

Forum: LI a laggard in early ed

Lack of pre-K, child care called economic drag

BY JOIE TYRRELL

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Long Island lags far behind other parts of New York in the availability of quality child care and early education programs — a deficiency that negatively affects the region's economic growth, educators and economists said Thursday at a Long Island Association forum in Melville.

Only an estimated 10 percent of 4-year-olds on the Island have access to full-day, state-funded

prekindergarten programs, according to a group of early childhood experts that includes the three regional BOCES districts and child care councils in Nassau and Suffolk counties.

Most pre-K offerings in the two-county region, where available, are half-day and last about 2½ hours. By contrast, New York City offers access to a full-day, funded program for all 4-year-olds.

Making child care affordable and accessible to working families on Long Island would lead to more economic development opportunities and increased workplace productivity, the LIA's leaders said.

"Child care is not a women's issue or a mom's issue or a family issue," said Kevin Law, the



Students in a pre-K class learn about plant life at the Greenport School last year.

RANDEE DADDONA

group's president. "It is very much an economic development issue, and we need to view it as such."

According to a report from the association, on Long Island there are 1,825 full-time and part-time child care and early education programs employing 8,750 people, collectively representing an \$804 million industry. That includes day care centers.

Thursday, a panel of experts from the medical, business, education and nonprofit communities discussed the importance of

more opportunities for children, with efforts to include lobbying for equitable state funding for prekindergarten on Long Island. They noted that studies have shown that early childhood education pays off academically in a child's later years.

"Making sure that children have a safe and high-quality place to go while parents are working is good for all of us," said Jennifer Marino Rojas, executive director of the Child Care Council of Suffolk Inc.

Advocates of early childhood education are asking the state for

\$750,000 to launch a Regional Technical Assistance Center that would combine services and expertise for expansion of prekindergarten and coordinate relationships between school districts and community-based providers.

Constance Evelyn, superintendent of the Valley Stream 13 school district, which enrolls about 2,100 students in kindergarten through sixth grade, called the lack of such programs for the youngest learners a "crisis for Long Island and the State of New York."

NCC president search down to three finalists; forums set

BY JOIE TYRRELL

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The search for Nassau Community College's next president has narrowed to three finalists, each of whom is slated to participate in public forums this month before the school's Board of Trustees selects the new leader of the 20,000-student institution, officials announced this week.

The finalists are Maria Conzatti, Christine Mangino and Jermaine Williams — all administrators at community colleges. Conzatti works at NCC, while Mangino is at City University of New York's Hostos Community College in the South Bronx and Williams is at North Shore Community College, based in Danvers, Massachusetts.

The new leader will replace President W. Hubert Keen, whose contract expires in August. Two of the finalists — Conzatti and Mangino — are NCC alumni.

"We recruited a highly competitive pool of candidates from throughout the state, region and



Maria Conzatti

nation," said a statement dated Wednesday from Dr. Jorge Gardyn, chairman of the Board of Trustees, and other members of the search committee.

Conzatti is vice president for academic student services at the college in Garden City and previously served simultaneously as acting executive vice president and acting chief academic officer. She holds an associate degree of science in information processing from NCC, as well as a bachelor's de-



Christine Mangino

gree in business administration and a master of business administration degree in corporate finance and investment, both from Adelphi University.

Mangino is provost and vice president for academic affairs at Hostos Community College. She earned an associate degree in hotel restaurant management from NCC, a bachelor's degree in elementary education and English and a master's degree in elementary education, both from Hofstra Univer-



Jermaine Williams

sity, and a doctoral degree in instructional leadership from St. John's University.

Williams is vice president of student affairs at North Shore Community College, which also has campuses in Lynn and Middleton, Massachusetts. He holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology and sociology from Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania; a master's in sociology from St. John's University; and a master's of education in educational administra-

tion, with a higher education specialization, and a doctorate of education in educational administration, with a higher education specialization, from Temple University in Philadelphia.

NCC, the largest single-campus community college in the state's public system, was founded in 1959 on a 225-acre site in the heart of the county. Its \$200 million budget is funded by Nassau County, New York State and, increasingly, student tuition. The associate degree-granting institution is among the more prolific feeders of students to both public and private four-year colleges in the region.

Keen was named president of NCC in May 2016.

Each finalist will participate in an open forum where feedback forms will be given to all who attend and the completed forms collected for the Board of Trustees to review. The forum with Williams is scheduled Feb. 25, while the session with Conzatti is set Feb. 27. The forum with Mangino is slated for Feb. 28.