



Student Achievement Leadership Team
Resource Kit #14

Understanding the value of high-quality pre-K

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Ohio School Boards Association
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Dear school board members, superintendents and treasurers:

We all know children begin learning at birth. The question we need to ask as school board members and administrators is, “When is the right time to begin a formal education?”

Studies have shown that high-quality prekindergarten education provides students a solid foundation on which to begin kindergarten. They will have fewer problems learning, fewer problems socializing and more academic success throughout their school careers.

Unlike public K-12 education, which has Ohio state standards for each grade level, pre-K or preschool programs vary greatly. Ask a dozen board members to define pre-K and you will get a dozen different answers. While virtually all Ohio school districts provide pre-K for at-risk students, not many have programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds. Some districts offer it for 4-year-olds, but most districts are limited to just what they have to provide by law.

Gov. Ted Strickland raised the bar for high-quality pre-K when he included between \$5 million to \$12 million in his budget for new early childhood education programs. At one time, Ohio was leading the nation in funding and innovation in this vital area. Today, other states have taken that leadership role.

The state school boards associations in Ohio, Kansas and Texas were invited by the National School Boards Association to participate in a grant funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The purpose of the 2-year initiative is to inform local school board members, state policymakers and the general public about the short- and long-term benefits of high-quality pre-K education. One purpose of the grant is to increase awareness of high-quality pre-K in the three states. This resource kit contains information to help you decide if pre-K is right for your district.

Please take a moment to read and learn more about this important issue. We hope you find this information helpful.

Martha F. Rothey
2007 OSBA president
board member, Findlay City

OSBA's role — the Pew grant initiative

Ohio was selected by the National School Boards Association to participate in a grant program sponsored by the Pew Charitable Trusts. State school boards associations in Kansas and Texas are joining OSBA and NSBA in the program. The purpose of the two-year initiative is to inform local school board members, state policymakers and the general public about the short- and long-term benefits of high-quality pre-K education.

OSBA staff members serving on the project are Scott Ebright, deputy director of communication services; Maryse Gonzalez, secretary of legislative services; Kathy LaSota, deputy director of search services and board development; and Donna Williams, management development specialist.

Representatives of the three state associations met with leaders of the national movement for quality pre-K education at NSBA's Washington office in November to kick off the initiative. A second meeting was held in Kansas in June to review each state's progress and learn how three school districts conducted their pre-K programs.

In addition to learning about the present state of pre-K education in the United States during the two meetings, the group gained a valuable understanding of the grant and how the three state associations could contribute to its success.

Each of the three states is approaching the grant in a unique way. Kansas, with a small association staff, named four staff members to its team, complemented by early childhood education experts from the University of Kansas, Kansas State University and the state department of education. Two Texas Association of School Boards staff members are working with a number of other organizations in the Lone Star state. Ohio's diverse team plans to work with a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Each state developed an action plan, vision and goals. OSBA's efforts will focus on creating a

climate of readiness for voluntary, quality, universal pre-K for Ohio's children. This will be realized when our members and their constituents understand the definition and believe in the benefits of quality pre-K programs; when successful public models have been identified and can be replicated; when new public and private funding sources are identified; and when currently available resources are used creatively to provide needed programs.

The OSBA plan first was presented to management, then to the OSBA Board of Trustees at its Jan. 20 meeting. Ohio was once considered the front-runner in pre-K education, but other states have passed us. Several groups are actively involved in increasing early childhood education opportunities.

OSBA staff members are reaching out to other Ohio groups interested in this issue. They have met with the Community Solutions Group, another Pew Charitable Trusts grant recipient, to discuss potential collaboration, and are attending meetings of the Ohio School Readiness Group.

One of the Pew grant's goals is to learn what is working in various states and sharing that knowledge. OSBA's pre-K team members are participating in monthly conference calls with their counterparts from Kansas and Texas, as well as the grant leadership team at NSBA. The three state teams will meet twice a year during the two-year grant. Ohio will be hosting such a meeting in May.

Gonzalez and LaSota spoke during a session on pre-K education at the NSBA national convention in April. An OSBA Management Development Series workshop in early February was the first seminar to feature the topic. In addition, a pre-K session will be conducted during Capital Conference.

Expanding voluntary preschool education — the federal role

By Chrisanne L. Gayl
NSBA

The first five years of life are a time of enormous growth for children. The cognitive, social and emotional skills that children develop during their early years are essential building blocks for their entire educational lives. The pace of learning, however, depends on whether and to what extent they encounter and engage in supporting environments.

As the National Research Council reported in “Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers,” “there can be no question that the environment in which a child grows up has a powerful impact on how the child develops.” Given this reality, preschool education programs play a critical role in setting a positive trajectory for student success and can help close some achievement gaps that exist among children even before they enter school.

Yet, despite the importance of early childhood education on the continuum of learning, the federal government has been slow to engage in efforts to develop or encourage pre-kindergarten programming for 3- and 4-year olds. In fact, it is estimated that the U.S. Department of Education spends only 1 to 1.5% of its \$57.6 billion annual discretionary budget on preschool education.

Instead, the federal government’s primary focus over the past few decades has been on subsidizing childcare options for low-income families through programs administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HHS administers the Child Care Development Block Grant and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs, which together provide more than \$8 billion in federal resources for childcare.

Head Start is the one notable exception that addresses education outcomes. However, even at \$6.8 billion, this program only reaches families that are living at or below 100% of the poverty line. Head Start also is designed to focus on a broader spectrum of services for children and their families than primarily school readiness.

With the onset of No Child Left Behind, preschool has emerged as an important strategy to increase school readiness and improve student achievement in elementary school and beyond. As states and districts struggle to meet the law’s accountability benchmarks, they have begun to recognize that high-quality early education is critical to ensuring that every child who enters kindergarten will be well prepared to undertake a challenging curriculum and meet high standards. School board members are challenged to implement cost-effective programs that will have a positive and sustainable impact on increasing student achievement.

This policy briefly examines efforts currently under way to prepare our children for school, what the research tells us works and how the federal government can help school districts implement effective programs. First though, we must set a context for the role that early childhood education plays in the United States’ overall system of education and how this compares to other parts of the world.

In 2004, there were nearly 8 million children ages 3 to 4 in the United States. Among them, 40% of 3-year-olds and 66% of 4-year-olds were enrolled in some type of preschool program, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. This may seem like a substantial number of children that are being served, but

the educational focus and quality of these programs vary substantially.

In addition, these enrollment figures are relatively low compared with the formal schooling that children receive in other developed countries. For example, Belgium, France, and Italy enroll 95% of children ages 3 to 6 in universal, voluntary and free preschool programs. Other countries, such as England, Sweden, Hungary, Japan, and Russia, all have higher percentages of 4-year-olds and younger enrolled in school than the United States.

No substantial evidence suggests that preschool enrollment has an impact on cross-national indicators of student performance, but a strong correlation exists among countries with high percentages of children enrolled in preschool and later student performance on international assessments. In fact, almost all of the nations referenced above outperformed the United States on the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which measures fourth-grade math achievement. In addition, Sweden, Hungary, and England scored higher than the United States on reading achievement as measured by the 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

For the United States to compete on a level playing field with our international competitors, it seems only reasonable that we must devote more time and resources to ensure that our children have the same opportunity to develop the necessary skills to be successful in school.

State programs

While the federal government has tended to overlook the importance of early education, many states have made significant strides in establishing and/or expanding preschool

programs in recent years. Currently, 41 states and the District of Columbia operate some type of pre-K program. During the 2004-2005 school year, states spent \$2.84 billion on these programs.

Today, 801,900 children — approximately 10% of the nation's 3- and 4-year-olds — and 17% of all 4-year olds — are enrolled in state funded pre-K initiatives. To pay for these programs, states rely on a variety of resources, including general revenues, lottery sales, special excise taxes on cigarettes and beer, and tobacco settlement funds. A few states, including —Maine, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Vermont, West Virginia and Wisconsin, even include financing for pre-K in their school-funding formula.

But while states have been active in promoting preschool, the scope and quality of these programs has been uneven. Some states content themselves with targeting services toward specific populations of students (low income, disabled, English language learners) to address a particular deficiency with a subset of the population, while others, such as Oklahoma and Georgia, have adopted a universal approach. And some states do not offer any publicly funded pre-K at all.

The quality of preschool programs also varies depending on the amount of state investment and what policymakers decide to focus their resources on. Often, states are forced to make trade-offs between variables such as the percentage of highly trained teachers and staff, small class sizes and low teacher child ratios. As a result, the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) reports that only six states met at least nine of the 10 quality benchmarks used to assess program quality. Another six states met no more than three indicators. Given these disparities, the federal government has a legitimate role in helping to

provide quality programs for children that otherwise would not have access to these services.

Research findings

According to numerous studies, programs that provide children with developmentally appropriate stimulation can improve school readiness and academic performance in the early grades. Children who participate in high-quality preschool programs also demonstrate greater interest in learning, are less likely to repeat a grade or require special education classes and are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college. Many of these effects are compelling incentives for districts to invest in preschool programs.

Academic achievement

Several national and state studies have shown that students who attend preschool programs score higher on academic assessments than peers who do not attend preschool. For example, the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, which provides data on 14,000 children from birth through age 5, indicates that students who participated in preschool programs scored higher on reading and math tests than children who did not participate.

A more tailored study from NIEER, which used a rigorous approach to control for measured differences between children (and their families) who attend and do not attend preschool, found that “graduates” from publicly funded pre-K programs in Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina and West Virginia performed substantially better on vocabulary, math and print awareness assessments compared to nonparticipants. Overall, children in these programs posted scores that were 31% higher in vocabulary, 44% higher in math and 85% higher in print

awareness (including recognition of letters, letter sounds and book concepts) compared to children who did not participate in a program. Studies also have shown that these cognitive benefits are particularly powerful among children from low-income and minority families who tend to obtain, on average, lower reading assessment scores than their more affluent peers without some type of intervention. As a result, preschool can help to mitigate some gaps in children’s skills and knowledge that are present before children begin school and tend to worsen over time.

An analysis of Oklahoma’s universal pre-kindergarten program has shown greater increases in cognitive development among children in on free-and-reduced-priced lunch programs and among certain racial and ethnic groups. For example, Hispanic children in the study increased letter word identification scores by 4.15 points and applied problem-solving scores by 4.97 points, compared to white children, who experienced gains of 3.02 and 0.85, respectively.

Long-term impact

Besides the effects on young children’s cognitive growth, preschool programs have demonstrably positive effects on the future lives of young children as measured by a variety of educational and social indicators. Much of this data can be traced to longitudinal studies of three well-designed and well-implemented model programs — the Perry Preschool Project the Carolina Abecedarian Project and the Chicago Parent Centers Program. Together, these projects have shown that students who attended preschool were more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to repeat a grade in school, less likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18, less likely to become teen parents and more likely to be employed and have higher earnings than

their peers who did not attend. In addition, all three studies show significantly lower rates of special education services for students who attended preschool. For example, only 15% of the Perry participants required special education services, compared with 34% of children from the control group. For Abecedarian, 48% of the control group received special education services versus 24% for pre-K children. In the Chicago Parent Centers Program, the gap was 11 percentage points (14% to 25%) in placements between pre-K participants and nonparticipants.

Economic benefits

Many of the benefits that high-quality preschool education provides have a significant impact on reducing school district costs, as well as federal, state and local government expenditures. A cost/benefit analysis done by the Committee for Economic Development reports that targeted preschool programs can generate \$2 to \$16 in long-term net benefits for students and taxpayers for every dollar invested. Viewed another way, these programs provide an annual return on the initial investment of about 7% to 18%.

According to research by Clive Belfield, a school district's investment in early education largely pays for itself by reducing the cost of high-priced interventions such as special education placement and grade retention. In the near term, Belfield contends that K-12 education can expect to retain from 30 to 40% of the overall state fiscal benefits.

Depending on various expansion scenarios, the cost savings in subsequent years can offset up to 75% of preschool expansion costs, translating into K-12 savings ranging from 36 to 77 cents for every dollar spent on preschool.

Quality matters

The benefits of preschool education that accrue both to individuals and the community are impressive; however, the amount of this benefit varies greatly depending on the quality of each program. Factors such as teacher training, class size, teacher-child ratios and comprehensive learning standards play an important role in determining the quality of a program, and ultimately in influencing child outcomes.

According to NIEER, students experience large gains when programs share similar characteristics, such as highly educated teachers, teacher-child ratios of 1 to 10 or lower, support for teachers' ongoing professional development and intellectually challenging curricula. In addition, teachers who have at least a bachelor's degree and specialized training in early childhood education are most likely to have a positive impact on their students. Yet along with improving quality come additional costs for states and school districts, which makes tackling this challenge ever more difficult.

Legislation sought by NSBA

Unfortunately, access to and the quality of preschool programs is far from uniform. Many children are placed in mediocre childcare settings without the tools and instruction necessary to achieve their full potential. Regulations governing class size, teacher-child ratios, and teacher qualifications in preschool programs vary from state to state, or even within states. Additionally, some parents and policymakers have concerns that, from a social standpoint, 3- and 4-year olds should not be in a structured school setting.

NSBA believes that the federal government has an appropriate role to play in addressing these and other challenges to help provide voluntary

high quality preschool education for all 3- and 4-year old children.

With the 110th Congress, NSBA urges policymakers to incorporate the following recommendations as key components of any federally funded voluntary preschool plan. These policy ideas form the foundation of NSBA's advocacy agenda upon which we will continue to build over the next year.

NSBA seeks federal legislation that will create a new grant program that will increase funding over the next five years to develop, expand, and sustain voluntary quality preschool programs for participating 3- and 4-year olds. Although the federal government currently invests in a variety of early childhood programs, these resources do not necessarily go to support programs that focus on developing the cognitive, social and emotional skills that help children become ready for school.

NSBA believes that Congress should focus its attention on establishing a new, separate funding stream that is dedicated to assisting school districts seeking such programming and other qualified providers in creating, expanding and improving school readiness programs. Just as such programs would not be compulsory for school districts to operate, they would be available only to those children ages 3-4 whose parents wish to enroll them. The design of the delivery system should not operate as or foster an education voucher system, or come at the expense of K-12 funding.

NSBA proposes that federal legislation require federally funded preschool programs to adopt developmentally appropriate early education standards that are aligned with state K-12 academic content standards. Preschool programs should increase their emphasis on developmentally appropriate pre-reading,

pre-mathematics and language skills that are part of an overall coordinated system of learning that supports student achievement. Such standards should be aligned both vertically and horizontally so they are logically connected, meaningful and provide achievable steps of learning. In doing so, however, young children should not be pressured by high-stakes testing, and recognition should be given for expected variations in individual development among young children.

The federal government should require outside pre-K providers that receive federal funding to collaborate with local school districts to ensure that programs are reflective of the expectations of local schools. In instances where pre-K services are offered by outside providers, NSBA believes school districts should have a role in designing these programs to ensure that they are well articulated with the kindergarten programs that students will attend in their communities. The federal government should create incentives for states to upgrade their teacher certification and licensure systems to ensure all preschool instructors are highly qualified.

Congress should provide dedicated resources to states to phase in over time certification requirements for preschool instructors. All instructors should possess a bachelor's degree and some type of specialized training in early childhood education. Such resources should be used to develop career ladders for existing preschool instructors to meet these new requirements, as well as to increase teacher compensation.

Congress should devote specific resources to help school districts develop and implement joint training and professional development programs for Pre-K-3 instructors. Coordinated professional development is essential for instructors to increase their awareness of the

connections from child development and academic instruction in young children. These professional development academies will help ensure a more seamless transition from preschool to kindergarten, and kindergarten to the elementary grades.

The federal government should provide tools and incentives to replicate effective models and improve program quality. Congress should encourage states and local service providers to adopt policies that have been shown to be effective. These include: reducing class size, limiting teacher-student ratios, adopting full-day instruction and implementing rigorous curriculum. In addition, the administration should work to disseminate best-practice research on new and effective models that have strong impacts on student outcomes.

Conclusion

Publicly funded preschool programs are essential to improving our education system and providing a solid foundation on which every child can build. By giving children a quality education early on, we can have a tremendous impact on their future educational success. With the passage of No Child Left Behind, the stakes are now higher than ever for school districts as they struggle to meet the accountability benchmarks for their students. Yet, the current system of early education is disjointed and the federal investment is weak. Although states have made progress in this area over the past few years, our nation is still a long way from matching the efforts of many of our global competitors. The federal government must do more to help implement and expand voluntary quality programs that will make a significant impact on the future successes of our children.

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NIEER — your resource for pre-K education research

The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) supports early childhood education initiatives by providing objective, nonpartisan information based on research.

The goal of NIEER is to produce and communicate the knowledge base required to ensure that every American child can receive a good education at ages three and four. The institute seeks to provide policymakers with timely information addressing the practical problems they face. The Institute offers independent research-based advice and technical assistance to four primary groups: policymakers, journalists, researchers and educators.

NIEER was established at Rutgers University's Graduate School of Education with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The institute is part of the trusts' 7-10 year grant-making strategy to ensure universal,

voluntary access to high-quality early education for 3- and 4-year old children. For more information about the trusts' early education initiative, visit www.pewtrusts.org.

In January 2002, the Rutgers University Center for Early Education Research (CEER) was merged with NIEER. Past and current supporters of research performed by the center and the institute include: Carnegie Corporation of New York; The Fund for New Jersey; Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; The David and Lucile Packard Foundation; The Prudential Foundation; The Schumann Fund for New Jersey (Lighthouse Early Childhood Initiative); Smith Richardson Foundation; Tulsa Community Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI).

The NIEER report — state-funded preschool education, a long and winding road

“The State of Preschool 2006: State Preschool Yearbook” is the fourth in the series of NIEER’s annual reference volumes tracking state-funded preschool education programs. Its purpose is to provide a compendium of data on state efforts to offer preschool education, as well as analyses of key measures of programs progress: access, quality standards and resources.

The following is a reprint of the NIEER “2005-2006 Yearbook Executive Summary.” The entire NIEER yearbook, with cross-state comparisons and individual state descriptions and extensive details, can be viewed at www.nieer.org.

In 2005-2006, state-funded preschool education reached new highs and at least one new low in the three areas tracked by our survey of the states: access, quality standards, and resources. Thirty-eight states enrolled nearly 950,000 children in their pre-K programs. Enrollment rose over previous-year levels, enough to make state pre-K the largest source of public preschool education. About two-thirds of these children are served in public schools; one-third are in other settings, such as private childcare and Head Start. States also made real progress in improving quality standards in 2005-2006. Sixteen states raised their quality standards enough to meet NIEER benchmarks that they had not previously met, some more than one standard. For the first time, two states — Alabama and North Carolina — met all 10 of the NIEER benchmarks for state standards. Total state spending for prekindergarten increased to nearly \$3.3 billion. However in many states, funding did not keep up with increased

enrollments and inflation. After adjusting for inflation, funding per child fell to the lowest level since NIEER began collecting such data in 2001-2002.

Hidden behind the national picture is tremendous variation among states. Access ranges from universal availability to no availability; quality standards from excellent to poor; and funding varies from state to state by several orders of magnitude.

Oklahoma continues to lead the nation as the only state to close in on universal enrollment, and it does so with high standards. In addition, evaluations of Oklahoma’s pre-K program provide evidence that this is a program that works.

Total enrollment in state-funded pre-K rose to 942,766 children in 2005-2006, including 805,807 at age 4. This represents a 40% increase in the number of 4-year-old children enrolled in state pre-K over the past five years. Thus, state preschool education now serves 20% of the 4-year-old population in the U.S. The 130,709 increase over the prior year for 4-year-olds reflected Florida’s new commitment to serve all 4-year-olds (it had no state program the year before) and incremental increases in other states. Enrollment at age 3 increased to 119,602, a gain of 8,598 children. A very small number of children are served at younger ages. State pre-K continues to be essentially a program for 4-year-olds in most states. Only 26 states offered pre-K to 3-year-olds, and only five states served more than 10% of that age group. As the need for education of young children does not begin at age 4, this is a cause for concern. It also points

to the need to coordinate with other public programs that serve larger numbers of children at age 3, such as Head Start and government-funded childcare.

Although many states still fall short, 2005-2006 was a banner year for improvement in state quality standards. NIEER specifies 10 benchmarks for state standards relating to program quality. Programs that meet the benchmarks correspond at least roughly in their design to programs demonstrated to produce substantial gains in children's learning and school success. These benchmarks may be viewed as necessary, though not entirely sufficient, conditions for highly effective preschool education. Sixteen states met more benchmarks in 2005-2006 than they did in 2004-2005. The most common area of improvement was in the adoption of comprehensive learning standards. The programs in Alabama and North Carolina met all 10 benchmarks, and six more state prekindergarten initiatives achieved nine of the 10. At the other extreme, 10 states failed to meet at least half of the benchmarks.

Before adjusting for inflation, total spending on state prekindergarten increased by \$380 million, or 13%, from the previous program year. Florida's new program contributed more than half of that increase. States spent an average of \$3,482 per child on their preschool education programs in 2005-2006. This is a new low, and marks the fourth year in a row that average inflation-adjusted funding per child declined. Although Florida's low per-child spending contributed to this decline, many other states failed to increase funding in proportion to growing enrollments and inflation. As educational effectiveness requires adequate funding, the continuing decline in already low state expenditure per child causes concern.

The decline in per-child expenditure can be attributed to: (1) increases in enrollment that outrun increases in funding and (2) states' failure to keep up with inflation. States face a constant temptation to increase the number of children served without a proportionate increase in expenditure. When enrollment increases outpace funding growth, states run the risk that effectiveness will deteriorate. Inflation can have equally insidious effects. As inflation in the state and local government sector of the economy runs about twice as high as in the overall economy, increases in preschool education funding that might look generous before inflation can be budget cuts after inflation takes its toll. The effects of inflation add up quickly over the years. Since 2001-2002, inflation-adjusted state pre-K spending per child has declined by more than 17%.

Key findings for 2005-2006 in each of the three main topic areas are highlighted below.

Access

- Thirty-eight states funded one or more state pre-K initiatives. There were 12 states without state-funded pre-K.
- Florida, which had no state pre-K in the prior year, launched a new initiative to serve all 4-year-olds in response to a voter approved constitutional amendment. Florida added 105,896 children to the state pre-K rolls in 2005-2006.
- State pre-K initiatives served 942,766 children. In addition to Florida, 27 other states increased their enrollments over the previous year. Nine states served fewer children, one state served the same number of children and 12 states continued to serve none.

- State pre-K programs continued to focus primarily on 4-year-olds. Twenty percent of the nation's 4-year-olds were enrolled, up from the 17% served in the previous year and 14% served in 2001-2002. This is a 40% gain in just 5 years.
- Only 3% of the nation's 3-year-olds were enrolled, virtually the same percentage served in 2001-2002. Just five states served more than 10% of their 3-year-olds: Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, New Jersey and Vermont. Nearly half the states (24) served no 3-year-olds.
- Oklahoma (70% enrollment) and Georgia (51% enrollment) were the only states to serve more than half of their children at age 4 in 2005-2006. However, Florida and Vermont (47% enrolled) are poised to overtake Georgia. Texas (44% enrolled) ran a surprising fifth, especially since Texas has not announced a goal of serving all 4-year-olds.
- State-funded preschool education employed diverse delivery systems in many states, with one-third of the children served outside the public schools.
- Head Start and preschool special education also serve many children under age 5, so not all children would enroll in a state-funded pre-K program, even if made universally available. However, not all services provided by Head Start and special education are alternatives to state preschool education — sometimes they are supplemental or collaborative services. For example, some children receiving special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may also attend state pre-K or Head Start. State pre-K and Head Start may also jointly serve children. For example, state funds may support enhanced quality or increased hours in Head Start, or each program might fund a half-day of services to provide a full day of education.

Quality standards

- Alabama and North Carolina met all 10 of NIEER's quality benchmarks. Six additional state preschool initiatives met nine of the 10 benchmarks — Arkansas, Illinois, Oklahoma, and Tennessee, as well as the Nonpublic Schools Early Childhood Development Program in Louisiana and New Jersey's Abbott program.
- States are developing policies that establish stronger and more uniform quality standards. Nineteen programs in 16 states made policy changes that increased the number of benchmarks met by their quality standards, a remarkable single-year improvement. The number of state initiatives meeting fewer than five benchmarks decreased from 15 to 11.
- Twenty states did not require all state pre-K teachers to hold at least a bachelor's degree. Eight of these states did not require any state pre-K teachers to have a bachelor's degree. Eight more exempted at least some teachers outside the public schools, and four had multiple pre-K initiatives, at least one of which did not require a bachelor's degree of all teachers. Ten states did not require all teachers to have specialized preparation in the education of preschool children. At a time when the national No Child Left Behind law is pressing for every child in kindergarten or above to have a "highly qualified" teacher, it is striking that a number of states fail to require even the most basic qualifications of preschool teachers.
- Twenty-eight states used regular site visits to monitor local programs as part of a continuous quality improvement process. Such efforts are a key way for states to maintain and improve program effectiveness.

Resources

- Total state spending for pre-K initiatives reached \$3.27 billion. To put this in perspective, state governments spent more than \$250 billion on grades K-12. Thus, states spent about one penny on preschool education for every \$1 they spent on K-12.

- Total state pre-K spending grew by \$380 million (without accounting for inflation), or 13%. Florida's new program accounted for 60% of that increase.

- Average state spending per child enrolled was \$3,482. States varied greatly in their per-child spending. The top-ranked state — New Jersey — spent \$9,854 per child. Three states spent less than \$2,000 per child and 12 spent nothing.

- Some states provide all of the funding for state pre-K programs. Others depend on local school districts and other sources of funds, as well. States that fund preschool education through the same public education funding formula as K-12 education combine state and local dollars to fund the program. Local schools may use federal education dollars, as well. Some states fund programs that are also supported by government-funded childcare, Head Start, and other funds. In some states, the state pre-K dollars may only pay for a certain portion of hours and days, even though providers that offer full-day, year-round services deliver the program. Despite cost-sharing arrangements, whenever the state per-child expenditure is set far below the level of K-12 funding (for an equivalent number of hours), it cannot help but limit quality and effectiveness.

- Florida's new program is particularly worrisome because it enrolls so many children

in a program that has very low per-child funding (it ranks 35th of 38 states) and low quality standards.

- Inflation is a hidden drag on the progress of preschool education. From 2001 to 2005, state and local government cost inflation was a cumulative 18%, compared to 10% for the overall economy. This is not widely understood, and it seems likely that the public underestimates how much more money is needed each year just to maintain preschool education service levels. Flat funding, or even modest increases in funding, can mean a substantial decrease in real financial support once inflation is taken into account.

- Inflation-adjusted spending per child declined in 25 of 37 states (Florida's initiative was new and not included here). In other words, real spending per child declined in twice as many states as it increased. Worse yet, nominal spending per child (that is, without any adjustment for inflation) declined in 14 states. In a few states (North Carolina, for example) spending declines may be explained by the fact that high startup costs in the initial years of a new program decline as the program goes to scale. However, this explanation justifies reductions in spending per child only in states that adequately funded their programs from the start.

What qualifies as a state preschool program?

The NIEER yearbook focuses on state-funded preschool initiatives meeting these criteria:

- The initiative is funded, controlled and directed by the state.
- The initiative serves children of pre-K age, usually 3-year-olds and/or 4-year-olds. Although initiatives in some states serve

broader age ranges, programs that serve only infants and toddlers are excluded.

- Early childhood education is the primary focus of the initiative. This does not exclude programs that offer parent education, but does exclude programs that mainly focus on parent education.
- The initiative offers a group learning experience to children at least two days per week.
- State-funded preschool education initiatives must be distinct from the state's system for subsidized childcare. However, preschool initiatives may be coordinated and integrated with the subsidy system for childcare.
- The initiative is not primarily designed to serve children with disabilities, but may include children with disabilities.
- State supplements to the federal Head Start program are considered to constitute de facto state preschool programs if they substantially expand the number of children served and the state assumed some administrative responsibility for the program. State supplements to fund quality improvements, extended days or other program enhancements, and that expand enrollment minimally, are not considered equivalent to a state preschool program.

Quality Standards Checklist

The Quality Standards Checklist is in no way meant to be an exhaustive catalog of all the features of a high-quality program. Rather, it represents a set of minimum criteria needed to ensure effective pre-K programs, especially when serving disadvantaged children. Four of the items NIEER uses to rate the quality of state pre-K programs involve teacher

credentials and training. State pre-K policies are evaluated based on whether programs require teachers to have a bachelor's degree; whether they require teachers to have specialization in preschool education; whether they require assistant teachers to have at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) or equivalent credential; and whether they require teachers to have at least 15 hours of annual in-service training.

Teacher qualifications receive this emphasis in the quality checklist because research has shown this area to be critical in determining the quality of a program. Better education and training for teachers — both before they begin working with children and on an ongoing basis as they update their skills and knowledge — can improve the interaction among children and teachers. This, in turn, affects children's learning.

Class size and staff-child ratios are also emphasized in the Quality Standards Checklist. States are expected to limit class sizes to 20 at most, and to have no more than 10 children per teacher. With smaller classes and fewer children per teacher, children have greater opportunities for interaction with adults and can receive more individualized attention. The importance of class size and staff-child ratios in determining the quality of programs has been confirmed by several studies.

Early learning standards are another critical factor in determining the quality of a state's pre-K program. Statewide early learning standards offer programs guidance and ensure that they cover the full range of areas essential to children's learning and development. States should have comprehensive early learning standards covering all areas identified as fundamental

by the National Education Goals Panel — children’s physical well-being and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches toward learning; language development; and cognition and general knowledge. These standards should be specifically tailored to the learning of preschool-age children so that it is appropriate for their level of development, and should be required by the state or actively promoted for use in state pre-K classrooms.

The Quality Standards Checklist also addresses the comprehensive services that pre-K programs should be expected to offer. Programs should provide at least one meal; vision, hearing, and health screenings and referrals; and additional parent involvement opportunities, such as parent conferences, or

support services, such as parent education. These items are included because preparing children for success in school involves not only their cognitive development, but also their physical health and social and emotional well-being.

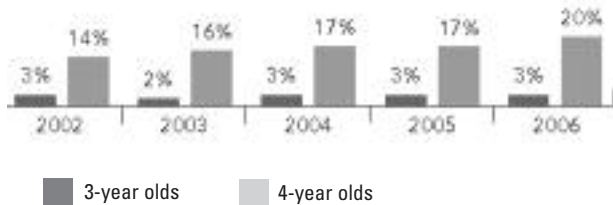
The Quality Standards Checklist focuses on state pre-K policy requirements, rather than implementation of those policies. However, the checklist does include an indicator of whether states are taking steps to monitor programs’ implementation of the quality standards. While policies requiring strong state quality standards are essential, it is also necessary to have a means of ensuring that programs meet those standards.

State rankings and quality checklist sums

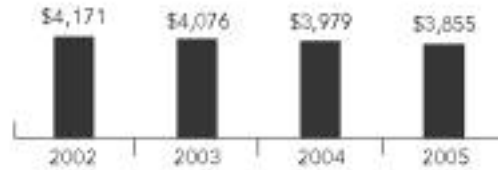
State	Access for 4-Year-Olds Rank	Access for 3-Year-Olds Rank	Resources Rank	Quality Standards Checklist Sum (Maximum of 10)
Alabama	38	none served	11	10
Arizona	29	none served	33	4
Arkansas	15	5	9	9
California	24	7	20	4
Colorado	20	14	24	4
Connecticut	19	11	4	6
Delaware	26	none served	5	8
Florida	4	none served	35	4
Georgia	2	none served	13	8
Illinois	13	2	21	9
Iowa	32	17	25	5
Kansas	18	none served	28	3
Kentucky	10	4	31	8
Louisiana	14	none served	8	7.8
Maine	17	none served	36	4
Maryland	9	21	37	7
Massachusetts	25	6	16	6
Michigan	16	none served	14	6
Minnesota	37	19	3	8
Missouri	34	13	27	6
Nebraska	35	15	29	8
Nevada	36	23	22	7
New Jersey	12	3	1	8.5
New Mexico	27	24	34	4.8
New York	11	26	17	5.6
North Carolina	21	none served	15	10
Ohio	33	20	32	4
Oklahoma	1	none served	19	9
Oregon	31	12	2	7
Pennsylvania	30	16	7	4
South Carolina	8	10	38	8
Tennessee	23	25	12	9
Texas	5	9	26	4
Vermont	3	3	30	6.7
Virginia	22	none served	18	7
Washington	28	18	6	6
West Virginia	6	8	10	7
Wisconsin	7	22	23	5.1
Wycke	no program	no program	no program	no program
Hawaii	no program	no program	no program	no program
Idaho	no program	no program	no program	no program
Indiana	no program	no program	no program	no program
Mississippi	no program	no program	no program	no program
Montana	no program	no program	no program	no program
New Hampshire	no program	no program	no program	no program
North Dakota	no program	no program	no program	no program
Rhode Island	no program	no program	no program	no program
South Dakota	no program	no program	no program	no program
Utah	no program	no program	no program	no program
Wyoming	no program	no program	no program	no program

United States

Percent of national population enrolled



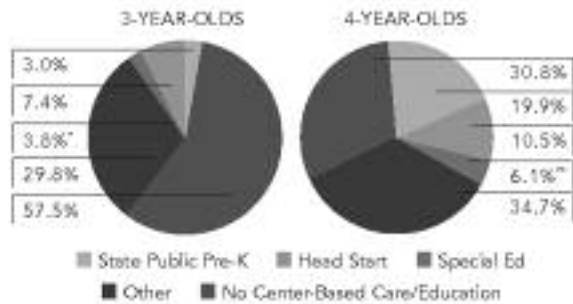
Average state spending per child enrolled (2006 dollars)



National access

Total state program enrollment, all ages942,766
 States that fund preschool38 states
 Income requirement27 state programs have an income requirement
 Hours of operation8 full-day, 12 half-day, 28 determined locally
 Operating schedule31 academic year, 17 determined locally
 Special education enrollment, ages 3 & 4398,679
 Federal Head Start enrollment, ages 3 & 4721,289¹
 Total federal Head Start and894,354¹
 Early Head Start enrollment, ages 0-5
 State-funded Head Start enrollment, ages 3 & 415,487²

STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



* 1.5 of the 3.8 percent overlaps with other programs

**1.9 of the 6.1 percent overlaps with other programs

Comparison — how does Ohio stack up?

This national profile provides a summary of state-funded pre-K data across the United States in the 2005-2006 academic year. The focus is on access to state preschool, quality standards, and spending presented in national, rather than statewide, totals and averages. During the 2005-2006 year, 38 states funded pre-K initiatives. Some states offered multiple programs, so across the states there were 48 distinct preschool education initiatives in total.

Nationwide, 942,766 children participated in state pre-K initiatives in 2005-2006. Quality standards varied enormously across the states. Almost half of the state preschool education initiatives failed to meet the important benchmark of requiring a bachelor's degree or higher for all lead teachers. State pre-K spending totaled nearly \$3.3 billion during the 2005-2006 academic year. Some state pre-K initiatives reported financial support from local and federal sources, in addition to state funding, adding at least \$400 million to the total spending in these initiatives. Still, total spending per child enrolled was much less for state pre-K than for grades K-12 in public schools.

Ohio

Ohio established the Public School Preschool Program (PSP) in 1990 after a 4-year pilot initiative was successful. PSP funding is awarded to public schools, which may subcontract with Head Start and private childcare centers to offer services. PSP programs initially followed the federal Head Start Performance Standards, but now the state requires programs to use its Early Learning Program Guidelines. These guidelines address all aspects of program services and management. Three- and 4-year old children

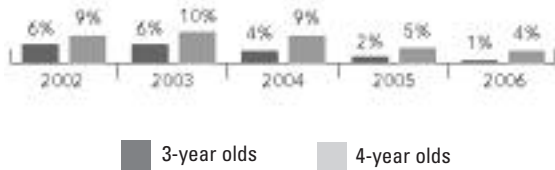
from families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) qualify for services, although families earning above 100% of the FPL pay fees on a sliding scale. Programs may also enroll children from families above 200% of the FPL, but these services are usually paid for either by district funds or parent tuition.

Ohio also operated a separate state-funded Head Start initiative from 1990 until 2005. State funds to supplement funding for the federal Head Start program were reduced significantly over time and replaced with federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding that introduced more stringent eligibility requirements. The result was a large drop in enrollment between 2002 and 2004 due to changes in eligibility criteria. In 2005-2006, Ohio eliminated its Head Start initiative entirely and replaced it with the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), which is completely funded by TANF. While the new initiative has an educational component that mirrors PSP and is viewed as a companion to that initiative, the goal of these TANF funds is to support working families.

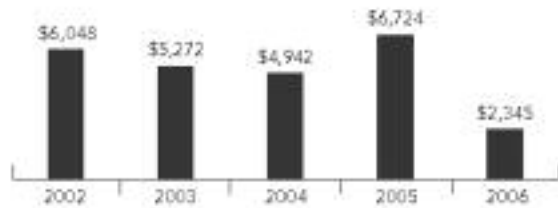
Enrollment occurs on a rolling basis throughout the calendar year, and income eligibility is reassessed every 6 months. If family income exceeds 195% of the FPL, TANF funding is terminated within a month of a child being determined ineligible. Children may continue to be served in the program if other funding is available. Due to the potential for ongoing fluctuation in children's eligibility status, ELI does not meet our criteria for a pre-K education program. As a result, data on ELI are not included in this report.

Ohio

Percent of state population enrolled



State spending per child enrolled (2006 dollars)



Ohio access

Total state program enrollment	8,102
School districts that offer state program	18%
Income requirement	200% FPL
Hours of operation	Determined locally
Operating schedule	Determined locally
Special education enrollment	12,594
Federally funded Head Start enrollment	32,067
State-funded Head Start enrollment	0

STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



On the Ohio legislative front

House Bill (HB) 119, known as the biennial budget, included changes for early childhood education and preschool programs.

School district preschool program

Ohio Revised Code Section (RC) 3301.53 and 3313.646 now permits any school district to establish a preschool program. Previously, a school district could establish a preschool program if it was eligible for poverty-based assistance and able to demonstrate that the district's need for the program could not be met by an existing childcare program. However, the appropriations section of the new provision (RC 269.10.20) requires the new programs to be eligible for poverty-based assistance in order to receive funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 and FY 2009.

Early childhood education

Under HB 119, the appropriations for early childhood education, previously called public preschool, was increased by \$12 million in FY 2008 and \$5.5 million in FY 2009.

Staff qualifications for early childhood programs

RC 3301.311 postpones from FY 2008 until FY 2010 the requirement that teachers for state-funded early childhood programs established prior to July 1, 2006, have at least associate degrees. Fiscally, this provision allows an early childhood program to continue to receive state funding through FY 2009, even if all of its teachers do not have associate degrees.

The new provision also sets new deadlines for state-funded early childhood programs established on or after July 1, 2006, as follows:

- Beginning July 1, 2011, all teachers must have an associate degree;
- Beginning July 1, 2012, half of all teachers must have bachelor's degrees.

Fiscally, a new early childhood program could continue to receive state funding through FY 2010, even if all of its teachers do not have associate degrees, and through FY 2011 even if half of its teachers do not have bachelor's degrees.

An Ohio school district — one success story

Hamilton County Educational Service Center Early Learning Program

Program description

It is the goal of the Early Learning Program that every child we serve will enter kindergarten healthy and prepared for success. To reach this goal, the Early Learning Program, through its network of partnerships, provides a comprehensive and integrated early care and education program focusing on the whole child. This includes a curriculum addressing children's cognitive, developmental and socio-emotional needs; medical and dental screenings and referrals; nutritional services; parent involvement activities; and referrals to social service providers and mental health services. The Early Learning Program offers Head Start, Early Head Start, and Ohio's Early Learning Initiative (ELI). These programs, offered in public schools, childcare centers and school-linked family resource centers, lay the foundation for school achievement for years to come.

Hamilton County ESC is an ERSS (Educational Regional Service System) serving southwest Ohio counties and school districts, Pre-K through 12.

The Early Learning Program serves 861 federally funded Head Start children, birth to age 5, and over 526 state TANF-funded ELI children, 3- and 4-years old. These programs are operated on part-day, full-day and year-round sessions to meet the needs of families working, in school and in training.

Children and families served

Low-income families that meet the Federal Poverty Level guidelines of 185% or lower are served. The children represent a high risk for failure in school.

Funding

Federal Head Start funding ranges from \$4,700 to \$6,200 per child for half-day or full-day sessions, and the state TANF ELI funding is \$10,438 per child (effective July 1, 2007) for full day/full year.

Benefits

This program gives children the basic social, emotional and academic tools, as well as the health care they need, to be better students and improves schools and communities.

Keys to success

- A. Leadership and ESC governing board support;
- B. Quality teachers and excellent learning environment;
- C. Parent/family involvement;
- D. Strong linkages and coordination with related early care and education systems;
- E. Blending funding to meet the comprehensive services.

Essential tips

School districts that decide to expand funding for preschool programs for all students should ensure success by targeting the needs of the community, strengthening and complementing existing programs, and disseminating information. The following are 10 suggested steps for success:

1. Know the research. Making the case for voluntary quality pre-K programs for all children is straightforward once people see the facts. This includes understanding the key characteristics of good pre-K programs.
2. Build public awareness about the qualities of good pre-K programs and their influence on student outcomes. Share this information with your colleagues, parents and the community.
3. Remember that high-quality pre-K programs will be most effective when they are complemented by continued investments in high-quality elementary and secondary education. Consider creating a continuum of instructional practices and policies from at least pre-K through third grade; beyond would be even better.
4. Take a fresh look at your options. One major difference between approaches can be understood by asking: Does the delivery model allow families more or less freedom of choice when choosing a provider of pre-K education?
5. Explore your funding mechanisms. Both general revenues and dedicated funds can support pre-K programs. Other options might include endowments, foundations and scholarship programs. Leverage the existing system to build upon the infrastructure already in place.
6. Work closely with providers of pre-K in your community. A mixed delivery service model, in which a variety of public and private schools and community agencies offer programs, works well in many states and is required by several.
7. Maintain parental choice. Children and their families vary greatly, and therefore, a diverse set of solutions is preferable to a single one. Surveys show consistent public support for parents to have options when choosing a provider to care for and educate their young children. Government policies that support a market-based approach create a level playing field for providers, which in turn enables a wide variety of organizations to operate, leading to more choices.
8. Form effective coalitions. Identify and work with pre-K supporters at your local and state education agencies; OSBA and other education related advocacy organizations; the business community, local colleges and universities; other local and state policymakers; and pre-K program providers in your community. Pre-K is one of the few issues that easily garner bipartisan support.
9. Don't reinvent the wheel. There may be highly successful pre-K programs open to all students on a voluntary basis and operated by public school districts right in your backyard or across the state. Find out how they define their keys to success and customize their models.
10. Check out the resources that have been compiled for you at OSBA through the Pew initiative. These should help you in your efforts to establish a voluntary quality pre-K program for all students.

Pre-K resources

For additional information on this topic, see these suggested resources:

Thinking P-12

Pew Center for Public Education pre-K Initiative

NSBA's Center for Public Education

www.centerforpubliceducation.org

The center will be building a pre-K section on its Web site with research, information, materials, online discussions and more.

National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER): **www.nieer.org**

<http://nieer.org/yearbook/>

The Pew Charitable Trusts

www.pewtrusts.org

The Pew trusts are a major force in support of universal pre-K for 3- and 4-year olds. The Pew Web site has information about its pre-K initiative, along with media resources, fact sheets and other content related to pre-K. Includes links to other Pew grantees:

www.pewtrusts.org/ideas/index.cfm?issue=26

Pre-K Now

www.preknow.org

Pre-K Now is a national advocacy organization that promotes high quality pre-K education for all 3- and 4-year olds. Its work is focused primarily on state policy. The group's site has a lot of good resources for state advocates, including reports, fact sheets, public opinion polls and materials that can be downloaded. Sign up for its pre-K electronic news service.

Other useful sites:

Committee for Economic Development
www.ced.org

CED has several publications aimed at the business community that make the case for effective pre-K programs.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study

<http://nces.ed.gov/ecls/Kindergarten.asp>

An ongoing study through the U.S.

Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten class of 1998-99 (ECLS-K) is tracking the school experiences of a representative sample of children from kindergarten through middle school. NCES has also followed a birth cohort from 9 months to 2 years of age. Neither survey picks up 3- and 4-year olds, but there's still interesting information about school readiness.

Foundation for Child Development

www.fcd-us.org/ourwork/index.html

The Foundation for Child Development is a national, private philanthropy focused on children and families. One of its four main initiatives is PK-3: A New Beginning for Publicly Supported Education, which promotes a universally available pre-K program for 3- and 4-year olds aligned to K-12 standards.

Publications

Economic benefits

Cost Benefit Analysis of Universally Accessible Pre-Kindergarten Education in Texas, The Bush School of Government & Public Service, Texas A&M University.

[http://bush.tamu.edu/academics/mpsa/capstone/projects/TECEC2006/ACost](http://bush.tamu.edu/academics/mpsa/capstone/projects/TECEC2006/ACostBenefitAnalysisofHigh-QualityUniversally-AccessiblePre-KindergartenEducationinTexas.pdf)

[BenefitAnalysisofHigh-QualityUniversally-AccessiblePre-KindergartenEducationinTexas.pdf](http://bush.tamu.edu/academics/mpsa/capstone/projects/TECEC2006/ACostBenefitAnalysisofHigh-QualityUniversally-AccessiblePre-KindergartenEducationinTexas.pdf)

Educational benefits:

The Effects of State Pre-Kindergarten Programs on Young Children's School Readiness in Five States, NIEER

This study looks at the effects of state funded programs in Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina and West Virginia.

<http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=129>

The Effects of Universal Pre-K on Cognitive Development (Gormley): Another study of Oklahoma's pre-K program

<http://www.apa.org/journals/releases/dev416872.pdf>

Funding pre-K programs:

Missed Opportunities? The Possibilities and Challenges of Funding High Quality Preschool through Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act. Center for Law and Social Policy

http://www.clasp.org/publications/missed_opp.pdf

Steve Barnett, National Institute for Early Education Research

Early literacy: Policy and practice in the preschool years

<http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/10.pdf>

Increasing the effectiveness of preschool programs

<http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/11.pdf>

Fact sheets:

Children's social and emotional development
<http://nieer.org/resources/factsheets/10.pdf>

Danielle Ewen, Center for Law and Social Policy

Using TANF for Early Childhood

http://www.clasp.org/publications/tanf_early_childhood.pdf

Albert Wat, Pre-K Now

Funding the future

http://www.preknow.org/documents/FundingtheFuture_Feb2006.pdf

Pre-K Now Dollars and sense

http://www.preknow.org/documents/DollarsandSense_May2007.pdf

New cost benefit data Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation: Public Investment in High-Quality Prekindergarten

Robert G. Lynch, Economic Policy Institute executive summary

http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/book_enriching