



Press Advisory

What?

**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
presents
*Providence Data in Your Backyard:
Findings from the 2004 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Factbook and Census 2000***

When?

10:00 A.M., Thursday, January 13, 2005

Where?

**The Rhode Island Foundation
One Union Station
Providence, RI**

Program

The *Data in Your Backyard* presentation combines data from the *2004 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* and *Census 2000* describing the education, health, economic well-being, and safety of children in Providence.

The event is sponsored by Mayor David N. Cicilline and Rhode Island KIDS COUNT in partnership with The Providence Plan.

Attending the presentation will be elected officials, city leaders, school department officials, service providers and community leaders.

For more information:

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Press Release

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT presents
*Providence Data in Your Backyard: Findings from the
2004 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook and Census 2000***

Policy forum focuses on the need to comprehensively address the issues facing children and families in Providence in order to improve educational outcomes and increase opportunities for youth to succeed.

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**Providence, RI, January 13, 2005** – Mayor David N. Cicilline joined with Rhode Island KIDS COUNT and the Providence Plan to sponsor today's policy forum on the well-being of children in Providence, with special attention to issues that affect educational achievement. City officials and community leaders convened at The Rhode Island Foundation building in downtown Providence for a presentation on the condition of Providence's children that focused on the education system and supports available in the city. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst Kathleen Keenan delivered the presentation, which relied on census demographic data and city data from the *2004 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* as well as neighborhood-level data from the Providence Plan.

The presentation showed demographic trends in Providence that have led to a younger, more diverse population in the city. The population of Providence has been increasing over the past two decades, from a low of 156,804 people in 1980 to 173,618 people in 2000. More than one-quarter of the Providence population is children under age 18. The child population in Providence increased by almost 20% between 1990 and 2000. Currently there are 45,277 children under the age of 18 in Providence. Almost half of the children in Providence are Hispanic or Latino, accounting for 44% of the total child population in 2000 compared to 24% in 1990.

Changing demographic trends have come with increased concern over issues of poverty. The poverty rate among the 45,277 Providence children is 41%, well above the state's rate of 17% and above the rate for large cities nationwide (26%). Nationally, Providence has the third highest child poverty rate of all cities with populations over 100,000.

The forum highlighted increased health access and improved health outcomes that are critical to meeting education goals. While Providence's teen birth rate is still more than double the state average, over the last decade the teen birth rate fell significantly from 74.3 to 50.8 per 1,000 teens 15 to 17 years old. Providence has also seen a decrease in the percentage of women receiving delayed prenatal care, down from 18.4% to 11.8%. The rate of childhood lead poisoning has also decreased.

Recent data from the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education indicate that Providence schools are showing improvements in the achievement test scores and provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 that determine if schools are high performing, moderately performing or in need of improvement. In 2004, there were 2 schools in Providence that were classified as high performing (up from 1 school in 2003); 4 schools that were moderately performing (the same as in 2003); 9 schools in need of improvement / making progress (up from 4 in 2003); and 29 schools in need of improvement / making insufficient progress (down from 35 in 2003). These classifications are based on 21 annual targets for each school level. Actual school improvements may exceed those described by the classifications as several schools have achieved or made significant gains in most, but not all, of the 21 targets. The targets focus on reading and math skills which are critical to a student's success in school and later in the workforce.

There is clearly much progress needed if all children are to enter school ready to learn and leave school prepared to lead productive lives. The core message of the policy forum was the need to stay focused on continued gains in school improvement by addressing the multiple issues facing children and families in the city. Data were presented on several key programs that research shows lead to increased school readiness and school success, including high quality out-of-school time programs, full-day kindergarten, and early care and education. While access to these programs is increasing, there is the critical need to make sure that programs are of high quality and linked to school achievement goals.

Data were also presented on the social and economic issues that have an impact on school success, including the number of English language learners, student mobility rates and the educational attainment of parents. In Providence, one in five public school students is receiving English as a Second Language or bilingual education services. Currently over 5,000 English language learners are enrolled in Providence schools. More than half of these children (59%) are in grades one through five. Data presented showed that student mobility, or the number of times a student switches schools, is strongly correlated with school success. Students who move are two to five times more likely to repeat a grade later in school than students who do not move. “Understanding causes of student mobility and the changing composition of public school enrollment in the city is essential to our strategic thinking on how to invest in students,” commented Patrick McGuigan, Executive Director of The Providence Plan.

The educational attainment levels of Providence parents also emerged as an essential factor affecting children’s academic outcomes. Between 1998 and 2002, 27% of children born in the city had mothers with less than a high school diploma. Research shows a strong link between parental education levels and the level of education their children ultimately achieve.

Elizabeth Burke Bryant, Executive Director of Rhode Island KIDS COUNT noted, “Factors such as access to quality early child care, student mobility and language barriers directly affect education outcomes. We must consider each of these factors when we consider how to improve the performance of our students and schools.” Data on adult educational attainment, teen parents and child abuse and neglect were also presented to highlight the need for continued attention to the needs of parents as well as their children. Parents who are under great social and economic stress are less able to provide adequate care and learning opportunities for their children. “It is critical that we consider Providence schools with an understanding of the community context in which they exist,” stressed Ms. Burke Bryant. “Adult education, family support and quality early childhood programs need to be critical elements of the city’s education agenda.”

Mayor David N. Cicilline echoed this sentiment noting how encouraged he was by recent improvements in academic outcomes in 2004 and that this success has both rewarded and renewed the commitment to addressing the in-school and out-of-school factors that drive student success: “We are listening to the research and we understand that both time in school and out of school are critical to student achievement. Efforts to increase access to after school

programs and to improve the relationships between parents and schools are underway and will help Providence students succeed in their academic pursuits. We are committed to the success of every child in Providence.”

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children’s policy and research organization that works to improve the health, economic well-being, education, safety and development of Rhode Island children.