



Step Forward

An initiative of Community Foundation of North Louisiana



2021 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY: Data Drives Results for Children

cfnla.org/stepforward

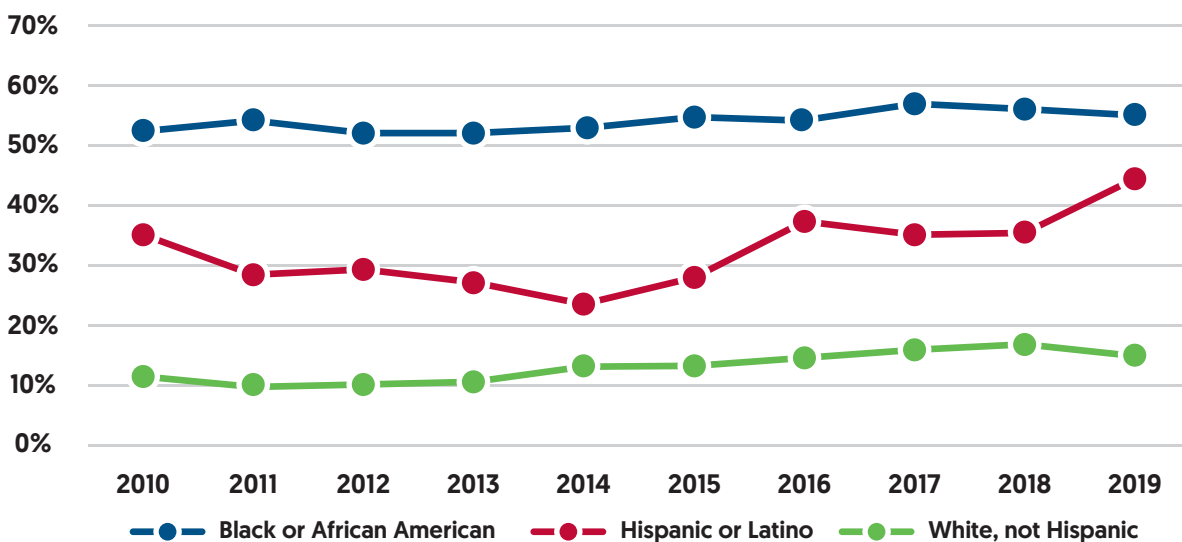
Building Resilience

The Building Resilience Network focuses on addressing trauma and strengthening mental health among children of all ages.

One driving force behind lagging child health and education outcomes are persistently high levels of child poverty in North Louisiana. Safe environments and nurturing caregivers allow children to build resiliency by protecting them from impacts of adverse conditions like poverty. Nurturing the social and emotional development of children, so they may succeed in school and beyond, depends on strong partnerships between parents, their out-of-home caregivers, and the community.

The Data: Age 5 and under Below Poverty Level by Race and Ethnicity, 2010 to 2019

Location: Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden



American Community Survey 5-year estimates Data: <http://data.census.gov/>

Addressing the Data:

My Brother's Keeper Alliance

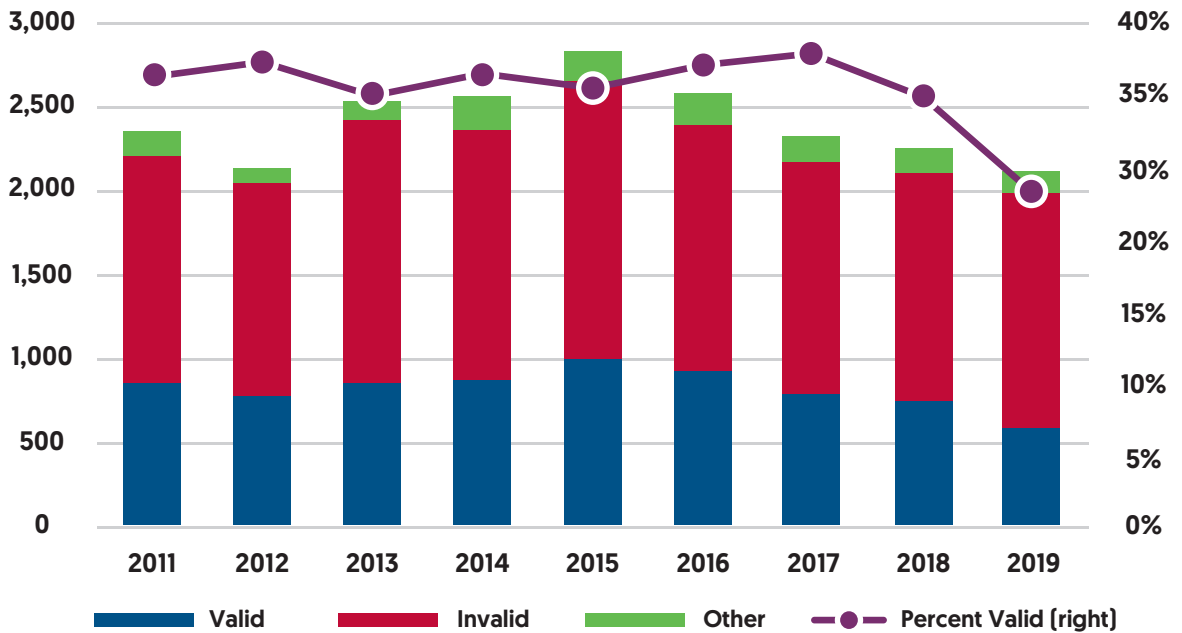
The My Brother's Keeper [MBK] Alliance leads a cross-sector national call to action focused on building safe and supportive communities for boys and young men of color where they feel valued and have clear pathways to opportunity.

MBK supports communities in developing and executing rigorous action plans focused on near-term impact and systemic solutions to the most pressing challenges facing boys and young men of color. It is national movement of citizens and institutions committed to effective and urgent action to build safe and supportive communities for boys and young men of color. MBK identifies and promotes effective programs and policies and that have a tangible, measurable, positive impact of life outcomes for boys and young men of color.

"I've long supported the My Brother's Keeper, now that this group is revamping its efforts, I want to continue my support. A strategic plan to support our youth and deter them from violence is exactly what we need at this time." Shreveport Mayor Adrian Perkins.

The Data: Child Protection Investigations by Finding, 2011 to 2019

Location: Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden

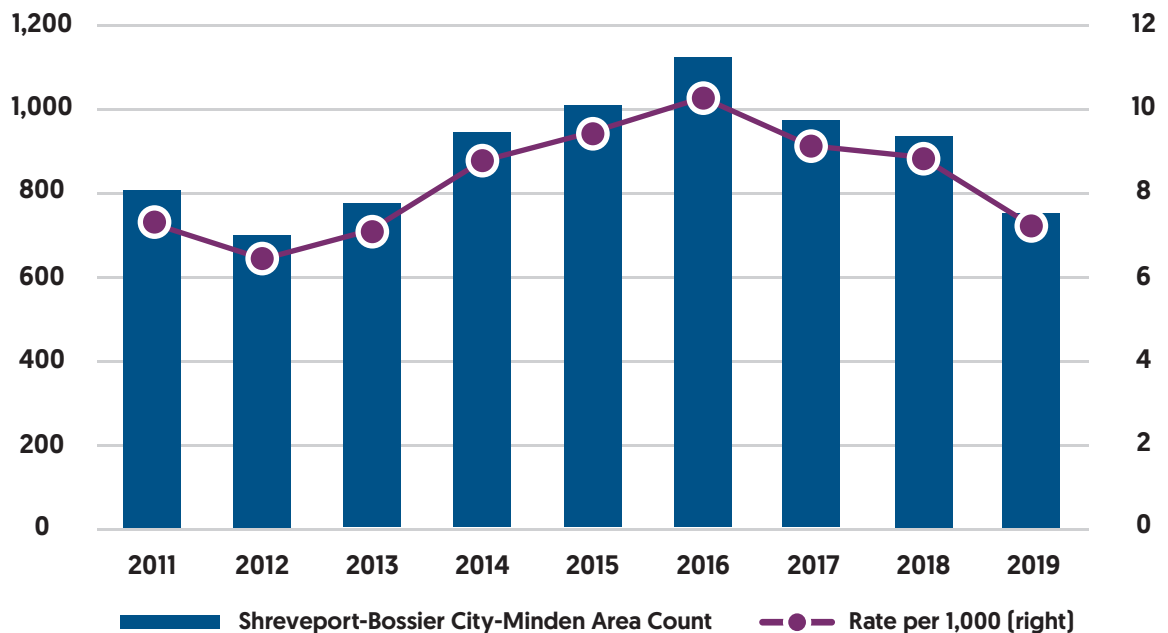


The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center; Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services via Agenda for Children

Data: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#LA/2/0/char/0>

The Data: Children in Foster Care, 2011 to 2019

Location: Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden



The Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center; Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services via Agenda for Children

Data: <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#LA/2/0/char/0>

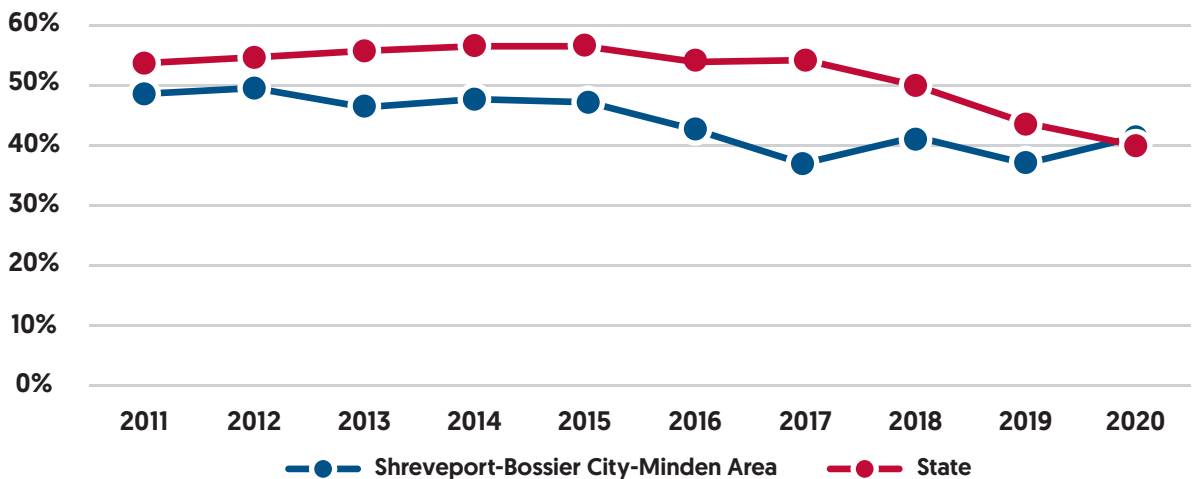
Building Foundations

The Building Foundations Network seeks to strengthen educational outcomes for children from birth to grade 5.

Being ready for kindergarten allows a child to take full advantage of all available educational opportunities. This decade, greater than half of incoming kindergarteners in the Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden area lacked the letter and number awareness, understanding, and fluency expected of students upon school entry. This means that about 3,150 5-year-olds in the area, on average each year this decade, were not prepared when they began school in the fall.

The Data: Kindergarten Readiness, 2011 to 2020

Location: Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden



Louisiana Department of Education. Data: <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/data-center>

Note: Author's calculation of area annual averages based on district level fall DIBELS Next or alternative assessment scores weighted by district kindergarten enrollment

Addressing the Data:

Early childhood is a period of rapid neurological growth with 1 million new neural connections forming every second, and 90% of all brain development achieved by age 5. Children do not develop naturally into school-ready students; the necessary language, literacy, and numeracy skills must be learned through interaction with others.

In recognition of the critical need for early brain development and high-quality access to early childhood education for all children, the Louisiana Childcare Assistance Program, or CCAP, provides financial assistance to low-income families (while parents are working or attending school) for quality childcare. However, in the fall of 2019 in Caddo Parish there were 842 children enrolled with 188 on the waiting list.

To address this, CFNLA created the Early Childhood Education Fund and raised \$1 million which was matched dollar for dollar by the State of Louisiana. \$2 million is now available to provide scholarships to children ages 0 to 4 to attend Type III Early Childhood Centers (privately owned centers are vetted by the Louisiana Department of Education). This funding will enable up to 200 more children in Caddo Parish to attend Type III Centers.

"Congratulations to all at CFNLA for raising the funds for what can be a game changer for the futures of hundreds of children. The addition of Bossier parish to this initiative speaks well of the region, adding momentum to ECE. I am very pleased and excited by where you have taken Step Forward to focus even more on education and children. Good job!" John Peak, former Step Forward Board Member.

COMING SOON: CFNLA Early Childhood Education Fund for Bossier: www.cfnla.org/bossier/

CFNLA's Continuation of Step Forward's Neighborhood Networks to Improve School Readiness program provides outreach to neighborhoods with the lowest kindergarten readiness scores to raise awareness among parents and caregivers about the importance of early brain development, early education, and the availability of state and federal funding for same. Through community meetings, parent meetings and online discussions, parents and caregivers will also learn how to apply and enroll in quality early childhood programs.

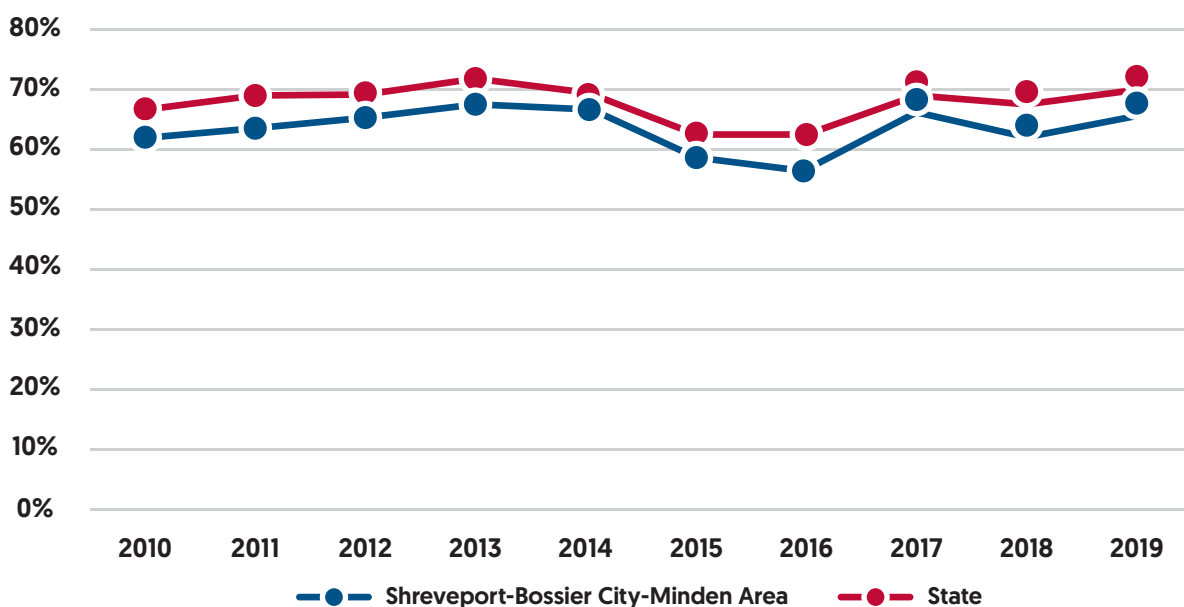
"ECE is the most important part of a child's life!" Lynn Yancey, Women's Philanthropy Network

To encourage parent/caregiver participation during the COVID-19 pandemic Step Forward launched a Virtual Parent Group. The group will engage in activities that encourages early brain development, early childhood literacy, builds resilience and protective factors that strengthen the family's ability to thrive.

Soon parents/caregivers will be able to participate in Facebook Live training on the following topics on [1] The importance of brain development to early childhood education; 2) A healthy diet and brain development (nutrition); 3) Child maltreatment – child abuse and neglect [C/AN] defined; 4) Educating the educators on brain development; 5) Trauma [ACEs] and the impact on the educational systems; and 6) Healthy Parent Healthy.

The Data: Third Grade Reading

Location: Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden



In the third grade, around age 8 and with three years of formal education, students are expected to transition from learning-to-read to reading-to-learn. Those who complete this shift have a much greater chance of continued success in school. The state assesses the English Language Arts proficiency of students through the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program, given in the spring in grades 3 through 8. New LEAP ELA scores from Spring 2020 are not available due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing the Data:

The effects of COVID-19 on children are yet to be determined but are likely far-reaching. The Building Foundations Network is working to understand how it may assist our schools in coping with learning losses experienced during the pandemic.

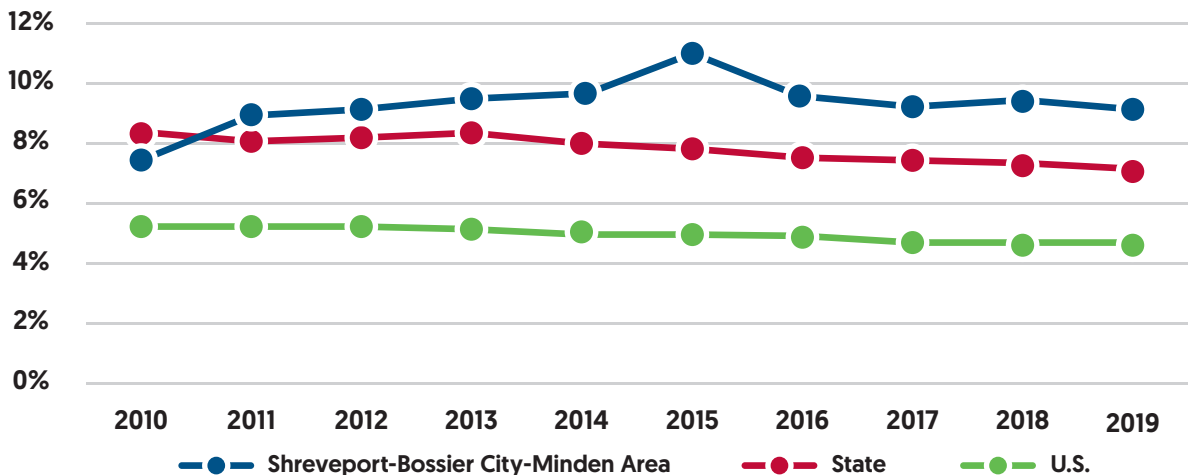
Building Futures

The Building Futures Network seeks to prepare students for college, career, and life beyond grade 5.

Data demonstrates a close correlation between poverty and education levels. Thus, encouraging and enabling students to pursue education beyond high school results in less poverty, a stronger workforce, and better future for North Louisiana.

The Data: Age 16 to 19 Idleness, 2010 to 2019

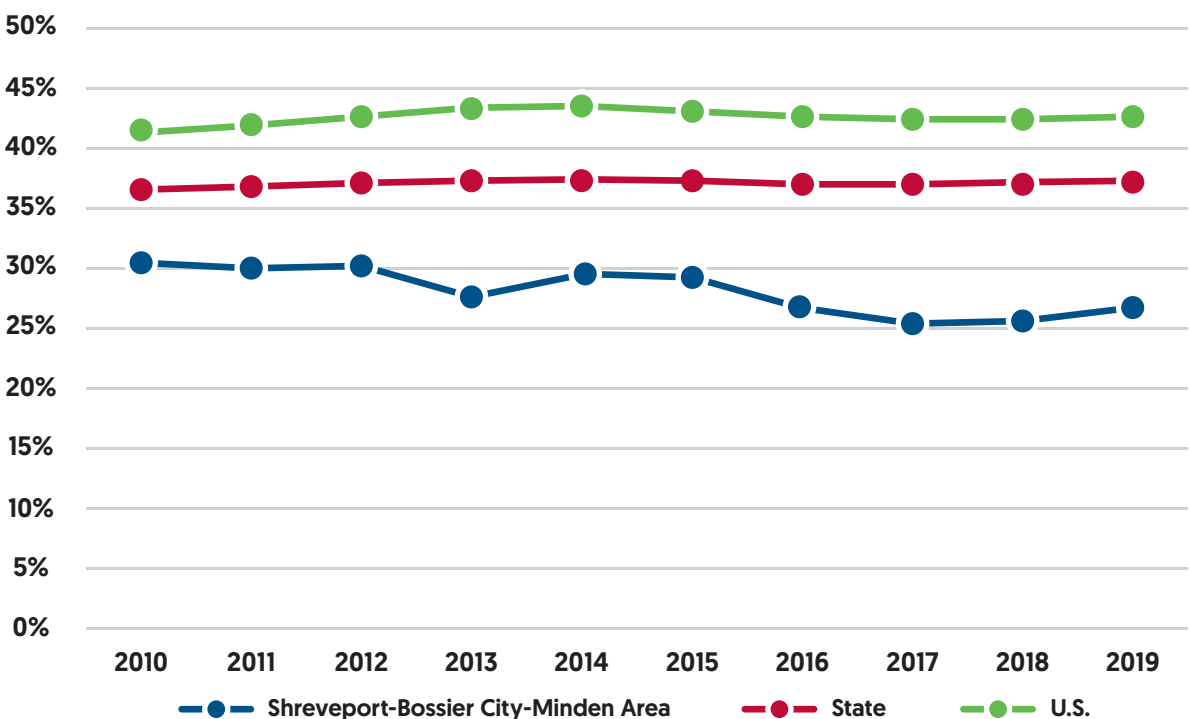
Location: Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden



American Community Survey 5-year estimates Data: <http://data.census.gov/>

The Data: Age 18 to 24 Enrolled in College or Graduate School, 2010 to 2019

Location: Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden



American Community Survey 5-year estimates Data: <http://data.census.gov/>

Addressing the Data:

Step Forward's Teen Advisory Committee (TAC) is a regional, diverse student-led group helping to improve local policy decision-making and programming that impacts teens and young adults in North Louisiana. TAC provides leadership development and engages teens in issues, policies, programs, and activities that affect young people in Northwest Louisiana.

The goals of TAC are to: [1] Provide teens perspective on policy planning/programming; [2] Provide teen advocacy through peer-to-peer mentorship and advisement; and [3] Partner with schools to identify gaps in the lack of funding or school resources, after-school activities, and teen services.

In 2020, TAC launched its first Northwest Louisiana (NWL) Teen Mental Wellness Summit. Over 50 delegates assembled to discuss data collected from over 5,000 teenagers from Caddo Schools and other local districts surveyed in Northwest Louisiana. The survey revealed that, in Northwest Louisiana, 83% of high school students encounter challenges including stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and thoughts of self-harm within the school setting. While counselors are provided for students in all public high schools to combat these issues, less than ten percent of students choose to confide in the provided school counselors.

“The degree of mental distress reported by teens in this survey was eye-opening and requires further study. This whole project was done by and for our youth in high school who saw a pressing need for more knowledge about what they face in these formative years, so that we can help them move forward with changes that will positively impact their lives, health, and education.” James C Patterson II MD, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine at LSU Health Shreveport

The 2020 Teen Summit attendees recommended fostering systems of support for students' emotional and mental well-being as a priority for public school districts. To promote students' mental wellness, institutional investment is vital. Every campus needs a diligent and devoted staff to execute consistent programs and services to promote mental wellness.

TAC members surveyed 580 area high school students and discussed the results with more than 50 delegates at the 2021 NWLA Teen Summit. The survey found 83.7% of participants had experienced challenges that negatively impacted their physical or emotional well-being. Students most faced these challenges in school (82.7%), their homes (81.3%), and online (28.2%). 79% [4 out of 5] believe they do not or are unsure that they have access to mental wellness resources at school. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on students' wellbeing as 64.8% of them reported that their mental health has worsened since the start of online learning.

From the survey results, TAC members proposed solutions to increase awareness and access to wellness resources in schools. Some of the proposed solutions include visible resources posted throughout school campuses, helpful “Wellness Wednesday” tips during morning announcements, a wellness presentation during student orientation, and a TAC table during lunch to provide awareness, wellness resources, and peer support.

The group's goals also include exploring issues that impact the health, education, and engagement of teens and young adults in North Louisiana. This includes topics such as professional development, career planning, teen voter registration, and other community-drive projects. The committee works closely with a group of advisors and coaches made up of local professionals, officials, and community leaders.

“Step Forward has proven its commitment to addressing the needs of students' mental and educational needs with a focus squarely on the voices of students in our community. The Northwest Louisiana Teen Summit was an incredible event that allowed individuals from across our community and from varying walks of life to hear from our students first-hand and collaborate on how to elevate these critical conversations to improve Shreveport and Northwest Louisiana.” Dr. Lamar Goree Superintendent Caddo Parish School Board.

Data Drives Results

Step Forward convenes community leaders and uses data to illuminate obstacles faced by children of color and those living in poverty. Through a shared community vision, Step Forward and its partners use evidence-based decision making and collaborative action to make positive changes for North Louisiana children. This type of change can only be achieved through a partnership with the entire community. Step Forward seeks success for every child in North Louisiana with the goal that all obtain a sustainable, living-wage job by age 25.

INDICATOR	CURRENT LEVEL	TREND FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
Kindergarten Readiness*	41.2%	Improved
3- to 4-Year-Olds Enrolled in School	52.4%	Improved
Early Childhood Program Proficiency	94.4%	Improved
Age 5 and under Below Poverty Level	35.7%	Improved
3rd Grade ELA Proficiency*	66.4%	No Change
6th Grade Math Proficiency*	53.9%	No Change
Age 17 and under Arrest for Theft	167	Improved
Age 17 and under Arrest for Assault	371	Improved
Fertility rate for Females Age 15 to 19	32.5	Worsened
Average ACT Composite Score	18.7	Worsened
Age 16 to 19 Idleness	9.3%	Improved
High School Cohort Graduation*	81.2%	Worsened
Immediate College Enrollment*	60%	Worsened
Age 18 to 24 Less than H.S. Graduate	18.7%	Improved
Age 18 to 24 Some College or Above	45.6%	No Change
Age 20 to 29 Associate's Degree or Above*	23%	Worsened
Age 20 to 24 Labor Force Participation Rate	72%	Worsened
Age 20 to 24 Unemployment Rate*	11.5%	Improved
Age 20 to 29 Median Annual Wages	\$19,448	Worsened
2- year college Degrees and Certificates	3,171	Worsened

*Core Indicator

This Executive Summary is a condensed version of the full report which can be found on the Community Foundation of North Louisiana website at www.cfnla.org/stepforward



Step Forward

An initiative of Community Foundation of North Louisiana

401 Edwards Street, Suite 105., Shreveport, LA 71101

cfnla.org/stepforward