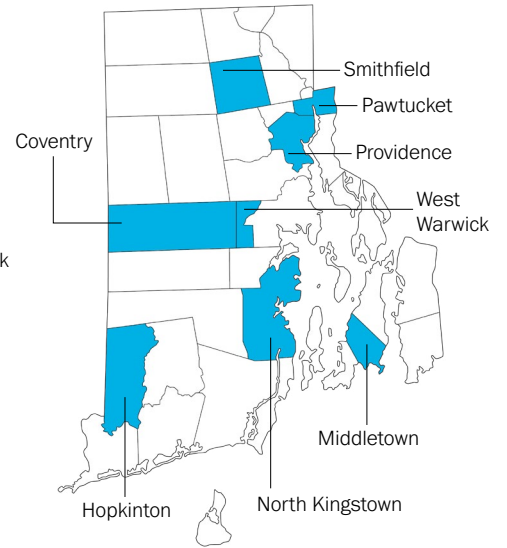
Communities with a high quality program with space, but no resources to expand

MAP 1C



Communities with a lower quality or non-rated program with space and resources to expand

MAP 1D



Communities with a lower quality or non-rated program with space, but no resources to expand

Successful, Quality Child Care Facility Projects Have Each of These Key Components – Support is Needed in All Areas to Bolster Expansion Efforts

SITE

- Accessible, safe location
- Enough land for building, parking, playground
- Site control for facility operator (ownership or long-term lease)
- Convenient for families
- Use allowed by zoning
- No environmental issues

BUILDING

- >10,000 SF
- Single level or 2-story with accessibility
- Good natural light
- Easy to add plumbing
- Few or no interior load-bearing walls
- No environmental issues

These four things together

EQUALS

PROJECT SUCCESS!

FUNDING

Project

- Funds for acquisition
- Carrying cash for building
- Predevelopment funding
- Significant cash on hand (\$1M+)

Operating

- Sufficient funds to cover start-up operating losses for 2-3 years
- Sufficient cash flow to show ability to cover debt
- Sufficient cash flow for building reserves

OPERATOR

- Desire to expand or relocate
- Demonstrated understanding of quality programming
- Capacity to manage a real estate project
- Sufficient funding or ability to secure funding for construction and start-up expenses
- Ability to hire appropriate project team/professionals
- Realistic plan and timeframe

Effective Real Estate Projects Take Planning and Time

New Facility Timeline



Successful, quality child care facility projects can take years to complete. In order to ensure a robust pipeline of expansion projects moving forward, Rhode Island should focus on building the capacity of operators and supporting the planning and predevelopment activities that are essential to project success.

“As a parent, I am so grateful for the renovated infant room. It is a relief to know that the babies have a safe way to exit the building in case of an emergency. The new space is attractive, relaxing and I can see how positively my son has reacted to being in his new room. It makes me happy to know that his teachers love it too. It is so important for babies and young children to have well-designed space that meets their ever-evolving needs.”

– Parent from The Genesis Center on health and safety improvements made to the classroom





EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 5 - Constraints

Facility Barriers Are Not All About Buildings

Early learning providers in Rhode Island are only able to dedicate, on average, 12% of their total revenues to all expenses related to occupancy and infrastructure.

Financial constraints facing the early learning industry and the Rhode Island state budget negatively impact the ability of most community-based providers to expand or make quality improvements.

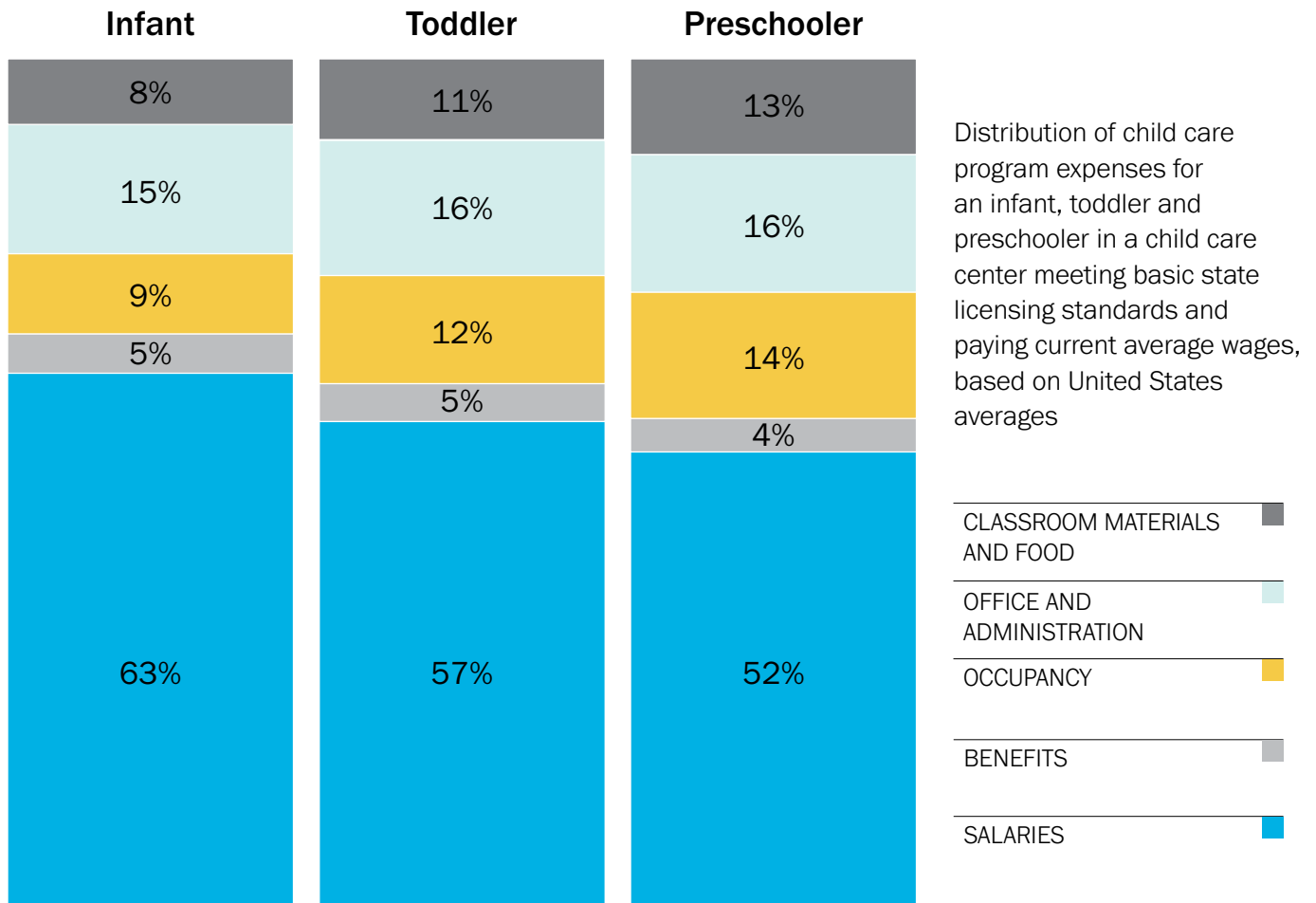
Many early learning providers in Rhode Island express interest in opening new facility spaces and/or expanding and operating additional programs, but there are significant barriers, most notably financial and a lack of affordable and appropriate sites, inhibiting their ability to do so.

Early learning facility projects frequently cannot qualify for traditional building and construction loans due to the unpredictable and short term nature of many funding streams, such as state pre-k, the delayed reimbursement process for state subsidies, lack of sufficient collateral and tight operating margins.



Revenues are Allocated to Salaries, Benefits and Classroom Supplies, Little is Left for Occupancy

Community-based early learning facility operators typically use equity, personal savings, loans and fundraising in order to fund improvements to their facilities and/or expand to serve additional children.



Source: Center for American Progress

A review of financial data from 60 Rhode Island community-based childcare facilities validates the findings of the Center for American Progress: Only 10-15% of a facility's total revenues are available for occupancy costs, improvements and expansion.

There are Capacity, Quality and Financial Limitations Within Rhode Island's Current Mixed Delivery Early Learning System

54 <i>(out of 287)</i>	Organizations/schools districts in Rhode Island with a four or five star quality rating
4 <i>(out of 468)</i>	Family child care homes with a four or five star quality rating
30%	Community-based organizations and small businesses with financial records reviewed that meet established ratio thresholds for fiscal health
18%	Operators who indicate they have sufficient cash on hand to address a facility emergency
87%	Operators who say their facilities need improvements or upgrades to improve the quality of their program
19%	Operators who have not made any improvements/upgrades/renovations to their buildings, playgrounds or parking lots in the last 5 years
88%	Operators who would need funding in order to improve or upgrade their facilities
57%	Operators who say money is a barrier to opening additional classrooms at their current location
50/50	For profit and non-profit
65%	Surveyed providers who looked for space to expand but found it to be cost prohibitive
19%	Surveyed providers who were successful in locating suitable new space to expand

Converting Preschool Space to Infant Space is Feasible from a Facility Standpoint, However, Converting is Not Practical from a Financial Standpoint

Most communities already have sufficient built space for four year olds. Therefore, as public pre-k continues to expand across the state, it is likely that preschool spaces will open up in community-based facilities. Converting these classrooms to infant/toddler use could generally be achieved from a facility standpoint, but is not feasible for operators from a financial standpoint. This is due to factors such as higher teacher to child ratios and lower group sizes for younger children.

FACILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Most spaces, if converted, would meet the basic requirements for children ages 0-3:

- **Ground level**
Currently 9 in 10 preschool classrooms are located at ground level
- **In-classroom changing and food prep areas with sinks**
Currently 3 out of 4 preschool classrooms have the plumbing required to support conversion
- **Minimum of 540 square feet for a group of toddlers and 360 square feet for a group of infants**
Current preschool classrooms average 650 square feet
- **Different furnishings and equipment (cribs, changing tables) than preschool classrooms**
- **Direct access to the outdoors so children with no or limited mobility can be easily transported in case of emergency**

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Operators of community-based facilities would need access to capital to retrofit space and purchase new equipment AS WELL AS additional operating support dollars to make up ongoing revenue losses.

Illustrative Conversion	Illustrative Quality Rating	Annual Net Revenue Loss
18 preschool children to 8 infants	4 star (high quality)	\$56,000/year
18 preschool children to 12 toddlers	4 star (high quality)	\$24,000/year

Assumptions: The above modeling assumes the same number of staff at the same salary levels and that all other overhead, materials and other costs remain essentially stable. Revenue was calculated as follows: the number of children that could be enrolled x the published reimbursement rate x 90% to factor typical vacancies and non-payments. There may be additional costs or considerations, so the above examples should be used for broad overview illustrative purposes only.

There is no dedicated public source of capital for early learning facilities, therefore in addition to the above operating losses, in the absence of new funding sources, most providers would also need to bear the cost of all renovations to convert the space. Many existing early learning spaces were originally built for another, non-early learning use. By making funding available to allow for the complete reconfiguration of space, program efficiencies could be achieved and age conversions made more viable.

Rhode Island Needs New Partners and New Funding Strategies

*Interviews with thought leaders across the country illuminated a common theme: they successfully **increased** the number of children they served by enlisting the help of new partners and developing new funding strategies.*

INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

Rhode Island can capitalize on the learnings of other market areas that have demonstrated their ability to effectively add new space

Market	Learnings
Detroit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hope Starts Here initiative, Detroit's Early Childhood Partnership, is guided by a Stewardship Board comprised of parents, child care providers, early childhood educators, healthcare providers, local and state government and business, community and philanthropic leaders and has a 10-year plan with a dedicated work stream focused on improving early learning facility quality and leveraging available resources to increase the number of early learning facilities Hope Starts Here is a joint project of the W.K. Kellogg and Kresge foundations, who pledged \$50 million towards early childhood education initiatives
Massachusetts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2013, an act financing the production and preservation of housing for low- and moderate-income residents established the Early Education and Out of School Time (EEOST) Capital Fund, providing \$45 million in general obligation bond funding over five years to finance new construction and renovation of early education centers
City of Philadelphia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Child Care Facility Fund provides support to high quality child care providers for facility maintenance and improvement to maintain a high quality rating. Center- and family-based child care providers are eligible for the fund, which helps with minor to mid-level renovations and the purchase and installation of large appliances. Their website also provides a list of resources for providers, including a list of contractors who recently completed projects, sample materials and budget templates
Fund for Quality - Philadelphia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Fund for Quality (FFQ), a partnership between Reinvestment Fund and Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC), is funded by the William Penn Foundation and Vanguard
Pittsburgh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Child Care Quality Fund improves the quality of child care facilities around the city. Recognizing that only 18% of child care facilities are high quality, this program improves lower quality facilities to meet higher quality standards and makes quality coaches available to work with child care providers on a plan to improve facilities to meet quality standards in order to apply for grant funding
San Mateo, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Up for San Mateo County is a new initiative designed to grow and improve the supply of child care. Through advocacy, partnerships and making early education a community conversation priority, they are growing access. A development impact fee of \$1.08 per square foot is collected on commercial developments that exceed 10,000 square feet. The fee applies to new developments, expansion of existing commercial developments and commercial tenant improvements. Over \$2 million from these impact fees were recently offered, as forgivable loans, to community programs to create new child care spaces
Washington state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Early Learning Facilities grant and loan program, administered by the Dept. of Commerce and DCYF, supports high quality early learning programs for low income children. The program is an innovative partnership among government agencies, CDFIs and affordable housing developers that helps state-funded comprehensive preschool program and child care subsidy providers expand, remodel, purchase or construct early learning facilities and classrooms. Grants range from \$10,000 for pre-design grants to \$800,000 for facility renovation, construction and purchasing
Washington, DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bainum Family Foundation partnered with Reinvestment Fund and Public Health Management Corporation to launch the Early Learning Quality Fund (ELQF) Program in 2017 and provide technical assistance and financing - including a \$3.8 million loan fund to help both center-based and family-based child care providers serving infants and toddlers



EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 6 – Solutions and Strategies

Solutions and Strategies to Promote Growth in Access and Quality

FUNDING



Take necessary steps to include early learning facility bond referendum on November, 2020 ballot. Utilize highly successful Massachusetts program as a model. This is the most clear-cut way to access the large amount of capital needed to grow the system to scale and enable prioritized providers to make necessary improvements to infrastructure. Funding can be tied to state priorities and critical needs.

Include line item in the state budget for a small grants program to be used for facility planning and predevelopment activities as well as urgent space-related health, safety and quality issues. Utilize funding to emphasize state priorities. Seek matching opportunities from private funders.

Develop, fund and implement a state backed loan guarantee program in order to incentivize greater private investment in the early learning sector.

Engage and partner with utility companies to offer specialized and targeted incentives for early learning providers to convert to renewable energy sources for operational cost savings

POLICIES



Contemplate policy change that allows delaying start-up of newly awarded pre-k classrooms to allow time for adequate planning and infrastructure development. Few providers or developers will build new space on speculation and current time frame does not allow for development of new spaces.

Reconsider policy that requires child to attend state pre-k in his or her community of residence which allows for better use of existing infrastructure.

Work with legislature and municipalities to:

- Create a blanket property tax exemption or stabilization program for providers meeting key benchmarks (quality, high needs populations, etc.) This will afford greater financial stability to existing providers and better encourage new development.
- Lessen zoning restrictions so that more buildings and sites can be considered for early learning use.

Review tiered reimbursement policies to create easier pathway for existing high quality providers to access higher rates at any newly developed sites to minimize start-up operating losses.

PARTNERS



New partners from different backgrounds than traditional early learning advocates are needed. Form an early learning facilities task force similar to the one in San Mateo County, CA that includes business, real estate experts, philanthropy, government and educators. To be effective this group must include new partners with specialized expertise.

Connect with leadership of other states currently grappling with similar issues. Form Governor's Association Working Group to advocate federally and share lessons learned and strategy successes.

Support and incentivize partnerships between LEAs and high quality community-based early learning providers to maximize use of appropriate infrastructure available within many school systems.

Engage Rhode Island's philanthropic community in a shared vision to support growth of a quality early learning system. Evidence from around the country points to the vital role that private funding plays in successful early learning policy.

REGULATIONS



SMILEE Regulations are needed for facilities - Specific, Measurable, Incremental, Logical, Enforceable, Enforced. Ensuring facilities can be readily measured and regulations consistently understood should be a top priority for the next revision to standards.

Create and operationalize tools that support regulators with consistency and transparency and guide providers in clearly understanding requirements. These are needed to support shared understandings and consistent application.

Create a central clearinghouse for all regulations connected to facilities. This could be as simple as a website page that contains links to resources and includes links to resources, all applicable regulations and key contacts.

PROGRAM SUPPORTS



Develop and launch an online platform such as the ones available in Philadelphia, DC, Detroit and New Jersey to readily identify and easily connect providers, available sites, developers, funders and areas of need.

Create a more robust set of resources to guide providers through the real estate process and educate other essential partners on key components of quality early learning space.

Increase access to training and supports to guide current and potential providers through the facility improvement and development processes.

Ensure access to robust on-site facility related support for all components of the mixed delivery system.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT



Launch developer and business incentives for including early learning in mixed use developments. Conversely, consider implementing developer impact fees.

Develop strategies, in partnership with Rhode Island Housing, for incentivizing the co-location of housing and child care, including set-asides of family child care space in new developments.

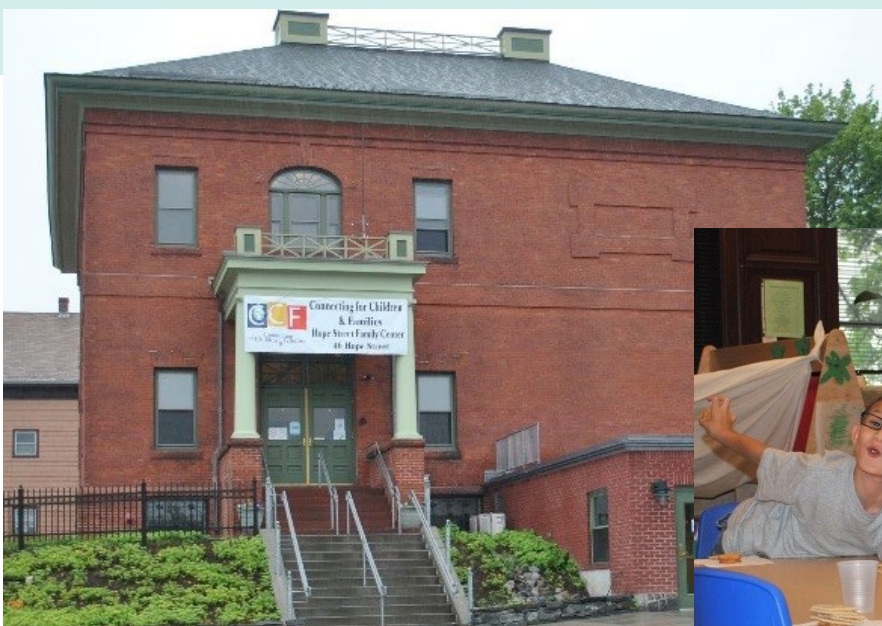
Offer tax incentive programs that make early learning space a more viable component of a mixed use real estate project.

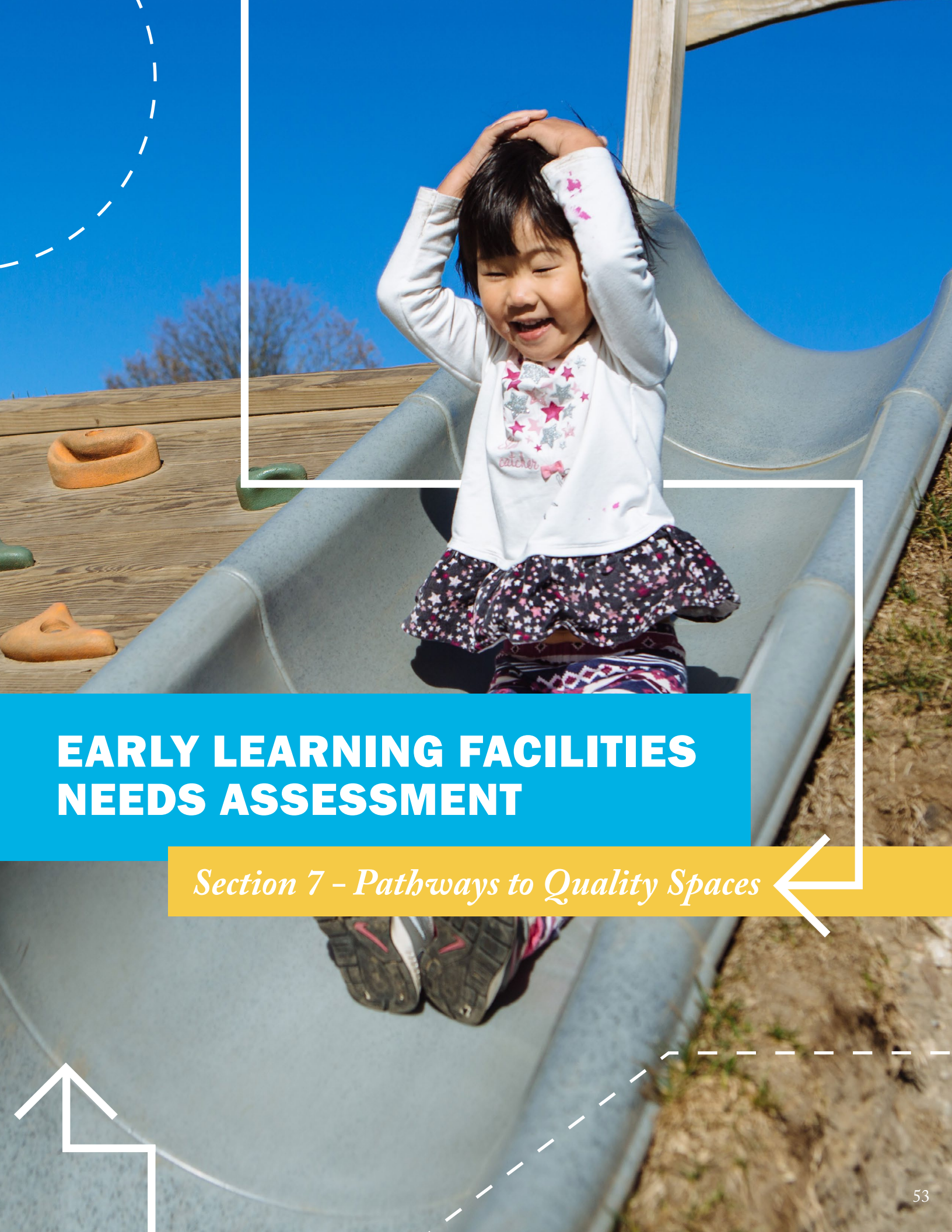
Rally broader support of municipal and state leaders to prioritize reuse of open or underutilized publicly owned spaces for early learning purposes.



“The redevelopment of the abandoned Hope Street School in Woonsocket is proof that almost any space can be made appropriate for early learning. Most people, looking at that building, in the state of deterioration it had reached would have not seen early learning as a natural use. But with the right vision, careful planning, a team of professionals and robust funding from a variety of sources the transformation occurred. The result, an eyesore was turned into a neighborhood asset and dozens of families now have access to quality early learning.”

- Joe Garlick, Executive Director, NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley

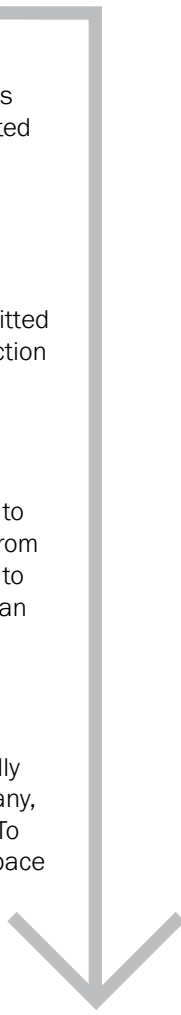





EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 7 - Pathways to Quality Spaces





A fundamental challenge to LISC in conducting this assessment was to consider every type of space that could potentially house child care and early learning programs. In addition to child care spaces as they currently exist, many space types were considered including abandoned buildings on contaminated sites, empty classrooms in public schools, meeting rooms in community buildings, retail sites and prefabricated/modular structures. Through site explorations and case study modeling, LISC, working together with its team of experienced design professionals, determined that most any space can be utilized for child care and early learning so long as careful planning, time and money are part of the equation. Locations that are currently contaminated can typically be cleaned and readied for use. Meeting rooms in community buildings and classrooms in public schools can be converted and retrofitted to be appropriate for young learners. When land is available, everything from ground up new construction to prefabricated or modular structures can be utilized. In existing community-based early learning facilities themselves, updating and reconfiguring spaces can increase capacity and improve quality. However, are these cost-effective, timely or logical options?

To answer these and other questions, LISC conducted a comprehensive analysis of the requirements to add quality space within a mixed delivery system and determined that costs can vary wildly, ranging from a low of \$26/square foot to improve the quality of an existing community-based or Head Start facility to a high of \$599/square foot to create an innovative new quality facility or do substantial upgrading to an abandoned building. Timelines for these project types are equally disparate, with improvements to existing facilities typically requiring only a few months while constructing new, innovative spaces can take several years.

No one building type holds the answer to all early learning space needs. There are multiple and equally viable opportunities to expand early learning infrastructure but it is vital to note that there are few, if any, readily available spaces in which to offer high quality early learning programming without some cost. To increase access and improve quality in a true mixed delivery system, a mixed pathway approach to space also needs to be considered. On the following pages, this mixed approach is described and modeled.

Child Care Expansion Requires a Multi-faceted Approach

The pathway to expansion of quality early learning facilities is multi-faceted, complex and requires creativity, commitment, funding and strong partnerships.

This section highlights five key strategies, referred to here as pathways, that can help lead to the expansion of quality child care and early learning spaces.

Each pathway, indicated by a unique icon, will be introduced with a brief analysis that highlights estimated timing and costs, explains what is needed to pursue that particular pathway, reviews both opportunities and challenges that exist within and showcases project examples that illustrate how it can be achieved on the subsequent pages.

These five pathways are:



Capitalize on Existing Space in Community-based **Early Learning Centers & Head Start** Locations



Capitalize on Existing Space in **Public Schools**



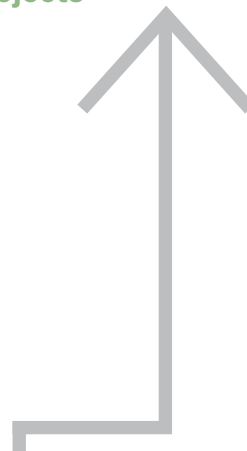
Facilitate **Partnerships** Between High Quality Early Learning Providers Ready to Expand and Community-based Organizations with Available and Appropriate Spaces



Facilitate Strategies that Connect High Quality Early Learning Providers Ready to Expand with Available and Appropriate Spaces in State and **Municipal Buildings**



Initiate Funding Strategies and Innovative Partnerships and Ideas that Build a Strong Pipeline of New **Construction Projects**





Capitalize on Existing Space in Community-based **Early Learning Centers & Head Start** Locations

ANALYSIS

Given the time, expense and complexity of building new space, a **critical priority** is to better support and improve existing facilities and utilize them to the maximum extent possible for the growth of quality programming.

ESTIMATED COSTS & TIMING

Cost Range Per Square Foot: \$26 - \$171 (depending on a number of variables*)

Cost Range Per Slot: \$1,200 - \$10,925 (depending on a number of variables*)

Average Construction Timeframe: 3 - 6 months

WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

- Financial and technical supports to reconfigure spaces to maximize enrollment and improve quality of space
- Financial supports to address health and safety issues in existing spaces
- Creative strategies to explore braided funding models with Head Start
- Focused prioritization and clear mandates on basic health and safety in licensing system
- Strong and consistent licensing to ensure compliance and quality improvement plans to improve safety and quality of facilities overall
- Incentives and supports to convert unused or underutilized spaces for infant/toddler programming
- Flexibility in requirement that state pre-k be offered in the child's community of residence

ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECT EXAMPLES

The Children's Workshop – Lincoln, RI

Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center – Providence, RI

The Children's Workshop (conceptual) – Rumford, RI

Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association Inc., Benoit-Brown Children's Center – Woonsocket, RI

**Variables include but are not limited to: building construction type, building age, local zoning and/or historic planning board requirements, construction duration and phasing, source of funding, prevailing wages, use of general contractor and/or in-house labor, use of project manager, predevelopment/architectural costs, other soft costs, land acquisition, ownership, unforeseen conditions, contingencies, etc.*



Capitalize on Existing Space in Community-based **Early Learning Centers & Head Start** Locations

Opportunities	Challenges
There is already enough built classroom space in Rhode Island to serve 70% of the four-year-old children	Over 60% of existing facilities are suffering from deferred maintenance and need basic upgrades
On average, lowest construction cost per square foot and shortest construction timeframe	More than 90% of outdoor play spaces at existing facilities have safety hazards
All of the existing facilities are appropriately zoned, permitted and free of environmental hazards	Only one in five (21%) facilities is currently rated high quality
Most of these facilities have “good bones” and are structurally sound	Data shows that operators have limited or no financial resources to put towards facility repairs
Many (though not all) existing classrooms meet basic quality space requirements: they are located at ground level and have floor to ceiling walls, activity sinks in classrooms, bathrooms in or adjacent to classrooms and direct natural light in classrooms	Converting preschool to infant/toddler classrooms is not enticing to operators due to lower teacher/child ratios and the resulting loss of operating revenues which can exceed \$50,000 annually per classroom
Many of these facility operators have a demonstrated ability to understand and achieve high quality, particularly when offered an array of appropriate supports, including financial supports	Most of these sites have limited open/unused space for expansion in or next to their buildings
Facilities experiencing declining preschool enrollment can repurpose space for infant/toddler use with minimal capital costs	One in six (16%) community-based centers do not accept CCAP children or participate in the BrightStars quality rating system, yet are the group that are most likely to have buildings in good condition and to have made recent investments in new facilities
Improving and reconfiguring existing built early learning spaces is typically less costly than creating new space	Very few Head Start grantees have readily available building space, though most are willing to secure additional space if time and resources are available
Most existing high quality providers have a wait list for their programs and many are interested in expanding their programs	Head Start classrooms typically serve at least 90% low income children which is in conflict with Rhode Island’s current pre-k blended income model
Existing Head Start providers have a history of successful expansion, securing quality spaces, investing in facilities and accessing federal sources to grow high quality services for at risk children and families. In fact, 43% of high quality centers are operated by Rhode Island’s seven Head Start & Early Head Start grantees. Additional financial support could spur growth in this system	Only one Head Start grantee has a significant physical space restriction to expanding to full-day due to a sheer lack of available quality space and resources to develop that space; however, that grantee also serves the state’s most high needs communities - all other Head Start grantees have the physical space to expand to full-day hours, however some report a resistance to doing so for other (non-space) reasons
Most Head Start grantees still operate some part-day classrooms; however, only one grantee has significant physical space restrictions to expanding to full-day	
Existing Head Start programs score above the national benchmark and are among the highest quality Head Start programs in the U.S. based on classroom observations of teacher/child interactions	



The Children's Workshop

Lincoln, Rhode Island



Building Exterior

Located in a busy office park environment, The Children's Workshop in Lincoln was the oldest, signature location of this multisite for-profit provider. Designed decades ago, the space created challenges with full licensing compliance. Further, the space inhibited quality and reduced operating efficiency.

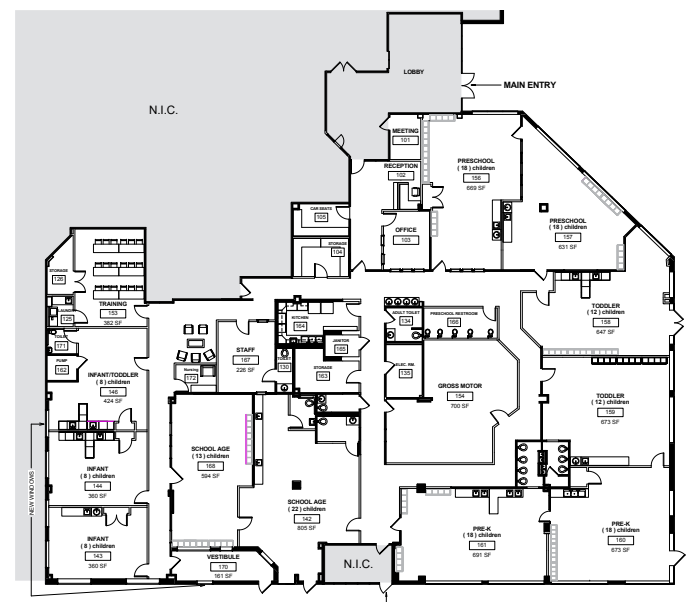
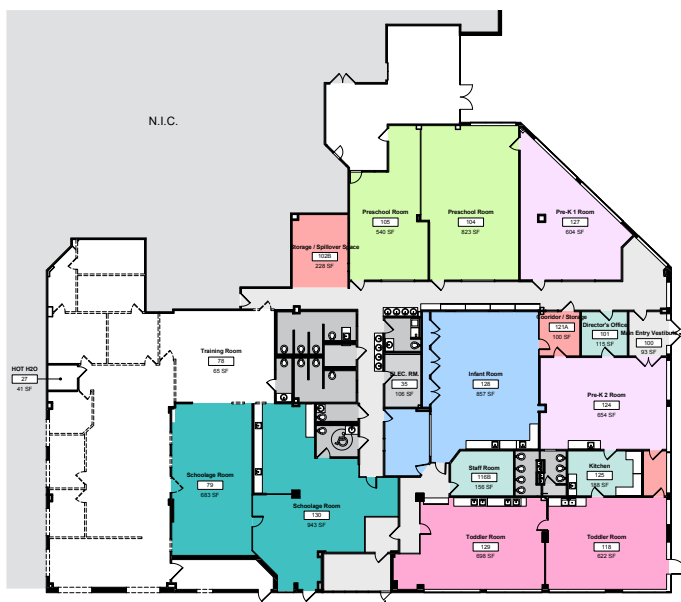
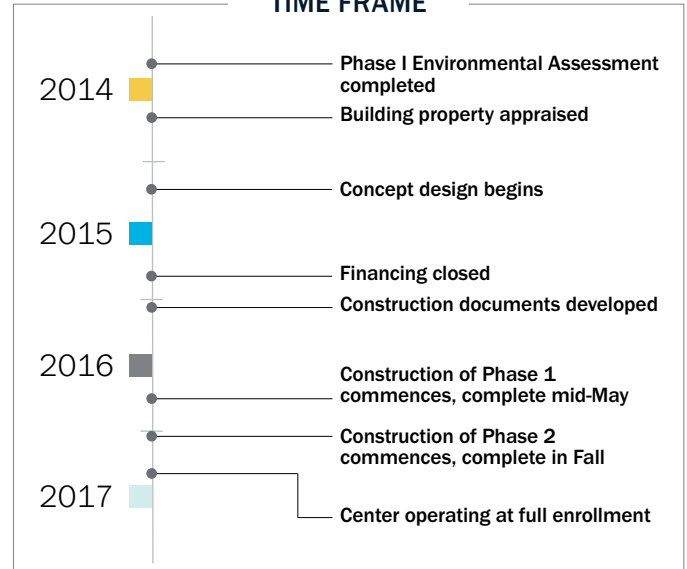
Using a combination of their own equity, grant funding and loan dollars, coupled with 60 hours of technical assistance from LISC staff, The Children's Workshop was able to redesign the space over the course of two years to better support quality and operations. In the process, some adjacent unused space was captured, thus increasing square footage by 30% and making room for 31 additional students. The layout of the center was reconfigured to maximize group size, give all classrooms direct access to natural light, improve access to bathrooms and grow enrollment. Additionally, the playground was relocated to a safer spot, allowing an opportunity for the outdoor space to be enlarged and for new play activities to be integrated.



PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2017
Project Type	Renovation of existing child care space to address issues caused by 2014 remeasurement process
Total Development Cost	\$710,193
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LISC Predevelopment Grants ▪ LISC Loan ▪ Private Funding
Square Footage	15,271 SF
# of Children	164 (133 improved slots, 31 new slots created)
# of Classrooms	5 infant/toddler classrooms 4 preschool/pre-k classrooms 2 school age classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$4,330/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$46/SF

TIME FRAME



Design by Silverman Trykowski Associates



Beautiful Beginnings Child Care Center *Providence, Rhode Island*



Classroom Interior - After

Jammat Housing and Community Development Corporation's Beautiful Beginnings, located on Elmwood Avenue in Providence, provides high quality early learning programming to 150 young children, ages 6 weeks to 5 years, from low income households. The one-story, 14,014 square foot facility, which previously served as a Verizon warehouse and retail store, was purchased in 2003 by Jammat to house Beautiful Beginnings. It required substantial renovations to convert it to its specialized, regulated use. Planning for the conversion was supported with LISC grant dollars and significant technical support.

Prior to moving to the Elmwood Avenue location, Beautiful Beginnings was housed in a small, very challenging leased space located in a strip mall. The move allowed Beautiful Beginnings to nearly double enrollment, substantially improve quality and begin to grow organizational net assets to support future growth. Jammat used organizational savings to purchase the building. A LISC predevelopment grant and additional recoverable grant (zero interest loan) dollars supported the planning process. The building seller provided a loan to Beautiful Beginnings to finance the build out of the site. Two years after Beautiful Beginnings opened, LISC provided a \$600,000 loan allowing Beautiful Beginnings to pay off the higher interest loan to the seller. This loan was later refinanced at even more favorable terms.

When the site opened there was a retail car sales establishment operating in half of the building. Over time, Jammat would take back that space and convert it to use for other agency programming. As Beautiful Beginnings began bursting at the seams with enrollment, they pursued a plan to take over that space and convert it for use as an early learning center. Grant and loan funding through LISC allowed the conversion of that adjacent area into a space that now houses two vibrant pre-k classrooms and enabled growth of infant/toddler programming as an Early Head Start partner site.



PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	Phase 1 - 2007 Phase 2 - 2016
Construction Type	Phase 1 - Adaptive reuse of existing commercial building Phase 2 - Interior expansion of existing child care center
Total Development Cost	Phase 1 - \$1,200,000 Phase 2 - \$100,000
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LISC Predevelopment Grants ▪ LISC Loan ▪ Private Funding
Square Footage	Phase 1 - 14,014 SF Phase 2 - 2,000 SF
# of Children	Phase 1 - 137 Phase 2 - 72
# of Classrooms	8 infant/toddler classrooms 4 preschool/pre-k classrooms 2 school age classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	Phase 1 - \$8,759/child Phase 2 - \$1,388/child
Construction Cost/SF	Phase 1 - \$85/SF Phase 2 - \$50/SF



Building Exterior - Before



Building Exterior - After

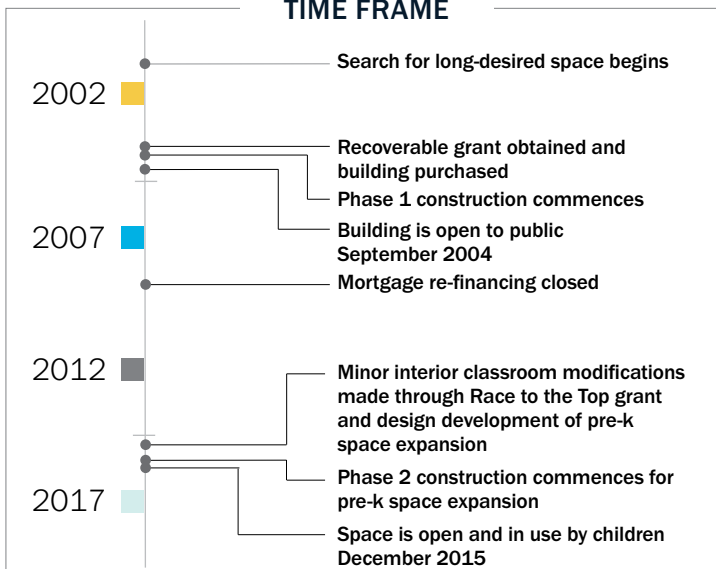


Preschool Restrooms - Under Construction



Playground - After

TIME FRAME





The Children's Workshop

Rumford, Rhode Island

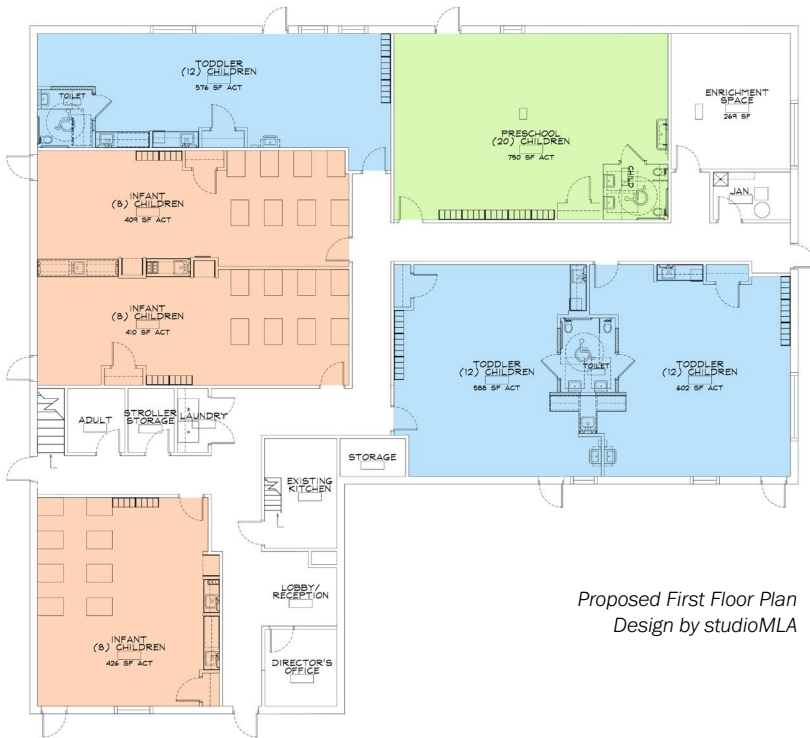


Building Exterior

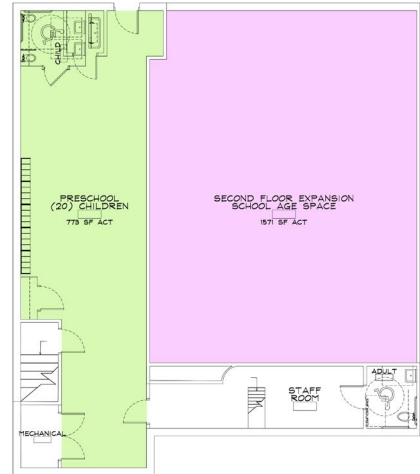
It is no surprise that with readily available buildings already at a premium, many child care centers operate wherever they can find space, even if it is not the most ideal environment. As a former dance studio, The Children's Workshop (TCW)'s facility in Rumford was never designed or intended to be used for child care - a common theme among many centers throughout Rhode Island. High ceiling heights, problematic acoustics and limited access to windows and natural light are just some of the challenges in the space. The building has a large footprint, though in its current configuration ample space goes unused. The site is in an important location and TCW knows many more children could be served. With a vision towards quality and expansion, TCW saw the potential this building had to offer and began exploring a conceptual design to better use the space.

The proposed interior renovation and reconfiguration would reorganize the entire space, reclaiming expansive and wasted square footage while absorbing all of the nooks and crannies that were non-functional. Double story ceiling heights create acoustical challenges but offer potential for creating a second story that could be used to support program expansion.

As a multi-site program operator, TCW is very well aware of the time, expense and complexity of building new space. They also know how challenging it is to find spaces that can work for early care and education. So, even with the expense and many challenges of this type of renovation, TCW believes a sound pathway forward is exploring how to best utilize their already owned space to the maximum extent possible for both growth in capacity and improved program quality.



Proposed First Floor Plan
Design by studioMLA



Proposed Second Floor Plan

PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	Not complete, conceptual only
Construction Type	Interior renovation and total reconfiguration of existing child care center with second floor addition
Estimated Development Cost	\$1,376,640
Square Footage	9,560 SF
# of Children	126 (108 improved slots, 18 new slots created)
# of Classrooms	6 infant/toddler classrooms 2 preschool classrooms 1 school age classroom
Construction Cost/Child	\$10,925/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$144/SF



Classroom Interior - Existing



Benoit-Brown Children's Center

Woonsocket, Rhode Island



Building Exterior

Originally built in 1990, Woonsocket Head Start's Benoit-Brown Children's Center was designed for child care use from the ground up. While state of the art at the time, regulations and standards have shifted over three decades and all buildings require regular maintenance and upgrading to continue to operate as efficiently as possible. Understanding this, Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association (WHSCDA)'s Benoit-Brown Center prioritized a complete interior renovation in 2017 to upgrade the facility.

With the exception of some playground and HVAC upgrades, no major renovations had been made to the center since its original construction. This renovation project included overall upgrades and cosmetic improvements to classrooms, children's bathrooms, offices and the kitchen. Other reconfiguration benefits included creating better sight lines and supervision, improving access to the outdoors, redesigning spaces to better serve infants and toddlers, upgrading the efficiency of fixtures, maximizing available square footage, repairing the roof, adding compliant safety surfacing and simple cosmetic changes, all to help ensure the continued quality of programming.

The construction was completed throughout the summer and reopened in time for the start of the 2017-2018 school year.



PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2017
Construction Type	Renovation of existing child care space to improve overall condition and flow of space
Total Development Cost	\$448,000
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LISC Predevelopment Grants ▪ LISC Loan ▪ Private Funding
Square Footage	7,000 SF
# of Children	74 improved slots
# of Classrooms	4 infant/toddler classrooms 2 preschool classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$6,054/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$64/SF

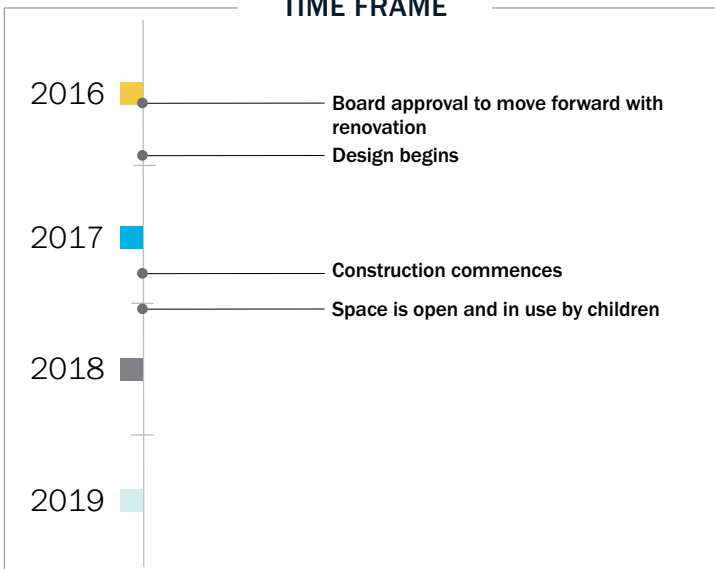


Classroom Interior - During Construction



Classroom Interior - After

TIME FRAME





Capitalize on Existing Space in **Public Schools**

ANALYSIS

Another **critical priority** is to capitalize on the existing space and resources available through the public schools and to support partnerships between public schools and quality early care and education providers.

ESTIMATED COSTS & TIMING

Cost Range Per Square Foot: \$50 - \$457 (depending on a number of variables*)

Cost Range Per Slot: \$2,500 - \$12,250 (depending on a number of variables*)

Average Construction Timeframe: 6 - 12 months

WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

- Greater engagement with all Local Education Agencies (LEA) to prioritize early learning space as part of overall strategic and capital improvement plans in a variety of ways that include, state pre-k, community partnerships, on-site child care and more
- Supports and incentives for partnerships between LEAs and quality community-based early learning providers
- Greater incentives for LEAs to include early learning space in facility funding applications
- More thorough understanding of actual usable space available in each district and its suitability for early learning use

ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECT EXAMPLES

Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association Inc. Partnership with the Woonsocket Education Department at Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School – Woonsocket, RI
Edward R. Martin Middle School – East Providence, RI
Nathanael Greene Elementary School – Pawtucket, RI

**Variables include but are not limited to: building construction type, building age, local zoning and/or historic planning board requirements, construction duration and phasing, source of funding, prevailing wages, use of general contractor and/or in-house labor, use of project manager, predevelopment/architectural costs, other soft costs, land acquisition, ownership, unforeseen conditions, contingencies, etc.*



Capitalize on Existing Space in **Public Schools**

Opportunities	Challenges
<p>Many of Rhode Island’s school districts, also known as Local Education Agencies (LEAs), have experienced declining enrollment over the past two decades which may have resulted in available classroom space</p>	<p>Nine out of ten (87%) of Rhode Island’s public school buildings are in poor repair</p>
<p>On average, second lowest construction cost per square foot and second shortest construction time frame</p>	<p>Recent estimates show it would take \$627.6 million to get public school buildings warm, safe and dry</p>
<p>Funding mechanisms are already in place to support school construction and renovation</p>	<p>The current scale and design of many public school buildings is not an ideal learning environment for very young children</p>
<p>Of the 30 public schools with preschool classrooms that participate in Rhode Island’s quality rating program, 12 are rated “4” or “5” stars - demonstrating an ability to understand and achieve high quality</p>	<p>Few public school buildings have classroom spaces that are ideal for early learning use without modifications, such as the addition of sinks and bathrooms and the development of appropriate outdoor space</p>
<p>Neighborhood public schools are often in locations that are convenient for families</p>	<p>Because pre-k has historically been prioritized in only a few districts, not all district leadership is fully engaged in planning for pre-k expansion</p>
<p>Many public school buildings have adjacent land which may allow for building expansion or opportunities for creative modular or prefabricated building options</p>	<p>School districts currently serve only a small percentage of Rhode Island’s preschool age children, make up a small percent of Rhode Island’s existing state pre-k classrooms, offer little or no full-day/year-round programming for working families and typically do not offer programming for infants and toddlers</p>
<p>Public school buildings are secure and are appropriately zoned, permitted and generally free of environmental hazards</p>	<p>Per square foot construction costs in this model vary and tend to be high for new and major construction depending on procurement requirements</p>
<p>In addition to offering pre-k programming, LEAs could offer on-site child care for employees, students and the community</p>	<p>The report, <i>State of Rhode Island Schoolhouses</i>, examined school utilization rates and determined that most were already above optimal space utilization levels, with elementary schools showing the greatest levels of crowding</p>
<p>There is a high potential for innovative partnership models with quality early education providers where school spaces are made available to quality partners experienced in delivering early learning services</p>	
<p>Early learning programs on-site in public school buildings can offer more seamless transition processes as children enter kindergarten</p>	
<p>Public school districts often have the ability to shift classrooms and children across buildings to free up space</p>	



Woonsocket Head Start at Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School

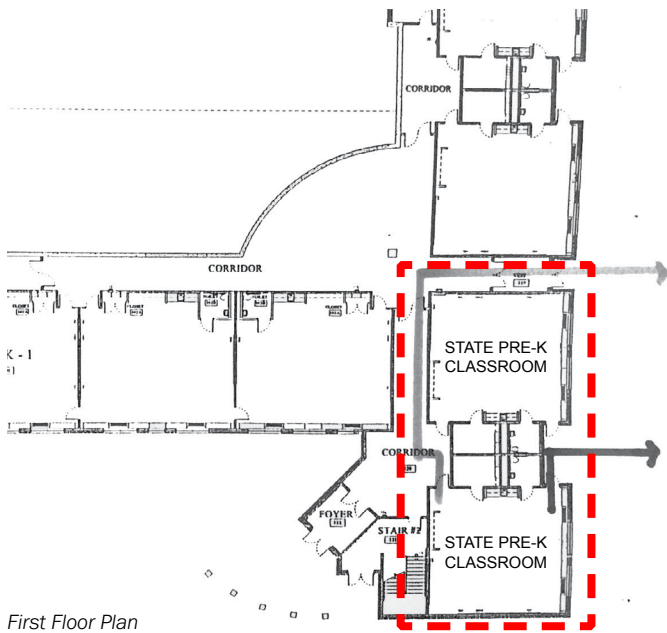
Woonsocket, Rhode Island



Building Exterior

The Woonsocket Education Department recognized that a partnership with Head Start would create more quality pre-k opportunities, enhance transition practices, provide on-site comprehensive services and better support and engage families in their town. As a result, the Education Department rearranged space at the Governor Aram J. Pothier Elementary School to enable the Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association (WHSCDA) to occupy two rooms for pre-kindergarten programming.

As is typical with K-12 classrooms, the available space at the Pothier School was not designed for use by pre-k students. Among the required updates were the addition of toilets and sinks to meet the bathroom regulations for younger children. The renovations were funded through available school construction funds. Future plans include upgrades to the outdoor play space.



First Floor Plan



Classroom Interior - Before

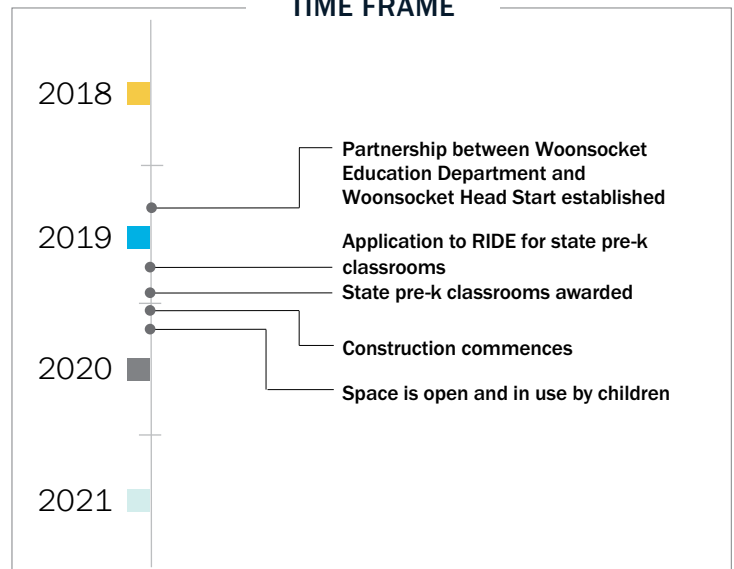


Playground - Existing

PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2019
Construction Type	Renovation of existing school classrooms for state pre-k
Total Development Cost	\$90,000
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School Department Funds ▪ School Building Authority (SBA) Funding
Square Footage	1,800 SF
# of Children	36
# of Classrooms	2 state pre-k classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$2,500/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$50/SF

TIME FRAME





Edward R. Martin Middle School

East Providence, Rhode Island



Building Exterior

As part of the mission to build early childhood education access for all four year olds in East Providence, the East Providence School District enthusiastically pursued funding to operate Rhode Island Department of Education's state pre-kindergarten classrooms. In 2016, they were awarded seven new classrooms. Five of these new classrooms were to be housed in a then vacant portion of the Edward R. Martin Middle School.

While the space was open and available, it was not appropriate for pre-kindergarten programming in its current state. In order to get the classrooms up and running and appropriate for early learning, interior modifications were necessary including: replacement of all ceiling tiles in all of the classrooms, installation of new windows for access to natural light, new restroom facilities separate from use by any other portion of the building (which required major concrete trenching) and installation of fencing and gates to create a safe and secure outdoor environment.



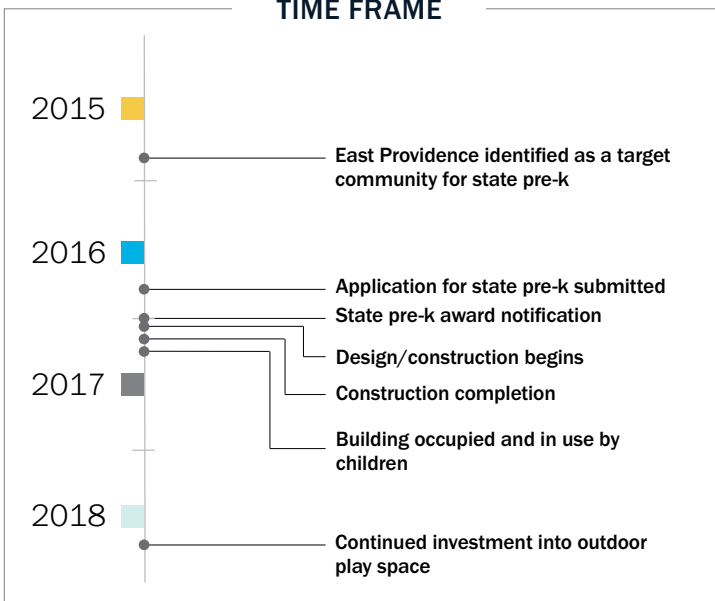
PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2016
Construction Type	Interior renovation of masonry building
Total Development Cost	\$278,394
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	School District Facility Building Reserves
Square Footage	3,780 SF
# of Children	90
# of Classrooms	5 state pre-k classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$3,093/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$73/SF



Classroom Interior - After

TIME FRAME



Plumbing Trench in Corridor - During Construction



Nathanael Greene Elementary School

Pawtucket, Rhode Island



Building Exterior

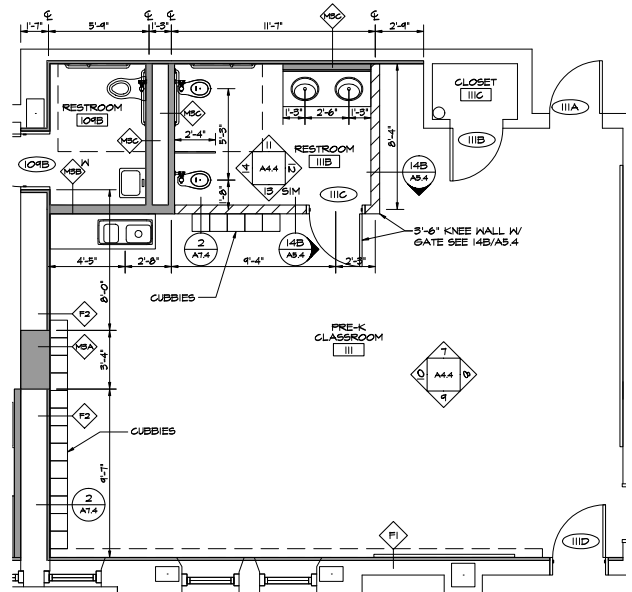
Part of the comprehensive \$56M bonded master plan for health and safety improvements at Pawtucket schools included a complete overhaul and renovation of Nathanael Greene Elementary School, completed in 2018. Renovations included significant improvements to all classrooms, bathrooms, office and ancillary spaces, building envelope and systems in the 65,217 square foot school which was constructed in 1916.

With a financial incentive to include early education from the resources available through the Rhode Island Department of Education's School Building Authority, the Pawtucket School Department capitalized on this by including two dedicated preschool spaces in the design plan. Having had much success with operating state pre-k classrooms at other schools in Pawtucket, the Department saw an opportunity to create high quality preschool at Nathanael Greene by including toilet facilities within the classrooms and near-direct access to the outdoor playground.

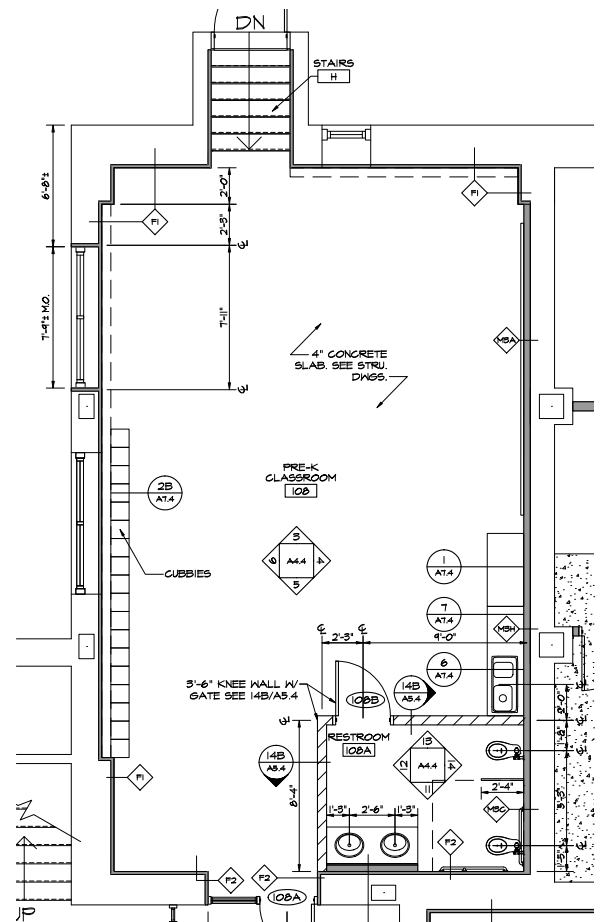


PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2018
Construction Type	Total building renovation of existing school
Development Cost	\$340,000 (pre-k spaces only - total development project cost is estimated at \$13,700,000)
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School District Facility Building Reserves Bond School Building Authority (SBA) Funding
Square Footage	1,617 SF
# of Children	36
# of Classrooms	2 state pre-k classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$9,444/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$210/SF



First Floor Plan - Pre-K Classroom 1
Design by Torrado Architects



First Floor Plan - Pre-K Classroom 2



Classroom Interior - After



Facilitate **Partnerships** Between High Quality Early Learning Providers Ready to Expand and Community-based Organizations with Available and Appropriate Spaces

ANALYSIS

An **important priority** is to explore whether non-profit, community-based organizations (CBOs) that work at a local level to improve the lives of residents may offer valuable partnership opportunities with early care and education providers by providing underutilized space for child care programming that aligns with the CBO's mission and potentially meets a need for their clientele.

ESTIMATED COSTS & TIMING

Cost Range Per Square Foot: \$115 - \$300 (depending on a number of variables*)

Cost Range Per Slot: \$7,111 - \$22,700 (depending on a number of variables*)

Average Construction Timeframe: 1 - 2 years

WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

- Facilitated collaboration to help connect quality providers to available community space
- Training on building effective collaboration and partnership, including co-location, for early education and non-profit leaders
- Funding pool for retrofitting community space for use by early learning for projects meeting key criteria (quality, targeted locations and populations, etc.)

ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECT EXAMPLES

Children's Friend at Dorcas International – Providence, RI

Center for Southeast Asians (conceptual) – Providence, RI

Child & Family (conceptual) – Providence, RI

**Variables include but are not limited to: building construction type, building age, local zoning and/or historic planning board requirements, construction duration and phasing, source of funding, prevailing wages, use of general contractor and/or in-house labor, use of project manager, predevelopment/architectural costs, other soft costs, land acquisition, ownership, unforeseen conditions, contingencies, etc.*



Facilitate **Partnerships** Between High Quality Early Learning Providers Ready to Expand and Community-based Organizations with Available and Appropriate Spaces

Opportunities	Challenges
<p>Many community-based non-profit organizations, including community centers, human service organizations, health organizations, churches and nursing homes have underutilized space in their existing buildings; making space available for early learning use could generate revenue for the CBO while also fostering collaborative programming</p>	<p>Space will still need to be renovated to be appropriate for early learning use and neither the CBO nor the early learning provider may have access to sufficient resources to do so</p>
<p>Co-location of quality mission aligned programming fosters better and more comprehensive services to families and the community with multiple programs, including early learning, under one roof</p>	<p>Building security can be uniquely challenging in shared spaces</p>
<p>Provides a potential opportunity for established high quality early learning providers to expand programming to new locations without the complexity of a new facility construction project</p>	<p>Unless very long-term leases are offered it creates instability for the early learning facility and can be challenging to secure grants or loans to build out the space</p>
<p>Community-based organizations often own their buildings and most are conveniently located, often with parking and bus route access</p>	<p>CBO is unlikely to want to operate the program and finding an appropriate, quality provider to match with them can create unique challenges</p>
<p>There are examples of successful partnerships between CBOs (such as health organizations and non-profit hospitals) and early care and education providers bubbling up across the country</p>	<p>The current system and timing for selecting, awarding and starting up new pre-k classrooms creates a barrier to this model which takes time, both to foster the partnership and to develop the space</p>
<p>Economies of scale can be achieved with multi-site quality providers sharing leadership, back-office supports, purchasing power and more</p>	



Children's Friend at Dorcas International *Providence, Rhode Island*



Building Exterior

Many non-profit community-based organizations (CBOs), especially human service organizations, have underutilized space in their existing buildings due to changes in programmatic funding. Seeing the opportunity to generate revenue, fill a client need and foster a collaborative, like-missioned partnership, Dorcas International Institute of Rhode Island and Children's Friend combined efforts to open one preschool classroom in an unused wing at Dorcas International's inner city Providence location.

Dorcas International works to empower refugees and immigrants in the Providence community by providing vital programs and services for legal aid and representation for citizenship and immigration, refugee resettlement and education to help the population it serves to thrive and be successful. Many of their clients needed and requested child care services in order to take full advantage of the organization's offerings. Knowing they didn't have the capacity to provide high quality child care, they partnered with Children's Friend, a high quality early education program operator who had been seeking additional space, to provide this service on site.

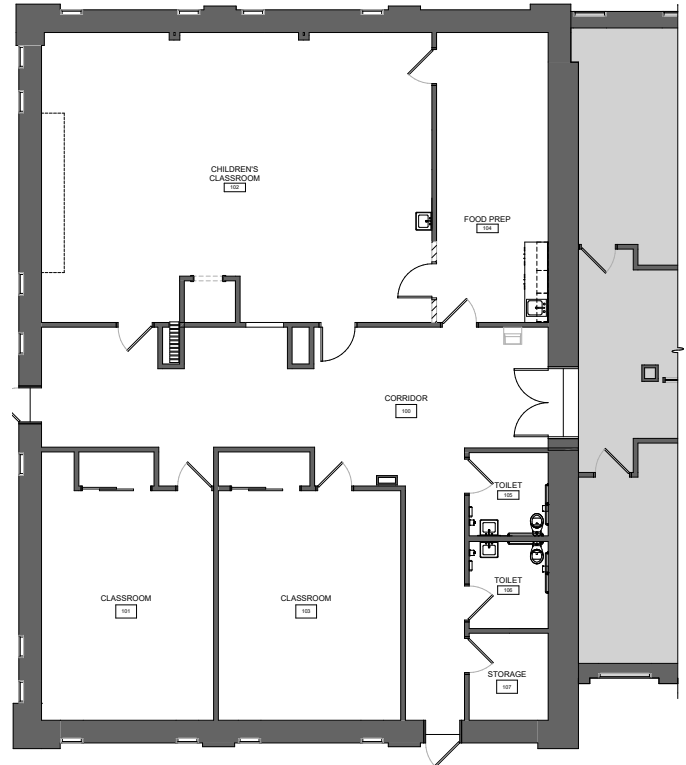
The open space with already adjacent bathrooms required only minimal upgrades to make it usable for preschool programming. The most significant change was to the outside, where 11 parking spaces were absorbed to create a safe and secure outdoor play space.

There are future plans to expand much-needed infant and toddler child care programming using other available space at this location.



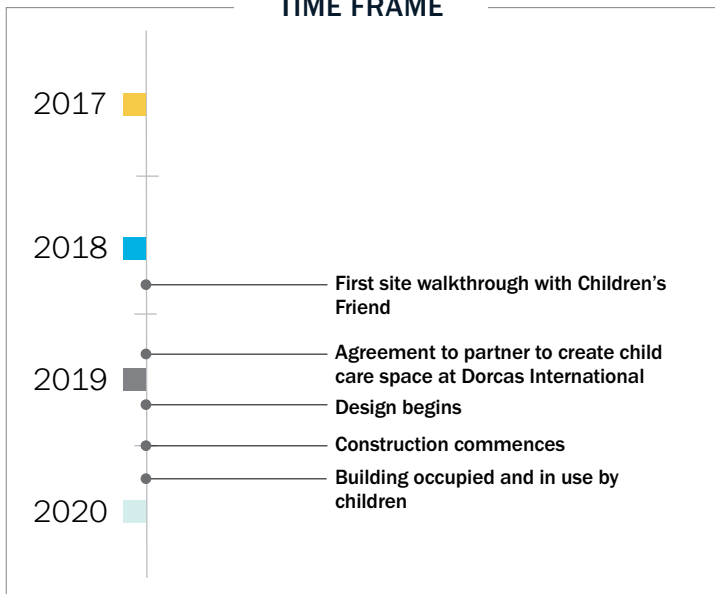
PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2019
Construction Type	Interior renovation
Total Development Cost	\$128,000
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Donations ▪ Private Funds (shared between the two partnering agencies)
Square Footage	630 SF
# of Children	18
# of Classrooms	1 preschool classroom
Construction Cost/Child	\$7,111/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$203/SF



First Floor Plan
Design by Vision 3 Architects

TIME FRAME



Classroom Interior - After



Center for Southeast Asians

Providence, Rhode Island



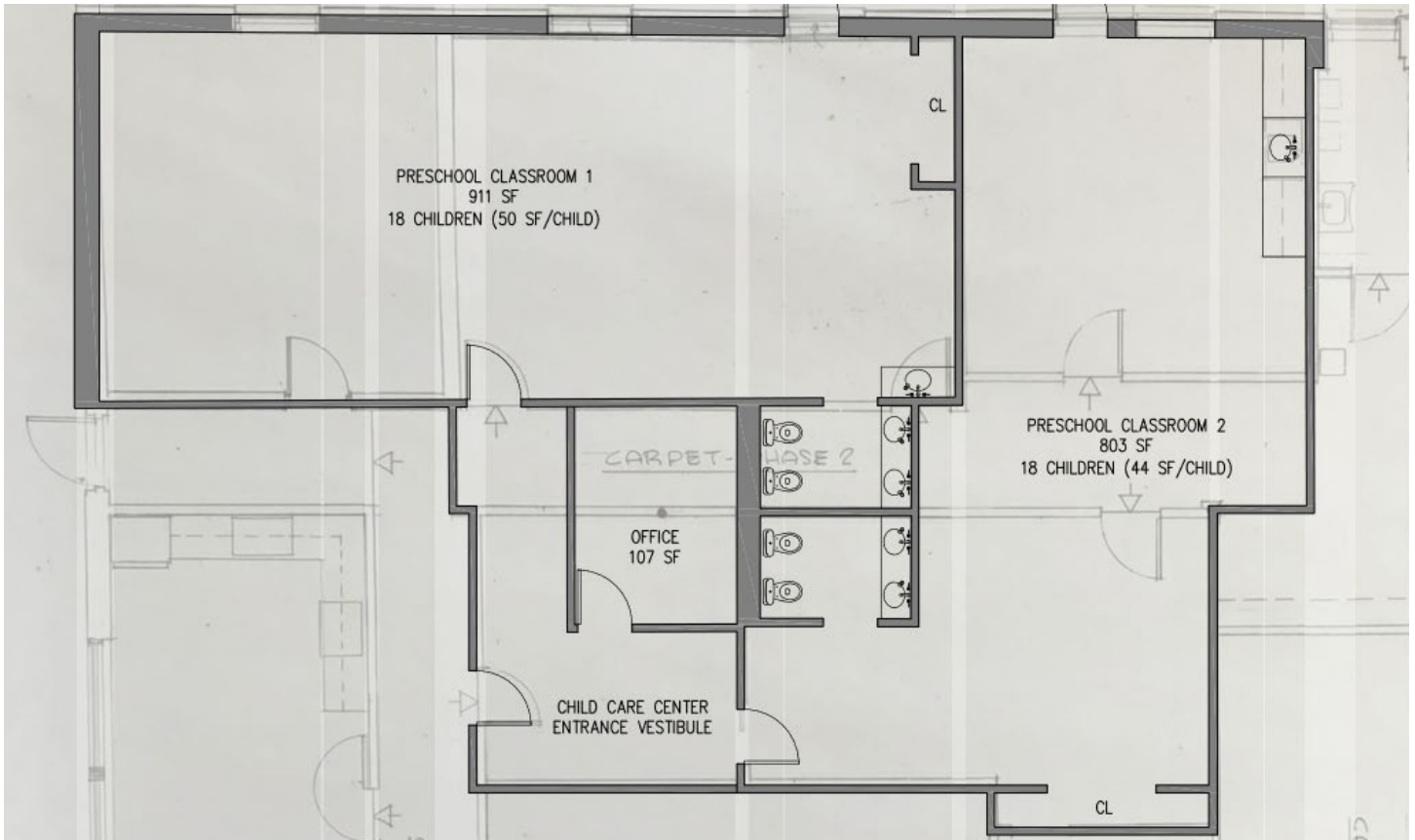
Building Exterior

The Center for Southeast Asians (CSEA), located in Providence, is a community-based organization working to promote the prosperity, heritage and leadership of Southeast Asians in Rhode Island. The center owns a single story building that is currently less than half occupied with programming on most days. The building, located in a key neighborhood on a bus route and near complementary activities, is an ideal location for early learning programming.

The addition of early learning classrooms to the CSEA site would not only maximize building potential but would provide an important service to the community and CSEA clientele in a facility where families already feel welcomed and are comfortable receiving services. Efficiently utilizing the site could also have the added benefit of generating additional revenues, critical in a shrinking resource environment. Trying to determine the best way to serve their clientele while also striving to find other ways to generate income, the CSEA began plan development for adding on-site child care that could 1) help stabilize the agency and 2) provide a much needed service for participants, as well as the local community.

The concept plan reconfigures a portion of the building, creating two preschool classrooms with toilet facilities in the classrooms, direct access to a newly created outside play space and a separate and secure entry to the child care wing. All of this would occur in a portion of the building that is currently empty the majority of the time.

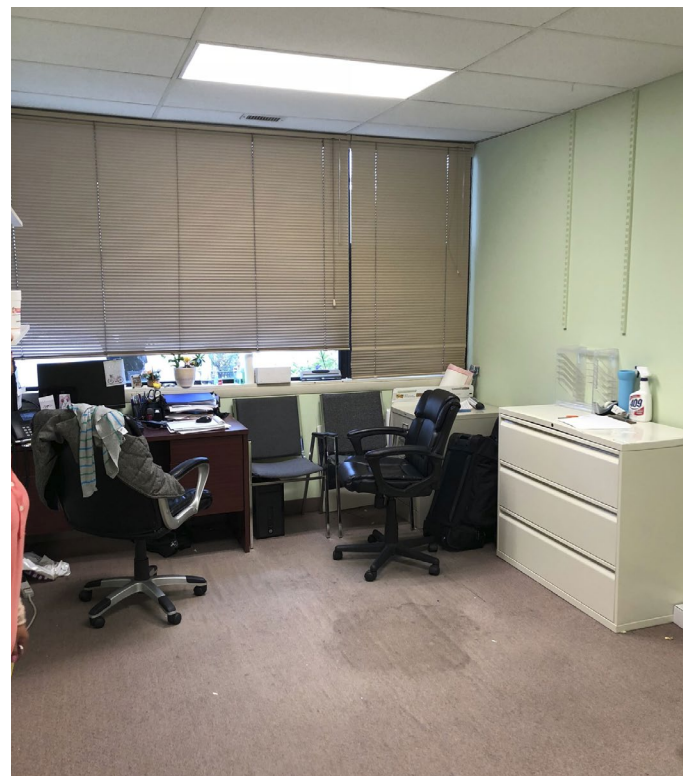
This project is an ideal way to facilitate partnerships between high quality early learning providers who are ready to expand and community-based organizations with available space. Rather than entering the early learning programming arena, something CSEA is not experienced in, they could instead rent the space. This would generate revenue for them, provide needed space for an established provider and offer child and family programming under one roof.



Proposed First Floor Plan

PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	Not complete, conceptual only
Construction Type	Interior renovation
Estimated Development Cost	\$449,280
Square Footage	3,744 SF
# of Children	36
# of Classrooms	2 preschool classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$12,480/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$120/SF



Interior - Existing



Building Exterior

Child & Family, a non-profit organization whose mission is to strengthen individuals, families and the communities in which they live operates programs throughout Rhode Island. For years, Child & Family has operated a successful high quality early learning center in Middletown, RI. While this center provides essential services to that community, services are lacking for the families they serve in their Providence location.

Child & Family operates programming from a space in the heart of Providence in a brick office building they own. The building, while ideally located, is not being optimized in its use. With an eye on mission and community need, Child & Family is exploring ways to take advantage of that space, including reconfiguring for use as an early learning center.

By Child & Family exploring the current use of their oversized brick office building with the help of an architect experienced in early learning design, they have developed a proposed plan that can potentially add a total of 132 children from infant to school age in this prime Providence location. This is a great use of space in a location that is starved for high quality, affordable care.



Facilitate Strategies that Connect High Quality Early Learning Providers Ready to Expand with Available and Appropriate Spaces in State and **Municipal Buildings**

ANALYSIS

Another **important priority** is the strategic exploration of available state- and municipally-owned buildings for use by existing early learning providers. Where appropriate publicly funded space is available and unused, utilizing it for a public good such as early learning programming is a sound strategy.

ESTIMATED COSTS & TIMING

Cost Range Per Square Foot: \$156 - \$401 (depending on a number of variables*)
Cost Range Per Slot: \$20,000 - \$54,807 (depending on a number of variables*)
Average Construction Timeframe: 1 - 2 years

WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

- Predevelopment assessment of available properties conducted at state or municipal expense with subsequent RFP made available for potential developers and/or providers
- Engage municipal leaders to embrace the importance of early education in an effort to encourage implementation of policies that support early education, including; zoning, property tax policies and the prioritized use of municipal spaces
- Provide technical support to quality early learning providers to help them approach and engage with municipal leaders around available space

ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECT EXAMPLES

Children's Friend at Althea Street – Providence, RI
Connecting for Children & Families, Hope Street Child Care Center – Woonsocket, RI
Triplett Preschool (conceptual) – Newport, RI

**Variables include but are not limited to: building construction type, building age, local zoning and/or historic planning board requirements, construction duration and phasing, source of funding, prevailing wages, use of general contractor and/or in-house labor, use of project manager, predevelopment/architectural costs, other soft costs, land acquisition, ownership, unforeseen conditions, contingencies, etc.*



Facilitate Strategies that Connect High Quality Early Learning Providers Ready to Expand with Available and Appropriate Spaces in State and **Municipal Buildings**

Opportunities	Challenges
Available space already exists in state and municipal buildings in many cities and towns	In some cases, estimated construction costs can exceed \$400 per square foot
Space in state and municipal buildings could be made available at significantly reduced site acquisition cost	Only a handful of Rhode Island city and town leaders have shown historical interest in prioritizing supports for community-based early learning providers. In fact, only five communities responded to our request for information about potentially available open spaces for early learning use
State and municipal buildings are often in locations that are convenient for families and many may have adjacent open land	Co-location in an active state or municipal building can be challenging due to security, incompatible programming, etc.
Maximizes use of publicly owned and funded buildings for the public good	Unused state or municipal buildings are often in a state of disrepair, yielding them unusable as early learning facilities without great expense
Could provide opportunities for multiple complementary programs under one roof such as senior centers with early learning centers promoting inter-generational programming or classrooms in library spaces, making use of underutilized spaces in buildings	Unless very long-term lease arrangements are made, this type of space creates operating instability
This partnership could potentially better engage municipalities in prioritizing supports for early learning programs	Decommissioned state and municipal properties may be better suited for private developers for higher-return uses. <i>However, proceeds from property sales could be contributed to a pool of funds for early learning facility use</i>
	The current system and timing for selecting, awarding and starting up new pre-k classrooms creates a barrier to this model which takes time, both to foster the partnership and to develop the space



Children's Friend at Althea Street *Providence, Rhode Island*



The former Althea Street School and Asa Messer Annex, closed in 2012, was a dilapidated, unsafe eyesore in the West End of Providence. With a need to expand their services and a willing partner in the City of Providence who shared a vision for increasing access to quality early education programming, Children's Friend took on the challenge to renovate and transform the building into a center of excellence housing Head Start, child care and pre-kindergarten programs. The costly project was made feasible by an array of funds, including a \$4.3M federal Head Start grant, small donations and grants and private funding, all while navigating the unique challenges a historic building presents.

The renovation of the two-story brick building that now houses seven classrooms each with their own restroom facilities, a community play space, food preparation area, a nurse's office and other administration spaces included: total masonry façade restoration, abatement of hazardous materials, an addition for the new entrance, lobby and elevator, full accessibility, updated HVAC systems, enhanced security and fire protection, new parking and a new playground.

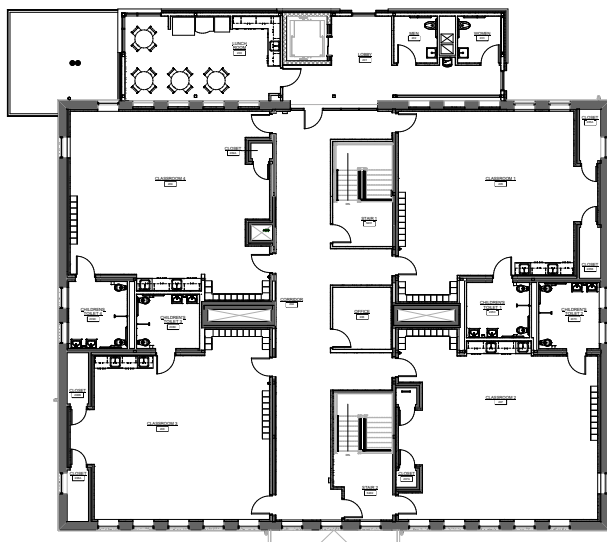
This project truly embodies the "it takes a village" mentality and is the result of a collaboration with Children's Friend, the West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA), the West Side Play Space (WSPS), City Council members and Rhode Island's Congressional delegation who all helped with various City Council, building permit and historic approvals.

This space not only increases child care capacity, but also restores a deteriorating community asset and acts as a hub of positive activity in the neighborhood.



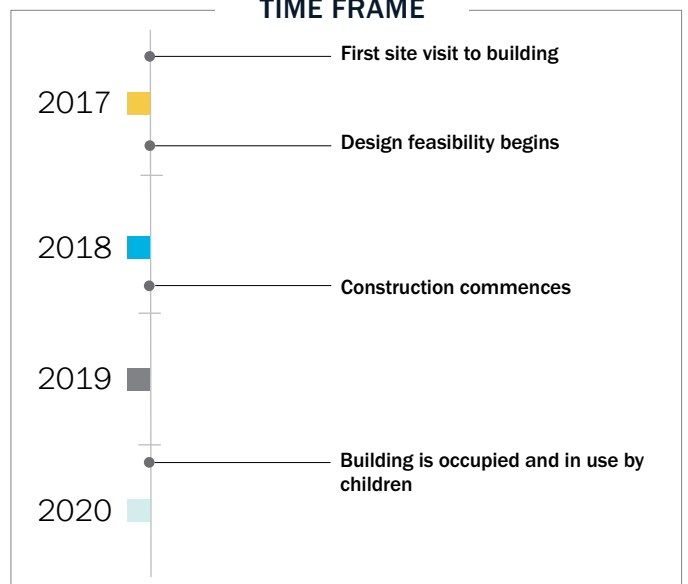
PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2019
Construction Type	Adaptive reuse of existing vacant, masonry building with historic preservation
Total Development Cost	\$6,900,000
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Grants Federal Head Start Grants Donations Private Funding
Square Footage	21,380 SF
# of Children	126
# of Classrooms	7 preschool classrooms serving 3, 4 and 5 year olds
Construction Cost/Child	\$54,761/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$322/SF



*Second Floor Plan
Design by Vision 3 Architects*

TIME FRAME





Connecting for Children & Families, Hope Street Child Care Center *Woonsocket, Rhode Island*



Building Exterior

The Hope Street School, a landmark of Woonsocket's Constitution Hill neighborhood and a building on the National Register of Historic Places, had been closed since 1977 when NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley (NWBRV), a non-profit community development corporation, proposed to renovate and revive the vacant and deteriorating space. In collaboration with neighborhood residents and the Historic Preservation Commission, NWBRV was able to move forward with plans to convert the school into a community facility that could meet the needs of an area with high levels of economic distress by housing a child care center and community programming.

With a total development cost of \$5,700,000, the project faced challenges in securing financing. In addition to investment by Bank of America, LISC Rhode Island provided a \$95,000 recoverable grant and an \$850,000 loan to fill a gap in project fundraising efforts. A \$4,400,000 LISC New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC) allocation mixed equity and debt- the equity being used to obtain state and federal historic tax credits. This was the first use of NMTC to support a child care project in the nation.

The facility, upon completion, was leased to Connecting for Children and Families (CCF), a well-respected local non-profit that provides a variety of family service programs. CCF's child care program at the Hope Street School provides a safe, nurturing environment for some of the community's most at risk population, young children from low income homes. What was previously a blighting influence in the neighborhood is now a vital community resource and a highly visible mark of the area's revitalization thanks to the efforts of NWBRV.



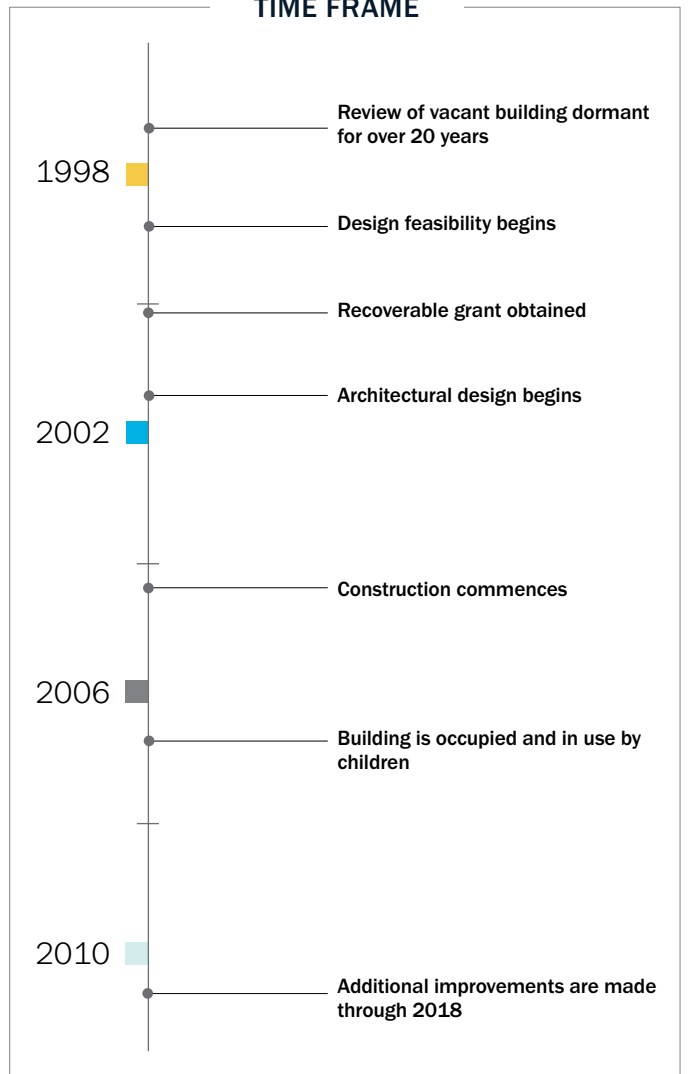
PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2006
Construction Type	Adaptive reuse of vacant masonry building with significant renovation in partnership with CDC
Total Development Cost	\$5,700,000
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contributions ▪ Government Grants ▪ Recoverable Grants ▪ New Market Tax Credits ▪ Debt
Square Footage	14,200 SF
# of Children	104
# of Classrooms	2 toddler classrooms 2 preschool classrooms 2 state pre-k classrooms 1 school age classroom
Construction Cost/Child	\$54,807/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$401/SF



Playground - After

TIME FRAME



Building Exterior - Before



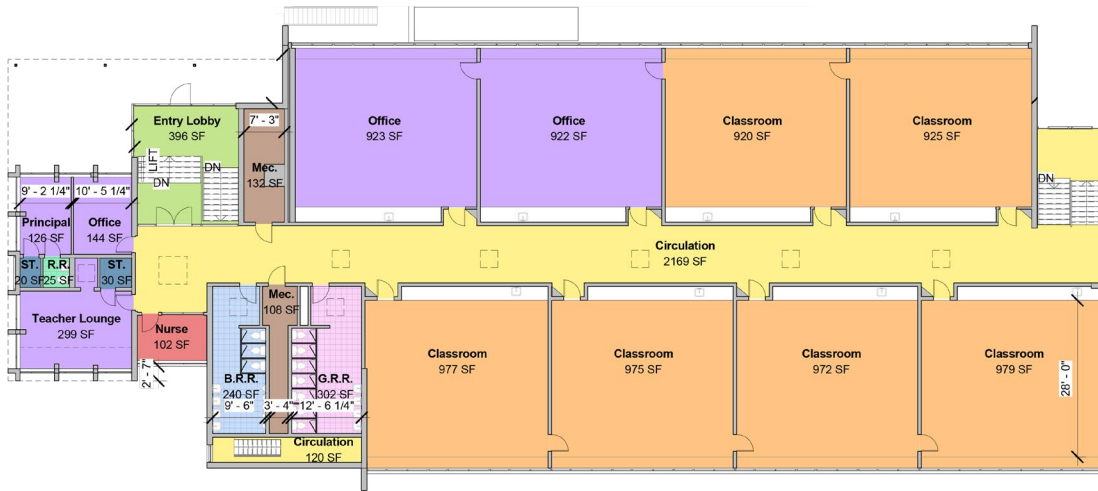
Triplett Preschool

Newport, Rhode Island



In 2014, the East Bay Community Action Program, in collaboration with Newport Public Schools, conducted a feasibility study to evaluate the potential for repurposing the closed George H. Triplett School located on 435 Broadway in Newport, RI, into a preschool center offering pre-k and Head Start programming. This was spurred by the lack of available and appropriate space for early childhood programming which was inhibiting program growth.

Bringing the 25,365 square foot Triplett School (circa 1960) up to modern standards and codes and making it appropriate for very young children included basic infrastructure repairs and modernizations such as the addition of an elevator, full sprinklering of the building and replacement of HVAC systems. Completed, the facility was designed to house a total of 12 classrooms, each with direct access to restrooms. The plan also incorporated appropriate outdoor play spaces and improved parking and circulation. Projected costs prohibited the project from moving forward.



Proposed First Floor Plan
Design by Newport Collaborative Architects

PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	Not complete, conceptual only
Construction Type	Adaptive reuse of vacant building
Estimated Development Cost	\$9,971,254
Square Footage	25,365 SF
# of Children	216
# of Classrooms	12 preschool classrooms serving 3, 4 and 5 year olds
Construction Cost/Child	\$46,163/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$393/SF





Initiate Funding Strategies and Innovative Partnerships and Ideas that Build a Strong Pipeline of New **Construction Projects**

ANALYSIS

A final **essential priority** is to build out a robust strategy that includes funding mechanisms to support the development of innovative new spaces in the form of ground-up new construction, total rehab of existing structures, modular construction and other “out of the box” classroom concepts. This should particularly focus on new spaces built through partnerships with real estate developers, private businesses, healthcare organizations and other non-traditional early learning partners.

ESTIMATED COSTS & TIMING

Cost Range Per Square Foot: \$85 - \$599 (depending on a number of variables*)

Cost Range Per Slot: \$8,740 - \$60,000 (depending on a number of variables*)

Average Construction Timeframe: 1 - 2 years for construction + up to 3 years for planning and predevelopment

WHAT'S NEEDED FOR SUCCESS

- Access to grant capital for projects meeting certain criteria (quality, target populations, innovative partnerships, model spaces, etc.)
- Assistance securing appropriate properties can be accomplished through land banks
- Predevelopment assistance as available through the SBA to LEAs
- Incentives for developers and businesses to partner with early learning providers to create early learning facilities
- Tax incentive programs that make early learning space a more viable component of a mixed use real estate project
- Strategies created in partnership with RIHousing for incentivizing the co-location of housing and child care, including set-asides of family child care space in new developments
- Robust online platform to connect available properties, interested quality providers, funding opportunities and potential real estate developers

ILLUSTRATIVE PROJECT EXAMPLES

King Street Commons (conceptual) – Providence, RI

East Bay Community Action Program – Newport, RI

Dr. Daycare at a Former Parochial School (conceptual) – Woonsocket, RI

**Variables include but are not limited to: building construction type, building age, local zoning and/or historic planning board requirements, construction duration and phasing, source of funding, prevailing wages, use of general contractor and/or in-house labor, use of project manager, predevelopment/architectural costs, other soft costs, land acquisition, ownership, unforeseen conditions, contingencies, etc.*



Initiate Funding Strategies and Innovative Partnerships and Ideas that Build a Strong Pipeline of New **Construction Projects**

Opportunities	Challenges
<p>Planning and building space specifically designed for early learning use offers the best opportunity to design for quality and program success</p>	<p>There are very few ideal sites in Rhode Island for new space development and where they exist they are generally costly</p>
<p>Building for early learning use from the ground up is often the most cost effective way to create quality space that fully meets program needs, offers cost effective operation and provides stability</p>	<p>Successful, quality child care facilities projects typically take four to five years to complete from concept to reality and estimated construction costs can approach \$600 per square foot</p>
<p>Some of the most effective and innovative early learning facility projects developed in Rhode Island were done by partnerships between non-profit real estate developers and quality early learning providers. These partnerships capitalize on the strengths of each partner. Having an experienced developer engaged negates the regulatory challenges often faced by early learning providers less experienced in navigating all of the aspects of a real estate project</p>	<p>Acquiring suitable sites takes funding that many community-based providers do not have. Ideal sites often have multiple bidders and require the ability to access capital and act quickly</p>
<p>Currently, Rhode Island does not have enough quality space so creating new space is essential</p>	<p>There are very few shovel ready projects in a pipeline even if funding were to come available. More robust predevelopment funding and support is needed to spur project planning</p>
<p>Development of new space provides ownership opportunities for early learning providers which can help stabilize their finances, build equity and offer program stability</p>	<p>Rhode Island lacks a seamless system to connect quality providers with potential developers, available and appropriate properties and funding opportunities</p>
<p>New and innovative partnerships could not only strengthen projects but also create new early learning advocates</p>	<p>Real estate developers perceive that while they would like to help with the need for more early learning spaces, including child care facilities in mixed use projects will add costs, time and complexity that could derail projects overall</p>
<p>There are already very underutilized tax incentive programs for private businesses that include child care space in new facility development</p>	<p>There is currently low philanthropic and business community engagement in Rhode Island's early learning infrastructure challenges as compared to some other geographies</p>
<p>Bond mechanisms that have been used successfully in other states could be effectively rolled out in Rhode Island</p>	<p>The current system and timing for selecting, awarding and starting up new pre-k classrooms creates a barrier to this model which takes significant time to move from concept to reality</p>
	<p>High quality providers are very likely to sustain operating losses during their initial 2-3 years of operation at a new site where they will be operating at a high quality level, but based on current policies will only be reimbursed at the lowest quality rate during this "start-up" time</p>



King Street Commons

Providence, Rhode Island



Building Exterior Rendering

One Neighborhood Builders (ONE|NB), a non-profit community development corporation, knew that there was a dramatic need for additional early learning space in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence. Lack of quality child care was a key issue in the neighborhood plan. Vision combined with a vacant and blighted lot provided a unique opportunity to incorporate early learning space into a mixed use development co-locating Head Start and child care classrooms with 30 units of new, affordable housing. ONE|NB developed and will own the space, leasing it at below market rates to the local, high quality Head Start provider.

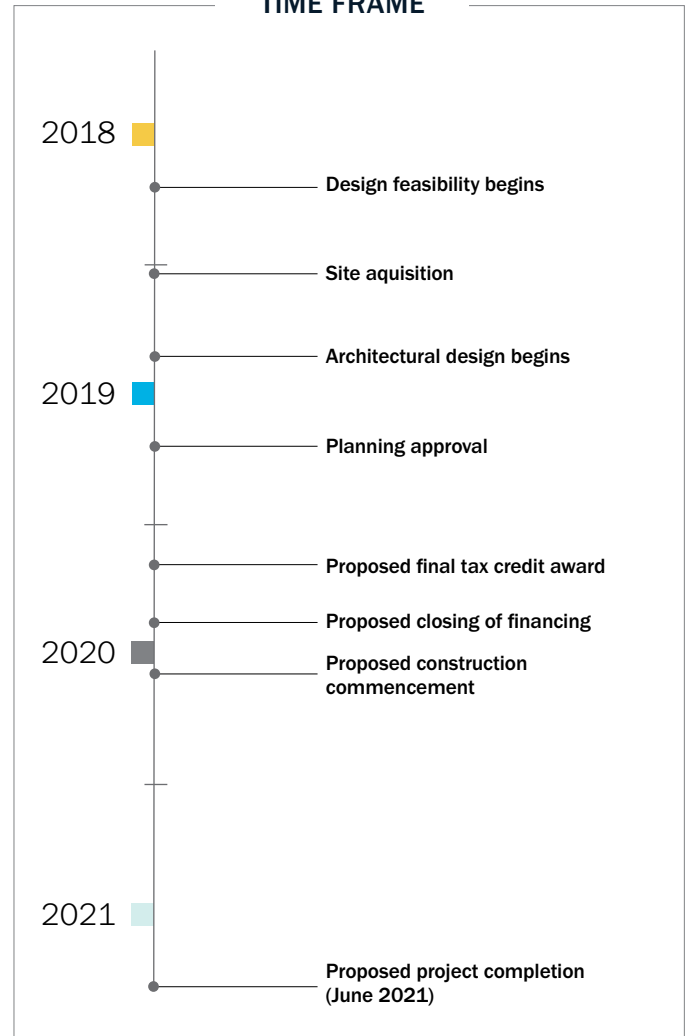
The new early learning facility will not only be an asset for King Street Commons residents, but for the community as a whole, helping to meet the unmet demand for services in Providence. The strategic partnership between this community development organization and an existing, high quality child care and early learning provider is critical in the success for this project. The child care provider worked collaboratively with the architect and ONE|NB to ensure early in the process that the design would successfully meet the need of the teachers and families utilizing the space while meeting all regulatory requirements. This collaboration between developer, architect and child care provider proved beneficial when encountering challenges such as meeting regulatory requirements for playground space in a congested, urban environment, accessing a variety of funding streams to leverage construction of the early learning facility and in navigating complicated zoning issues. The partnership was essential in moving the project forward in a timely and successful manner.



PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	Proposed June 2021
Construction Type	New construction of mixed use development
Estimated Development Cost	\$1,725,204 (tenant fit out only - total development project cost is estimated at \$17,231,410)
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Predevelopment Grant ▪ Predevelopment Loans ▪ RI Housing Loans ▪ Recoverable Grants ▪ Low Income Housing Tax Credit
Square Footage	8,367 SF
# of Children	76
# of Classrooms	2 infant/toddler classrooms 3 preschool classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$22,700/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$206/SF

TIME FRAME



Proposed First Floor Plan
Design by DBVW Architects



East Bay Community Action Program *Newport, Rhode Island*



Building Exterior

After years of operating single classroom Head Start sites across Newport County, often in areas not convenient for families, the East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) brought to life a strategic plan to develop a state of the art early learning center in a location convenient for families. Additionally, EBCAP strategically worked to consolidate and expand programming, creating significant efficiencies at a flagship location.

Working in partnership with the area community development corporation (CDC), a deal was struck to obtain donated land from the City of Newport. The land had been formerly owned by the U.S. Navy and, when decommissioned, was given to the city. Although contaminated and in need of substantial site work, it was ideally located in the north end of Newport, immediately adjacent to the several large neighborhoods of affordable housing. The site was also envisioned as a future home for the Community College of Rhode Island and a Neighborhood Health Center.

Construction of the facility was funded through a capital campaign, LISC predevelopment and loan financing and an additional loan from a community bank. Original cost estimates exceeded budget, so the strategy of using corrugated metal construction to reduce exterior building costs without sacrificing interior quality elements was used. This value cost engineering allowed the project to move forward. The site now serves 150 Head Start and Early Head Start children, including full-day/year-round care.



PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	2007
Construction Type	New construction of child care building (consolidation of multiple sites to expand access and create efficiency)
Total Development Cost	\$3,000,000
Sources of Funds/Capital Stack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Predevelopment Recoverable Grants ▪ Construction Loan ▪ Bank Loan ▪ Capital Campaign Fundraising
Square Footage	19,200 SF
# of Children	150
# of Classrooms	7 preschool classrooms serving 3, 4 and 5 year olds
Construction Cost/Child	\$20,000/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$156/SF

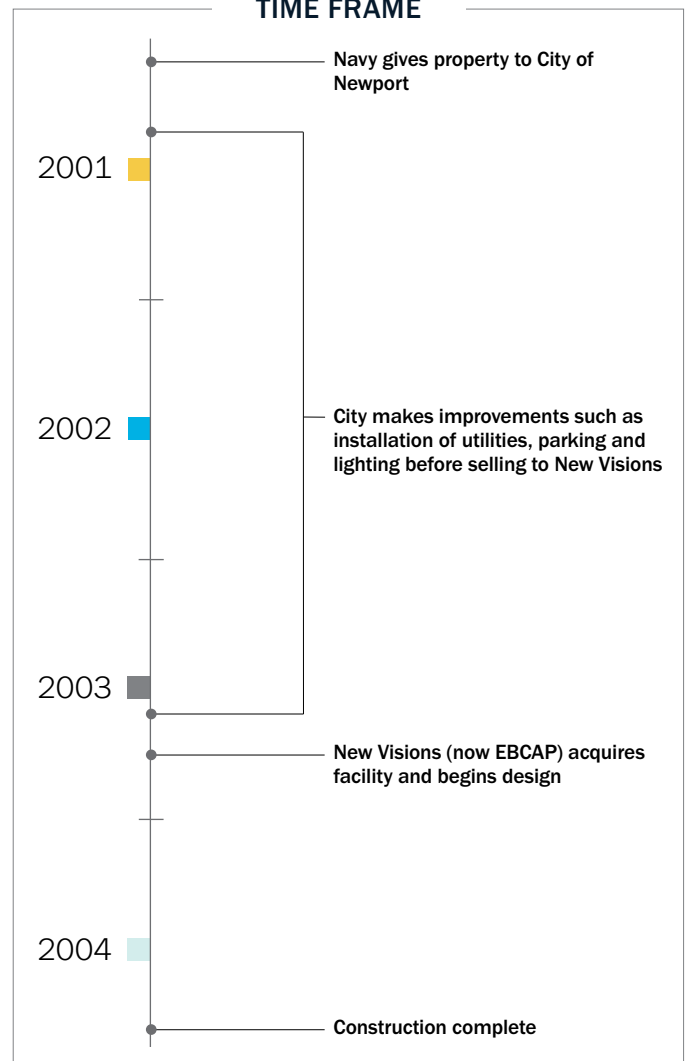


Playground - After



Building Site and Exterior - During Construction

TIME FRAME





Dr. Daycare at a Former Parochial School

Woonsocket, Rhode Island

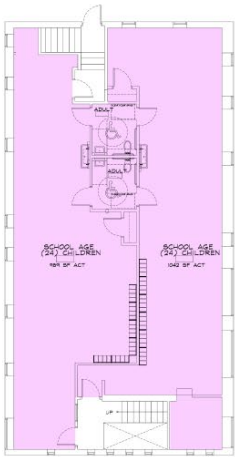


Building Exterior

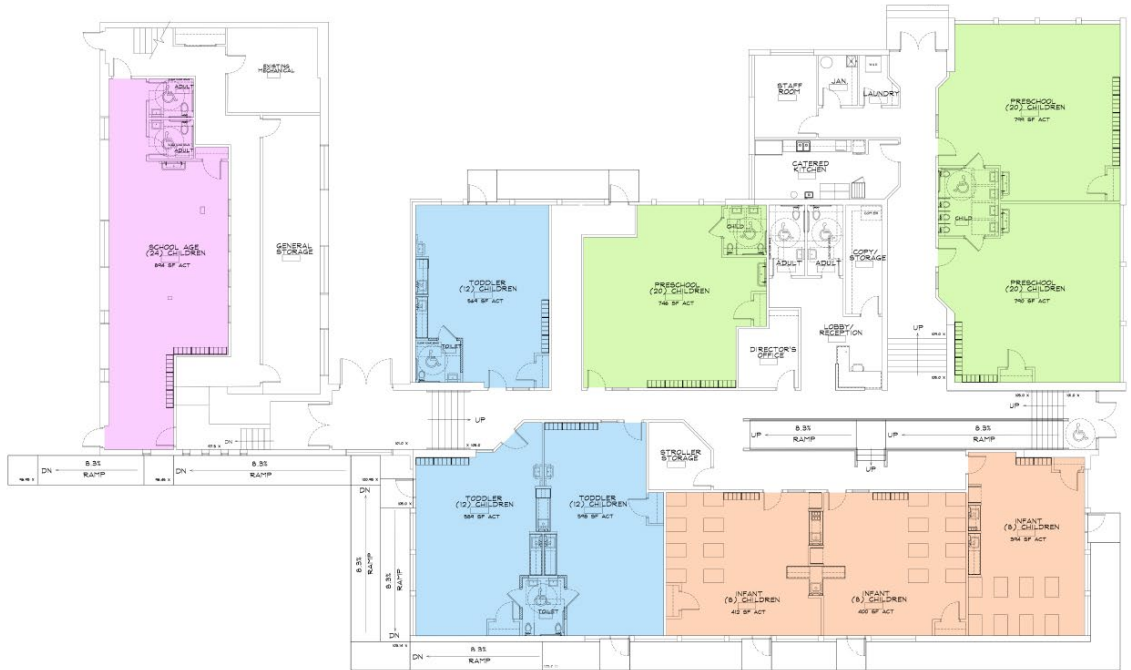
A former parochial school in Woonsocket, built in the 1960's, has stood dormant for years. Once a kindergarten through 2nd grade elementary school that was part of the Greater Woonsocket Catholic Regional School System, the building continued to operate until 2009, when it closed its doors due to declining enrollment.

With a large footprint of over 15,000 square feet sitting on over 1.5 acres of land, this location is an ideal spot to develop child care at scale, which is what Dr. Daycare is investigating. Renovations would include replacement of the roof, replacement of the HVAC, updates to electrical and fire systems, inclusion of plumbing in all classrooms, finish updates to all of the existing classroom spaces that are larger than the required square footages for child care space and a complete overhaul to the building's addition to create a separate school age and teen center that could house 192 children.

Not without its own unique challenges, including approval of special-use permit from the city to operate, there is a lot of opportunity for this building to provide much needed child care, especially infant and toddler slots.



Proposed Second Floor Plan



Proposed First Floor Plan
Design by studioMLA

PROJECT DETAILS

Year Completed	Not complete, conceptual only
Construction Type	Adaptive reuse of dormant education building
Estimated Development Cost	\$5,394,824
Square Footage	15,154 SF
# of Children	192
# of Classrooms	6 infant/toddler classrooms 3 preschool classrooms 3 school age classrooms
Construction Cost/Child	\$28,098/child
Construction Cost/SF	\$356/SF

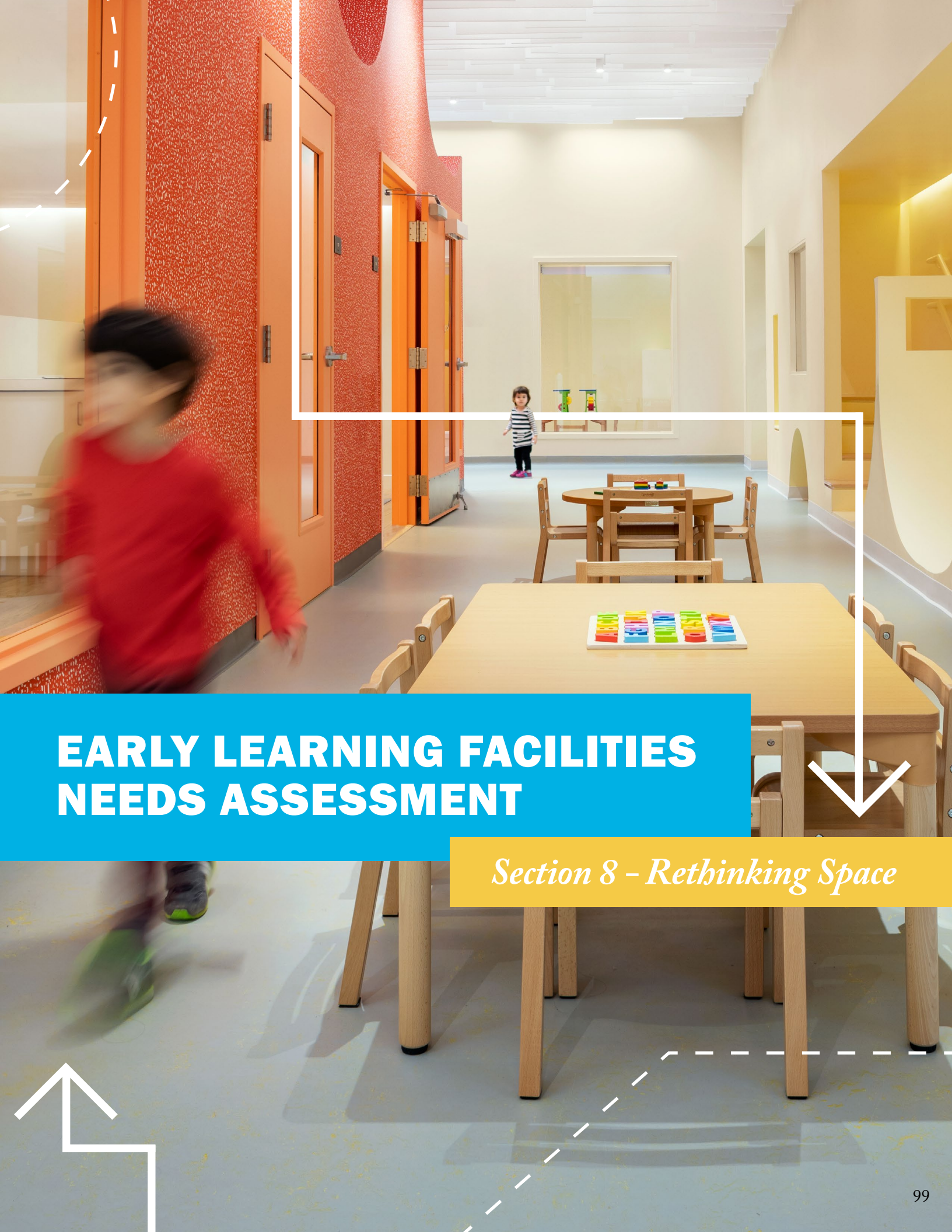


Interior - Existing

"We can choose to change. We can choose to design spaces for miracles, not minimums."

— Anita Olds





EARLY LEARNING FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Section 8 - Rethinking Space

Why Change is Difficult

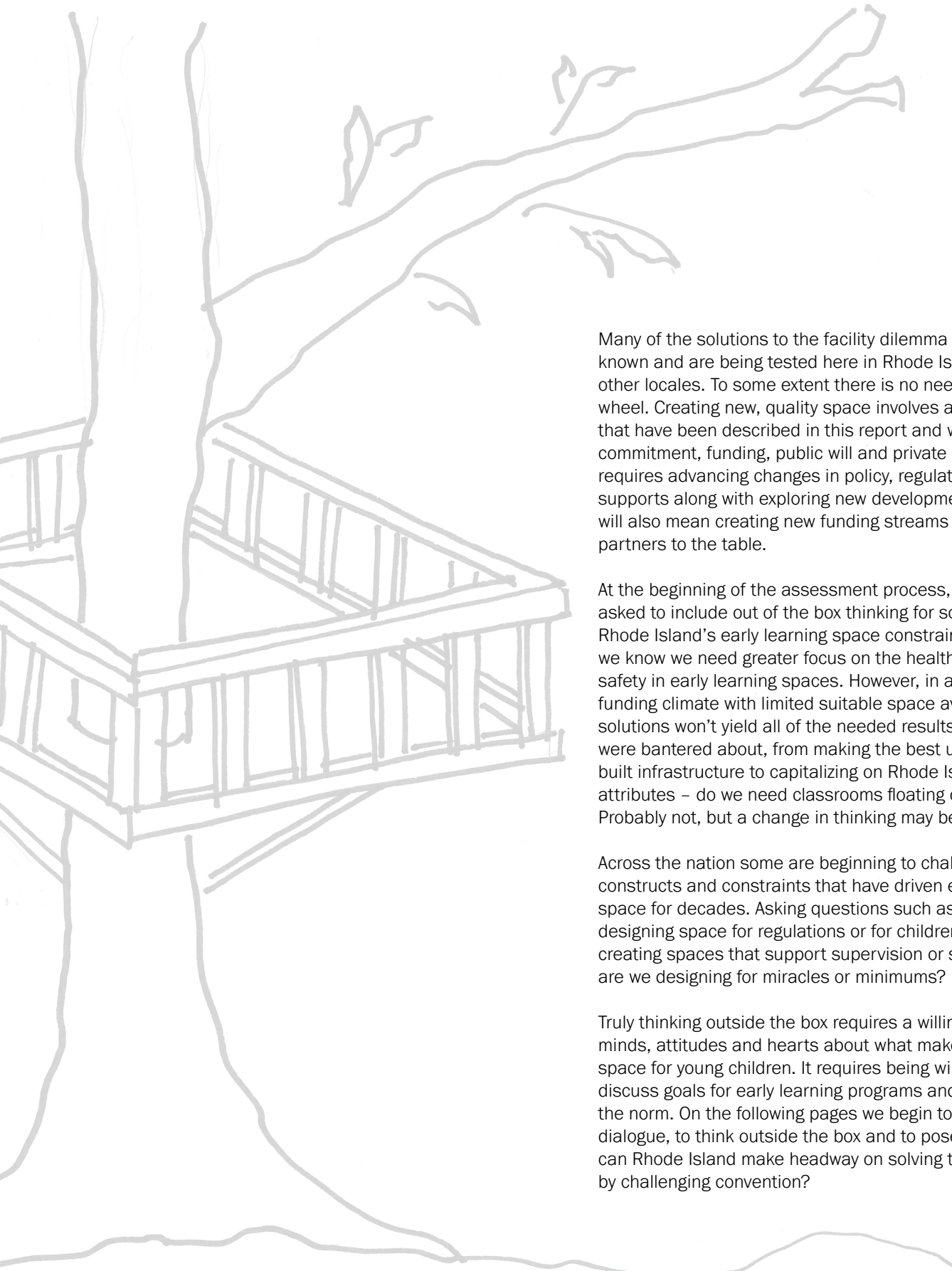
There are three major reasons why change is so difficult in early childhood programs – four, if changes require new dollars. One is that people do what they know how to do, and most of the time they believe in what they do. Second, in an institution or group living, the individual's actions and desires are meshed with the actions of others. There is always a strong pressure to continue present behavior for to do otherwise may alter the daily routines or challenge the beliefs or desires of others.

The third barrier to change is that change takes time, two kinds of time. Time away from children is the most precious resource in early care and education. Time to observe, think, meet, plan, work through problems, and develop collegial relations with other staff is scarce or non-existent in many programs. It is easier to continue to do things the way they are done, since there is rarely time to work through any complexities. The other kind of time is time over a period of weeks or months to sustain change, which often requires stability of people and material resources over time...

Understanding that major change is complex and time consuming is important because often, the result of a failed attempt to change is to blame the idea... Change happens when it is believed in, when the timing is right, and when there are resources to sustain the change.

– Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments that Work

If Space is Boxing Us In, We Need to Think Outside the Box



Many of the solutions to the facility dilemma are already known and are being tested here in Rhode Island and in other locales. To some extent there is no need to reinvent the wheel. Creating new, quality space involves all of the things that have been described in this report and will take time, commitment, funding, public will and private partners. Change requires advancing changes in policy, regulations and program supports along with exploring new development strategies. It will also mean creating new funding streams and bringing new partners to the table.

At the beginning of the assessment process, LISC was asked to include out of the box thinking for solving some of Rhode Island's early learning space constraints. As a state, we know we need greater focus on the health, quality and safety in early learning spaces. However, in a challenging funding climate with limited suitable space available, old solutions won't yield all of the needed results. Early on ideas were bantered about, from making the best use of already built infrastructure to capitalizing on Rhode Island's unique attributes – do we need classrooms floating on the ocean? Probably not, but a change in thinking may be in order.

Across the nation some are beginning to challenge the constructs and constraints that have driven early learning space for decades. Asking questions such as, are we designing space for regulations or for children? Are we creating spaces that support supervision or surveillance? And, are we designing for miracles or minimums?

Truly thinking outside the box requires a willingness to change minds, attitudes and hearts about what makes a safe, quality space for young children. It requires being willing to honestly discuss goals for early learning programs and to question the norm. On the following pages we begin to tease out this dialogue, to think outside the box and to pose the question: can Rhode Island make headway on solving the facility crisis by challenging convention?

Rethinking Space

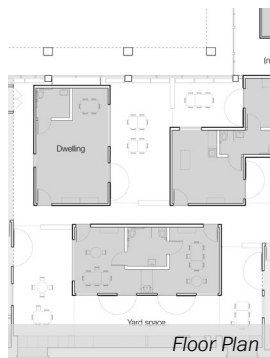
Alternative Approaches to Child Care Facilities

Reassessment of Traditional Classroom Space



When all activities are required to happen within just four walls of an early learning classroom, square footage requirements solely pertain to that particular classroom. To capitalize on space and make it more usable for children, cities like Boston, New York and Los Angeles are challenging the traditional licensing requirements for a classroom: a room bounded by four walls with an area of 35 square feet of space per child.

Because fewer than half (46%) of existing Rhode Island preschool classrooms have at least 700 square feet available - the minimum requirement to serve 20 children - and 37% have less than the 630 square feet required to serve 18 children, Rhode Island may need to think about space in more innovative ways. Reimagining classrooms and their required size to better adapt to the quality and level of activity within them could not only open up new space options but also enhance child experiences.



To the left is the SolBe Learning Center located in Chestnut Hill, MA designed by architecture firm, Supernormal (www.supernormal.io/). This center upends the traditional “one classroom fits all” mentality and houses a series of small dedicated activity spaces with open corridor space for active play. These small group settings allow for transitional movement of larger groups throughout the day and give access to greater total square footage as the children move through zones.

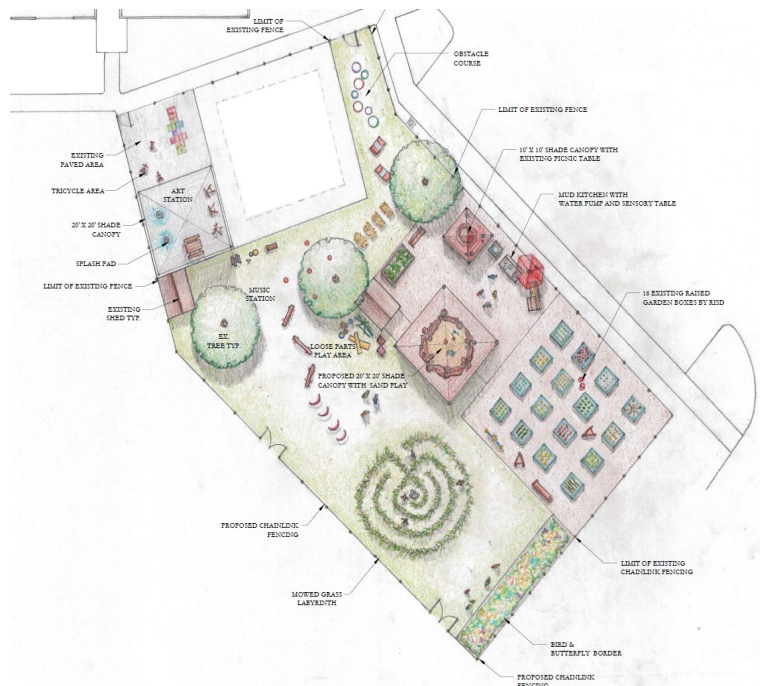
Forest Preschools, Outdoor Classrooms and Warming Huts

Space and experience go hand in hand, and sometimes one doesn't need to be confined to a physical structure to be in an appropriate environment.

What if the physical space was removed from the daily child care setting and the majority of time children were in care took place outside? All that would truly be necessary would be a covered enclosure that is safe, dry and warm with access to plumbing facilities. The size of the facility could be significantly less than what current square footage needs are. This shelter, or warming hut, would only need to be accessed during inclement weather conditions.

Many of the requirements for activity zones and centers can be met with a series of outdoor grade loose parts with space much more ample than what currently exists in classrooms.

With nature and time spent outdoors as core components of the pedagogy, this approach would certainly redefine the “traditional” classroom.



Kit-of-Parts, Modular/Prefabricated Units and “Flexible” Space

Rhode Island houses some of the nation’s oldest, densest building stock, which means optimal lot space is limited and at a premium. The use of small modular units like Quonset huts, shipping containers or other prefabricated components provides the opportunity to create brand new spaces in uniquely shaped or tight locations that would otherwise go unused. This type of building design can be more affordable than development of a new building because it minimizes the use of traditional construction methods. Able to be arranged in various configurations and added onto over time (both horizontally and vertically), modular design allows for flexibility and future growth. Reduced project cost (or development cost determined by available cash), limited available land and ability to size according to lot, limited schedule allowance and ease of construction and configuration, especially in dense, urban environments make the case for this type of building design.

High quality child care can be made accessible to families anywhere that are in need of it with the use of these components. Each unique center can be configured to accommodate to any location or environment, while also providing the opportunity for the center to easily expand as more families enroll in the program, starting off as micro-centers.

The prototypes on this page, developed by architecture firm studioMLA (www.studiomla.com/), show varying configurations with different-sized, but readily available prefabricated containers that house the basic needs for a child care center to be fully operational and high quality, including restrooms incorporated in the classroom, a private meeting space and office space with adult facilities. Condensed versions located adjacent to existing child care and/or school facilities could be utilized to efficiently expand the number of available classrooms.

Exterior Rendering



Interior Rendering



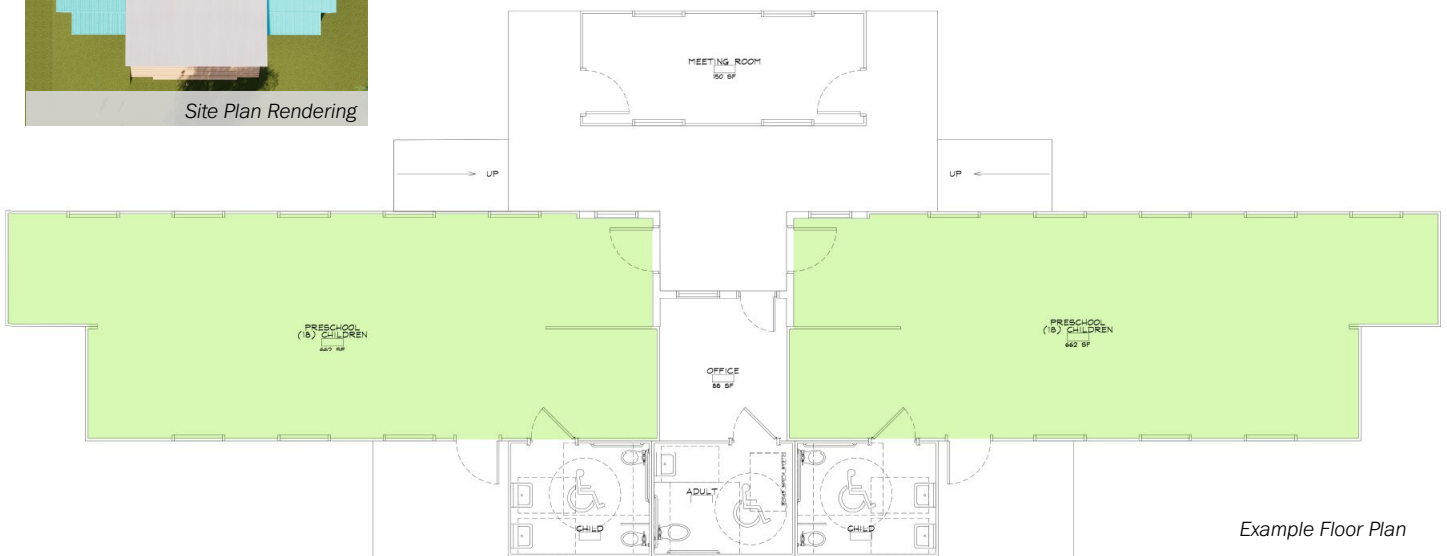
Exterior Rendering




Exterior Rendering



Site Plan Rendering



Example Floor Plan



Childhood depends on some precious formula of freedom and mess. Until institutionalized through child care, children in the most structured homes could usually break through the concrete web of good intentions and find the cracks, alive with possibilities for movement, exploration, and discovery—in the room, under the bed, in the back yard, on the stoop, alone or with friends. These were times when adult sanctions were weakened, allowing exploration of forbidden words with delicious hard consonant syllables and intriguing substances. These were times when space opened up rather than contained; and jumps, shouts, and giggles pierced the air. More centers can have the same feel by being alert to the dehumanizing tendencies that are ever-present.

—Jim Greenman

A group of young children are playing with hula hoops under a large, light-colored canopy. The children are wearing casual clothing, and the scene is outdoors with trees in the background. The text is overlaid on a blue rectangular area on the right side of the image.

FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Online Survey Outcomes

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

LISC

Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment: 2019 Online Survey Outcomes among Key Decision Makers at Licensed Community-based Early Learning Centers, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Head Start and State Pre-k Programs

Background

A key component of the Rhode Island Early Learning Facilities Study was a survey conducted among the key decision makers at businesses, organizations and school districts who have child care, preschool, state pre-k and Head Start site locations throughout the state.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of the survey were to:

- Assess whether current providers are able and willing to serve more infants, toddlers, and/or pre-k students
- Gather baseline information that would inform additional interviewing, site visits and focus group protocols

Specifically, the survey was designed to meet the following research objectives:

- Develop a list of facilities indicating they have space to expand - and are interested in expanding - the number of children they serve
- Better understand perceived barriers to facility expansion
- Assess the types of tools that decision makers would need in order to improve quality at their facilities
- Explore the degree to which decision makers feel they are financially able to fund building improvements and address urgent issues at their facilities
- Evaluate the types and condition of buildings that currently house child care facilities
- Assess current capacity (enrollment and wait lists) at child care facilities

Methodology

LISC RI engaged the services of a consultant from Market Research Partners, LLC to assist with the study methodology and survey design.

LISC RI utilized their database of licensed community-based child care centers, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Head Start and state pre-k programs as the sample for this research. The LISC RI database contains the name and contact information of the person who is the key decision maker for each of these facilities and also includes a number of key descriptors of the program, including:

- Age groups served

- Participation in CCAP program
- BrightStars rating (BrightStars is Rhode Island's quality rating and improvement system)
- Head Start classrooms (if applicable)
- Number of state pre-k classrooms (if applicable)

To reduce respondent burden and increase response rates, LISC RI staff and the consultant crafted the survey questions so that only those designed to specifically address the research objectives were included. The survey was emailed to 100% of licensed community-based child care, Head Start, state pre-k and all LEAs in Rhode Island. Surveys had unique identifier codes and were directed to key decision makers.

The following steps were taken to increase response rates:

- A warm-up email was sent
- Three reminder emails were sent
- Members of LISC RI staff and the consultant made personal phone calls to all non-responders requesting their participation
- Participants who were not comfortable with an online survey methodology and/or who were responding on behalf of multiple facility locations were offered the opportunity to complete the survey by phone with a LISC team member
- All participants who completed the survey were offered the opportunity to apply for a mini-grant to be used for physical space improvements- indoor or outdoor
- To avoid end-of-school-year activities and spring/summer vacations, the survey was fielded between April 10 and May 3, 2019

Outcomes

On average, decision makers with only one facility spent about seven minutes completing the survey. Those answering on behalf of more than one facility spent slightly more time, but tailored questions and skip patterns were designed to help reduce the overall burden for these respondents.

Presumably due to the methodology described above, as well as the positive relationship between many of these decision makers and LISC RI staff members, response rates were robust:

- Decision makers representing 448 unique facilities received a survey
 - Surveys for 162 unique facilities were completed (36% response rate)
- Of the 448 total facilities, 104 are high quality facilities, defined as rated 4 or 5 by BrightStars or otherwise providing high quality programming, such as Head Start or state pre-k

- Surveys for 61 high quality facilities were completed (59% response rate among high quality facilities)

Decision makers representing 53 facilities indicated they have space to expand and are interested in expanding the number of children they serve at their current facility and were flagged for additional interviewing and site visits.

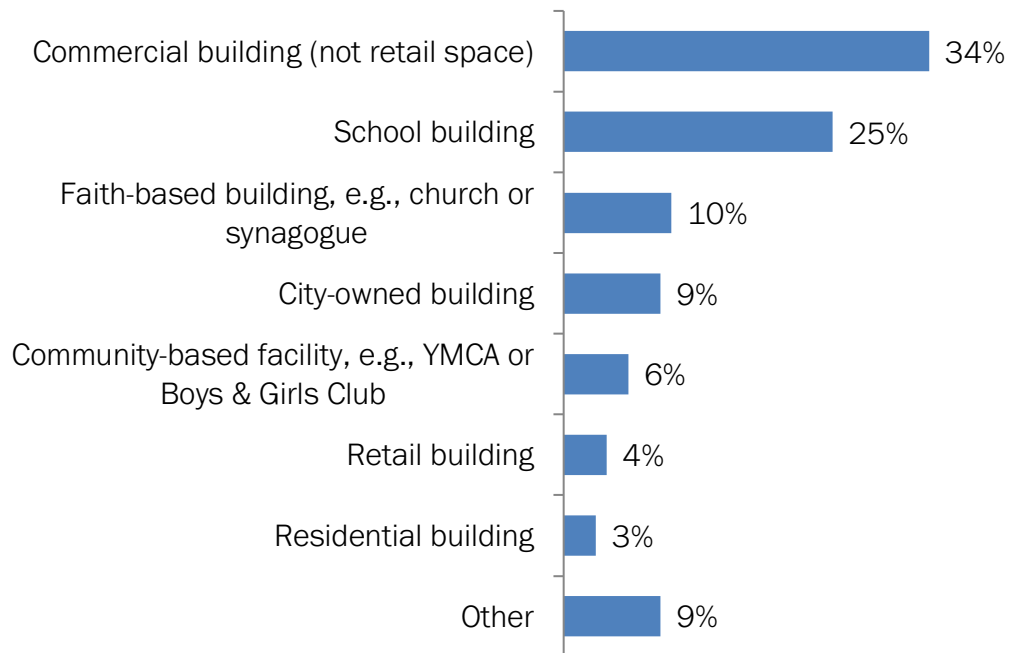
Decision makers representing 26 facilities indicated they are currently looking for space to open a new center in another part of their community or in another area of Rhode Island.

- Of those, there were 11 who do not currently have space to expand at their current facilities (and therefore had not yet been identified for follow-up) who were also flagged for additional interviewing and site visits

The results of all survey questions are reflected in the following pages.

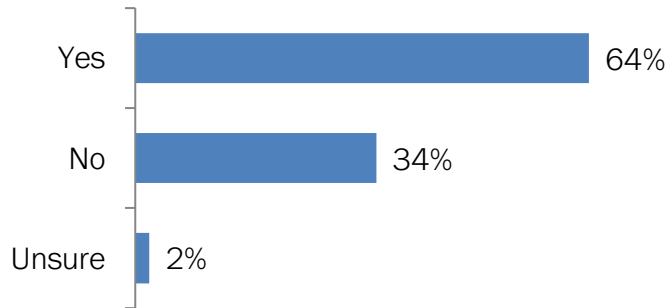
**Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment:
2019 Online Survey Outcomes among Key Decision Makers at Licensed Community-based
Early Learning Centers, Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Head Start and State Pre-k
Programs**

1. Which of the following *best* describes the building type where you operate your program?



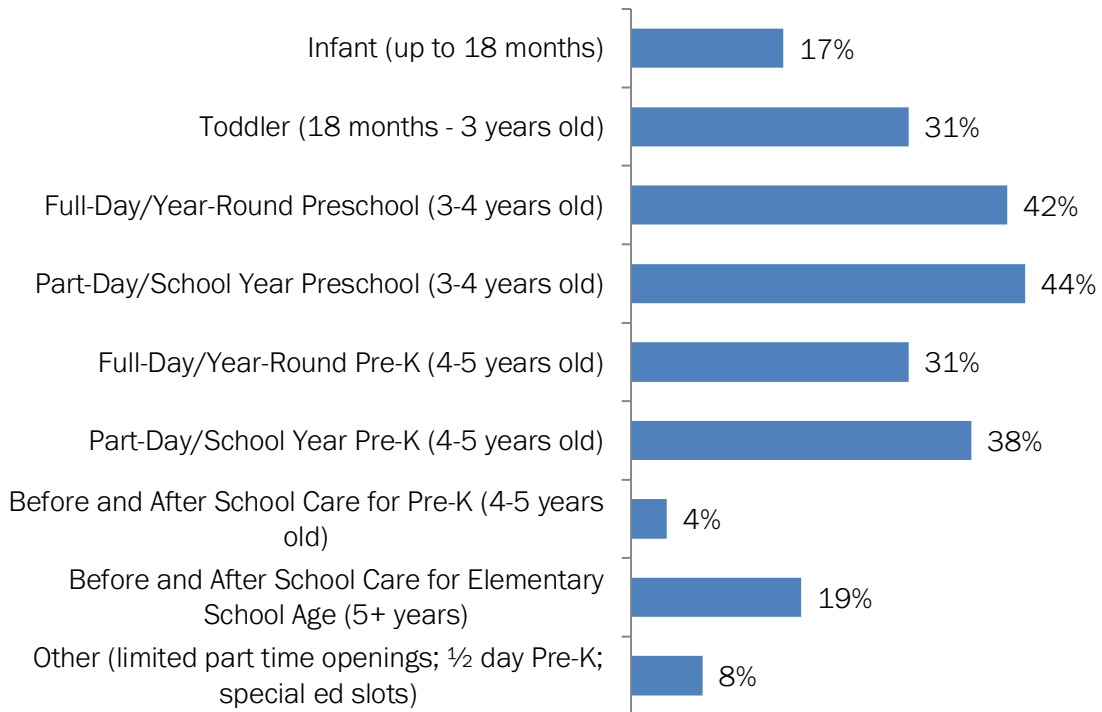
BASE = 162 key decision makers

2. Are you fully enrolled for all of your programs and age groups at your facility?



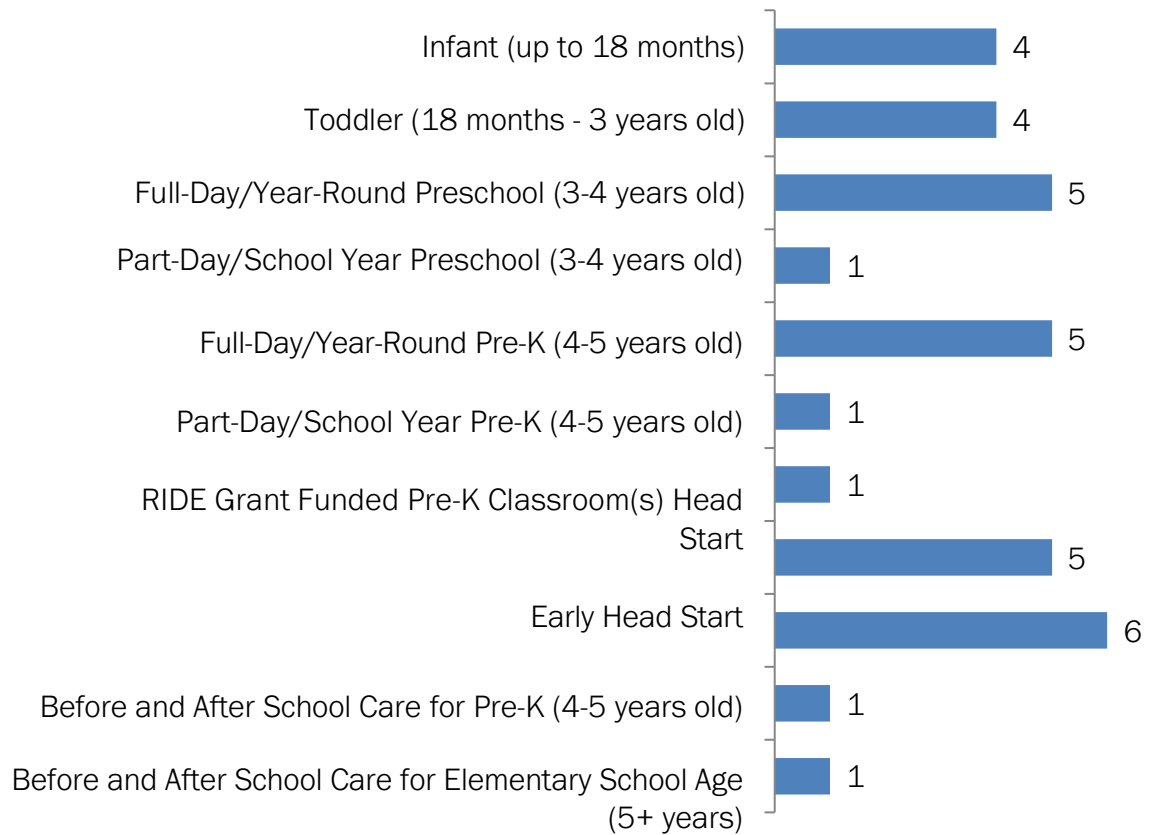
BASE = 162 key decision makers

3A. Which of your program(s) or age group(s) have openings?



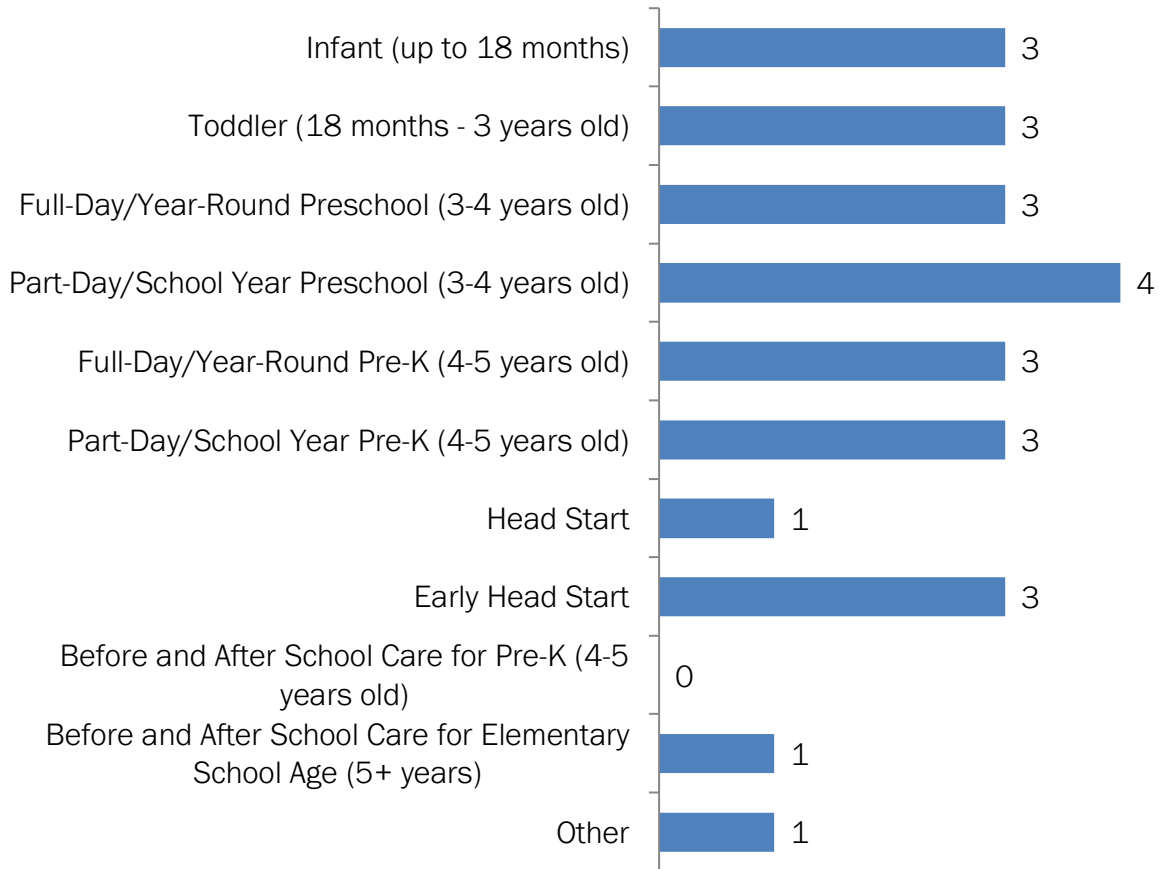
BASE = 48 key decision makers at non-Head Start facilities that are not fully enrolled for all of their programs

3B. Which of your program(s) or age group(s) have openings?
Reported in number of facilities per age group



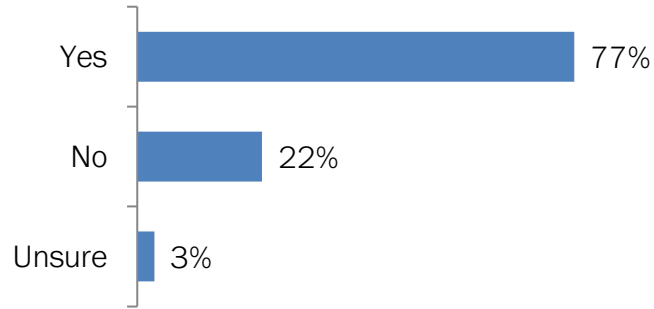
BASE = 7 key decision makers at Head Start facilities that are not fully enrolled for all of their programs

3C. Which of your program(s) or age group(s) have openings?
Reported in number of facilities per age group



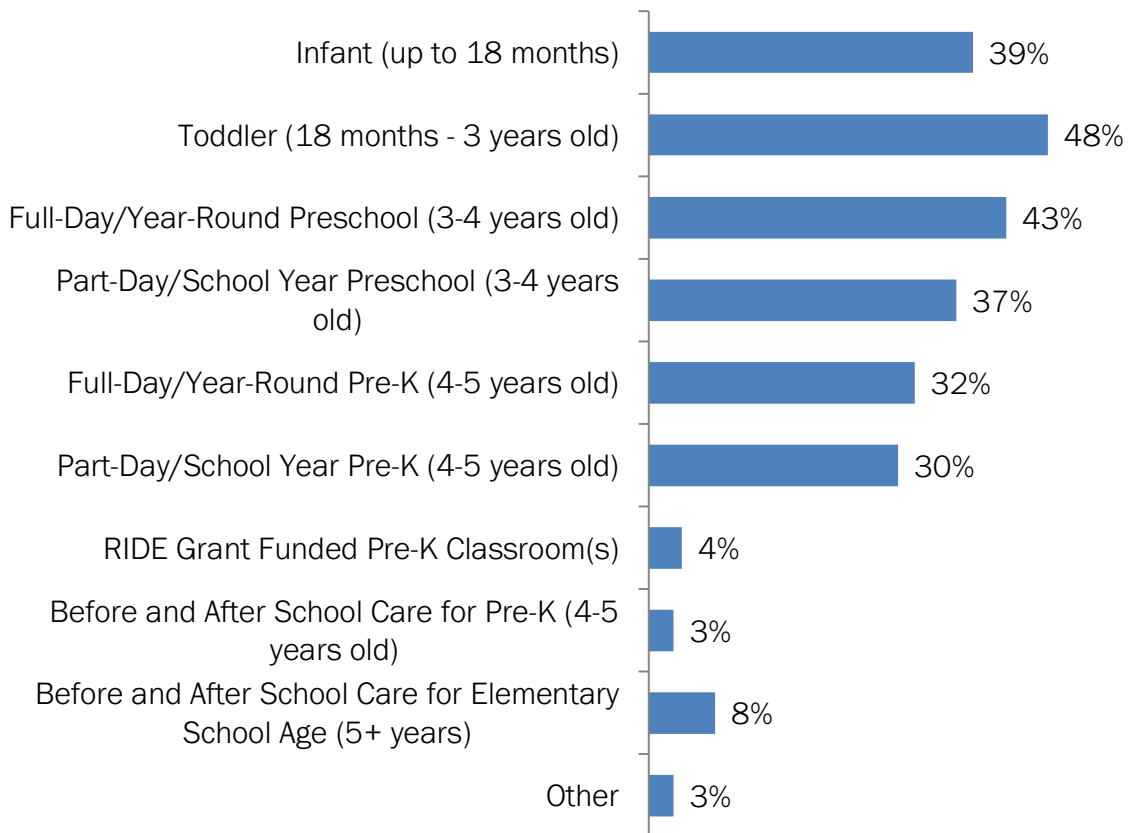
BASE = 6 key decision makers at State Pre-K facilities that are not fully enrolled for all of their programs

4. Do you have a wait list for any of your programs or age groups at your facility?



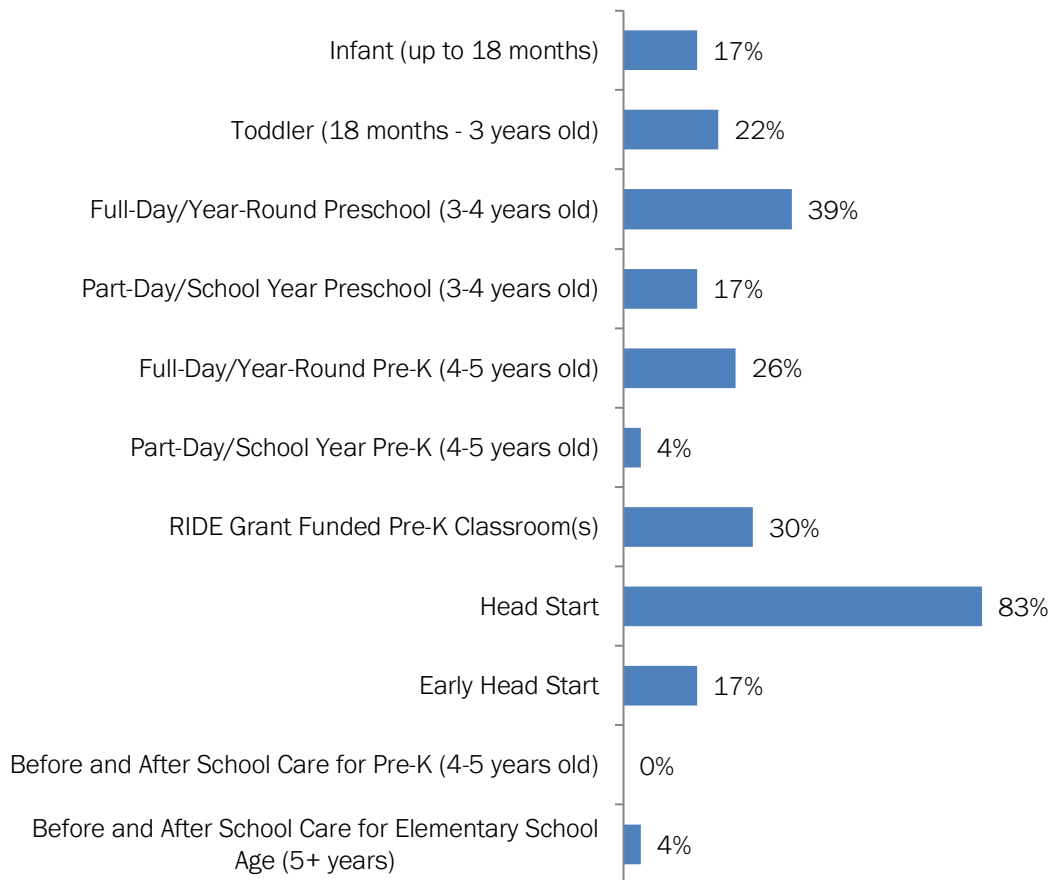
BASE = 162 key decision makers

5A. Which of your program(s) or age group(s) have a wait list?



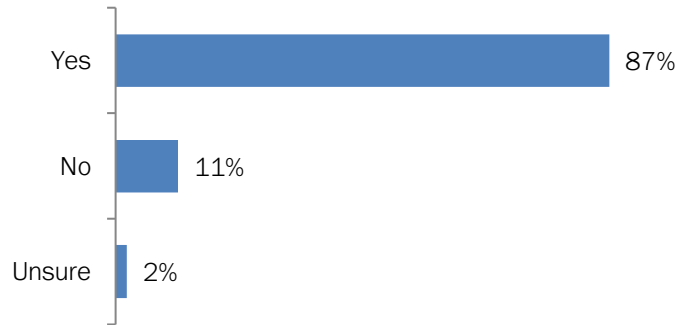
BASE = 99 key decision makers at non-Head Start facilities that have a wait list

5B. Which of your program(s) or age group(s) have a wait list?



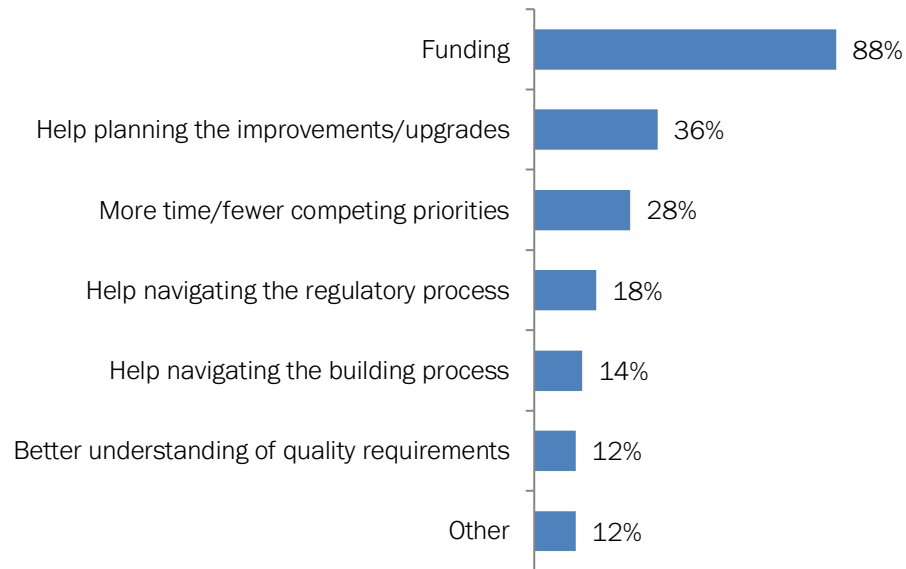
BASE = 23 key decision makers at Head Start facilities that have a wait list
View results with caution – small base

6. In your opinion, are there currently any improvements or upgrades that could be made to your facility (indoors or out) that would help to improve the quality of your program?



BASE = 159 key decision makers

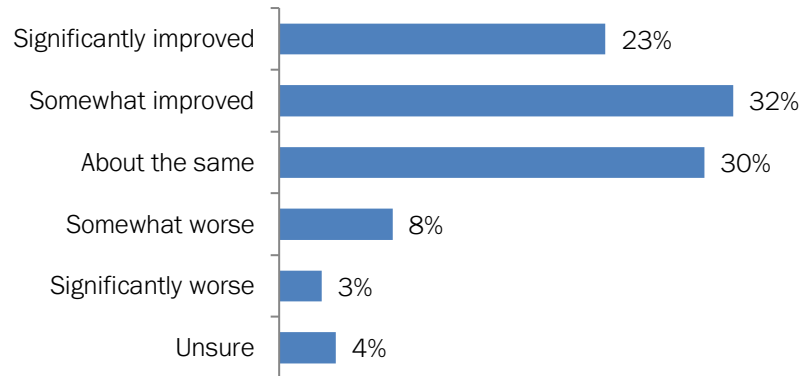
7. You indicated certain improvements or upgrades would help to improve the quality of your program. Which of the following would you need in order to make those improvements/upgrades?



BASE = 138 key decision makers who indicated improvements or upgrades would improve their program's quality

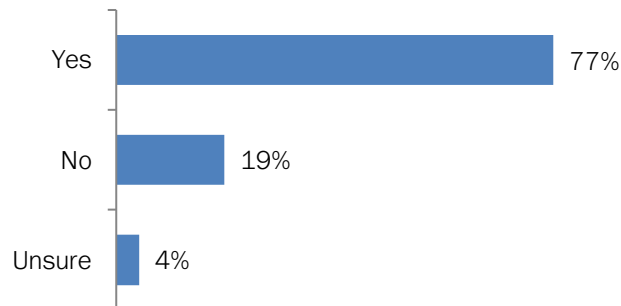
Multiple responses allowed

8. Compared to five years ago, how would you rate the current condition of your center's facility (building, playground, parking lot, etc.)?



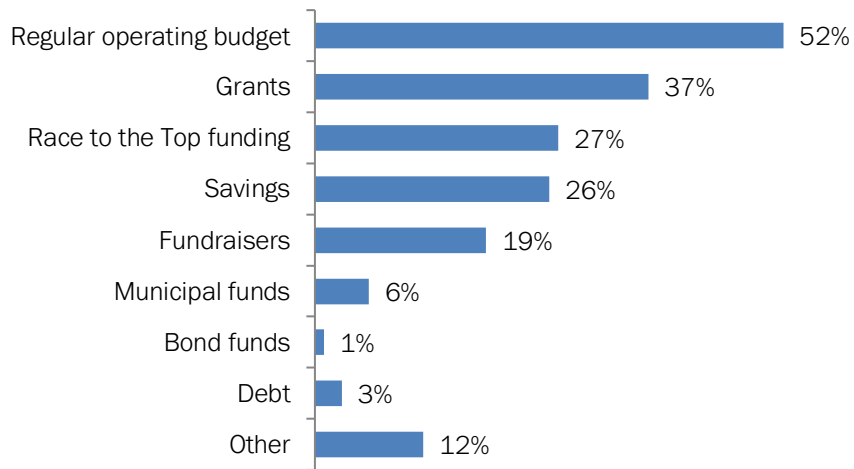
BASE = 158 key decision makers

9. In the past five years, have you conducted any improvements/upgrades/renovations at your facility (building, playground, parking lot, etc.)?



BASE = 158 key decision makers

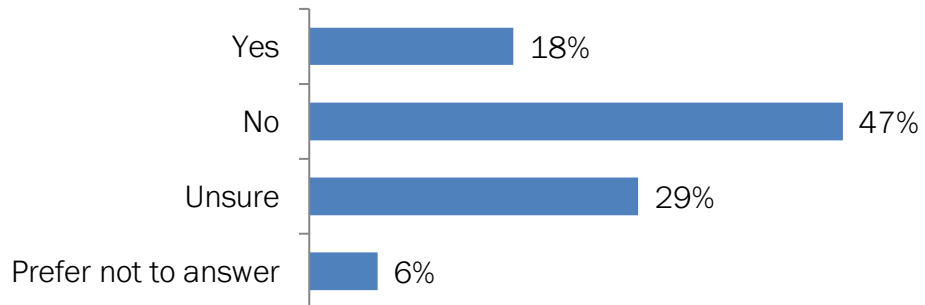
10. What types of funding did you use to pay for the improvements/upgrades/renovations?



BASE = 121 key decision makers who made improvements at their facilities in the past five years

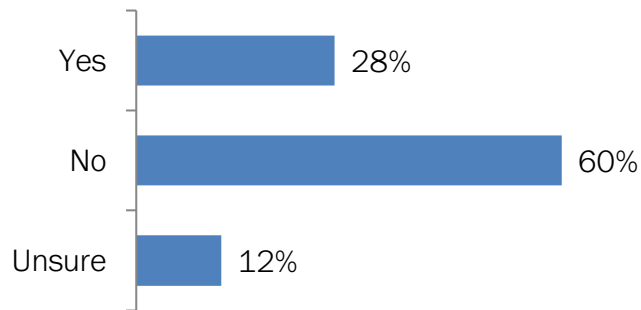
Multiple responses allowed

11. Do you feel you currently have enough money set aside for necessary building improvements or urgent issues that arise at your facility?



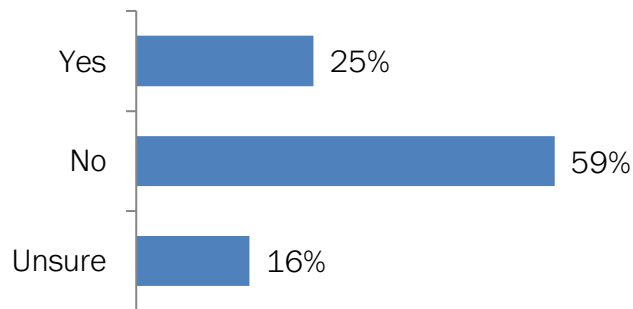
BASE = 158 key decision makers

12. Without considering any potential barriers to expansion, is there any *open/available space within your current building not currently in use* that you could use to add one or more classrooms?



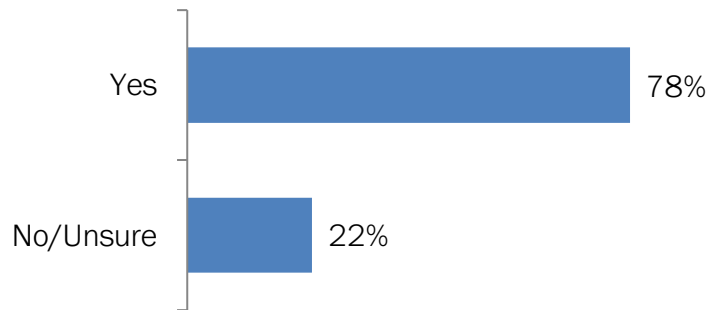
BASE = 158 key decision makers

13. Without considering any potential barriers to expansion, is there any *vacant land next to your current building* that you could use to build one or more classrooms?



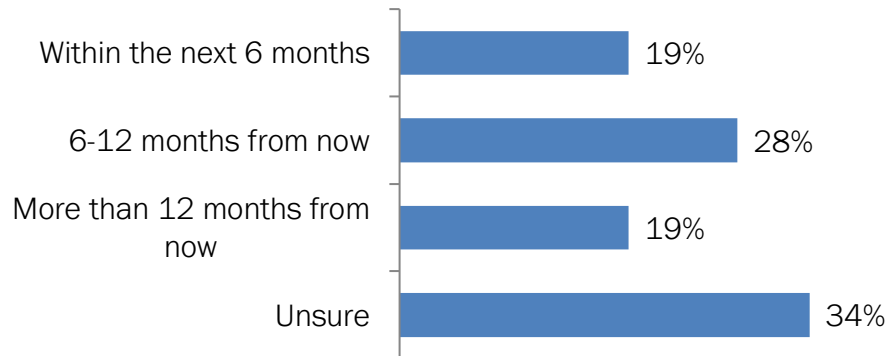
BASE = 158 key decision makers

14. You indicated you might have space to expand. Are you *interested* in opening additional classrooms in or next to your current building?



BASE = 68 key decision makers who indicated they have space to expand: 29 with space in their current building but no vacant land next to their building, 25 with vacant land next to their building but no space in their current building and 14 with both space and land

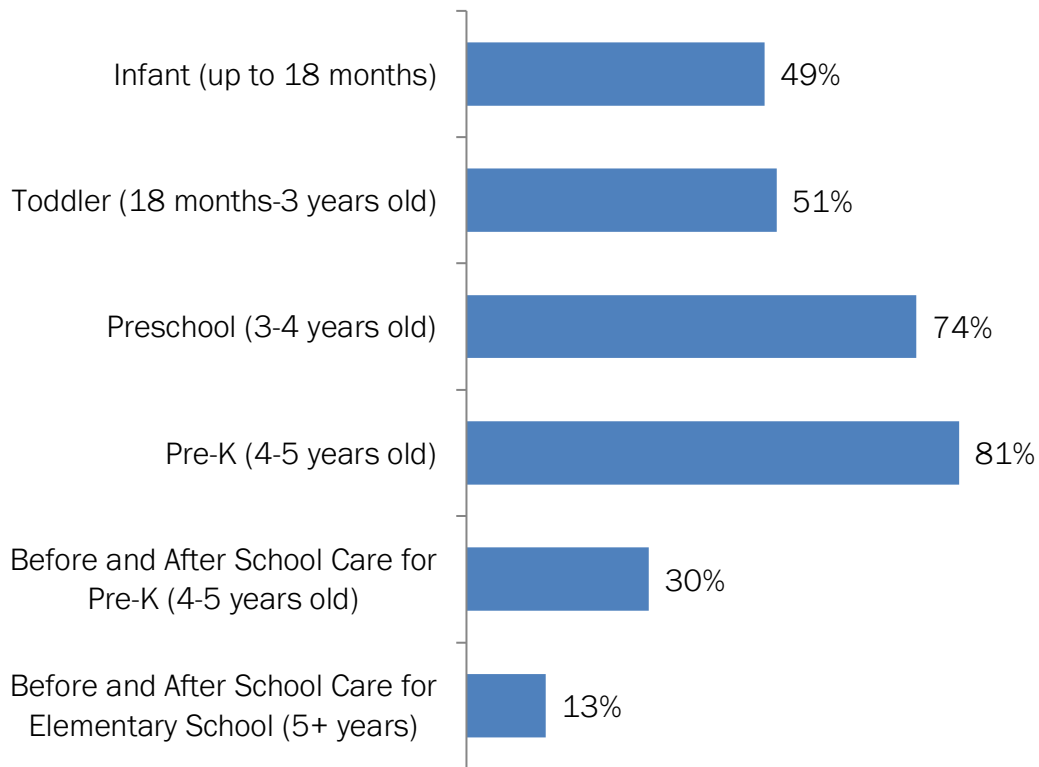
15. When are you interested in opening additional classrooms in or next to your current building?



BASE = 53 key decision makers who indicated they have space and are interested in expanding: 22 with space in their current building but no vacant land next to their building, 18 with vacant land next to their building but no space in their current building and 13 with both space and land

IMPORTANT NOTE: These 53 key decision makers plus 37 others identified by LISC RI (including state pre-k applicants who were not awarded classrooms in 2019) were flagged for follow-up interviews and/or site visits to enable LISC RI to better understand their available space. During these interviews and site visits, LISC RI verified that 32 facilities with a desire to expand in fact have adequate space for at least one additional classroom. However, LISC RI also discovered that many of these spaces would require modest renovations, such as the addition of plumbing, before they could be used as classrooms. Additionally, LISC RI determined that only 12 of the 32 facilities with adequate space are high quality (rated 4 or 5 stars by BrightStars) and that eight of the 12 high quality facilities with adequate space have funding on hand for expansion or renovations.

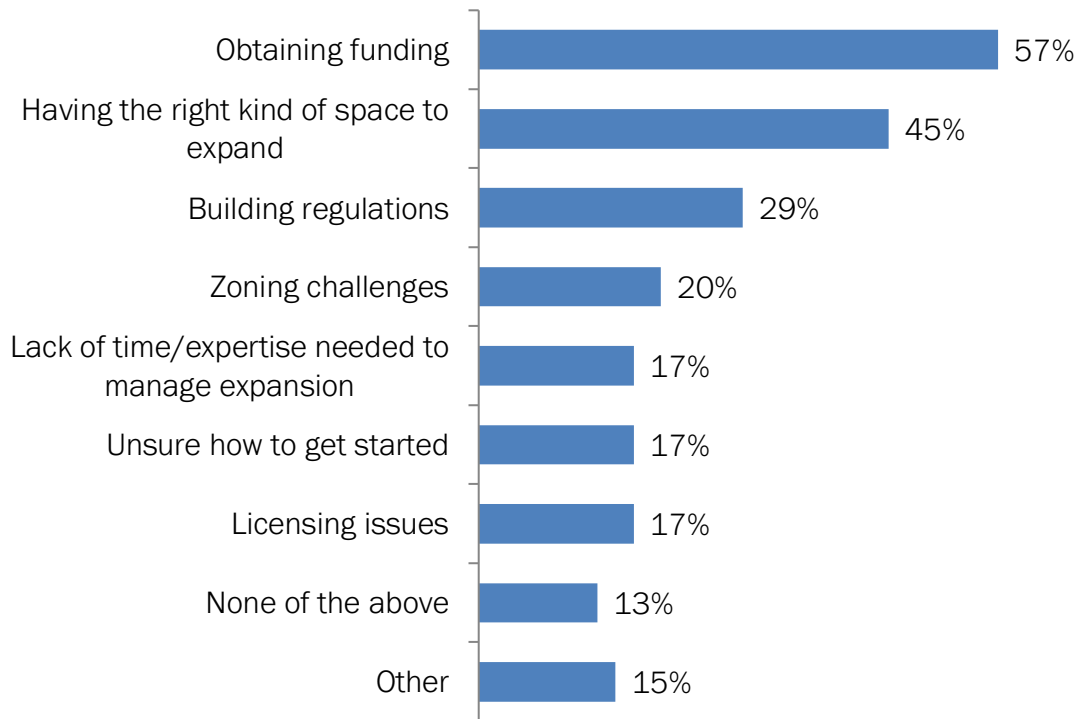
16. For which of the following groups of children are you interested in opening additional classrooms in or next to your current building?



BASE = 53 key decision makers who indicated they have space and are interested in expanding: 22 with space in their current building but no vacant land next to their building + 18 with vacant land next to their building but no space in their current building + 13 with both space and land
Multiple responses allowed

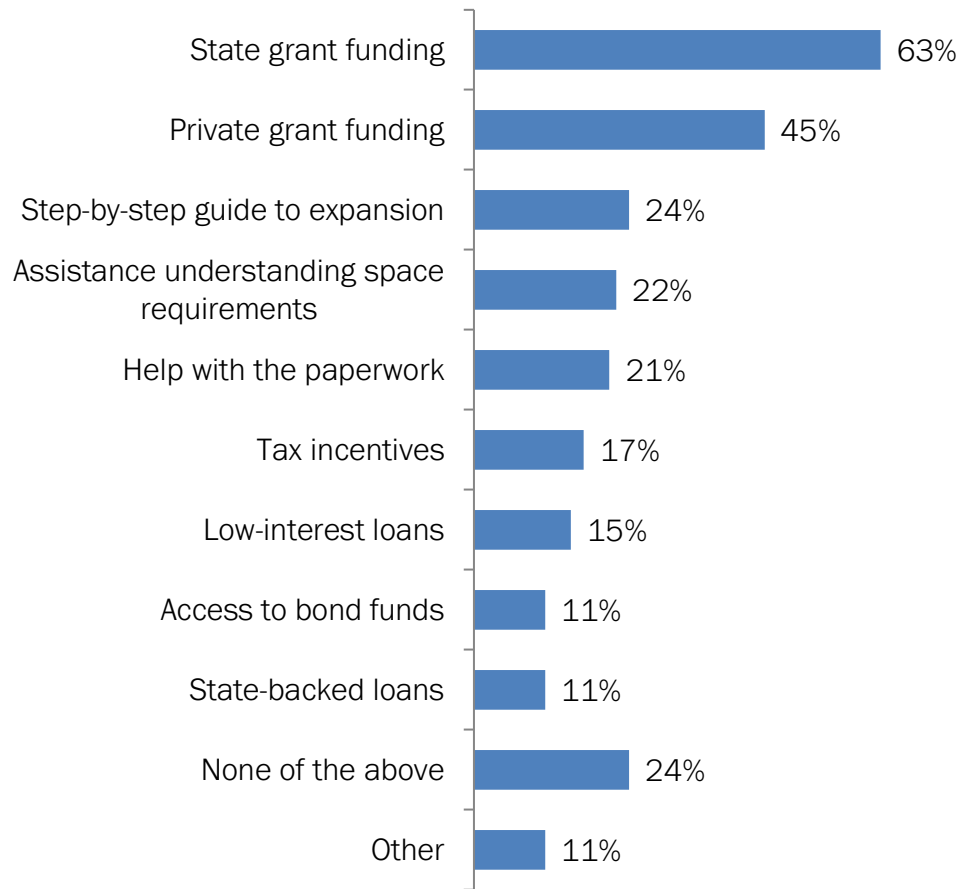
IMPORTANT NOTE: These 53 key decision makers plus 37 others identified by LISC RI (including state pre-k applicants who were not awarded classrooms in 2019) were flagged for follow-up interviews and/or site visits to enable LISC RI to better understand their available space. During these interviews and site visits, LISC RI verified that 32 facilities with a desire to expand in fact have adequate space for at least one additional classroom. However, LISC RI also discovered that many of these spaces would require modest renovations, such as the addition of plumbing, before they could be used as classrooms. Additionally, LISC RI determined that only 12 of the 32 facilities with adequate space are high quality (rated 4 or 5 stars by BrightStars) and that only four of the 12 high quality facilities with adequate space have funding on hand for expansion or renovations.

17. If you were thinking about opening additional classrooms in or next to your current building, which of the following do you think could be potential space related barriers?



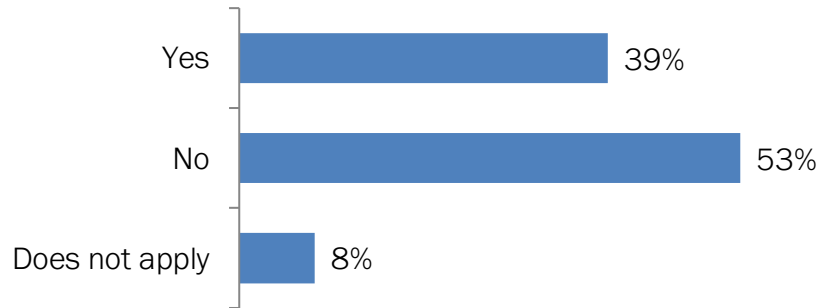
BASE = 157 key decision makers
Multiple responses allowed

18. Please indicate if any of the following would make you *more* interested in opening additional classrooms in or next to your current building.



BASE = 157 key decision makers
Multiple responses allowed

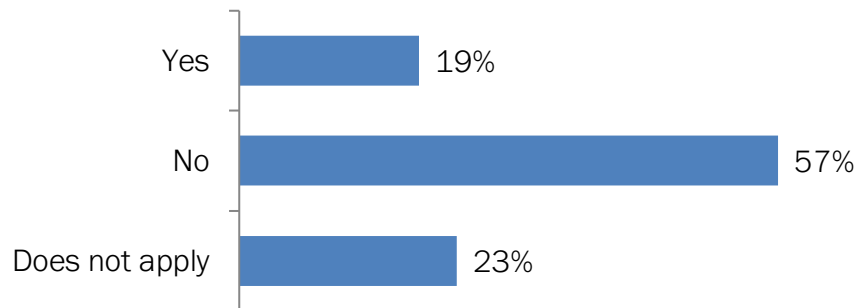
19. Have you ever looked for space to open a new child care center in another part of your community or in another area of Rhode Island?



BASE = 119 key decision makers

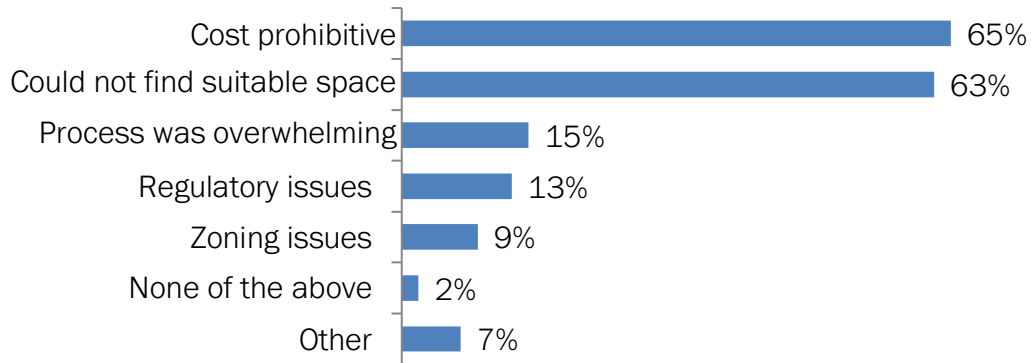
Note: Those who responded on behalf of multiple facility locations were asked this question only once

20. Were you successful in finding space and opening a new center in another part of your community or in another area of Rhode Island?



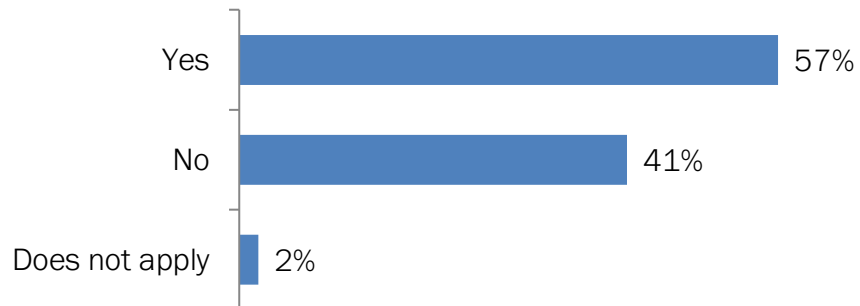
BASE = 47 key decision makers who ever looked for space to open a new child care center

21. Which of the following challenges did you encounter when you looked for space to open a new center in another part of your community or in another area of Rhode Island?



BASE = 46 key decision makers who ever looked for space to open a new child care center and answered the question

22. Are you currently looking for new space to open a new center in another part of your community or in another area of Rhode Island?



BASE = 46 key decision makers who ever looked for space to open a new child care center and answered the question



FACILITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2019 Focus Group Report

Local Initiatives Support Corporation

LISC

Rhode Island Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment: 2019 Focus Group Discussions with Key Decision Makers from Early Learning Centers, State Leaders and Key ECE Advocates and Real Estate Developers

Background

A key component of the Rhode Island Early Learning Facilities Study was a series of focus group discussions conducted with Rhode Island's state leaders and key early childhood education (ECE) advocates, real estate developers and key decision makers from early learning centers.

Research Objectives

The main objectives of the focus groups were to:

- Assess current perceptions of early learning programs in Rhode Island among three critical groups of stakeholders
- Understand interest in helping to address the need for quality child care in the state
- Learn more about the perceived barriers to building early learning facilities in Rhode Island

Specifically, the discussions were designed to meet the following research objectives:

- Assess perceptions of the best ways to achieve universal pre-k in Rhode Island
- Explore the degree to which various stakeholders understand the percentage of child care center revenues available for occupancy costs
- Evaluate perceptions of the time frame required to complete a new construction or major renovation project for a child care center in Rhode Island
- Explore the types of incentives that would motivate stakeholders to become more engaged in the development of child care/early learning facilities
- Gather insights into whether/how regulations make child care projects more challenging in Rhode Island than in other states
- Evaluate interest in partnerships for building quality child care facilities

Methodology

LISC RI engaged the services of a consultant from Market Research Partners, LLC to assist with developing the overall study methodology, creating the interactive activities and discussion guides and facilitating the group discussions.

LISC RI utilized their database of state leaders and key early childhood education (ECE) advocates, real estate developers and child care providers to contact and recruit participants for this research.

To increase attendance and engagement, the LISC RI staff and the consultant developed an interactive session and crafted a discussion guide so that only those questions designed to

address the specific research objectives were asked. An electronic clicker response system was used for a portion of each session to ensure that each respondent had the opportunity to independently answer questions without influence from others. Utilization of this technology also enabled the team to move each group quickly through a large number of questions.

The focus groups were conducted at the Save the Bay Conference Center in Providence, a central and convenient location for most participants. No incentives were offered for participation, however continental breakfast was provided to the morning group and lunch was provided to both afternoon groups. LISC RI paid for the cost of these refreshments with private dollars.

A total of three focus group discussions were conducted, each approximately 90 minutes in duration. All groups were conducted on June 19, 2019.

Participants

Participants of the “State leader and key early childhood education (ECE) advocate” focus group included:

- Leanne Barrett, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
- Nicole Chiello, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families
- Allison Comport, Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Veronica Davis, RI Department of Children, Youth and Families
- Jill Fain, City of Providence
- Maria Fairdo, Family Child Care Providers Union
- Rachel Flum, Economic Progress Institute
- Leslie Gell, Roger Williams University
- Amy Henderson, Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Shannon Heneghan Jutras, RIAEYC/BrightStars
- Lisa Hildebrand, RIAEYC
- James Logan, Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Zoe McGrath, Rhode Island Department of Education
- Caitlin Molina, Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Sarah Nardolillo, Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Nicole Oloughlin, RI SEIU State Council
- Brenda Potter, The Center for Early Learning Professionals
- Meg Robles, The Center for Early Learning Professionals
- Sam Saltz, Rhode Island Department of Human Services
- Bryan Ueda, studioMLA

- Maria Velasquez, The Center for Early Learning Professionals
- Chas Walker, Family Child Care Providers Union
- Catherine Weaver, Tupelo Design Studio
- Nancy Wolanski, Grantmakers Council of Rhode Island

Participants of the “Real estate developers” focus group included:

- Aurelien Alphe, ONE Neighborhood Builders
- Bill Bryan, Gilbane
- Eric Busch, Peregrine Group
- Steve Durkee, Cornish Associates
- Ray Neirinckx, Housing Resources Commission
- Jeremiah O'Grady, LISC
- Pauline Olean, Gilbane
- Pauline Perkins-Moye, Newport Housing Authority
- Frank Shea, FSA Housing & Community Development Consulting
- Eric Shorter, Rhode Island Housing
- Jackie Torres, Pawtucket Housing Authority

Participants of the “Early learning providers” focus group included:

- Betsy Akin, Child & Family
- Stacy Bernardi, CFSRI
- Julie Boutwell, The Children’s Workshop
- Charles Clifford, YMCA of Pawtucket
- Stacy Del Vicario, Children's Friend
- Lisa DiCarlo, CANE CDC
- Andrea Engle, Heritage Park YMCA
- Kimberly Fernandez, Federal Hill House
- Maryann Finamore, CFSRI
- Marilyn Garcia, East Bay Community Action Program Head Start
- Bailey Kent, The Children’s Workshop
- Kate Maccio, Woonsocket HS Child Development Association
- Kim Maine, Sunshine Child Development Center
- Maureen Manion, Tri County C.A.A. Head Start and State Pre-K
- Tracy Martin, Cadence Education
- Amy Maslyn, New Era Enrichment Academy
- Charlotte Moretti, Academy for Little Children
- Mary Ann Shallcross, Dr. Day Care

- Theresa Spengler, Silveira Preschool
- Cheryl Tella, Dighton Rehoboth Regional High School

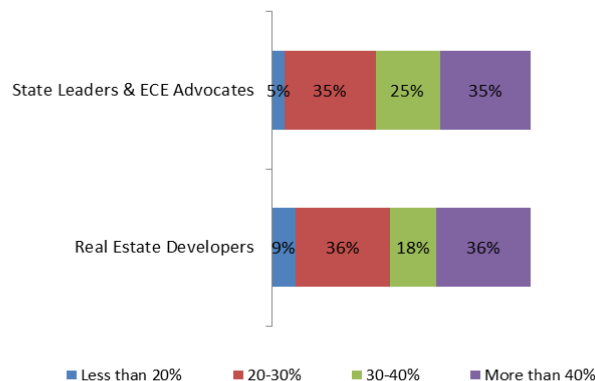
Outcomes

In addition to the interactive surveys, robust and insightful discussions took place in each of the three sessions. Common themes that emerged from the discussions helped to inform areas that required LISC RI to conduct additional exploration and deeper dives via follow up interviewing and site visits. Common themes, in particular feedback that mirrored the data and information gathered via other methodologies, helped to guide and shape recommendations as LISC RI moved into later phases of its work on the assessment.

Among the significant takeaway learnings are:

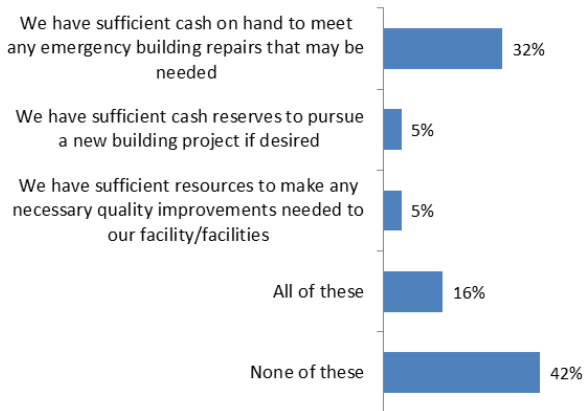
1. There is a strong interest in helping Rhode Island achieve its goal of offering quality early learning programs to more children. In fact, despite 79% of providers saying it is very difficult to operate an early learning center in Rhode Island, 70% say they are very interested in expanding.
2. In addition, real estate developers - including private, for-profit developers - demonstrate a high level of interest in helping with the space challenges and in meeting this important community need. However, this group is both uncertain and concerned about the unique liabilities or insurance requirements they perceive could be associated with early learning centers.
3. Although national and local data shows that less than 20% of an early learning center’s revenues are available for facility/operation/occupancy costs, those other than early learning providers themselves are likely to perceive that facilities have significantly greater resources for these expenses.

My best guess is that occupancy costs (rent/mortgage, utilities, maintenance, repairs, building reserves, etc.) take up ___% of the average child care center’s total revenues.



- This lack of funding on hand for facility/operation/occupancy costs is inhibiting most early learning providers from making quality improvements to their existing facilities and/or from pursuing new building projects.

Which of the following are true for your organization/business?

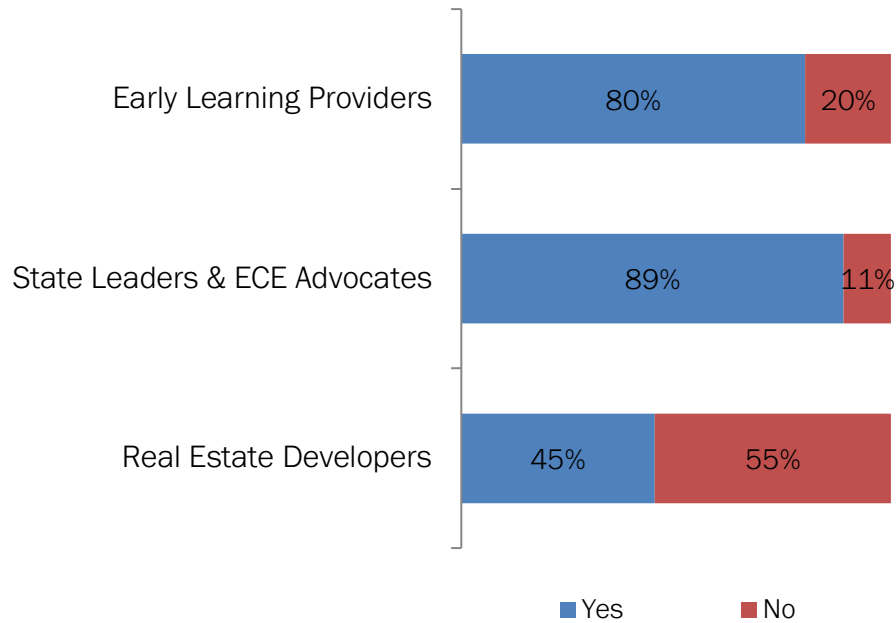


- If funding were available, early learning providers would be highly interested in building new centers from the ground up (68% very interested) but significantly less interested in building single classrooms in community-based facilities such as libraries, senior centers, community centers and churches (27% very interested).
- “Regulations” are often pointed to as a barrier or unwieldy challenge. The strong sentiment, across all groups, was that this is about interpretation and enforcement inconsistencies across and within departments, as well as the lack of a centralized place to find all requirements and contact information. Additionally, it was suggested that certain regulations and best practices (e.g., those related to parking and playgrounds) should be tailored to whether a facility is located in an urban or suburban setting.

The results of all survey questions asked during the three electronic clicker response sessions are reflected in the following pages.

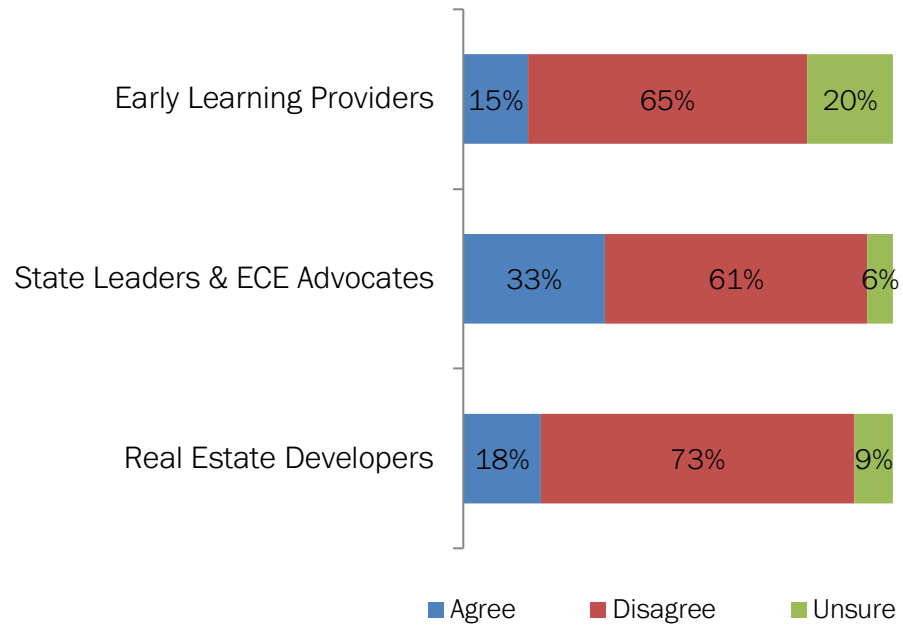
**Rhode Island Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment:
Answers to Electronic Clicker Response System Questions Asked During
2019 Focus Group Discussions with Key Decision Makers from Early Learning Centers,
State Leaders and Key ECE Advocates and Real Estate Developers**

1. Before being invited to this meeting, had you heard of the Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment?



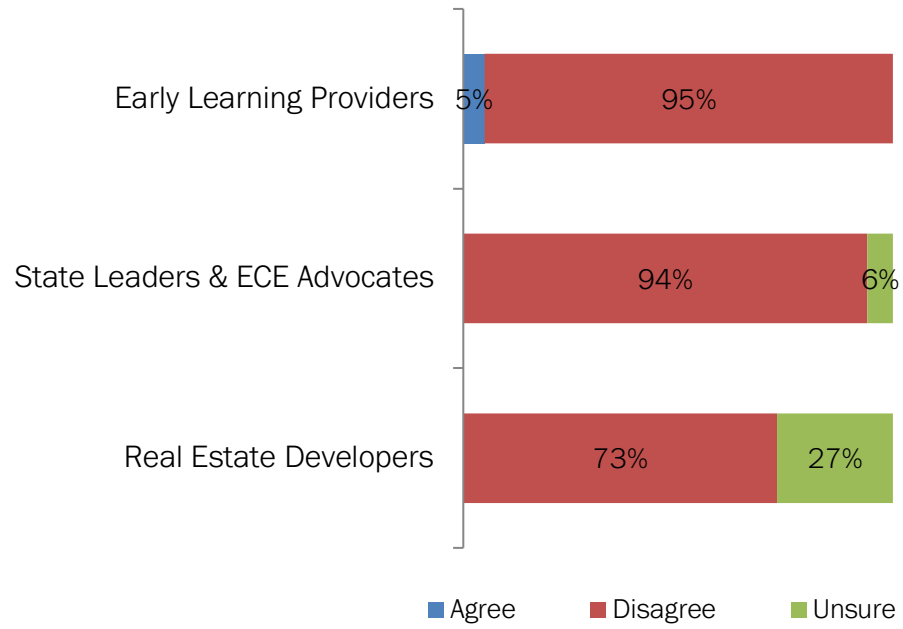
BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=18; real estate developers, n=11

2. I believe there are enough licensed child care slots in Rhode Island to meet the demand.



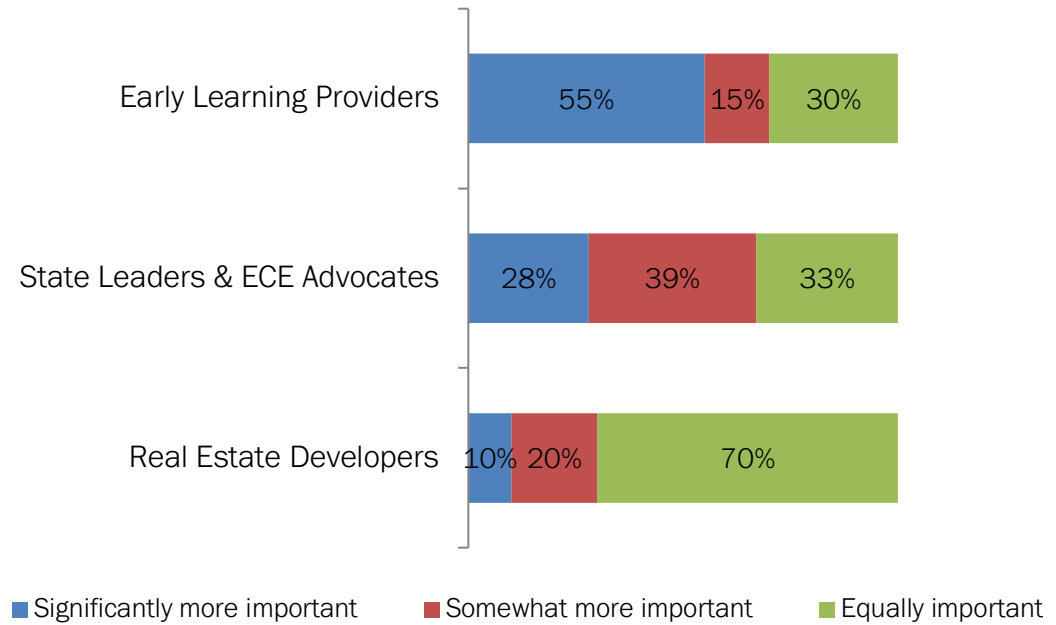
BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=18; real estate developers, n=11

3. I believe there are enough quality licensed child care slots in RI to meet the demand.



BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=18; real estate developers, n=11

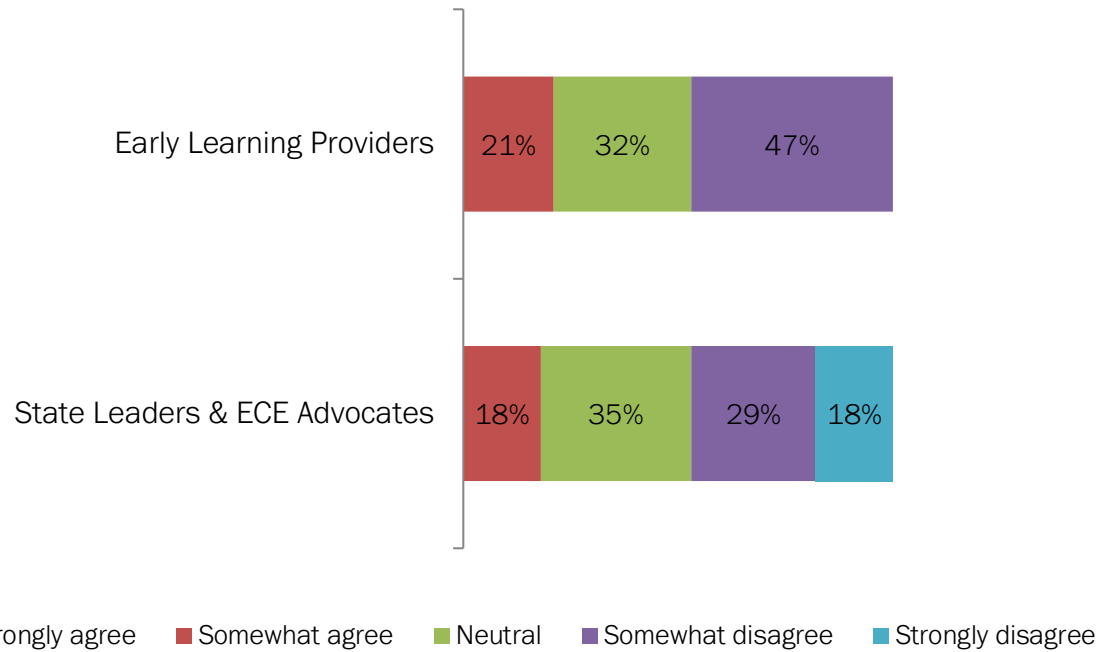
4. Thinking about some of the major social issues (crime, hunger, jobs, affordable housing, drugs, healthcare, environment, etc.) impacting Rhode Island, how would you rank “availability of quality infant/toddler/child care and pre-k programs”?



BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=18; real estate developers, n=10

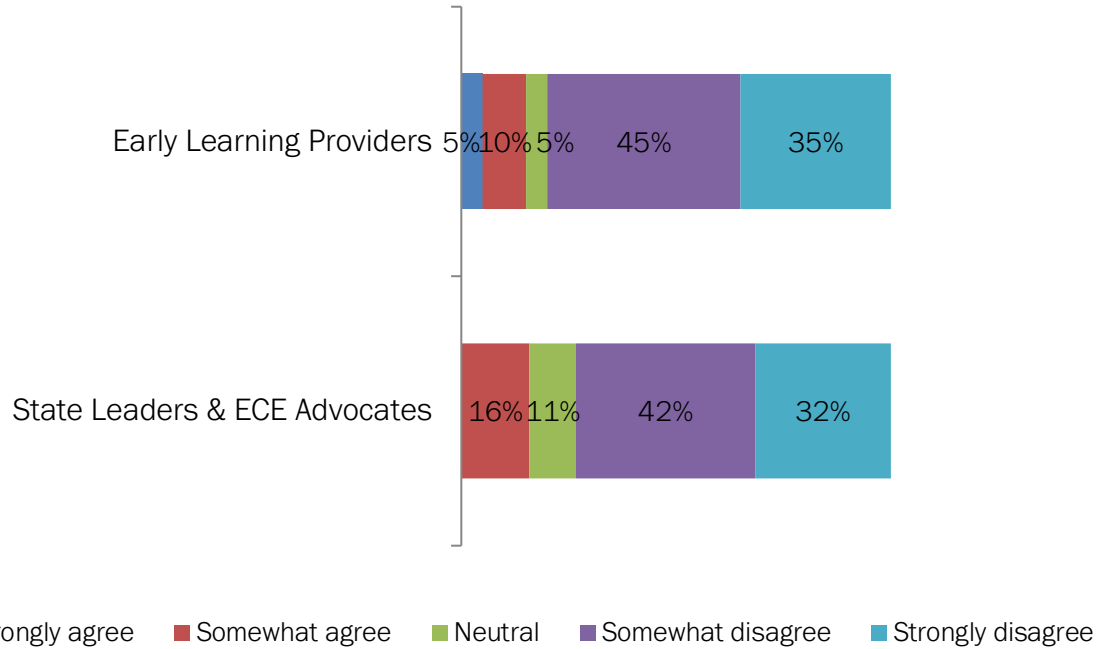
Note: No one indicated “availability of quality infant/toddler/child care and pre-k programs” was less important than the other issues

5. Considering physical structures only, most child care centers in Rhode Island are safe, in good condition and provide a healthy environment for children.



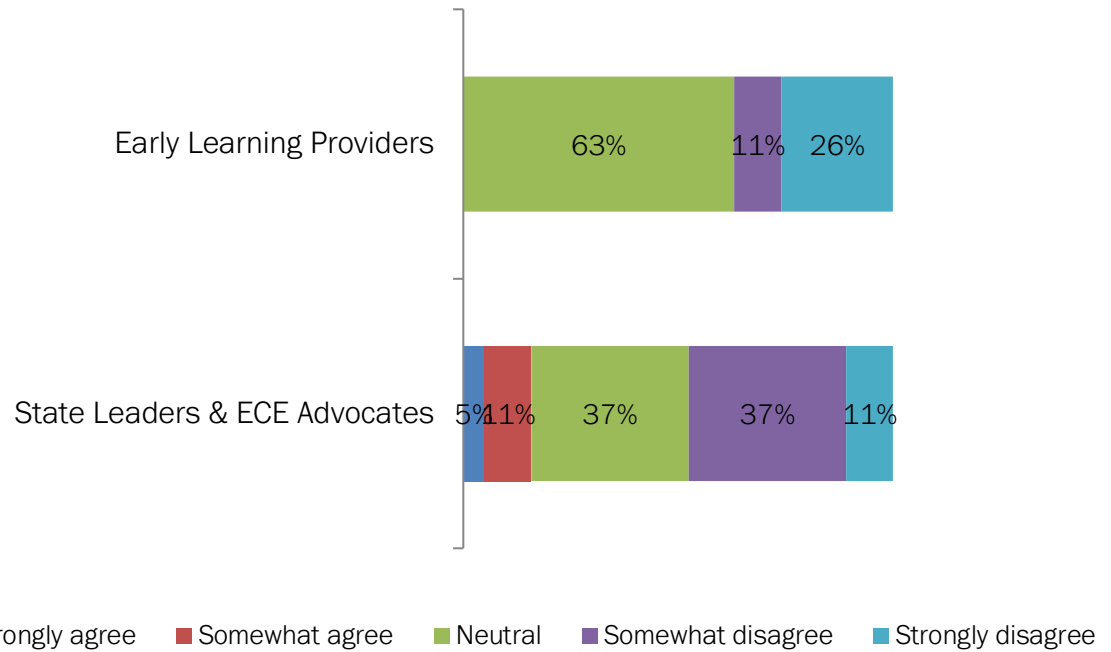
BASE = early learning providers, n=19; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=17
Notes: (1) No one indicated they “strongly agree” with this statement; and (2) real estate developers were not asked this question

6. Considering physical structures only, most child care centers in Rhode Island are high quality, best practice learning environments where the space promotes and enhances programming.



BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=19
Note: Real estate developers were not asked this question

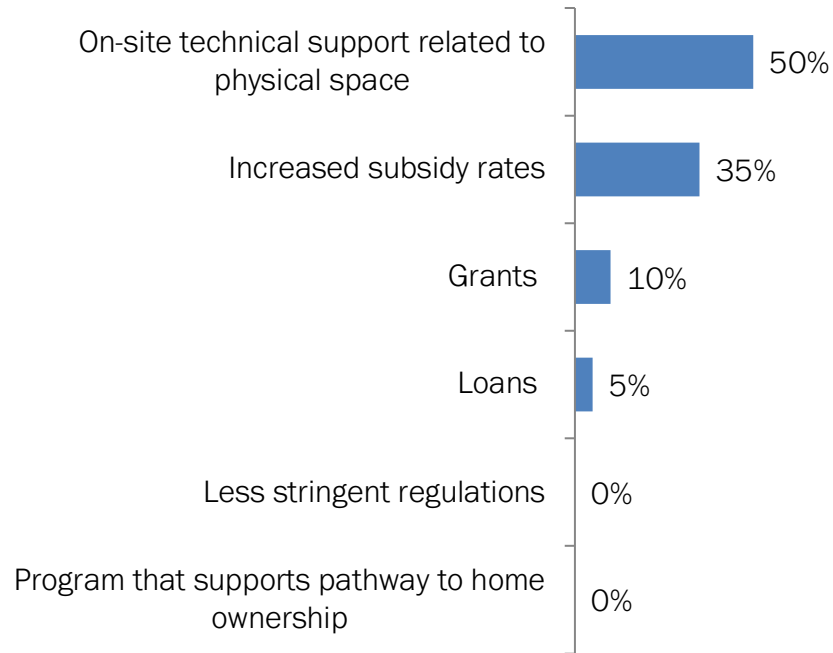
7. Considering physical structures only, the majority of homes housing family child care programs are safe, in good condition and supportive of quality programming.



BASE = early learning providers, n=19; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=19

Note: Real estate developers were not asked this question

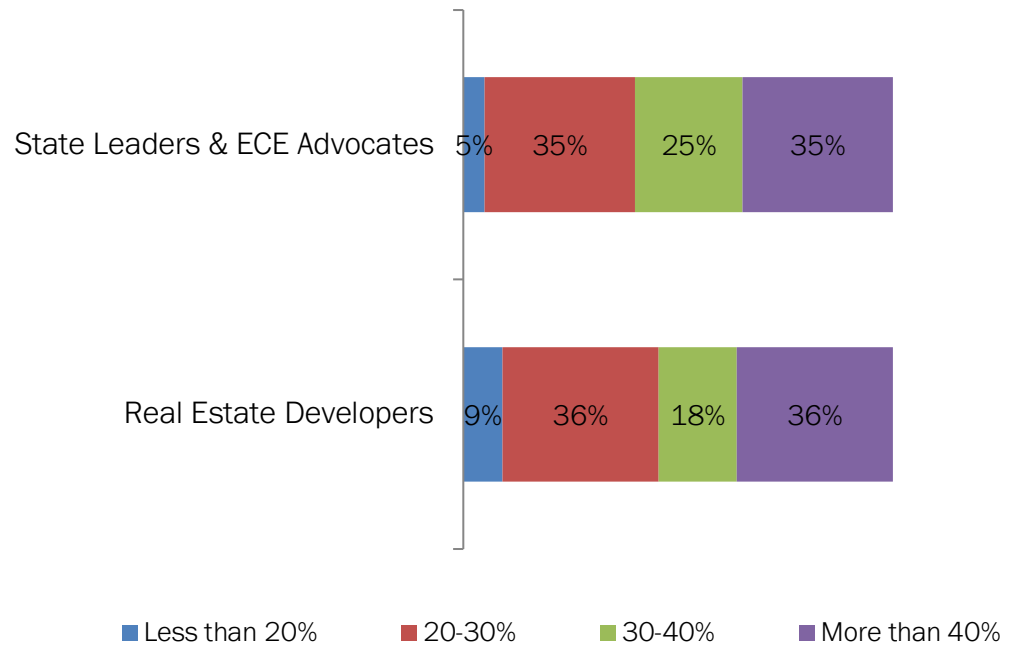
8. Considering physical structures only, which of the following would best support existing family child care providers and encourage more family providers to offer child care in their homes?



BASE = state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20

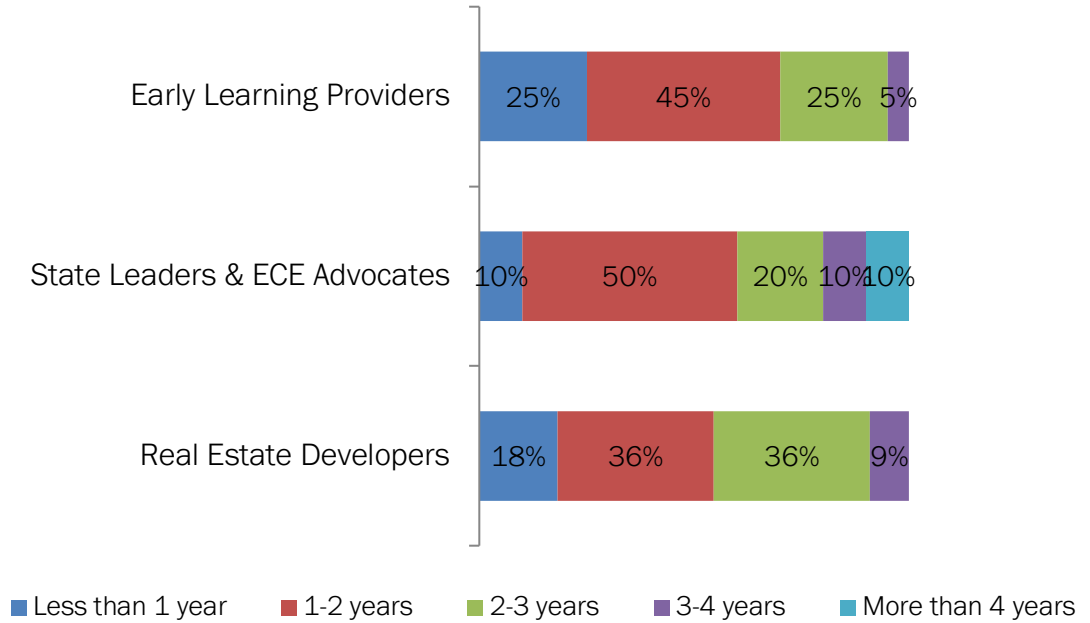
Note: Early learning providers and real estate developers were not asked this question

9. My best guess is that occupancy costs (rent/mortgage, utilities, maintenance, repairs, building reserves, etc.) take up ___% of the average child care center’s total revenues.



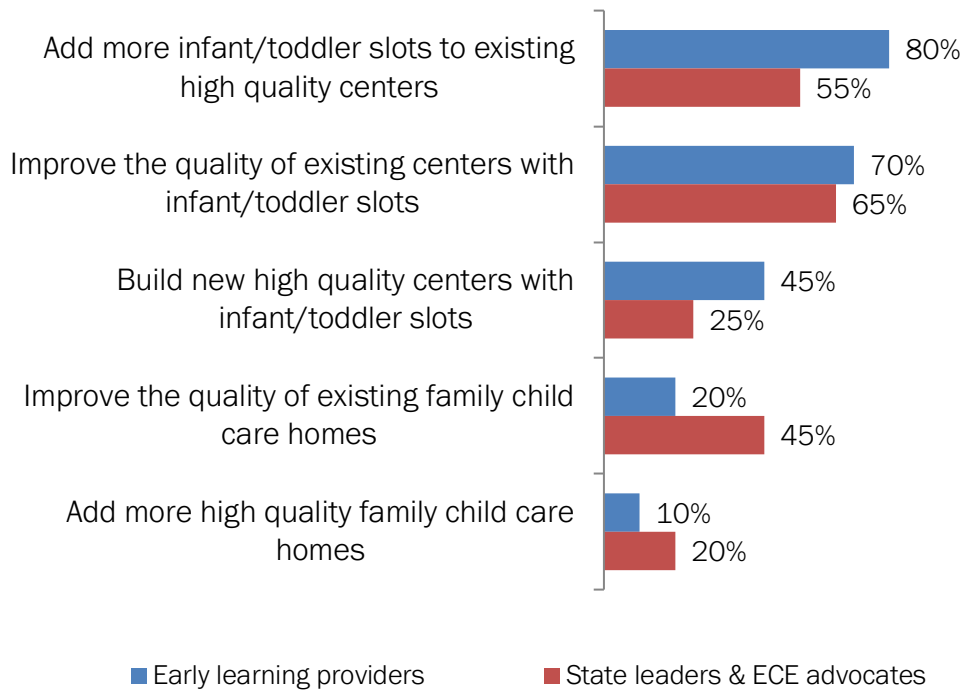
BASE = state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20; real estate developers, n=11
Note: Early learning providers were not asked this question

10. From very initial concept to final occupancy, what do you believe the minimum time frame would be to complete a new construction or major renovation project for a child care center in Rhode Island?



BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20; real estate developers, n=11

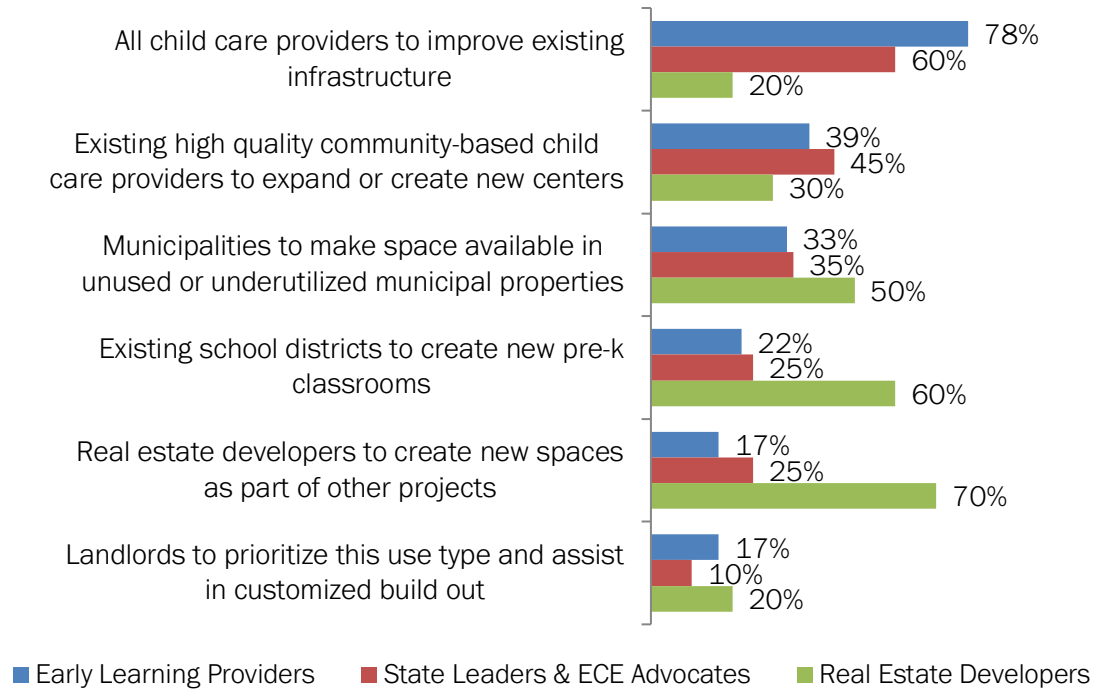
11. The best way to increase the number of high quality infant/toddler slots in Rhode Island is to:



BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20

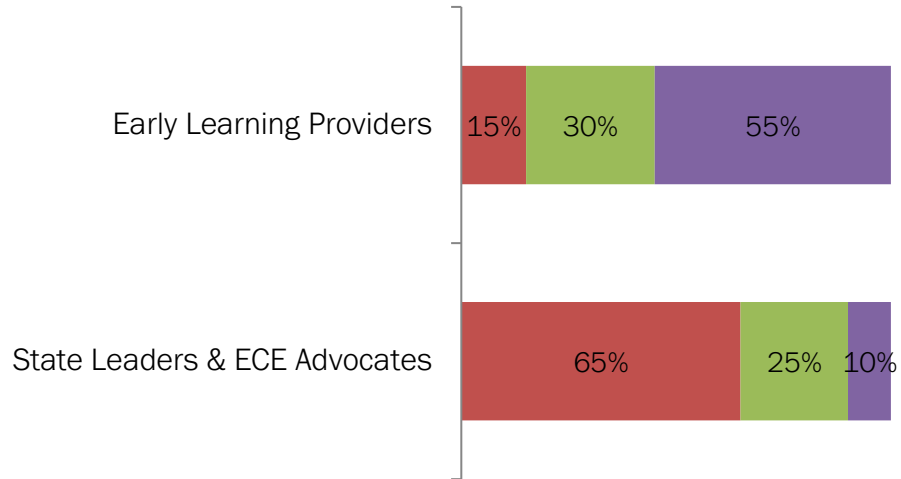
Notes: (1) Participants were allowed to select up to three responses; and (2) real estate developers were not asked this question

12. Achieving universal pre-k in Rhode Island means creating spaces for 7,000 four-year-olds that meet all regulations and support quality. This equates to about 300,000 square feet of space. The best way to accomplish this is to incentivize:



BASE = early learning providers, n=18; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20; real estate developers, n=10

13. Rhode Island state universities should...

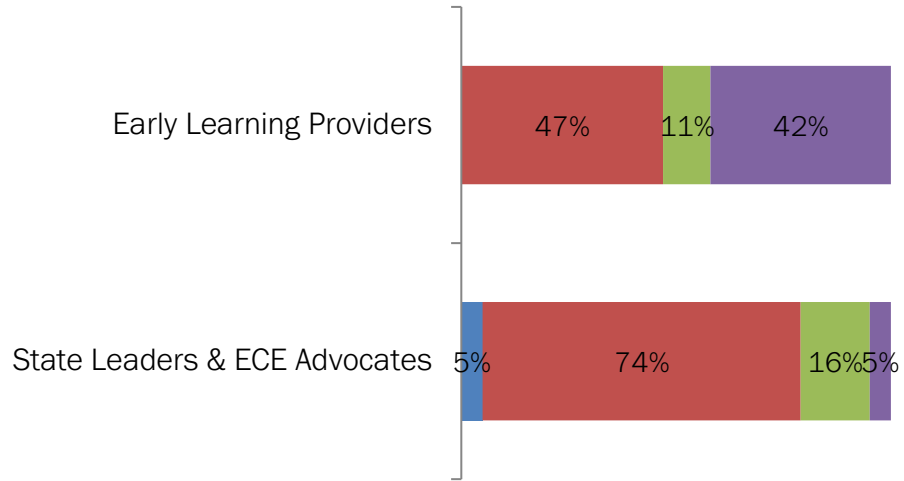


- Be required to make some of their building space available for child care/early learning
- Be incentivized to make some of their building space available for child care/early learning
- Both
- Neither

BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20

Notes: (1) No one indicated state universities should be required but not incentivized to make space available; and (2) real estate developers were not asked this question

14. Corporations relocating to or expanding in Rhode Island should...

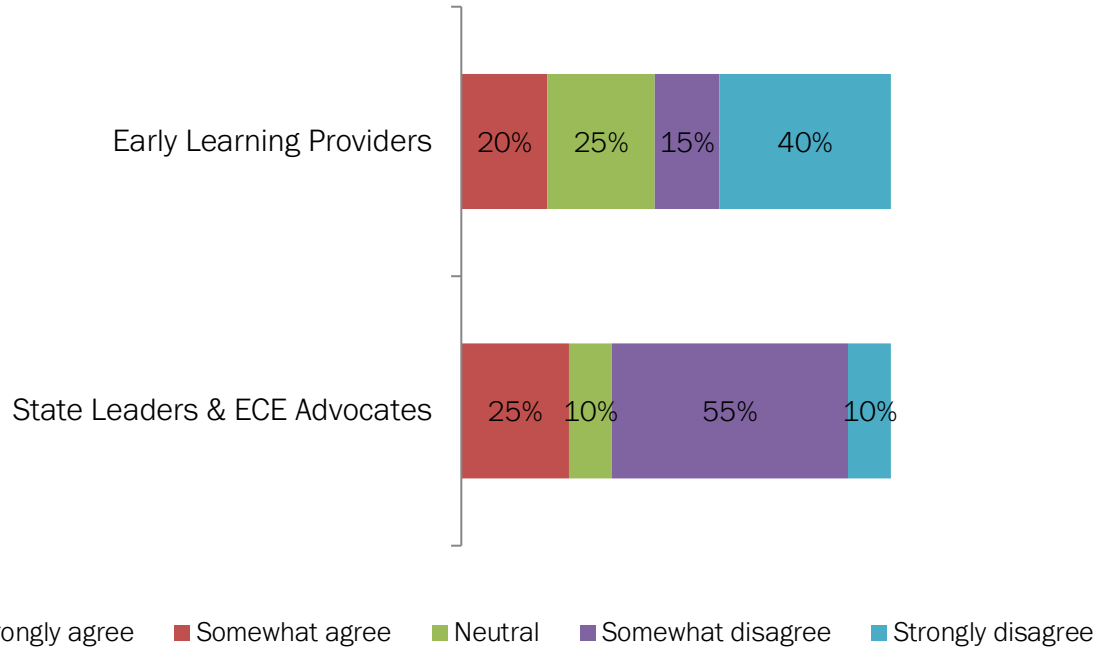


- Be required to make some of their building space available for child care/early learning
- Be incentivized to make some of their building space available for child care/early learning
- Both
- Neither

BASE = early learning providers, n=19; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=19

Note: Real estate developers were not asked this question

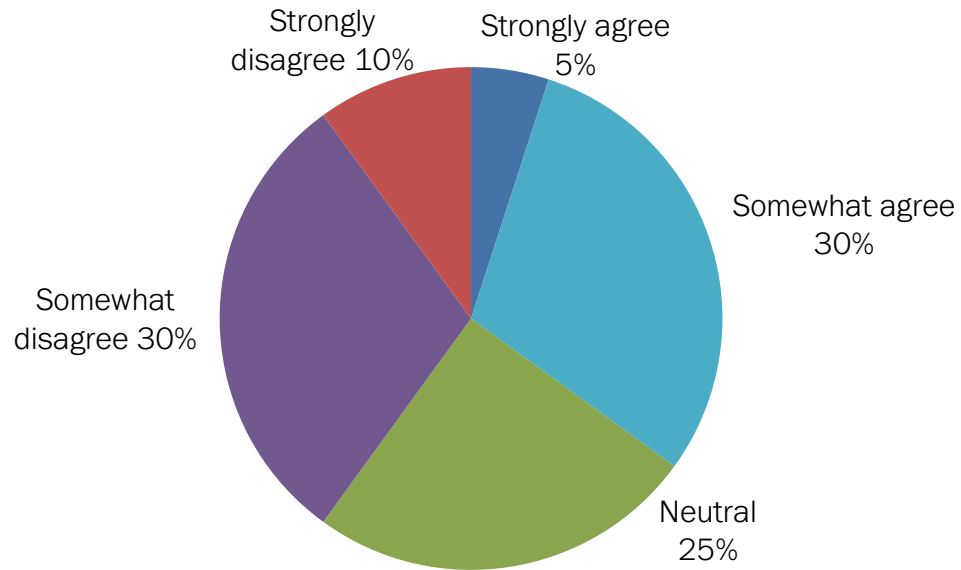
15. Existing child care regulations and quality standards (BrightStars) encourage innovation, creativity and out of the box thinking related to physical space in family child care homes, community-based early learning centers and public schools.



BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20

Notes: (1) No one indicated they “strongly agree” with this statement; and (2) real estate developers were not asked this question

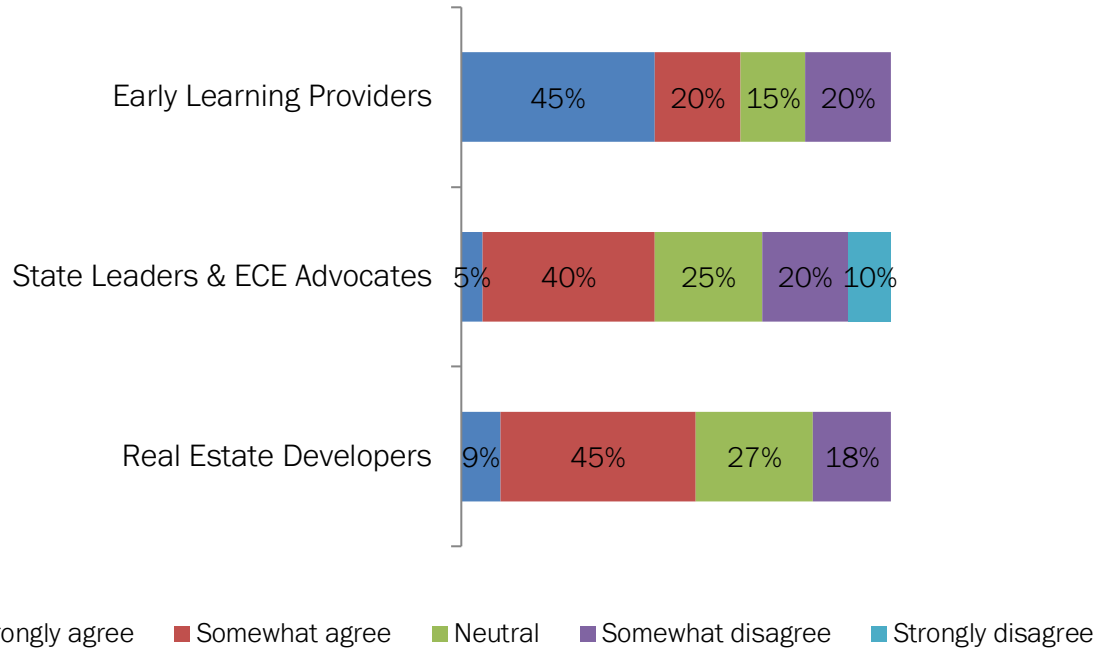
16. Our state's current regulations make it too difficult to be an early child care and pre-k education provider.



BASE = early learning providers, n=20

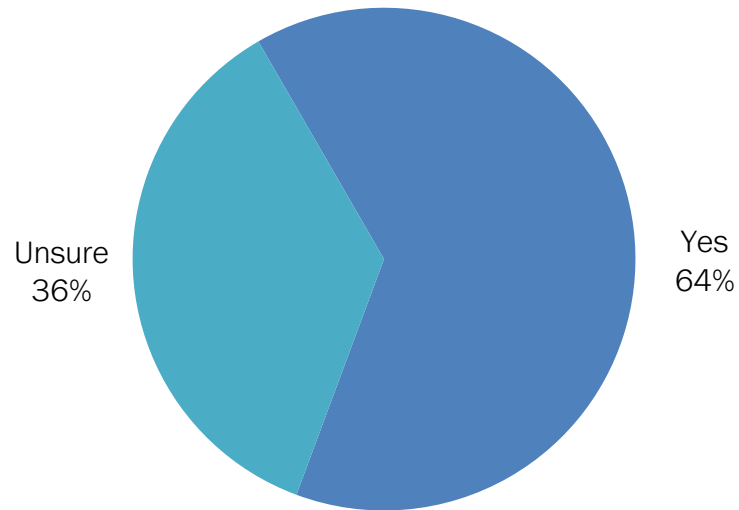
Note: State leaders & ECE advocates and real estate developers were not asked this question

17. Our state's current regulations make it too difficult for early child care and education providers to develop new spaces.



BASE = early learning providers, n=20; state leaders & ECE advocates, n=20; real estate developers, n=11

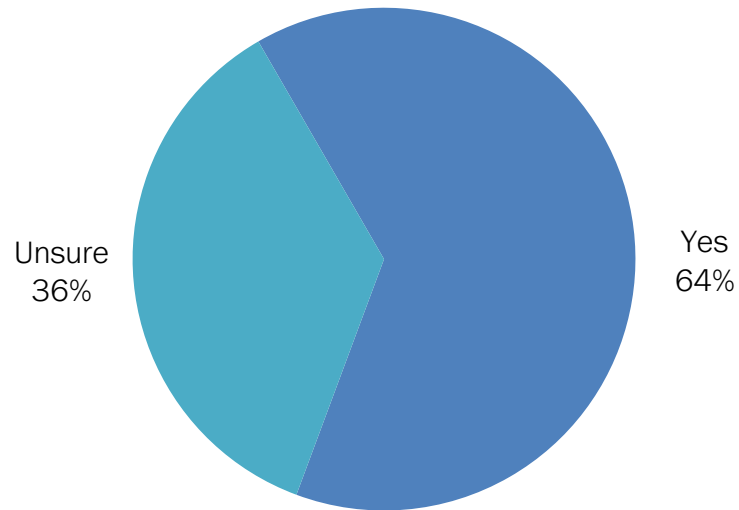
18. Do regulations make child care facility projects more challenging than other types of real estate projects?



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Notes: (1) None of the developers indicated "no"; and (2) early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

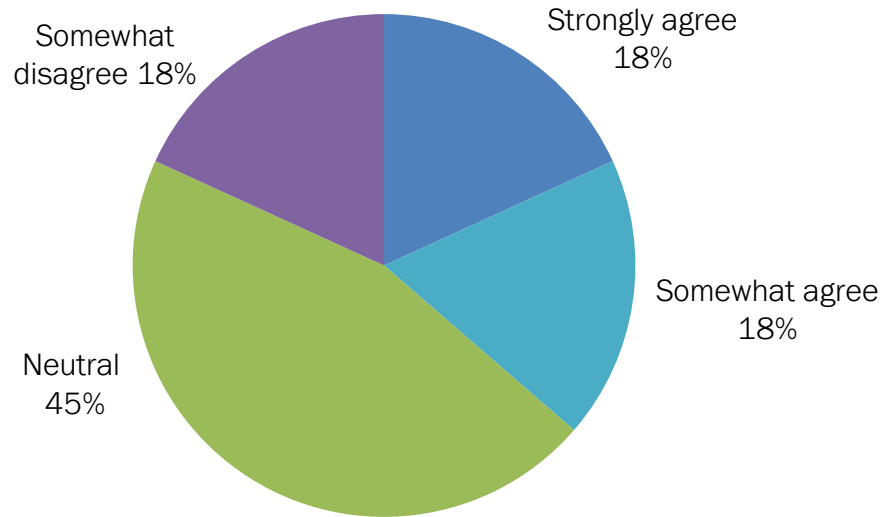
19. Do building/planning/zoning code challenges make child care facility projects more challenging than other types of projects?



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Notes: (1) None of the developers indicated "no"; and (2) early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

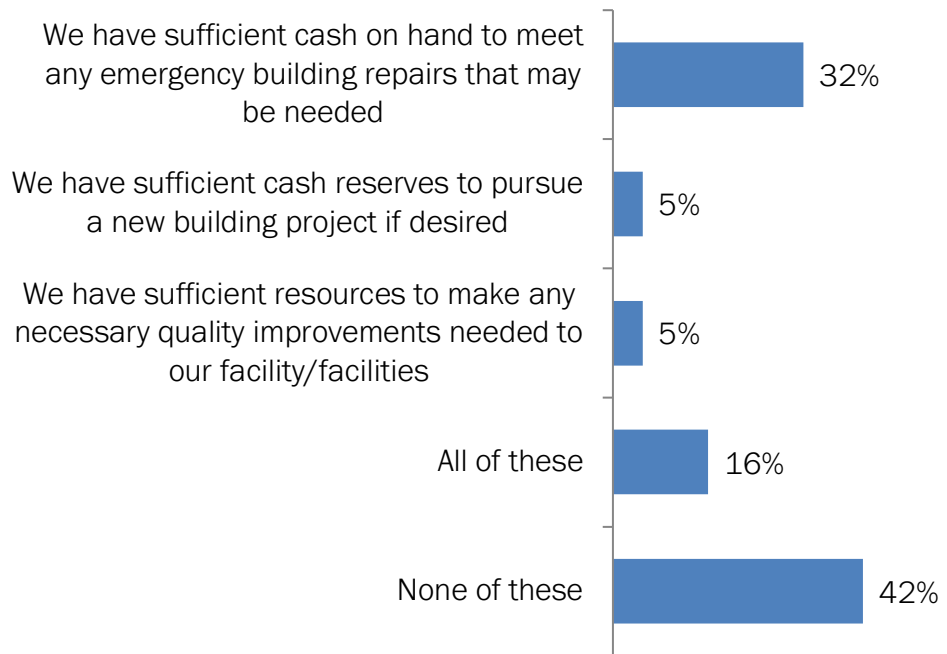
20. There are regulatory/planning/code issues that are unique to Rhode Island that make construction projects more challenging here than in other states.



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Notes: (1) None of the developers indicated they “strongly disagree” with this statement; and (2) early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

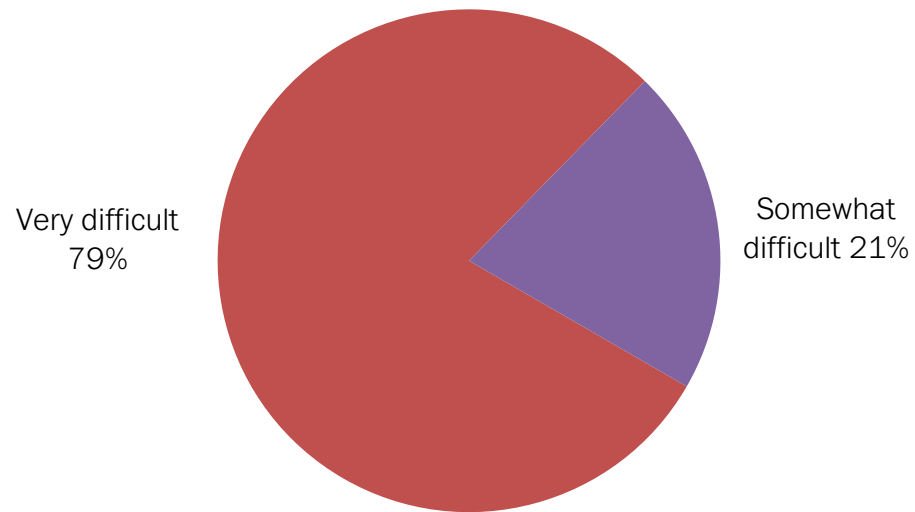
21. Which of the following are true for your organization/business?



BASE = early learning providers, n=19

Note: Real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

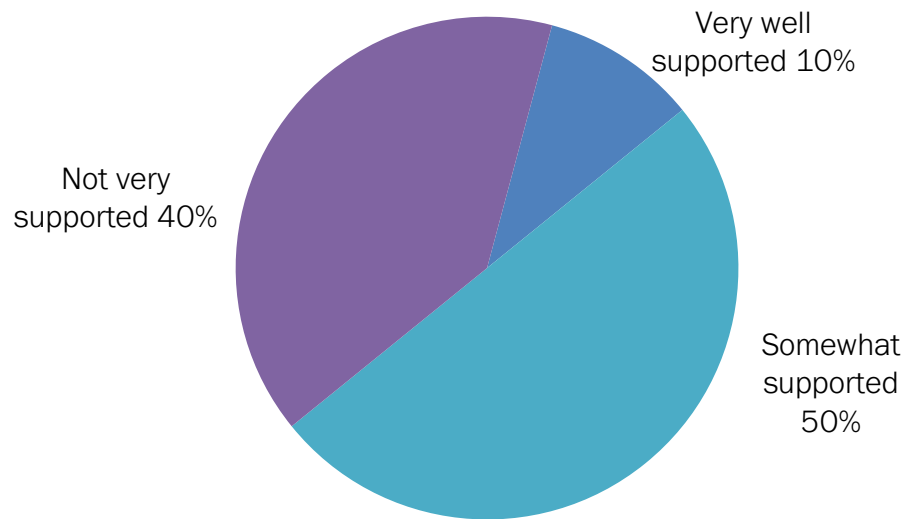
22. How easy or difficult is it to operate a child care facility in Rhode Island?



BASE = early learning providers, n=19

Notes: (1) None of the providers indicated it is "somewhat easy" or "very easy"; and (2) real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

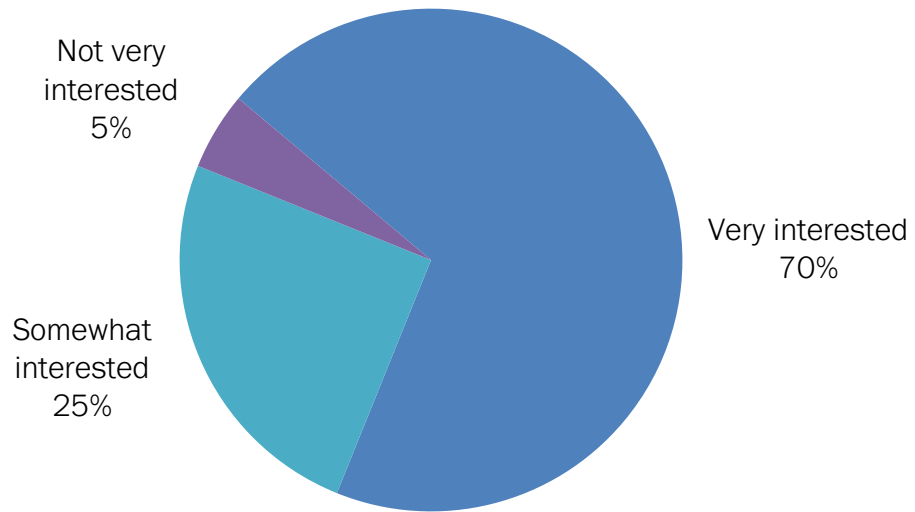
23. Overall, how well supported do you feel as a business?



BASE = early learning providers, n=20

Notes: (1) None of the providers indicated they feel "not at all supported"; and (2) real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

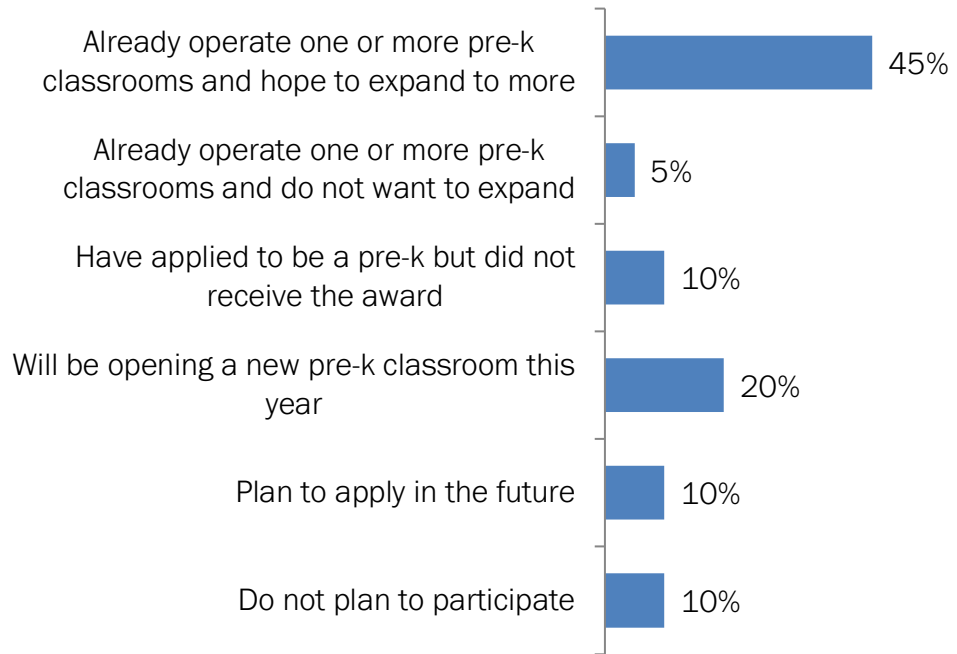
24. How interested are you in expanding the number of child care slots you offer?



BASE = early learning providers, n=20

Notes: (1) None of the providers indicated they are “not at all interested”; and (2) real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

25. Which of the following most closely describes your program's interest in participating in the state (RIDE) funded pre-k program?

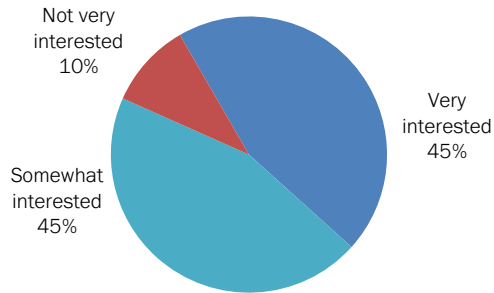


BASE = early learning providers, n=20

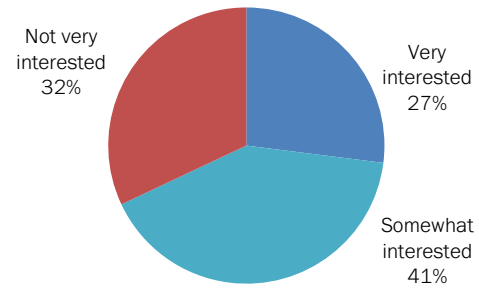
Note: Real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

26-29. If funding were available, how interested would you be in...

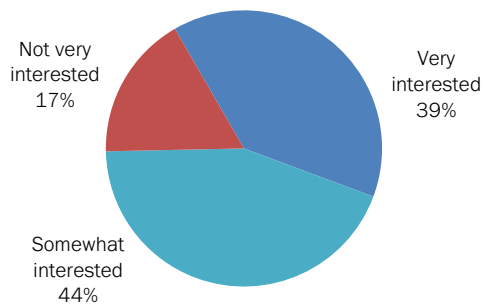
Building classrooms in empty commercial or retail buildings?



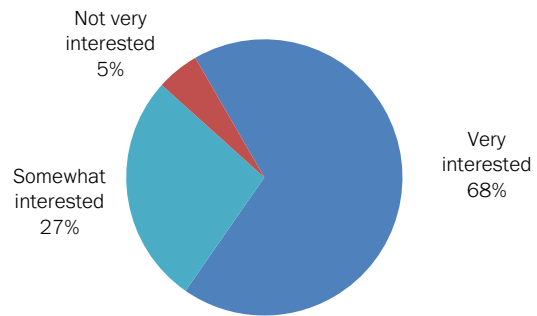
Building single classrooms in existing community-based facilities*?



Developing classroom space in partnership with public schools?



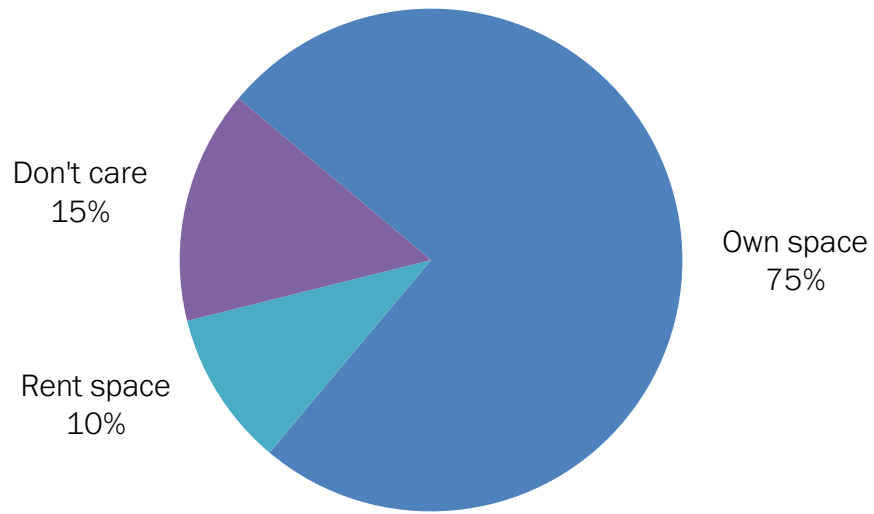
Building new child care centers from the ground up?



BASE = early learning providers, n=between 18 and 22 providers per question

Notes: (1) *Community-based facilities are libraries, senior centers, community centers, churches, etc.; and (2) real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

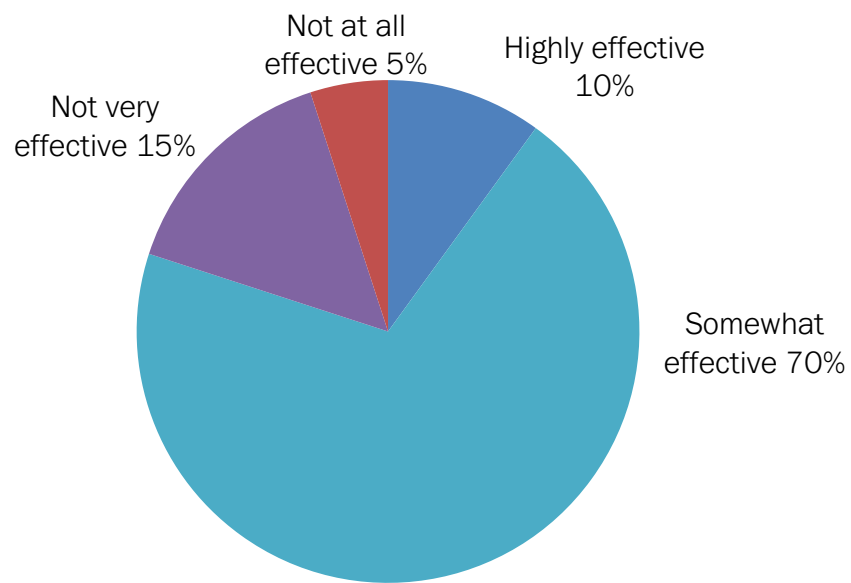
30. What is your site control preference for your child care center?



BASE = early learning providers, n=20

Note: Real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

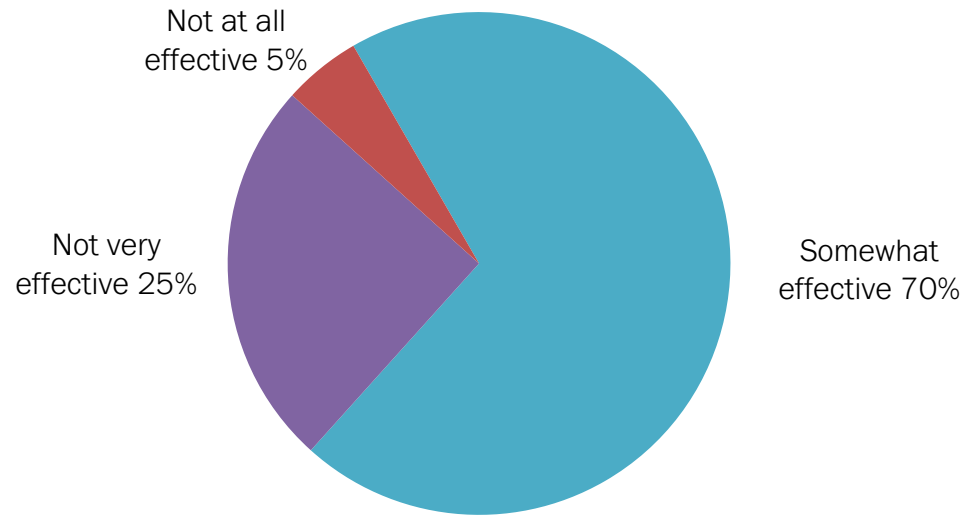
31. How effective are Rhode Island's current regulations in promoting healthy, safe child care and pre-k spaces?



BASE = early learning providers, n=20

Note: Real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

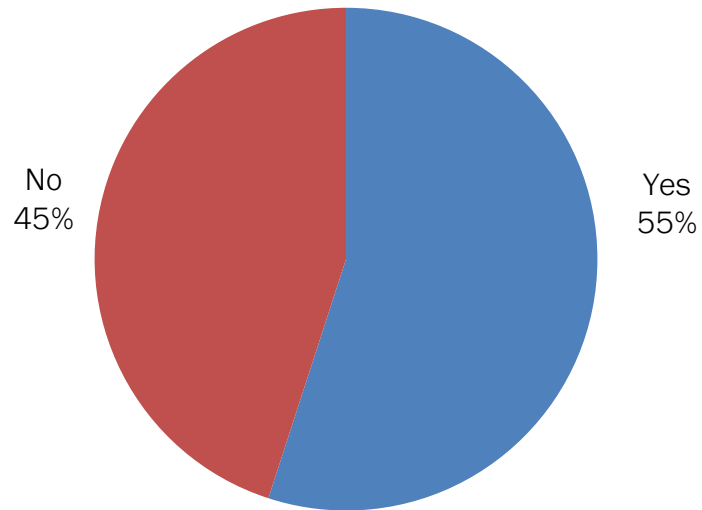
32. How effective is the current quality rating system in promoting healthy, safe child care and pre-k spaces?



BASE = early learning providers, n=20

Notes: (1) None of the providers indicated it is “highly effective”; and (2) real estate developers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

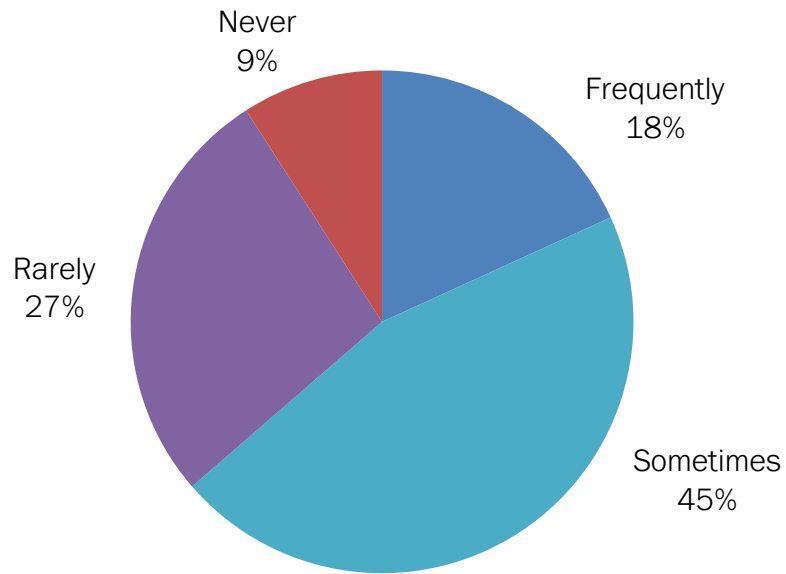
33. Have you ever been involved in a real estate project that incorporated a child care or early learning facility?



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Note: Early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

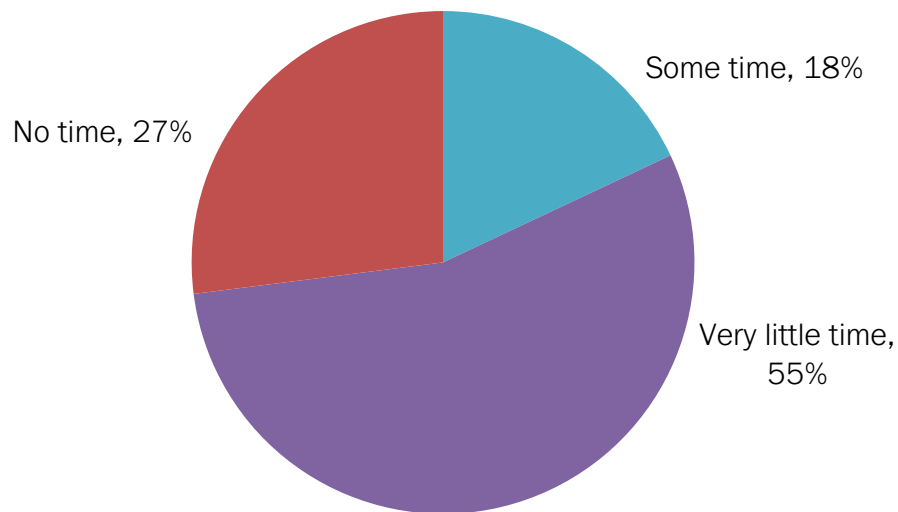
34. How frequently does the topic of lack of access to quality child care come up in community meetings in which you participate?



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Note: Early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

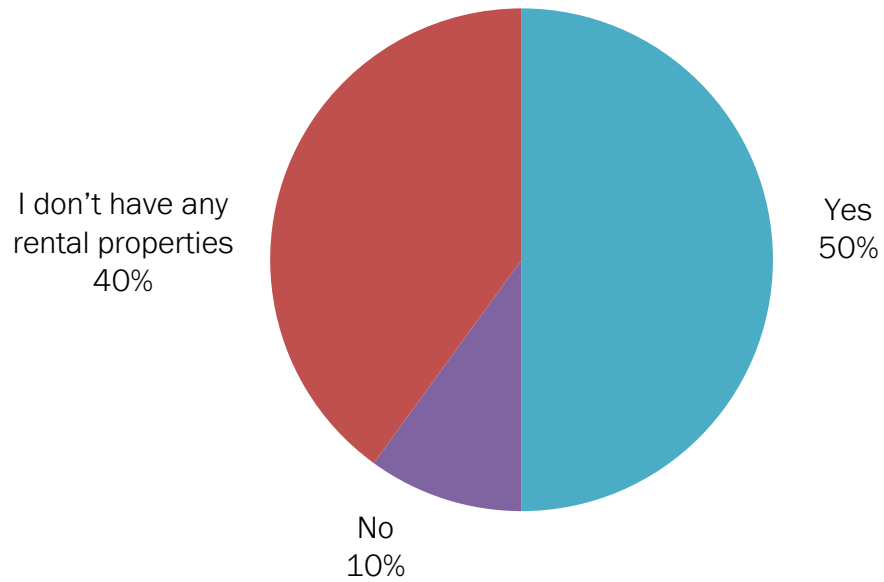
35. How much time do you, personally, spend thinking about ways to increase access to and/or improve the quality of child care in Rhode Island?



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Notes: (1) None of the developers indicated they spend "a lot of time"; and (2) early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

36. Do you allow family child care in your residential rental properties?

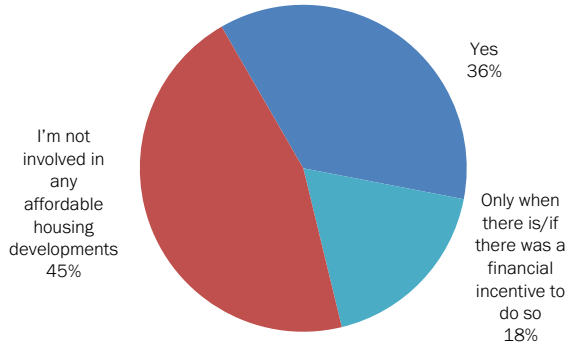


BASE = real estate developers, n=10

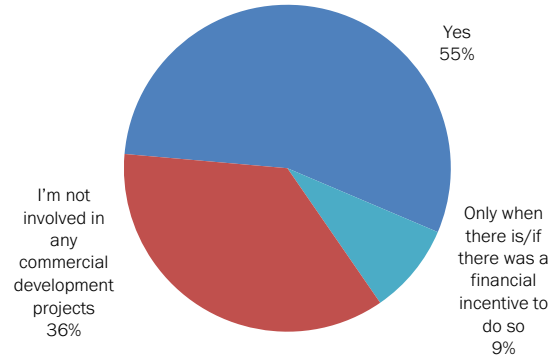
Note: Early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

37. Have you ever included/would you consider including...

Targeted family child care rental units
in your affordable housing developments?



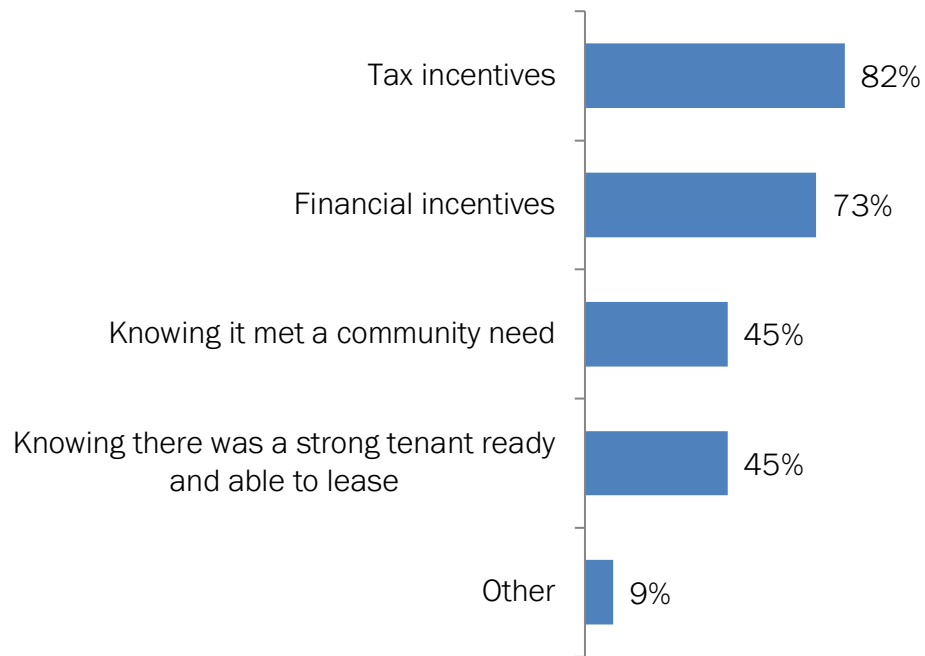
A child care/early learning center
in your commercial development projects?



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Notes: (1) None of the developers answered "no"; and (2) early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

38. What types of incentives would motivate you to become more engaged in the development of child care/early learning facilities?



BASE = real estate developers, n=11

Notes: (1) Developers were allowed to select up to three responses; and (2) early learning providers and state leaders & ECE advocates were not asked this question

This publication was made possible by Grant Number 90TP0027 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

This report, and supplemental materials, are available on LISC's Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund website www.riccelff.org. The online version contains numerous hyperlinks that allow you to explore the subject matter in greater depth.





For additional background on the impact of facilities on early learning quality and access we recommend the following selected readings:

- [From the Ground Up: Improving Child Care and Early Learning Facilities](#)
- [Why Early Childhood Facilities Matter: The Case for Public Action](#)
- [Building Early Childhood Facilities: What States Can Do to Create Supply and Promote Quality](#)
- [If We Want Pre-K for All We Need to Build Pre-K for All](#)
- [Early Learners Need Quality Facilities Tailored to Their Needs](#)

Please visit the LISC Rhode Island website for additional resources on early learning facilities at www.rilisc.org.

Follow us on social media for all the latest early learning facilities news and resources:

 | @liscchildcarefacilities

 | @lisc_childcare

LISC