



# NORTH CAROLINA RATED LICENSE ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Research & Recommendations

## Inequities in Access to Quality Early Care and Education

**W**hat we are reading now . . .

Hatfield, B. E., Lower, J. K., Cassidy, D. J., & Faldowski, R. A. Inequities in access to quality early care and education: Associations with funding and community context. *Early Childhood Education Quarterly* (2014), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.01.001>

**Purpose of study:** To examine **program- and community- level characteristics** related to **total licensing points** earned by early care and education programs in North Carolina's Tiered Quality Rating Improvement System (TQRIS).

**Information for this study came from:**

- (a) **Total licensing points** ❶ based on licensing data from NC DCDEE in September 2008; NCRLAP data, which contributed to the licensing points, were not directly used in this study.
- (b) Data on **community concentrated disadvantage**, ❷ **concentrated immigration**, **residential stability**, and **concentrated affluence** ❸ from the US Decennial Census 2000 Summary File 3;
- (c) **Subsidy, Head Start, and More at Four (now NC Pre-K)** data from the NC DCDEE, North Carolina State Head Start Collaboration Office and the North Carolina Office of School Readiness.

**Sample:** 6882 programs from 619 zip codes in North Carolina

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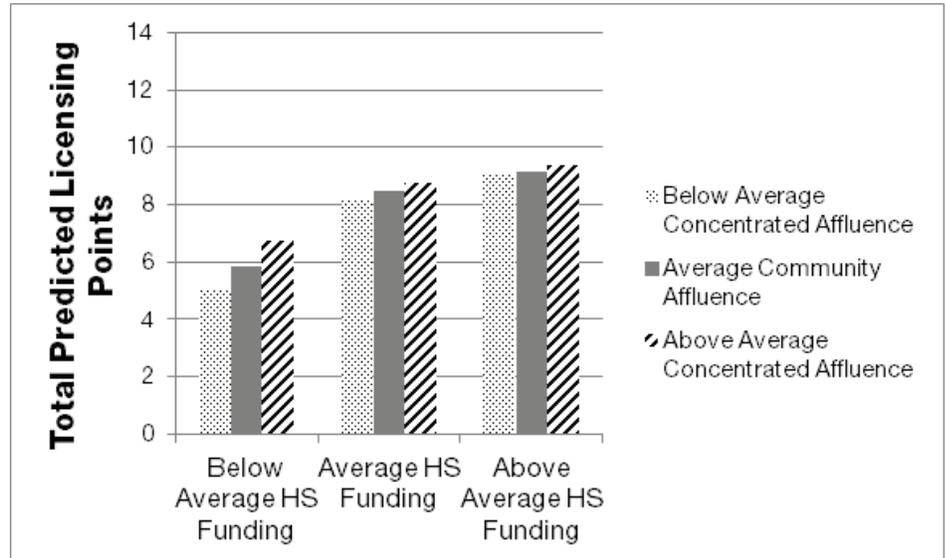
## Research & Recommendations

### FINDINGS:

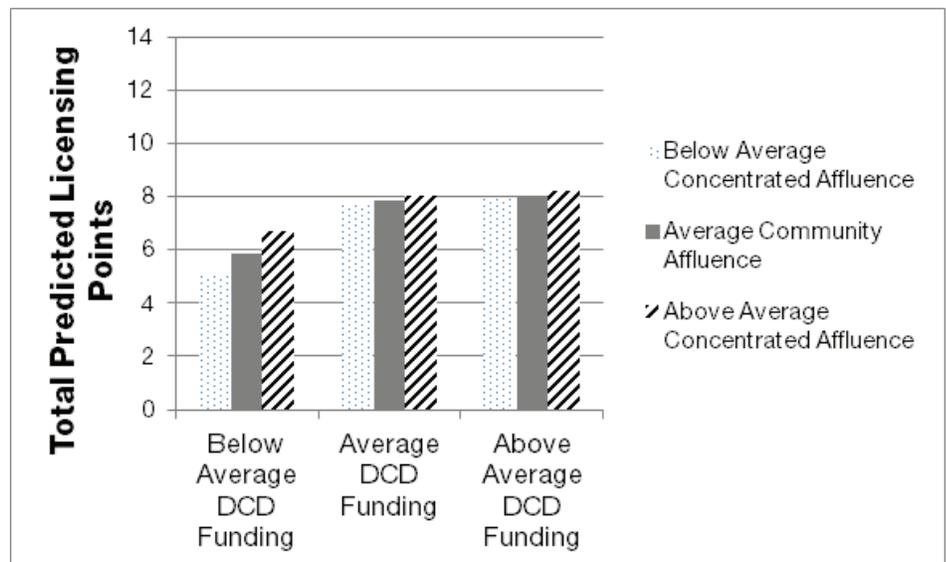
#### A. Centers

- (a) Increase in community concentrated affluence was associated with increase in predicted licensing points, across levels of DCDEE subsidy funding, Head start funding, or More at Four funding.
- (b) Increase in DCDEE subsidy funding, Head start funding, or More at Four funding, was associated with increase in predicted licensing points across community characteristics 4.
- (c) Programs located in communities with increase in concentrated disadvantage tended to have lower licensing points.
- (d) When programs from communities **with lower levels of concentrated affluence** received **above average level of concentration of Head Start funding or DCDEE subsidy funding**, they tended to attain comparable licensing points with programs from communities with increase in concentrated affluence. (See figures 1 and 2.)

**Figure 1.** Child Care Center Total Points by Head Start Funding and Community Affluence 5



**Figure 2.** Child Care Center Total Points by DCD Subsidy Funding and Community Affluence 5



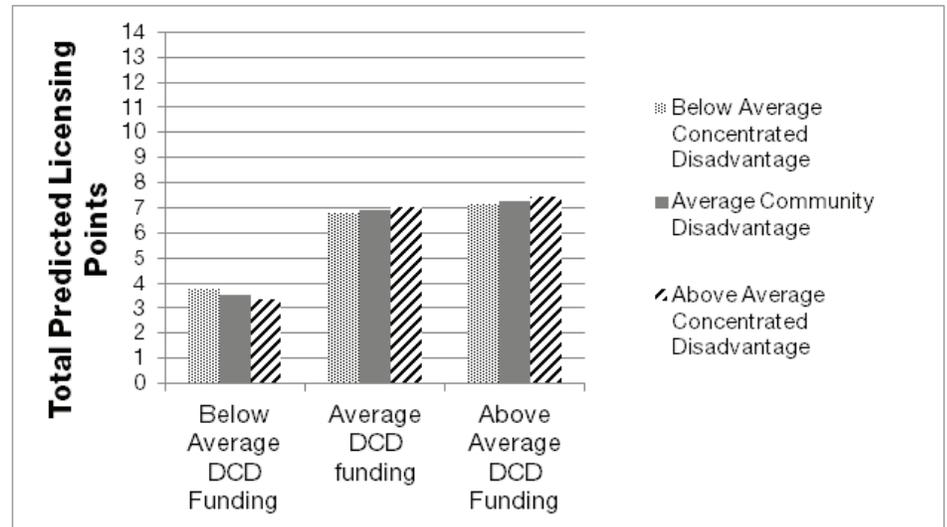
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#### B. Family child care homes (FCCH were not eligible for Head Start funding nor More at Four funding)

- (a) Increase in the concentration of DCDEE subsidy funding was associated with increase in licensing points, regardless of community characteristics.
- (b) Increase in community concentrated affluence was associated with increase in licensing points, across levels of DCDEE subsidy funding.
- (c) Licensing points were lower as community concentrated disadvantage was higher. However, higher-than-average levels of DCDEE subsidy funding were associated with higher licensing points for FCCH, even in communities with the highest levels of concentrated disadvantage. (See figure 3.)

**Figure 3.** Family Child Care Homes Total Points by DCD Subsidy Funding and Community Disadvantage



#### TAKE-HOME MESSAGES:

- (a) Quality, as indicated by licensing points, varies by community context.
- (b) When funding level is inadequate and programs are in the most disadvantaged communities, state and federal funding might not be able to buffer the negative effect of community context on program quality.
- (c) When funding levels are above average, centers from communities with different levels of affluence, as well as FCCH from communities with different levels of disadvantage, seemed to be able to attain comparable licensing points.

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### DEFINITION OF TERMS:

- 1 Total licensing points: a composite of points in education standards, points in program standards, and an additional “quality point” that may be achieved through enhanced teacher education requirements, approved curriculum adoption, or other options. Total licensing points range from 0 to 15 and are used for 1-5 star designation.
- 2 Concentrated disadvantage: indicated by percent population below poverty line, percent households receiving public assistance, percent individuals 16 and over in labor force unemployed, percent female-headed families with children, and percent Black or African American.
- 3 Concentrated affluence: indicated by percent of families with incomes \$75,000 or higher, percent of adults with a college education, and percent of civilian labor force employed in professional or managerial occupations.
- 4 Community characteristics: indicated by concentrated disadvantage, concentrated affluence, concentrated immigration, and residential stability.
- 5 “Below Average” refers to one standard deviation below the mean, indicating the lower level; “Average” refers to the mean level; “Above Average” refers to one standard deviation above the mean, indicating the higher level.



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