Education for Four-Year-Olds

State Initiatives

Supplement to
Technical Report #2
(California & Ohio)

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September 25, 2001

THE FOLLOWING REPORT continues and extends an earlier study of the development of Prekindergarten policy in five states (Gallagher, Clayton & Heinemeier, 2001). The procedures that were followed with California and Ohio were the same as those used in the previous study. Potential informants in each state who were familiar with the prekindergarten program development and implementation were identified and asked to participate in an hour long telephone interview designed to discover what the key facilitators and barriers were that affected the prekindergarten policy in their state. Documents related to the policy development and implementation were also collected and made a part of the review. There were eight interviews conducted in Ohio and nine interviews in California.

Each interview was taped and transcribed. A special coding procedure that was developed in the earlier study was applied to these tapescripts. Coding of facilitators and barriers identified in the scripts were made by three judges (see Tables 1 and 2 for brief description of the category system). When the codings were agreed upon by two of the judges, or all three of the judges, that coding was accepted as the final code for that statement. Previous comparisons of high judges' agreement on ratings were considered sufficient to support this procedure. (Gallagher, Clayton & Heinemeyer, 2001)

The sums of the codings were calculated and are presented here. The three authors of the report also created a consensus view of major facilitators and barriers. The description of each state's program was returned to the interviewees with a request to correct any factual errors and their comments were integrated into the final program presentation in this report.

Table 1. Categories for Facilitators

CODE DESCRIPTION

A **Institutional.** These facilitators are policies that stress the change or additions to the structure or institutions related to early childhood. The addition of an interagency coordinating council would be one example. A cooperative agreement with Head Start would be another.

- *A new Office of Early Childhood has been established*
- *A Planning Council has been established to set goals and standards for four-year-old programs*

B **Individual.** Individuals who have come forward with significant support for the four-year-old policy. These could be an influential newspaper editor or banker or other force in the community. (If the individual were a political figure such as a Governor or a Chair of the Appropriations Committee, then the statement would be coded jointly B/E.)

- *The new chair of the appropriation committee, Sam Dash, is an enthusiastic supporter.*
- *Bill Gates has promised all of the royalties from the new Windows program will be donated to the four-year-old program.*

C **Groups.** These statements or actions would be made about an established group of people representing a subgroup of society. (The NAACP, or the State Teachers Association or the Parents of Preschool children, making favorable comments on education for four-year-olds, would be examples.)

- *The Child Care Association has gone on record supporting the four-year-old program.*

D **Economic.** Statements or actions which increase the likelihood that additional economic resources will be directed to early childhood programs. (Increasing the sales tax or arguing for increased appropriations would be examples.)

- *The new sales tax will make it much easier to fund the expenses of the four-year-old program.*

E **Political.** Statements or actions by political figures or political parties that forward the cause of four-year-old programs in the school. (State of the State address, or budget request in the legislature, or bills proposed to enlarge the program for four-year-olds, would fit this category.)

- *The four-year-old bill has been enthusiastically supported by (name political party).*
- *The governor announced his intention to fight for universal education for four-year-olds.*

F **Geographic.** One geographic segment of the state expresses a strong positive view towards education for four-year-olds.

- *The communities in the mountains seem very supportive.*
- *The eastern part of the state wants to expand its program.*

G **Academic Evidence.** These statements would be using evidence from research in early intervention or statements on brain development during this age period or the various opinions of "experts" would fit this category.

- *Brain research reports have been received with high enthusiasm in public and legislative halls.*

H **Media.** Statements of support by members of the media or through TV programs or articles, which have been supportive of four-year-olds in education, would fit this category.

- *Several newspaper editorials have come out in favor of this bill.*

I **Resources.** The availability of personnel, space, etc., which would ease the transition of four-year-olds to education.

- *It was the availability of space that enabled us to go from half-day to full-day programs.*

Table 2. Categories for Barriers

CODE DESCRIPTION

Z **Institutional.** These barriers represent various institutions or administrative structures that hinder the development of the four-year-old program. Objections to collaboration between agencies might fit into this category.

- *An agency complains that they were not named the lead agency in this effort.*

Y **Individual.** These are barriers that are individual in nature and representing someone with a strong moral position or resistance to the essence of the program

- *Minister Jenkins believed this program would undermine family values.*

X **Groups.** These barriers represent policies that have run afoul of various identifiable groups who believe that this policy will bring harm to children or that their own efforts and programs are threatened.

- *Head Start coordinator wonders if this program will interfere with their efforts.*

W **Economic.** There are limited fiscal resources made available for this program. Many other state priorities seem to result in downgrading the fiscal priorities for this program.

- *The public school budget has to come first, then preschool.*

V **Political.** The program has become identified with one political party and has generated opposition form the other party. This may be philosophical differences or just the desire for one party to not succeed.

- *When the other party won the recent election, that slowed down the momentum for this program considerably.*

U **Geographical.** Differences in various regions of the state come to the fore and threaten the viability of the program.

- *People in the rural areas are dead set against four-year-olds in school.*

T **Academic Evidence.** Some distinguished academicians call attention to negative information about the program or past history. They may ridicule the notion that four-year-olds in school helps prepare children for school.

- *Professor Jones says there isn't any evidence that preschool programs are any sizable help in the child's development*

S **Media.** Various programs or publications present a negative picture of programs for four-year-olds. A well-known columnist starts a vendetta against these programs.

- *A prominent author has written a book about the weakness of the research on preschool children.*

R **Resources.** The lack of availability of space or trained personnel serves as a sizable brake on the program's growth.

- *Higher education has refused to add to its limited programs of personnel preparation in early childhood.*

OHIO

How It Began

The Ohio prekindergarten program began during a transition time between Governor Celeste, a Democrat leaving office, and Governor Voinovich, a Republican assuming office. This program was developed in response to some of the initial research concerning school reform and an interest in trying to intervene earlier to help preschool-age children to enter school better prepared for kindergarten.

Ohio operates two separate preschool programs: the State funded Head Start and Public Preschool program. The federally funded Head Start program is also available to eligible children and families. Both of these state funded programs began as pilot programs for "at-risk" low-income children in school year 1989–1990 and grew under the strong leadership of Governor Voinovich. They both received about $5 million originally and each served about 1,500 children. Both expanded in 1990–1991 with a combined total of about 6,000 students served. The programs have continued to increase but the State funded Head Start program has increased at a more rapid rate than has the Public Preschool Program.

The two programs started out with a different focus. The intent was for children at or below 100% of poverty to be served by State Head Start. The legislation for the state Head Start required Ohio to use existing grantees and serve children at or below 100% of the poverty level. The public schools could serve children between 100% and 185% of poverty. Once the public preschool program reached the available number of eligible children, then age appropriate children from families whose income is above 185% of the poverty level could be enrolled in the public preschool program on a tuition basis. The public preschool programs must ensure that at least half of their enrollment is comprised of children at or below 100% of the poverty level.

Head Start was embraced as a program that had a strong track record and was well established. It addressed the needs of the most vulnerable population of children and the thought was, "Why reinvent the wheel?" Ohio looked at how state dollars could increase the number of children being served through this federal Head Start program. The initial Public Preschool legislation was limited to eligible districts that had a significant number of children living in poverty.

In 1990 Ohio established a Division of Early Childhood Education within the Department of Education. By creating an operational unit within the Department of Education, the State Board indicated its interest in, and the importance of early childhood programming in Ohio's educational efforts. The action also created an organizational home for state activities.

Current Status

The two programs grew steadily during the 1990s. In 2000–2001 they had a state budget of almost $120 million serving almost 29,000 (20%) of four-year-old children in the state-funded Head Start and Public Preschool programs. The money came from General Revenue funds. State-funded Head Start received $100.8 million and 22,100 children were served. In the Public Preschool program there were about 8,000 children served with $20 million.

The Federal Head Start programs served about another 35,000 (24%) children, so it was estimated that there was a program for every eligible (at risk) child in Ohio.

Although most programs operate for one-half day, Head Start programs often deliver a full-day program by collaborating with local child care providers. Approximately 13,000 children receive full-day services utilizing this model. Public Preschool programs are operated by public schools but they may subcontract with a Head Start agency, chartered nonpublic school, or a licensed child care provider. The state Head Start programs are mostly operated by federal Head Start providers, but two "state only" grantees are also funded.

The Public Preschool program has made the decision to use the comprehensive services that Head Start provides as well as the Head Start Performance Standards. Class size is now limited in both programs to 17 with a teacher and an aide. They have the same square footage requirement and meet the same licensing requirements. The Ohio Department of Education licenses all programs operated by Head Start, public schools and charter nonpublic schools. These programs must meet or exceed the licensing standards set by the Department of Job and Family Services for child care centers. There has always been an emphasis on quality but Ohio has recently required that all Head Start teachers have an AA degree with a teaching certificate by 2008. At the present time, Head Start teachers need a minimum of a Child Development Associate (CDA). The Public Preschool programs require a minimum of a two-year associate degree with a prekindergarten teaching certificate or a four-year prekindergarten teaching certificate.

There is no prescribed curriculum although there are guidelines and a guidance document. Beginning with the state's model curriculum for K–12, experts assisted in developing the competencies and expectations for birth to five. The program design, which incorporated the expectations and competencies for kindergartners, is a result of this collaborative effort. In addition, programs are required to implement an assessment process called MAPS, which is a curriculum-embedded assessment tool.

Facilitators & Barriers—Ohio

Facilitators

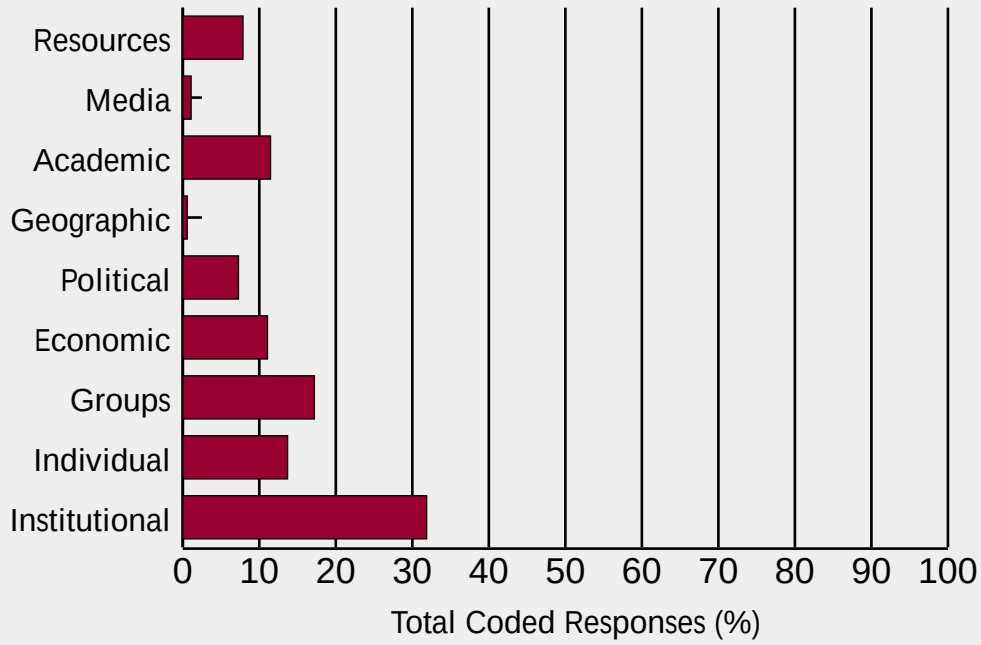
The summary count of the various interview codes in Ohio that were judged to be positive facilitators of prekindergarten policy can be seen in Figure 1, for the eight interviewees. The largest number of facilitative responses fell under the *Institutional* category. This finding was consistent with the results of the earlier study (Gallagher, Clayton, & Heinemeier, 2000) and indicated the importance of establishing a service system and program organization for successful implementation.

The dual nature of the program itself, one part in Head Start and one in the Public Schools, made additional institutional adjustments necessary. The building of an infrastructure for personnel preparation and for accountability comprised other components in the infrastructure. The statements in italics represent quotes from the interviewees.

> *This is where I give the Department of Education and the Office of Early Childhood Education credit, because they actually fund and administer both public school preschool and state funded Head Start, but also preschool Special Education.*

> *What we've really done, which I think is a plus, by going the route we did with providers who understood Head Start's comprehensive… I mean, we've really provided a system to a large number of our children.*

Figure 1. Ohio Facilitators



Groups. The next most frequent category mentioned was the positive role played by groups in the development of the prekindergarten policy. It was critical that the various groups that were stakeholders in the assistance of young children came together and agreed upon a common action plan. That was what happened in Ohio.

> *We're one early childhood community but the neighborhoods are Head Start, Public Pre-K, public special education Pre-K and child care. These neighborhoods have stayed separate in terms of their identities. But in terms of the early childhood delivery system, they've come together.*

Individuals. As has been true in all of the previous states studied, strong political leadership was an essential ingredient in the development of these policies. In this case, the interviewees noted the crucial role played by Governor Voinovich in the development of a strong program. There were other key persons in agencies and state government that also made contributions to the program.

> *We were fortunate to have some really good alignment between a Governor who had a strong commitment to early childhood lined up with state agencies that serve children and families and a state superintendent and the state board who also had that commitment. Everything kind of came together.*

> *The legislature was Republican and he was Republican (Voinovich) so that always helped. Before that, it was the Democrats that got*

some money in State funded Head Start and in Public Preschool. I guess you could say it has enjoyed bipartisan support, but it was his leadership in making that a part of his promise to the Ohio people.

Economic. The commitment of a substantial amount of money and other resources was the key for the program maturation that Ohio had seen and the political leadership appears to be largely responsible for that happening.

Ohio just decided to draw a line in the sand and make a commitment to serving these low-income children and families.

Academic. About 10% of the facilitator comments dealt with the academic goals of the program. It was the quality standards and career ladders that provided the Ohio public with confidence that this program had a solid grounding and was more than a babysitting operation.

I think that I've seen in Ohio a real move toward documenting children's readiness and really improving and increasing teacher skills and knowledge base around assessment and screenings of children.

There were fewer statements made regarding the role of the media as facilitator or of the geographically diverse nature of Ohio that might have contributed to the final result. The political process was important in that it allowed Governor Voinovich the vehicle for achieving his goals but the political process itself was not seen as crucial by many interviewees.

As appears to be true in many other cases of policy development, a combination of forces, individual and group appeared to be acting in conjunction with one another to allow this policy to grow and flourish at this particular time.

Barriers

The barriers faced by those creating prekindergarten policy in Ohio are similar to those found in other states. Figure 2 shows the percentage of barrier responses that fell into each of the nine categories in the coding system.

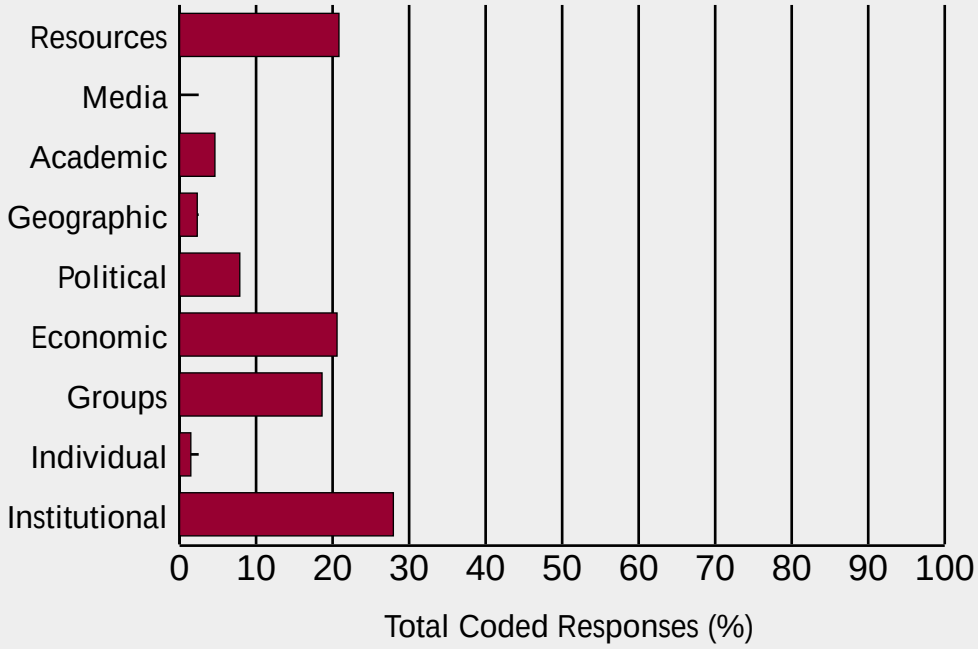
Institutional. Almost 30% of the barrier responses of the interviewees were coded in the *institution* category. When one is trying to create systems or organizational change, it seems appropriate that the older system, currently in place, will become a barrier. In this instance there is a powerful institutional barrier that threatens the prekindergarten policy and that is a recent State Supreme Court ruling that stated that Ohio's manner of funding their public schools was unconstitutional. This means that the state had to rethink how it could bring its funding procedures into line with the Court decision. This, in turn, might mean a redistribution of prekindergarten and state Head Start funds.

There are some feelings expressed that the early childhood community in Ohio has not yet realized that these programs have to show accountability it they are to maintain their level of funding.

Economic. About 20% of the issues noted were *economic* in character and reflected the continuing concern about how these prekindergarten programs are going to be funded. This had become a particular problem due to the *current* lack of strong political advocacy for the prekindergarten program.

We're in a big crisis right now because of the state's funding plan; the Ohio Supreme Court has declared that the state's financial plans for the public schools are unconstitutional.

Figure 2. Ohio Barriers



Resources. The shortage of nonmonetary resources also received a number of comments (21%). This was particularly true of the chronic problem of finding and maintaining a quality teaching staff. Lack of transportation and space were also significant *resource* barriers.

> *It doesn't provide enough resources to do the support services, the transportation, pay for the building, all those other things that are needed.*

> *Child care is having a real crisis in the state. Everywhere I go in child care, the story is the same; they can't recruit teachers of any sort.*

Groups. Despite the cooperative attitude that was mentioned in the facilitators there were still a number of barriers presented by groups that were mentioned in the interviews. There were mixed feelings reported from public schools administrators. It was not that they opposed the prekindergarten philosophy or program; it was that they already had so many responsibilities and so few resources to deal with them. It is important to note that there were practically no individuals identified as opposing these policies (see Figure 2). It was the problems these prekindergarten programs caused financially and institutionally that represented the major barriers.

> *I do think that the early childhood community is a really fractured group of people who don't know how to lobby very well. I would say at this point one of our lessons learned is that many childcare providers are very resentful that they cannot bid on the work either that the Public Preschools are providing or that Head Start is providing.*

So, while a number of our school superintendents believed philosophically in early childhood education, they have a hard time looking at it from the prevention side when they were struggling to have enough dollars to run their K-12 program which they were required to do.

Much of the current barriers seem to be causing trouble because the size of the program has become so impressive. With size comes complexity and expense. The prekindergarten program and the state Head Start program have elevated their efforts to a level where they are now seen as an expensive part of the state budget, and each may have to respond to a different, and more severe, kind of accountability.

Ohio Major Facilitators

There was an impressive conjunction of forces that resulted in a strong early childhood program. The strongest of these forces were perceived as follows:

1. **Strong political leadership.** Strong political leadership was provided by Governor Celeste (Democrat) and then expanded under Governor Voinovich (Republican). Because they were in different parties, bipartisan support for this program was provided. Governor Voinovich made the preschool program his platform and he wanted to ensure a space for every eligible four-year-old.
2. **Building strong performance standards and an emphasis on equality.** From the beginning, Ohio has put a strong emphasis on opportunities for the entire family, personnel standards, and curriculum. They now have the same requirements for both programs regardless of school or Head Start operation. They are both currently using the Head Start Performance Standards.
3. **Adopting the Head Start program.** The federal Head Start program had been in existence since 1965 and was considered a quality program. When Ohio decided to operate a state-funded program, they decided that they did not need to "reinvent the wheel" so they adopted this established, accepted model. They used existing federal funds, but established new classrooms and staff.
4. **An emphasis on personnel preparation standards.** The state has a career ladder called Career Pathways that allows courses from two-year schools to be accepted at most four-year institutions. They also have a Higher Education Consortium that has been instrumental in supporting professional development. The Head Start Association along with the community colleges and the Department of Education have done a lot of planning, convening, and working together to respond to the new requirement that all lead teachers must have a minimum of an AA degree and a teaching license by 2008.
5. **Efforts at collaboration.** Welfare Reform has played a role by expanding and encouraging collaborations between child care, state Head Start, and Public Preschool because of the need for full-day, full-year services. Collaborative programs serve children in the child care setting instead of using two different locations. Almost one-half of the Head Start children are in collaborative settings.

Ohio Major Barriers

1. **Child care programs were not included in state funding.** Because funding was available only to existing federal Head Start programs and public schools, there was some resentment at being 'left out' on the part of private child care providers. They felt that they might lose some of the children that they were serving.
2. **The need for stable prekindergarten funding.** There is uncertainty about how the available funds will be allocated. Currently some of the state Head Start money may be shifted to the Public Preschool program, which is causing great concern.
3. **Funding for Education.** The recent Ohio Supreme Court decision declaring the current financing of the public schools unconstitutional has added uncertainty to this issue and sizeable changes in agency responsibilities may result from this court action.
4. **Legislative term limits.** Because legislative positions are now limited to one term there has to be a reeducation of people so they can become vigorous advocates for prekindergarten programs.
5. **Resistance by some local public school personnel.** Some public school personnel have not shown much enthusiasm for adding the prekindergarten programs to their responsibilities. They are so consumed with the daily responsibilities of K–12, they have not been interested in adding another program.
6. **Different funding rates.** The three major programs (Federal Head Start, State Head Start, Public Preschool) are all funded on different levels, yet all have the same requirements and expectations. This has made it difficult for some programs to meet the standards expected.

Ohio Summary

The state funded Head Start started because the federal program could not serve enough children and Ohio sought to fill that need. The Public Preschool program was established at the same time to serve the population of children who were not Head Start eligible, but were still low-income and at-risk for school failure. These programs were to offer the social and cognitive skills that were necessary to be successful in the public schools. The Ohio Department of Education, which assures equipment, staff development, and technical assistance, administers both programs.

The future financing of these programs has been called into question by the Ohio Supreme Court decision declaring that Ohio's manner of financing their public schools unconstitutional. This has led to fears that the preschool and state Head Start funds may be raided for additional funds needed to respond to the Court's decision. We will shortly see how strong the public and political commitment is to these programs for young children.

CALIFORNIA

How It Began

California's child care and education investment dates back to World War II. The presence of many women in the workforce during the war effort stimulated the state to devise and implement a child care assistance program. The state of California decided to continue to fund child care programs after federal support (the 1943 Lanham Child Care Program) was reduced. In 1946 the state provided $3.5 million in funding for centers operated by local education authorities. The state supported program was now called the General Child Care and Development Program. Children ages 2–16 of working parents were eligible for the full-day, six days per week service. The program was made permanent in 1957.

State support was further affirmed in 1965 when the state committed to additional funding for part-day preschool programs. The California State Preschool Program was established to provide educational service to low-income, at-risk children, and was similar to the federal Head Start program which was also started in 1965. In 1972 the California State Department of Education was officially designated as the single state office responsible for administering all child care and preschool programs, including those resulting from Aid for Dependant Children (AFDC) programs. The introduction of California's welfare reform program, CalWORK, in 1997 allowed for the inclusion of the previously operating AFDC programs and created a new child care system for families returning to training and work. The Taskforce of Universal Preschool was also initiated in 1997 to study and consider universal preschool coverage for the state. This interest was primarily generated by school readiness issues.

Current Status

California makes a substantial investment in the care and education of its children. While the focus of the current study is specifically prekindergarten children (primarily 4-year-olds), it is important to note that many programs and services for families and children are not being reviewed in this report. CalWORK Child Care Programs and Federal Head Start programs are both prominent among such additional programs and the Department of Education operates many programs (e.g., children with disabilities) in addition to those described here. California's involvement in early care and education is far more complex than is described here. We restrict ourselves to the two programs that are closest to the prekindergarten policies that are our special concern. Table 3 provides a comparison of the two key programs.

Today, California provides both full-day and part-day services, which are funded through both federal and state sources. State Preschool is a part-day, part-year program, operating on the normal public school schedule. Full-day, full-year programs are funded through General Child Development Programs. As of April 2001, State Preschool was funded at $271.1 million, and enrolled roughly 90,000 children. The General Child Care program is funded at $914.5 million and enrolls 216,000 children. All programs emphasize quality in early care and educational settings.

Licensing for programs and staff can occur under two authorities. All publicly subsidized child development programs are regulated under Title 5 of the Code of Regulations. As of 1997, all of the California Department of Education-subsidized programs, which fall under Title 5 regulations, are required to have staff with a minimum Child Development Permit, which delineates the educational and experiential requirements for teachers, supervisors, and program directors. The permits are issued by California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing; personnel preparation opportunities are available through the community college system.

Recent initiatives, such as 1998's Proposition 10, have further focused attention on early care and education issues. Proposition 10 mandates an additional 50 cent tobacco tax, which is earmarked for early care and education. As such, Proposition 10 is an additional funding source, with much local discretion in fund allocation. The proposition has received much support, especially from well-known celebrities. While not specifically designed to

Table 3. Comparison Between Two Prekindergarten Programs in California

As Of April 2001	General Child Care & Development Program	State Preschool Program
Funding	$914.5 million	$271.1 million
Number of children enrolled	216,000	90,000
Age range	Infancy to 14	3-5 year olds
Fee	Sliding scale, based on income	Free
Eligibility	Up to 75% state median income	Up to 65% of state median income
Administration	California Dept. of Education (CDE)	CDE
Class size	8:1 ratio	8:1 ratio
Teacher requirements	Minimum Child Development, Permit, renewed every five yrs	Minimum Child Development Permit, renewed every five yrs
Curriculum	None mandated	None mandated
Operating Hours	Full day, full year	Part day, part year
Funds Available to	Private providers; school centers	School districts (which can subcontract to private providers); Head Start

support educational services, such initiatives do center attention on the diverse needs of young children. Local flexibility in planning and implementing programs ensures that local needs are acknowledged and met.

The development of prekindergarten policy in California turns out to be entangled with a long history of other child care programs developed at different times, often for different purposes, and administered by different agencies. The very size of California (it is estimated that if California were a country it would have one of the top 10 economies in the world) creates a scale of problems and enterprises that are unknown in the other states. Another issue created by the size is that it is hard for a single individual to capture a portrait of the entire child care and education enterprise. Each interviewee had a clear picture of a part of the enterprise but most of them knew little of other aspects of the history or current operation. Our task was to try and identify the overall facilitators that were seen to be important in the development of the policy and which barriers should be considered as important to overcome.

Facilitators & Barriers—California

Facilitators

Figure 3 gives the proportion of facilitative responses in each of the nine categories in the coding system used in the current study.

Institution. By far the largest amount of facilitative responses (30%) fit into the institution category. This frequency of response appeared to be due to the many collaborative efforts that were called for between the many players and the degree to which some form of institutional infrastructure was being established. Since the programs have a long history of concerns about collaborations, they have made progress in such collaboration.

I think that the long historical placement of Child Development programs in the Department of Education has been a signal to policy makers that early childhood is early education.

I would say that Prop 10 (tobacco tax money) is going to make a difference, and one of the things that we already know is that the public's knowledge and understanding of the importance of the early years has dramatically increased since the passage of Prop 10.

Groups. Several categories appeared about 15% of the time in the facilitators including *groups, economics,* and *academic.* As far as groups are concerned these were the activities of various advocacy groups, sometimes working together; sometimes merely pushing their own agenda, that moved the program along from one year and budget cycle to the next.

To be honest much of that has been led by those who are providers or advocates of those particular groups, such as organized Chinese or Hispanic groups. There's been a major push. There has been a conscious effort on the part of advocates to really make sure that not only the public but also the legislature and the governor were aware that full day programs are not just babysitting.

Economic. Given the size of California any particular policy initiative is bound to cost a great deal of money and the preschool and child care programs together costs well over $1 billion a year. There has to be some particular political force at work to turn loose that much money. The most recent initiative would seem to be Welfare Reform, which resulted in a large number of children in need of some daily care. Also, a growing economy gave the possibility of additional funds being available each year.

Well, the big change is welfare reform. The welfare reform has dramatically altered our world both in good ways and in not so good ways. Our program now has grown tremendously…

There's also been significant increases from the legislature because economic times have been good, and not just in California, so the state has increased the childcare and state preschool programs with significant state dollars.

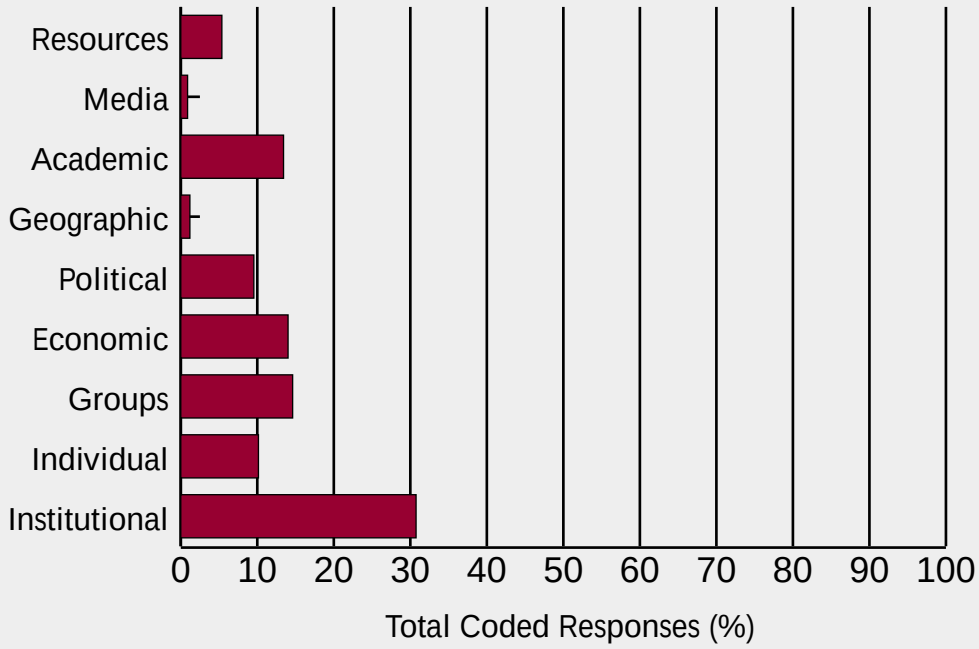
Academic. There has been a continued emphasis on program quality and support for the steps needed to achieve high quality. This emphasis on quality was important to convince the general public that there were serious purposes here beyond the necessary care and feeding of young children while their parents, or single parent, were at work. One of the major indicators of that emphasis was the development of a cadre of well-prepared teachers.

In general, crucial to our success was our emphasis on quality standards, we were not doing custodial care.

Preschool teachers are professionals and this is a profession. Four year olds are learners… It's our obligation to provide those experiences, and have places for those school children that stimulate their brains to learn.

The *individual* and *political* codes were not used as frequently as in other states, (see Figure 3) which probably indicated the maturity of the program. Political and key individuals are crucial at the beginning of the program but they seem to become less critical as the program matures unless something untoward happens, which would call anew for political clout to be applied to make sure that the program survives in the rough budget waters ahead.

Figure 3. California Facilitators



Perhaps one mixed blessing of term limits in California is that our legislators are getting younger and many of them have to deal with child care issues, personally..

Overall, the prekindergarten movement seems to have a broad level of support and many dedicated professionals are committed to make the various programs work and to become accountable. While the particular mix of resources may depend upon the momentary ups and downs of various programs and agencies, there seems to be little doubt that the prekindergarten program is here to stay. The move to provide universal services for all four-year-olds appears to be somewhere in the near future.

Barriers

Figure 4 summarizes the various comments of the nine interviewees on the barriers that stood in the way of prekindergarten programs in California. There appears to be three major categories that make up the majority of the barriers; Economic, Institutional, and Resources.

Economic. Again, the majority of the problems comes to rest at the price tag that these various programs will cost the state. One special problem is the likelihood that one particular group can be frozen out of consideration for state dollars, the private child care group who currently are not receiving any state support for their care of young children.

The fear of the private providers, particularly for profit, is that school districts in particular will monopolize what they perceive as having been a piece of the pie that they had carved out originally.

The tension that we're facing right now is that our state has gone from riches to rags. I mean, we have an energy crisis that is consuming every penny of spare change. We have an economy that's slowing down; where we had a big surplus last year.

This year we've got two or three school districts that are saying unless we get an increase in our reimbursement rate, we can't afford to continue to provide those services because the State is not giving us enough money.

Institution. There is an unmet need for a complex infrastructure to complement the large amount of service dollars that are being pumped into the early childhood system. This is partly due to the fact that there is not just one system to be serviced but several. It is difficult for political leaders to provide the support for one system but not the others.

Our infrastructure cannot keep up, as you have mentioned about the lack of staffing, we've also got facility needs, we've got lots of things we need. We can't handle more kids and some legislator just thinks they can throw money at this, and we're going to magically come up with quality programs, and we can't.

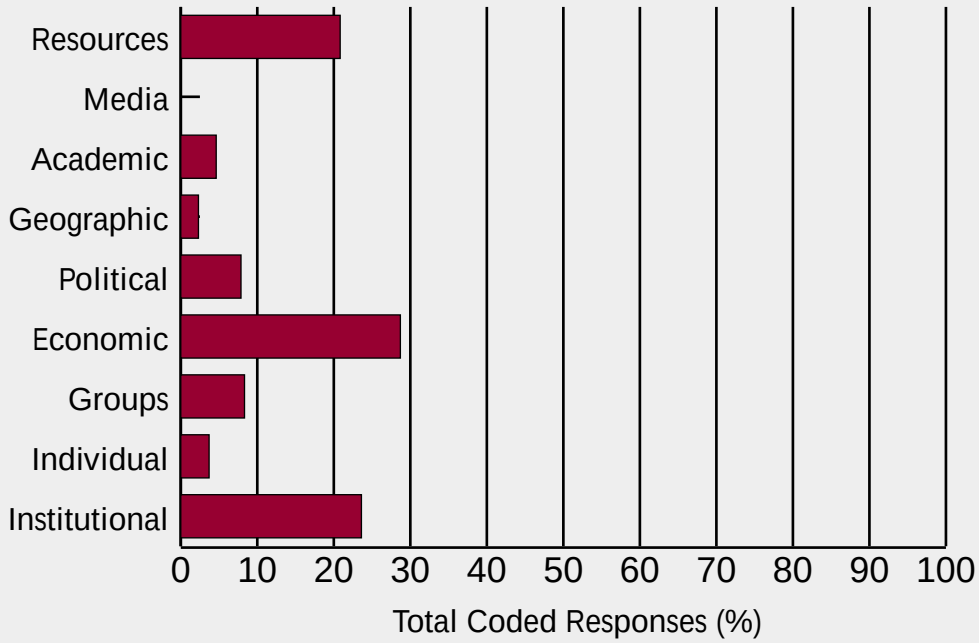
Resources. The lack of resources that are being sorely felt here focus on personnel but that is not the only shortage. Space is lacking in many places and transportation continues to be a major problem. The personnel preparation programs are heavily dependent upon community colleges and four-year institutes of higher education to provide courses and practicum programs for preparing teachers. These institutions of higher education have their own economic problems that often make an early childhood personnel preparation program an economic burden.

California has a huge community college system, but they don't always offer the classes as often as are needed, or at convenient times, and each community college makes its decisions about what it is going to offer.

Another big challenge that we face is that even when we have the staff and even when we have people that want to apply for expansion money, they often don't have a space to do it in….it's so sad because in a way I think its like that lack of resources is sort of leading California away from what has been our sort of spot in the sun.

Like everything else in California, the barriers that are faced by the prekindergarten and early child care programs are huge. The effects of a continued economic downturn worries many thoughtful people and problems such as getting a sufficient supply of well trained personnel seem to be intractable, particularly with the low salaries being provided. California has achieved so much for children and families over the years that one is tempted to say it will all work out satisfactorily but if it does it will be the result of hard work by many advocates and professionals.

Figure 4. California Barriers



California Major Facilitators

1. **World War II.** California's interest in providing subsidized services dates back to the 1940s when a large number of mothers were employed in the war effort. This created a substantial need for child care services. These services were supported at first with federal, and then with ongoing state funds. California has had a state-subsidized child care system ever since. Over the course of its history, child care services have become institutionalized. If there were battles over whether or not to offer these services, they were fought long ago.
2. **Early Childhood Concerns.** The early care and education system for young children has been modified and extended over time. California has a multitude of state-subsidized child care and education programs, serving a very diverse population. Modifications to this system continue to develop, as is evidenced by 1998's Proposition 10, (which provides tobacco tax money for early care and education) the ongoing development of a child care "master plan," and support for prekindergarten coverage.
3. **Infrastructure Building.** California has established an infrastructure to aid in administering these programs. This infrastructure includes not only regulatory agencies, but also technical assistance, resource and referral programs, and career development systems for professionals working in child care and education programs. This infrastructure allows statewide transfer of teaching certification, so that teachers can move about the state without the need to recertify.
4. **Need for service for children and families.** With its large and diverse population, California experiences a great need for a wide variety of educational and social services. Additionally, California's welfare reform program (CalWORK) includes a child care component that works in conjunction with established programs and Department of Education services. Many families, for example, need full-day and full-year services, rather than traditional part-day school-year programs. There is also a great need for bilingual and culturally diverse programs to support the needs of California's many immigrant families. California has responded with major resources directed to this problem.
5. **Public Support.** Child care and educational services have always received support in California. Political leaders such as Governor Pete Wilson, State Superintendents, Delane Eastin, Wilson Riles, and advocates (e.g., Rob Reiner, Maria Balakshin) have all vocally supported reform and expansion efforts.
6. **Secured Funding.** California's long history with child care and educational services has resulted in present-day secured funding through the Department of Education. While expansion funds are not committed, agencies can rely upon baseline funding every year.
7. **Administrative Core.** A decision was made early on to house most of these programs for young children in the Department of Education. This decision helped to ensure the quality of child care and educational services. Because of this decision, programs receiving state funding for General Child Care Programs or State Preschool operate under stringent California Department of Education guidelines.

California Major Barriers

1. **Money.** Although these programs receive secured baseline funding, there is simply not enough money to implement full-day, full-year high quality programs for all of California's young children. Some counties cannot afford the operational costs of child care and educational programs at present reimbursement rates. Additionally, California's energy crisis is placing continuing pressure upon financial resources.
2. **Resources.** As in most other states, a shortage of teachers extends well beyond the K–12 system into early child care and education. California's community college system, with more than 100 locations, offers programmatic support and training for early education professionals. The problem lies in salary and benefits packages that are very low, especially for teachers living in cities or regions with high costs of living. As a result, proportionally few people are seeking training in the early education field.
3. **Infrastructure growth.** Infrastructure has not kept pace with program growth. California's huge population and needs have required the development of services before an infrastructure could be set in place to effectively administer and bring quality to these programs. When this happens, critical support services such as technical assistance and quality assurance or accountability are overwhelmed and weakened.
4. **School Readiness Gets Lost.** Much of California's current and past focus is on providing services to support working families and this means finding a safe haven for the children but not necessarily stressing developmentally appropriate stimulation in cognitive and social development. Less emphasis has been placed on working with children who are deemed at risk of later school failure.
5. **Size.** California's huge size exacerbates the issues found in other states. There are few voices heard opposing services for young children. The issues are designing effective systems of service and finding the resources to provide for the services and the infrastructure to support quality service.

Commonalities & Differences Among States

The investigators believe they have observed some important commonalties and differences in the seven states in the current study, five in the earlier report and two in this one.

Commonalties

Collaboration. In each of the seven states studied in this overall investigation of policy development and implementation the leaders in this prekindergarten movement were faced with the problem that there already were many programs in place for four-year-olds. These programs had been established for different reasons, and at different times, in the past. In each state, a major effort was made to bring these early childhood efforts together in a spirit of collaboration with the new prekindergarten policies. For the most part, these efforts were successful and most of those professionals and parents concerned with early childhood were made a part of this program.

Full Day, Full Year. Although many of these prekindergarten policies began as a half-day program it became clear that a full day program was needed for working parents and welfare mothers. A variety of wraparound services from other agencies were integrated into the program to comprise, in effect, a full-day program at the local level.

Lack of Infrastructure. One typical way to calculate program cost is to multiply the cost of one child times the number of children one expects to serve. Such an approach always underestimates the 'true cost' since it leaves out so many of the resources and infrastructure that are needed for such a program. For example, where are the trained personnel needed for such a program coming from? Who will train them and who will pay for such a key effort? Where are the data systems so that one can determine needs and plan for the future? Who will pay for such data systems? Where are the technical assistance programs designed to assist local programs in short term training and consultation on difficult problems?

It is understandable for public decision makers, faced with the problem of allocating scarce resources to almost unlimited needs, to attempt to provide the minimum funds necessary for fundamental service and hope they can add to those funds in the future. But if we are serious about our goal of helping children "at risk" for school failure the infrastructure necessary to provide quality programs needs to be begun in the earlier stages of the program. Otherwise, we are in the equivalent position of providing 5MG of medicine (prekindergarten program minus trained personnel and infrastructure) when it takes 25MG to have an effect on the patient.

Public Support. Some of those interviewed have expressed concern about whether the general public was really "on board" of this prekindergarten concept. That may be part of the reason for the absolutely essential role played by political leadership in the development of these prekindergarten programs. There has been no observable groundswell of public demand for these programs that is evident, merely a passive acceptance of the need. Such lukewarm public support does not generate a high priority in spending public tax revenue. A substantial job lies ahead for advocates to point out the virtues and long term economies of such programs to the general public.

Differences

Financing. Despite the progress displayed by the states studied in developing prekindergarten programs there remains a concern that the funding for the program in some states is not included in the base state budget, but must be considered yearly. In times of good economic development this is not a problem but if the economy turns sour what happens to these limited commitments that have been made? One state, Georgia, has successfully used a lottery for funding but other states are dubious or reluctant to adopt this method.

Size. The size of the large states complicates and multiplies the many needs of these prekindergarten programs. The problems of California and Texas are of a different order of South Carolina and Ohio. Think of what is needed to establish a network of Personnel Preparation centers for early childhood. Care must be taken that various regions of the large states are all included. The sheer numbers of teachers that are needed create a problem in their own right. Technical assistance becomes a complex network of programs rather than a simple and direct service as can be done in smaller states.

Diversity. The increasing diversity of the American population creates special challenges for education and for prekindergarten programs. If the child does not speak the English language then what needs to be done to help them get ready for school? How should disagreements between the school programs and the attitudes of the families involved be resolved? Cultural diversity in the child population creates an added challenge to the planning and programming for such children. Although all states feel this issue to some degree,

it is obvious that some states feel this pressure a great deal more than others.

Implementation Schedule. In each of the seven states there was a stated intent by many interviewers that their state should be moving towards universal prekindergarten. These programs would not be mandatory but would be available to parents who wish to utilize them.

Georgia has largely moved to universal prekindergarten thanks to the use of the lottery. Other states like New York have a time schedule for moving to universal prekindergarten that will almost surely not be reached in the timeframe proposed because of the major costs involved in such a transition. Other states like Illinois and Texas seem to be biding their time waiting for the right combination of circumstances: a favorable budget situation and public clamor in order to make the move to universal prekingergarten programs.

The problem seems to be two-fold: The lack of an expanding economy that would create uncommitted dollars to this program and a more aggressive public attitude demanding that this be accomplished. Perhaps when the step to universal programs are taken there will be increased public support from more people who see it is in their self-interest and the interests of their own children, a view that they do not hold now because the program is restricted to "at-risk" children.

Distractions. Sometimes events apart from the program itself may have a serious effect on the program. The current state supreme court ruling in Ohio that said their financing of public schools is unconstitutional is certain to have a sobering effect on the prekindergarten program there, since additional funds may be needed to comply with the court ruling. Economic downturns and loss of political leadership would be two other distractions that could be counted upon to cause distress for those supporting prekindergarten programs.

What Do We Need to Know? If we were to construct a *Need To Know* chart on the prekindergarten programs that would be helpful to state decision-makers there would be some obvious components.

Personnel preparation for early childhood remains a serious long-term problem and none of the states, to our knowledge, have conducted a thorough survey of how many training institutions are available, how many teachers need certification, the number of open teachers aide positions in the state, etc. It is difficult to complete a comprehensive plan for prekindergarteners in the absence of such knowledge.

We should also know how many youngsters of prekindergarten age need special services prior to kindergarten. There is also the special condition of children with disabilities who are now expected to participate in the prekindergarten programs. What kind of professional support is needed and available to help their adjustment and the staff's readiness for these special problems?

Finally, there is general acceptance of the need for a support infrastructure to conduct a quality prekindergarten program. Few states know now what the status of the support mechanisms is of technical assistance, data systems, demonstration, etc. for their own state and what is needed to add to the existing support infrastructure.

A Last Word. It is hard to find observers of the current scene who would not predict that by the year of 2010 or 2020 each of the 50 states will have an organized prekindergarten program in operation. But the manner by which this will be done is not clear and many questions remain to be asked and answered. Above all, without the major commitment of time and advocacy on the part of many citizens devoted to establishing and implementing this prekindergarten program it will not automatically happen. ■