

Purdue Farm Policy Study Group Meeting Summary

July 16, 2024

The following members were in Tim Foltz, Ken Foster, Bill Gelifus, Scott Harper, Stephanie Harper, David Howell, Levi Huffman, Lisa Koester, Marshall Martin, Doug Mills, Om Sharma, Rita Sharma, Mark Townsend, Don Villwock and Nicole Widmar:

Excused: Sonny Beck, Brent Bible, JoAnn Brouillett, Pete Clark, Kendell Culp, Rachel Hyde, Tim Galema, David Hardin, John Hardin, George Kakasuleff, Joe Kelsay, Alan Kemper, Bryan Kirkpatrick, Randy Kron, Doug Morehouse, John Nidlinger, Steve Pithoud, Danita Rodibaugh, Rick Ward and Christy Welch

NOTE: Please visit [Farm Policy Study Group](#) to access presentation documents.

View the [Agenda](#) here

Agenda Items

1. Student Attendees

Two graduate students from the Department of Agricultural Economics joined us for the meeting. They were Emily Forsythe and Binayak Kunwar. Emily is originally from Montana and beginning her second year in the PhD program after completing her MS degree here. Binayak is from Nepal and will begin the PhD program in August after also completing his MS degree here.

2. Expanding Membership

We continue to seek increased diversity in the membership of the group across a wide range of factors. We have made several great additions in the past couple of years but continue to seek new members and their perspectives. Please forward names and contact information to Ken Foster (kfoster@purdue.edu) if you would like to nominate an individual for membership. We also encourage you to invite such individuals as your guest to a future meeting. According to traditions of the group, members should be engaged in farming in the state of Indiana. The lunch and fees for any first-time attendees will be paid out of Purdue Farm Policy Study Group residual funds.

3. Crop updates and go around

With a few exceptions, most everyone felt their crops were very good to outstanding. In a few part of the state there has been recently wind and water damage to crops that appears irreversible at this point. Please keep the folks in those circumstances in your thoughts. In addition, some areas in the east and southeast are deficit water but crops are doing ok for now. Pressure from tar spot continues around the state for corn and there is emerging evidence of root worm concern in some places.

Don Lamb graciously shared a high-elevation overview of the recent Indiana Farmland Loss study commissioned by the state legislature. Summary information and the entire report are available here: <https://www.in.gov/isda/divisions/policy-and-regulatory-affairs/inventory-of-lost-farmland/> . The report estimates a loss of 345,682 farmland acres (1.89% decrease) in Indiana between 2010 and 2022.

4. [Update on the College of Agriculture and the future plan for Purdue Extension](#)

The Glenn Sample Dean of the College of Agriculture, Dr. Bernie Engel provided an update on the College and on the progress with respect to future planning of Purdue Extension. Bernie highlighted the current QS rankings of the college which will place it 3rd in the US and 5th in the World once an error in the posted ranking is corrected. Bernie emphasized that while we do not chase ranking, they are important in many ways such as promoting student recruitment, building reputation with employers and private sector research partners, and in elevating our competitive position when seeking grants – not mention creating pride among our alumni.

Bernie also highlighted another strong year for the college in obtaining external dollars to support research and Extension programs. For the year, July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, the faculty and staff in the Purdue College of Agriculture were successful in obtaining \$97.7 million in support. It is estimated that each such dollar returns another \$20 in economic impact to the state of Indiana. These funds also fund many of our graduate students and undergraduate research projects that generate future capacity for the agricultural sector.

While there wasn't time for Bernie to highlight all of the great new research endeavors in agriculture at Purdue, he did single out the new Center for Food Conservation and Waste Reduction led by Ag Econ Professor Brenna Ellison. This new center is support with a grant from USDA and focuses on designing solutions and policies to address food waste. You can read more about this effort here:

<https://extension.purdue.edu/news/2024/06/1.5m-usda-nifa-grant-will-help-purdue-researcher-identify-community-based-food-waste-solutions.html> .

Bernie also mentioned the US Department of Energy funded Indiana Renewable Energy Planning and Technical Engagement Collaborative. This effort is led by Kara Salazar in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources and focuses on bringing to bear science on the development and siting of renewable energy projects. You can learn more at: <https://extension.purdue.edu/news/2024/04/u.s-department-of-energy-taps-purdue-extension-to-lead-new-indiana-collaborative-for-renewable-energy.html> .

There has been some administrative turnover in the college during the past year. New leadership roles include:

- Dr. Laura Bowling, new head for Department of Agronomy
- Dr. Paul Ebner, interim head for Department of Animal Science
- Dr. Nicole Widmar, interim head for Department of Agricultural Economics
- Dr. Zhao Ma, interim head for Department of Forestry and Natural Resources

Bernie highlighted the success of Purdue faculty and alumni in receiving recognition for their accomplishments. For example, Purdue opens up its prestigious *Book of Great Teachers* for new inductees every five years. This past year, 11 of the 38 new inductees were faculty in the College of Agriculture far outpacing the college's share of total Purdue faculty.

Last year, Purdue's chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANNRS) was recognized with the National Chapter of the Year Award. This group is mentored and advised by Associate Dean Dr. Pamela Morris.

The College of Agriculture continues to maintain strong undergraduate student numbers but has capacity to educate and train more students than are currently enrolled. Last year the college received 2,185 applications of which 1,344 were admitted and 577 accepted their admission for this fall. Our struggle is that other programs on campus has application numbers which are rising much fast that ours and with fixed admission rates that means agriculture struggles to gain students. Transfer students are an increasing percentage of the college's enrollment because they are not implicitly capped by the same admissions policy. The college has also embarked on a new Spring Start program that provides a mechanism for applicants who were deemed admissible but not admitted to begin their Purdue study in January. Next January, the college expect 35 such new students with potential to grow that number going forward.

Bernie also spoke briefly about the gap between agricultural sector employment opportunities and the number of graduates from such programs. The report he references with respect to this gap can be found here: <https://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/USDA-2020-25-Employment-Report-Summary.pdf> .

Bernie touched briefly on Extension and its activity at the state and local levels to address a wide variety of concerns and needs. A highlight of Purdue Extension continues to be the 160,000 youth who participate in 4-H. Research shows that these students are more likely to attend and graduate from college than their peers at a high rate.

Bernie briefly spoke about the Extension Taskforce that is developing recommendations about the future of Purdue Extension. Purdue Extension has a structural funding dilemma as the result of decades of flat state and federal appropriation. Basically, 65% of the budget which is nearly 100% salaries and fringes has been stagnant. Salary increases have been funded with open positions but this approach is increasingly unsustainable. Bernie expects a final report from the Taskforce early this fall.

[4. High-Quality Early Care and Education in Indiana](#)

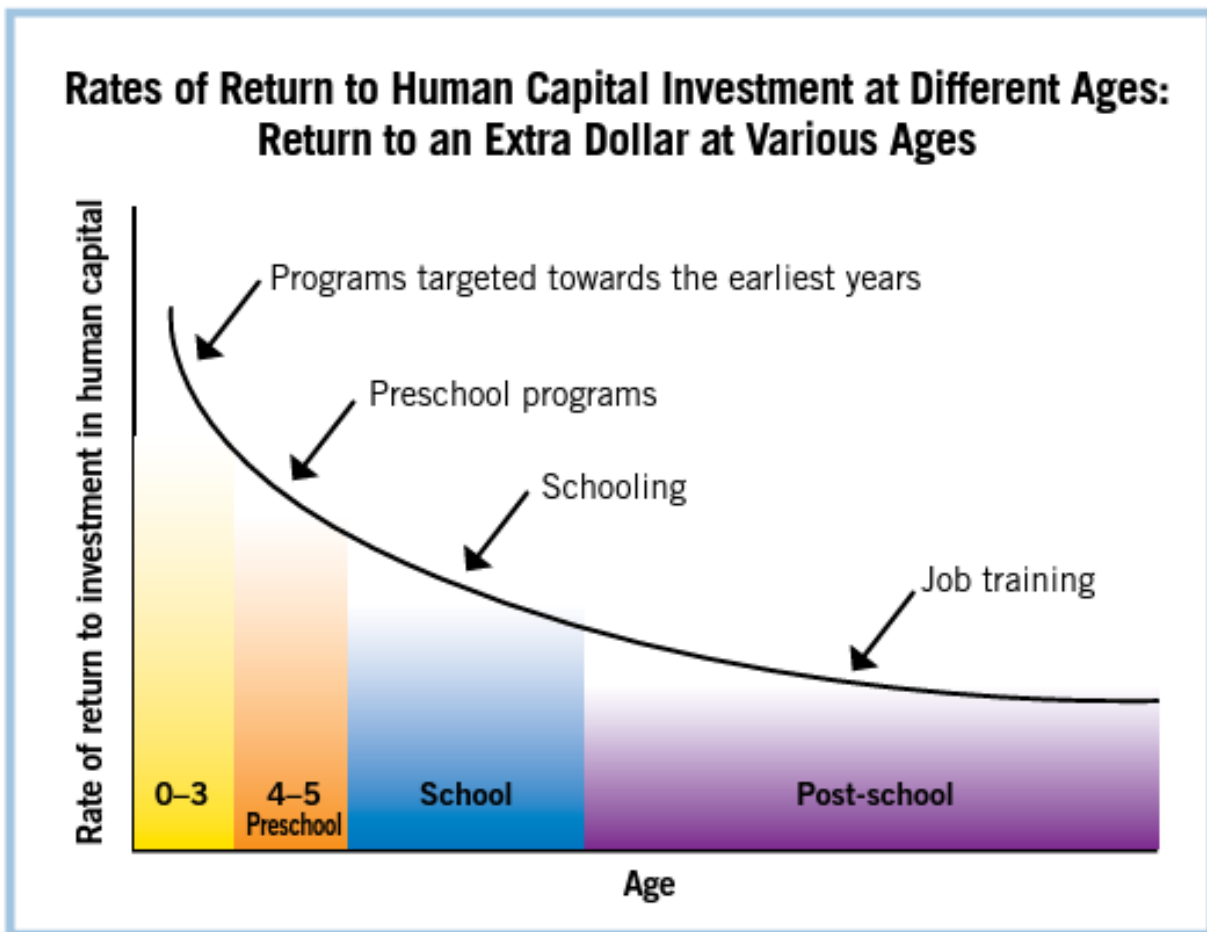
Dr. David Purpura, Director of Purdue's Center for Early Learning (CEL) and a Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Science presented an overview of the current situation regarding early childhood education and care in Indiana as well as the potential benefits of increased investment in such endeavors. His Center's webpage can be found at: <https://hhs.purdue.edu/center-for-early-learning> . Center for Early Learning is dedicated to improving the quality of early childhood education and care for all children from birth through 3rd grade. The center promotes school readiness and healthy development with a focus on research, practice and policy. There are 32 faculty affiliated with the Center from across six of Purdue's academic colleges. CEL has received \$51 million in grant funding since 2018. CEL is engaged in evaluating quality of programs in Indiana, training providers, educating students and researchers, and providing support to early childhood education activities across the state of Indiana.

Throughout his presentation David used the term Early Care and Education (ECE) which he defined as the birth to age 5 mixed delivery system that provides educational and developmental foundations for young children prior to formal school entry. Mixed Delivery System refers to the multiple methods of

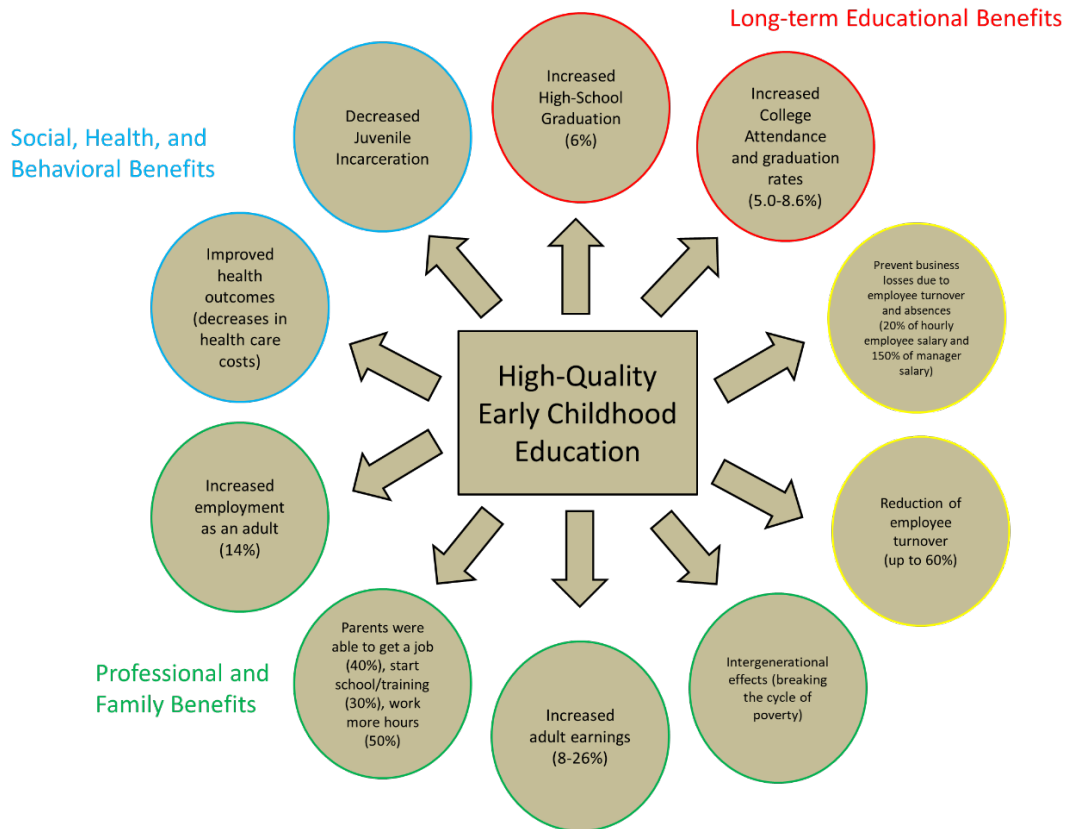
providing the educational and developmental foundations including: licensed child care centers, licensed family child care, registered ministries, public school programs, license exempt child care centers/family care centers, head start.

David reviewed Indiana’s current quality rating and improvement system. This system has four levels ranging from Level 1 (meets basic health and safety guidelines) to Level 4 (achieving national accreditation). State views ratings of 3 and 4 as “high-quality.” Indiana lacks any extensive ECE policy or public financial support programs for ECE. The only state funded program currently in existence is the On My Way! PreK. This is a state funded voucher program that allows 4-year-old children to attend a high-quality program if their family income is (typically) under 127% of the federal poverty level and their parent is working, going to school, or attending job training. Funded appropriated for this program are limited and far from sufficient to meet the state’s needs.

To motivate the importance of investing in ECE, David presented the following graph drawn from the research of University of Chicago Economics Professor and Nobel Laureate, Dr. James Heckman that shows that the returns to investing in ECE have the largest returns among human capital-building educational or training investments.

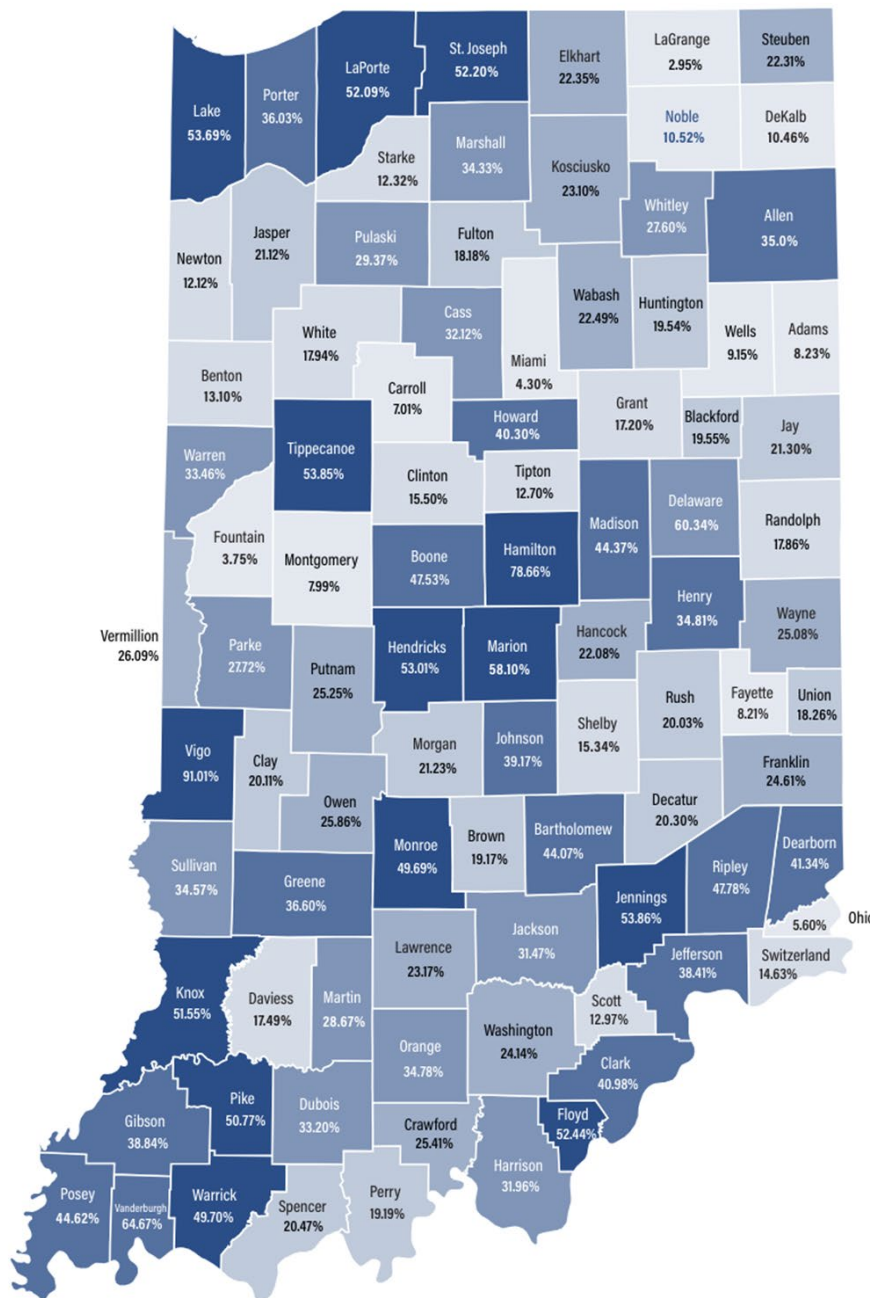


Furthermore, David presented from research that shows that investment in ECE generates a host of individual and societal benefits. These include: increased likelihood of taking the SAT, increased college enrollment and success, reduced high school suspensions, reduced juvenile incarceration, improved school readiness, and significant improvements in math and ELA performance. The graphic below summarizes these benefits.



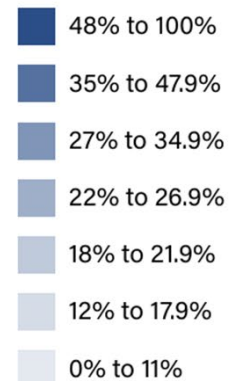
David presented that the state as a whole has a tremendous shortage in available childcare relative to the number of children aged 5 and below across all counties (see map below) with only a handful of counties barely exceeding 50% of needed capacity and gap generally worsening with a county's rurality. These gaps are even more concerning when adjusted for quality with a large share of the state's providers either not participating the quality assessment or ranking in one of the bottom two quality tiers (see David's powerpoint slides for more details).

Indiana is one of only five states with no state-funded Pre-K initiative. We are far behind peer states with whom we compete for private sector investment and employment opportunities in terms of ECE provisioning which creates an economic disadvantage for the state and its communities.



Percentage of Available Slots for the County Population of Children Birth to 5¹⁸

The following map displays the percentage of ECE slots for each county's population.



David identified a lack of investment in ECE, a lack of available high-quality centers, the availability of teachers, and the high teacher turnover rate as key barriers to childcare access and quality. The ECE teacher turnover rate is 50% compared to a K-12 teacher turnover rate of 8%. This high turnover rate is driven by low wages and the high demands of the work.

David's roadmap for where we go from here included: Local communities and the state need to work collaboratively to build greater access to high-quality programs that are sustainable, Focus on sustainability of funding models, Enhancing/supporting training of teachers—especially from distinct

areas around the state where needs are great, and Leveraging existing high-quality programs to help build and support new programs

5. *Child Care, Agriculture, and Rural Communities*

Adam Alson, Rensselaer area farmer and Co-Founder of Appleseed Childhood Education, Inc. presented concerning his experience in developing a early child care educational entity in his community, the needs for such, and the challenges faced in doing so. The mission of Appleseed Childhood Education is to increase the availability of affordable, quality child care in Jasper County. It is organized as a 501(c)3 and opened Appletree Rensselaer in March 2023. Appletree is a 70 seat, high-quality child care center for children six weeks to five years old. It is the only licensed child care center in the city of Rensselaer (population of 5,700).

Adam challenged the group to shift its paradigm on child care from one of a market provisioned service to that of necessary infrastructure for community and economic development. He emphasized that as a market good, child care is experiencing a failure due to undervalued (unvalued) positive social spillovers and externalities (detailed in Dr. Purpura's presentation: lower delinquency and higher educational attainment, etc. but also reduces time off for employees of local businesses and makes them more productive) and competitive advantages in luring employers and employees to a community. The market perspective is likely the reason for the huge gap in availability in that the market for child care operates very efficiently and only provisions services where there is an agglomeration of people with the capacity to pay the high costs of provisioning care (~\$18,000 per child annually).

Adam presented the concern for rural community viability and the importance of child care in addressing the concern. Rural communities are declining and aging in population. This is a downward spiral that reinforces itself without injection of economic activity to attract new and younger residents. Key community resources required to attract young families include: housing, employment opportunities, access to healthcare, broadband, quality education, and **child care access**. This embodies his argument that to be economically successful, communities must start viewing child care as a part of the local infrastructure.

Likewise, Adam pointed out that the agricultural sector has a labor force challenge that links to child care. 52% of agricultural sector jobs in non-urban counties are held by persons between 19 and 44 years of age. Employees miss, on average, 13 days/year due to child care lapses which result cost increasing inefficiencies. Consequently, the continued economic viability and profitability of agriculture in rural Indiana is somewhat dependent on the availability of child care in rural settings.

Adam returned to the lack of a viable private enterprise business model for child care in rural settings. The breakeven price for such a facility is far greater than what median income families can afford. His solution in the Rensselaer setting involves the development of public-private partnerships housed within a 501(c)3 nonprofit to create a financial sustainable option. In the case of Appletree Rensselaer, this partnership combines Right Steps Child Development Centers who contribute the necessary child care expertise to maintain quality, Franciscan Health who provide space, 30 local employers, local county and city government, and the Jasper-Newton Foundation. Adam provided the general cost structure for a facility such as Appletree Rensselaer in the table below to emphasize the need for public and private

support to maintain financial viability. He also encouraged us to lobby our legislators to take action to enhance public support for quality child care in the state.

	Total	Per seat (70 seat center)
Renovations and Start-up Costs	\$1,500,000	\$21,428
Annual Loss from Operations	\$300,000	\$4,285
Total Funding needed: 10 years	\$4,500,000	\$64,285

6. Future meeting dates

Barring unforeseen circumstances, the following will be the dates for the group's next two meetings: December 10, 2024 and July 8, 2025.

7. Future Topics

The following topics were suggested for future meetings:

- Land use and land use policy
- Farmland loss
- Agricultural Trade, Trade Policy, non-GMO markets
- Beth Bechdol – Deputy Director-General FAO if she happens to be back in the state
- Renewable energy and farming systems
- Conservation Stewardship Program in the Inflation Reduction Act
- Orange corn development and commercialization (Torbert Rocheford)
- Affordable rural housing

If you have thoughts on these or other topics of interest, then please forward those to Ken Foster (kfoster@purdue.edu).

5. Adjournment at 3 pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Ken Foster
Professor – Agricultural Economics
Director – Purdue Farm Policy Study Group