

Wide agreement on the potential benefits of early learning and development

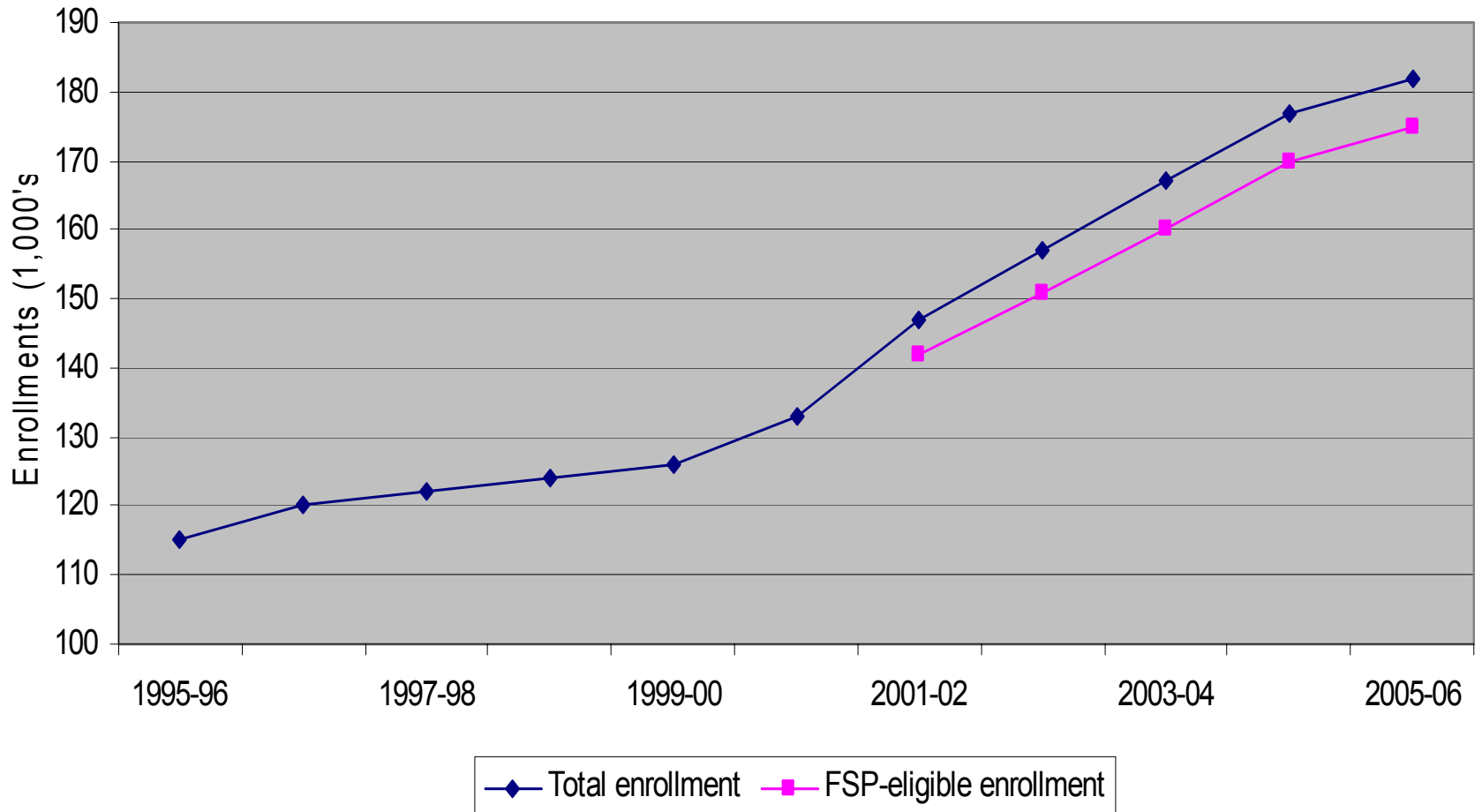
- Foundational relationships with parents, early caregivers.
- Language and pre-literacy skills.
- Learning how to learn, and be motivated, in human-scale organizations (schools).
- Narrowing achievement gaps in the early grades.

But difficult problems in how we organize young children's daily environments

- The inflexible organization of many jobs – from working-class to well-off parents.
- Affordability of child care options.
- Uneven supply of preschools, for children, age 2-4 years.
- Wide variation in quality, from infant care to preschool.

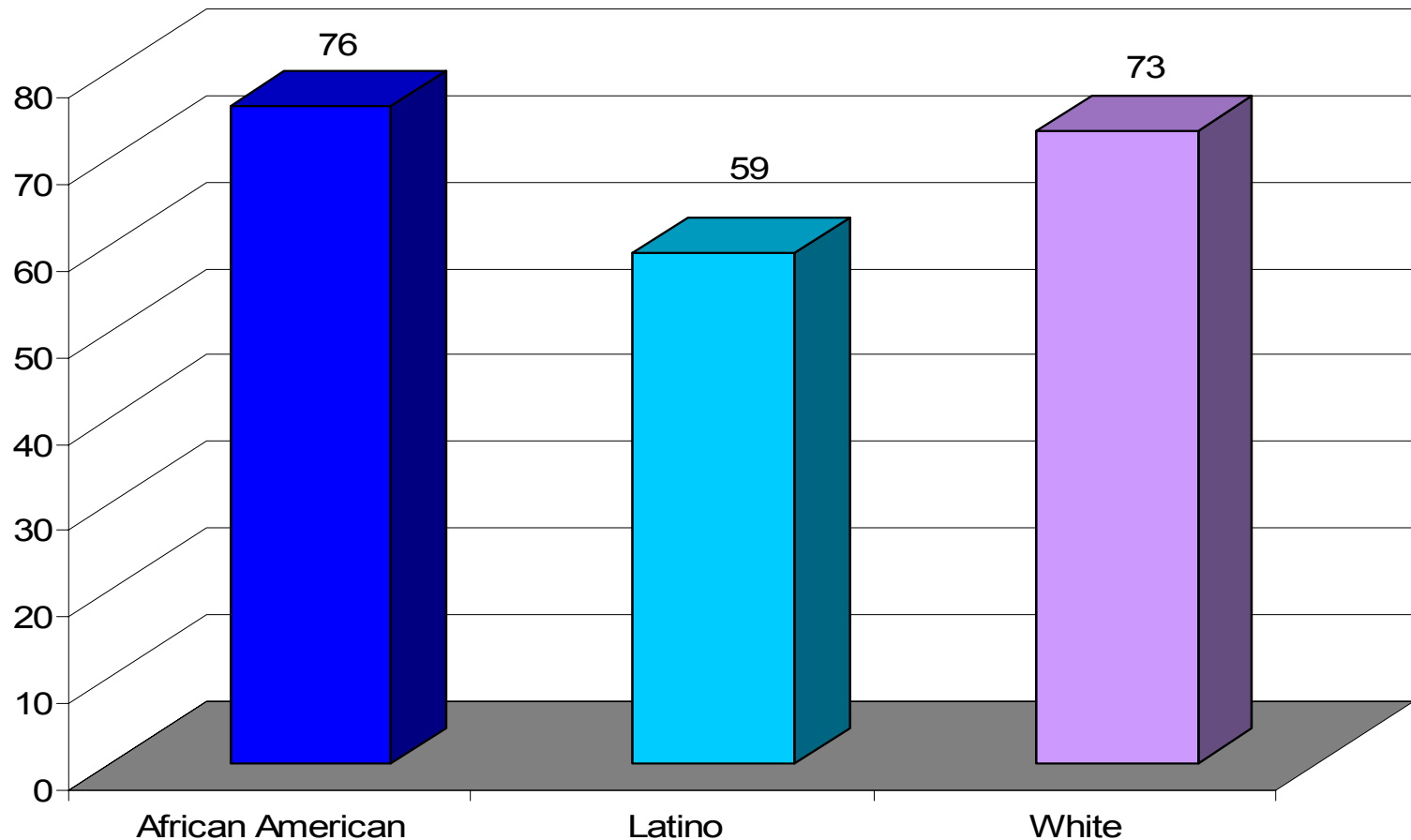
In Texas, steady growth in preschool enrollment among low-income families

Figure 1. Texas preschool enrollments under the Foundation School Program (FSP)



But inequities persist in which Texas families gain access to preschool

Percentage of Texas four year-olds attending a preschool center by ethnicity (ECLS-K, 1998)



Policy Choices for Texas

- **A state-run system or decentralized network of public and private preschools – a surgically regulated mixed market?**
- **Universal subsidies or targeted to narrow achievement gaps?**
- **Dilemmas around voucher forms of finance. Trade-offs with quality improvement.**
- **Standardizing how young children learn, explore, and understand how to work cooperatively. Who has the authority to decide?**
- **Investing in preschool to advance the spirit of Neeley v. West Orange-Cove.**



STANDARDIZED CHILDHOOD

THE POLITICAL AND CULTURAL STRUGGLE
OVER EARLY EDUCATION



BRUCE FULLER