Prekindergarten Policy Framework

The National Prekindergarten Center developed the Prekindergarten Policy Framework to provide local, state, and federal policymakers with research-based information on how to build high-quality programs.

The Prekindergarten Policy Framework provides:

- A comprehensive array of topics on the dimensions of high-quality prekindergarten programs.
- Concise, current summaries of the research on prekindergarten.
- Examples of state programs including links to state prekindergarten websites.
- Bibliographies and web resources for more information on each topic.

NPC Framework Contents

Section 1: Introduction

Recent National Academy of Sciences reports such as *Eager to Learn* and *From Neurons to Neighborhoods* clearly demonstrate the importance of the first five years of life. Decades of early intervention research have shown that early exposure to high-quality care and education can make a significant, positive impact on a child's later school and life success, especially for children with certain socio-economic and health risks. Experts cite an increasing belief in society that young children benefit from and should receive early education experiences in a caring environment.[1]

Arguments for early care and education have been framed within a school readiness or economic development framework. The school readiness framework argues that high-quality early learning opportunities will prepare children for success when they enter school. The economic development framework highlights the increasing number of women who both work and raise children, and makes early care and education a workforce support issue. Access to quality care means parents are more effective in their jobs, and children may be more successful in school, creating a better future workforce. Adequately addressing both issues of school readiness and workforce support means providing affordable, high-quality early education for all families who need or want it.

In response to the need for high-quality early education experiences, states have become increasingly involved in providing educational services for children and families prior to entry into formal school.

- Public investment has soared. Between 1988 and 2000, combined state spending grew from $190 million to nearly $2 billion.[2]
- Enrollments have increased. The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 52 percent of all three- and four-year-olds, or more than 4 million children, were enrolled in school in 2001. This is an increase from 21 percent in 1970, and a conservative estimate of prekindergarten participation, because not all programs are in schools.

- Programs have multiplied. Information from national surveys of teachers and state agency directors indicate that nearly half of public elementary schools now house a program for children younger than five.[3]

- More states are offering programs. Between 1988 and 2000, the number of states funding prekindergarten programs for three- and four-year-olds grew from 28 to 42.[4]

The growth in funding, enrollment, and the number of states offering public prekindergarten suggests prekindergarten is here to stay, and is fast becoming an accepted part of the public education system.

Information provided in the framework does not necessarily reflect the views of the funding organization, the Foundation for Child Development. The National Prekindergarten Center accepts full responsibility for any omissions or errors.

Defining Prekindergarten

Some states offer multiple prekindergarten programs, such as state-funded Head Start, state prekindergarten, and preschool for children with disabilities. Some states do not designate any state funds for the education of children between the ages of three and five, other than children with disabilities. In the Prekindergarten Policy Framework outlined in this document, *prekindergarten* refers to the set of educational programs serving three- and four-year-olds that are part of a formal, state-funded initiative. The programs may be administered by a variety of government agencies, such as the state education or human services agencies. The programs may be housed in various locations, including public schools, Head Start centers, and community-based child care centers.

Purpose of Framework

The National Prekindergarten Center (NPC) developed this Prekindergarten Policy Framework to provide research-based information to state and local leaders who are planning for, implementing, or expanding prekindergarten programs. The framework responds to a lack of information on the essential components of prekindergarten and a lack of research syntheses about the components.

The NPC framework delineates the primary components of successful prekindergarten programs. When there is a body of research knowledge, it is synthesized to provide succinct reviews about best practices. The Framework is intended to provide a research-based model for states to use as they develop, implement, or expand prekindergarten programs.

Although this document addresses a broad range of topics, it is not necessarily exhaustive. Information included in the Framework will be updated as federal and state policies are revised and new research results become available. Please return to the NPC web site (http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~NPC/) to obtain the most current version of the Framework.

Document Format

The NPCs Prekindergarten Policy Framework includes the following sections:

Impetus	Why do states fund prekindergarten programs and who takes the lead?
Finance	How much do prekindergarten programs cost and how do states fund them?
Governance	How are prekindergarten programs managed?
Service Delivery Models	Who provides the services?
Children Served	Are programs available to all children or only some? How are children with disabilities or children learning English served by the program?
Program Standards	What standards define high-quality programs? Standards include teacher qualifications, class size, adult-child ratio, curriculum, the duration of the program, and the scope of services offered.
Infrastructure	What policy mechanisms are in place to ensure programs attain and maintain high quality? Infrastructure elements include professional development systems, coordination with child care and K-12 systems, monitoring, technical assistance, and program evaluation.

Whenever possible, each section includes research-based information on the program component, along with additional resources such as articles, reports, and internet links. In the web-based version of the framework, hyperlinks are provided for all online references and web resources.

For More Information

National Research Council. *Eager to Learn, Educating our Preschoolers.* Eds. B. Bowman, M.S. Donovan, and S. Burns. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001. Available at: http://www.nap.edu/books/0309068363/html/

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development.* Eds. J. Shonkoff and D. Phillips. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000. Available at: http://www.nap.edu/books/0309069882/html/

Web Resources

State prekindergarten databases

Education Commission of the States: Online interactive prekindergarten database
http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/27/24/2724.htm

National Center for Early Development and Learning: Public school pre-K programs: National survey of states
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/pre-kprograms/

National Institute for Early Education Research: State databank
http://nieer.org/states/

National organizations or associations

Foundation for Child Development
http://www.fcd-us.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children
http://www.naeyc.org

National Prekindergarten Center
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~NPC

The Trust for Early Education
http://www.trustforearlyed.org

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[1] National Research Council, *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers*, eds. B.T. Bowman, M.S. Donovan, and S. Burns. (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001).

[2] A. Mitchell, *Prekindergarten Programs in the States: Trends and Issues* (Climax, N.Y.: Early Childhood Policy Research, 2001). Available at: http://www.nccic.org/pubs/prekinderprogtrends.pdf

[3] R.C. Pianta and M. J. Cox, *The Transition to Kindergarten* (Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes, 1999). Also, K. Schulman, H. Blank, and D. Ewen, *Seeds of Success: State Prekindergarten Initiatives 1998-99* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1999).

[4] A. Mitchell, *Prekindergarten Programs*.

Section 2: Impetus

The motivations for creating prekindergarten programs are as varied as the states that implement them. When a prekindergarten program starts and then expands, there typically is a compelling need for prekindergarten, a compelling individual (or group of individuals) to raise awareness of that need, and a window of opportunity to take action. This section highlights some of the reasons why states adopt prekindergarten programs and some of the people who make them a reality.

Why States Fund Prekindergarten Programs

There are many compelling arguments used to demonstrate a need for a comprehensive prekindergarten program.

School failure. The 2002 federal No Child Left Behind legislation continues a long history of policy efforts to address the rate at which children fail in school. Research on the effectiveness of quality early education programs in preventing later school failure can spur policymakers to consider programs that start before elementary school to remedy school failure.[1]

Changing workforce. As more women join or remain in the workforce after childbirth, more children are in nonparental care. In 1999, 76 percent of America's three- and four-year-olds were educated and cared for by someone other than their parents, compared with 67 percent in 1991.[2]

Economic return on investment. Longitudinal research on high-quality preschool programs for at-risk children shows that every dollar spent on such a program yields a savings of up to $7. Savings accrue in reducing crime, the need for educational remediation, and welfare payments; and increasing the economic productivity of the children who attend the programs, as well as the productivity of their children.[3]

Public will. Reports about the development of the young brain in popular magazines, television, and radio have changed the way the public thinks about child development in the early years. Most parents now know that the experiences children have during the early years form the foundation and scaffold on which

cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social, and moral development unfold.[4] In an August 2002 poll, 87 percent of respondents supported a statement calling on state governments to provide enough funding so that every American family can afford to send its three-and four-year-old children to a high-quality preschool education program.[5]

Declining K-12 enrollments. In a small number of states, birth rates are dropping, causing K-12 enrollments to decline. To maintain the same level of funding for the schools, school districts have added prekindergarten classes. This is only an option in states that have education aid formulas that allow spending on four-year-olds.

Who Takes the Lead?

Leadership for prekindergarten initiatives can come from all three branches of government, from ballot initiatives, and from nongovernmental sources such as advocacy groups, citizen's commissions, professional organizations, and philanthropists or philanthropic organizations. Leadership does not have to come from one source. In fact, successful efforts often have a convergence of leadership in one or more of these groups. Some examples, and their advantages and disadvantages, follow.

Executive branch. Georgia Governor Zell Miller knew the statistics about the poor academic performance of students in his state. He also knew the research showing children with strong preschool experiences tend to be more successful in school and have higher self-esteem. Governor Miller successfully lobbied for a state lottery to fund prekindergarten, college scholarships, and technology in schools[6]; and the pilot prekindergarten program he initiated in 1992 became universal in the state of Georgia in 1995. In 2003, more than 63,000 children, or approximately 60 percent of four-year-olds in the state, had access to the state-funded program.

Executives, especially governors, often have strong relationships with policymakers and are well-positioned to garner the resources needed to fund prekindergarten programs. They are in unique positions to share their agenda with the public and to build widespread support for new initiatives. However, executive-led prekindergarten initiatives can be limited by the natural lack of continuity in

leadership. When a new government official with different goals and objectives is elected or appointed, support for specific programs favored by the previous administration may not continue.

Legislative branch. New York legislated its Universal PreK (UPK) program in 1997 with the intent to guarantee a free early education program to all four-year-olds by 2002. Although state budget battles have prevented full implementation, Speaker of the Assembly Sheldon Silver has championed the cause with the support of multiple advocacy and professional groups. Like the Georgia lottery, New York's UPK program was part of a larger legislative effort to improve education in the state.[7]

The legislative branch of government typically holds the purse strings. When prekindergarten programs receive the endorsement of legislators, adequate funding for services is more likely to follow. In addition, legislators tend to be highly responsive to their constituents and advocacy groups. The challenge is to craft the legislation so that it produces a program and a constituency that will sustain the program through subsequent reauthorizations after legislative champions leave.

Judicial branch. The 1998 *Abbott v. Burke* decision mandated a "well-planned, high-quality" early education program for all three- and four-year-old children in New Jersey's thirty poorest school districts. This was the fifth of nine rulings from the New Jersey Supreme Court in response to a school finance equity lawsuit that began in the 1980s. Several states are involved in school finance equity lawsuits, and prekindergarten is one of the remedies to historically unequal access to quality education.

Prekindergarten programs introduced as a result of judicial action have the benefit of legal enforcement. Enforcement may necessitate further judicial action and therefore may bring an adversarial component to program development and implementation. Although judicial action encourages program implementation, rulings generally do not provide detailed guidelines for how prekindergarten programs should be designed or implemented. Responsibility for program implementation can be ambiguous, and the courts often leave issues related to program administration, design, service coordination, and finance unresolved.

Voter initiatives. Voters in Florida used their power to pass a referendum in 2002 that called for universal access to prekindergarten by 2005. Miami/Dade Mayor Alex Penelas championed this effort, but multiple advocacy groups and grassroots efforts made it a reality.

A mandate from the voters gives a focus to the work of the governor and the legislature, but it leaves many unanswered questions about what the program will look like and how the state will pay for it.

About half of the states allow voters to express their voice through a ballot initiative. All of these states require citizens to collect a specified number of signatures to put the measure on the ballot, but states vary in their rules of what and how voters can propose for the ballot.[8]

For More Information

Barnett, W.S., J.E. Tarr, C. Esposito Lamy, E. Frede. *Fragile Lives, Shattered Dreams: A Report on Implementation of Preschool Education in New Jersey's Abbott Districts*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Center for Early Education Research, 2001. Available at:
http://nieer.org/docs/index.php?DocID=16

Committee for Economic Development, Research and Policy Committee. *Preschool for All: Investing in a Productive and Just Society*. New York: Committee for Economic Development, 2002. Available at:
http://www.ced.org/projects/prek.shtml

Gallagher, J. J., J.R. Clayton, and S.E. Heinemeier. *Education for Four-Year-Olds: State Initiatives*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Center, National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2001. Available at:
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PDFs/EdFours-tr.pdf

Raden, A. *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia: A Case Study of Georgia's Lottery-Funded Pre-K Program*. New York: Foundation for Child Development, 1999.

Available at:
http://www.fcd-us.org/resources/resources_show.htm?doc_id=467603

Web Resources

Initiative and Referendum Institute
http://www.iandrinstitute.org/statewide_i&r.htm

National Institute for Early Education Research: Economic Benefits of Quality Preschool Education for America's 3- and 4-Year-Olds
http://nieer.org/resources/facts/index.php?FastFactID=6

State prekindergarten programs with different leadership impetus

Executive Branch Leadership: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
http://www.decal.state.ga.us/

Judicial Branch Leadership: New Jersey Early Childhood Education
http://www.state.nj.us/njded/ece/index.html

Legislative Branch Leadership: Connecticut School Readiness Initiative
http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/readiness/index.htm

Executive and Judicial Branch Leadership: North Carolina "More at Four" Pre-Kindergarten Program
http://www.governor.state.nc.us/Office/Education/home.asp

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[1] J.J. Gallagher, J.R. Clayton, and S.E. Heinemeier, *Education for Four-Year-Olds: State Initiatives* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Center, National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2001). Available at:
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PDFs/EdFours-tr.pdf

[2] Tabulations generated by the National Institute for Early Education Research, Rutgers University, based on data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Survey, 1999.

[3] National Institute for Early Education Research, *Economic Benefits of Quality Preschool Education for America's 3- and 4-Year-Olds*. Available at: http://nieer.org/resources/facts/index.php?FastFactID=6

[4] National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, Eds. J. Shonkoff and D. Phillips (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000). Available at: http://www.nap.edu/books/0309069882/html/

[5] National Institute for Early Education Research, Poll Shows Voters Want States to Fund Quality Preschool for All 3-and 4-year Olds, August 2002. Available at: http://nieer.org/mediacenter/index.php?PressID=6

[6] Gallagher, *Education*.

[7] Ibid.

[8] For more information, visit the Initiative and Referendum Institute website at: http://www.iandrinstitute.org/statewide_i&r.htm

Section 3: Finance

Cost and Funding of Prekindergarten Programs

Dramatic increases in state funding demonstrate the growth of public prekindergarten programs. Between 1988 and 2000, combined state spending grew from $190 million to nearly $2 billion.[1] These figures include expenditures from fourteen states[2] that began new prekindergarten programs, as well as substantial increases in existing state programs. State spending varies widely based on the design of the program and whether or not the state leverages additional funds from federal or local sources. This section describes the variation in state spending, potential funding streams, and funding distribution mechanisms.

It is important to acknowledge that private funding, primarily from parents, is a source of revenue for many prekindergarten programs. However, private funding for prekindergarten programs is difficult to quantify, and currently there are no reliable estimates of its magnitude. Therefore, it is not included in this analysis.

This section only examines the public financing of public prekindergarten programs as defined by this framework. The definition includes the set of educational programs serving three- and four-year-olds that are part of a formal, state-funded initiative. The programs may be administered by a variety of government agencies, and may be housed in various locations, including public schools, Head Start centers, and community-based child care centers.

Cost Estimates

Cost estimates for prekindergarten programs vary widely depending on program design. Key components[3] that drive costs include the following.

- Size of target audience: Will the program be available to all children or a sub-group?
- Rate of take-up: How many eligible children will access services?
- Duration of program: Will the program run half-day or full-day? For how many days each week, and how many months each year?

- Competitiveness of staff salaries: Will the program offer salaries that are competitive with the public school system or the private child care system?
- Type of facilities: Will the program run in existing space, rented space, donated space, or a public building? Will a new facility have to be built?
- Number and quality of offered services: How comprehensive is the program? Will it offer social services, health/dental/vision screenings, nutrition, or parent education?
- Costs of infrastructure: Will the budget include expenditures for items like professional development, monitoring, technical assistance, program evaluation, or databases?

A comparison of costs across states is difficult, if not meaningless, because of this wide variation in program components. Small programs in small states spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, while large programs in large states spend hundreds of millions. Per-child spending may be a more meaningful number, but still offers a poor comparison as it does not account for variation in program duration, quality standards, and scope of services. For instance, some part-day programs cost less than $2,000 per child, while some high-quality, ten-hour-day, full year programs can cost as much as $7,000 per child in Connecticut and more than $10,000 per child in the thirty New Jersey Abbott districts.[4] The average cost per child in the federal Head Start program is another benchmark for costs. Head Start spent an average of $6,934[5] per child in fiscal 2002 for a part-day program during the school year, offering extensive support services for very low-income families.

There is disagreement about the minimum per-child expenditure necessary to fund a high-quality prekindergarten program. The estimated range of costs for an average to high-quality prekindergarten program with a six-hour school day that runs through the entire school year is $6,000 to $8,000 per child.[6]

Funding Streams

State spending does not necessarily reflect the total public cost of prekindergarten, as many states combine federal, state, and local funds.

Federal funding streams. Every state receives federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds to offset the cost of providing free and appropriate education to preschool children with special needs. Most states use federal child nutrition program funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for lunches and snacks. Some school districts use Title I funds from the U.S. Department of Education to provide prekindergarten to educationally disadvantaged children. Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds can be leveraged if the families of the enrolled children meet federal income eligibility requirements. For example, Georgia matches federal TANF funds with prekindergarten funds to extend the day from six to ten hours for TANF-eligible families.

Local organizations in every state receive federal Head Start funding, but the Head Start program is a separate program in which the state has no formal role. Some states supplement Head Start funds with state revenues to serve higher numbers of eligible children. These programs follow Head Start performance standards, but states do play a role in their oversight.

State funding streams. With few exceptions, the majority of state funding for public prekindergarten comes from general revenues. General revenues can be generated through taxes or fees, as well as through lotteries and gaming. States have the discretion to reallocate existing revenues and/or generate new revenues to fund prekindergarten programs.

Local funding streams. In some states, prekindergarten programs receive local funding. This may be because of a state requirement that localities provide funds, state efforts to encourage local funding, or recognition among localities that they cannot fulfill program expectations without contributing additional funds.[7]

States fund their prekindergarten programs in a variety of ways.

- Education lottery: Sales of lottery tickets in Georgia generate more than $240 million annually for voluntary, universal access to four-year-old prekindergarten.

- Cigarette tax: California's Proposition 10 put a fifty-cent tax on cigarettes, generating more than $700 million annually. Local boards have discretion over how to spend the funds for children ages zero to five, but several counties are using the funds for universal access to prekindergarten. For example, Los Angeles County committed $100 million a year for ten years to jump-start the move to universal prekindergarten.

- Sales tax: Since 1984, a one-cent increase in the sales tax has funded South Carolina's prekindergarten program.

- Title I: An estimated 8 percent of federal Title I funds support prekindergarten programs.[8] School districts in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Chicago, Illinois, run two of the largest Title I-funded prekindergarten programs.

- Sliding fee scales: Some states, such as Massachusetts and Minnesota, supplement public funding by charging higher-income parents using a sliding fee scale.

Distribution of Funds

States distribute prekindergarten funds in one or more of the following ways.[9]

- School aid formula: States reimburse schools for prekindergarten students through the state education aid formula. This distribution method puts prekindergarten on an administrative and financial parallel with the K-12 education system, although some states limit reimbursement (and thus, eligibility) to students at risk of educational failure. Per-pupil reimbursements may be weighted to accommodate the higher costs of serving children who are disabled, learning English, or poor. Some states also provide a higher per pupil reimbursement rate to accommodate the smaller class sizes for prekindergarten.

Examples: Maine, Oklahoma, Texas, Wisconsin.

- Allocation or noncompetitive grants: School districts or local units of government receive a set allocation based on criteria determined by the state. (For example, districts with high rates of poverty, districts with high dropout rates, etc.) The state determines who can deliver the services or provides guidance to the local jurisdiction to make that decision. Local districts do not compete for funding, and funds are capped at the allocated amount.
  Examples: Kentucky, Maryland, New York, North Carolina.

- Competitive grants: Local programs or communities submit applications for funding. States can design the application to target communities with the greatest need, to encourage a broader range of services, or to ensure diversity in prekindergarten providers. Funds are capped at the allocated amount.
  Examples: Colorado, Illinois.

- Head Start supplement: State revenues expand the federal Head Start program in order to serve more eligible children. State-funded programs follow the Head Start standards.
  Examples: Delaware, Oregon.

Although each funding approach is unique, they can be blended into a combined approach where some funds are allocated and some are distributed competitively.[10] For example, Connecticut has priority districts that automatically receive funding, while other "severe needs" districts can compete for additional funds. Michigan has two prekindergarten programs: one is noncompetitive and goes directly to school districts, the other is competitive for community-based organizations.

For More Information

Barnett, W. S., and L.N. Masse. Funding Issues for Early Childhood Education and Care Programs. In *Early Childhood Education and Care in the USA*, Eds. Cryer and Clifford. Baltimore, Md.: Paul H. Brookes, 2003: 137-65.

Golin, S., A. Mitchell, and M. Wallen. *The Cost of Universal Access to Quality Preschool in Illinois*. Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2003. Available at: http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/preschoolIL.pdf

Helburn, S. W., and B.R. Bergmann. *America's Child Care Problem: The Way Out*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.

Mitchell, A. *Implementing Universal Prekindergarten in New York: Blended Funding and other Financial Considerations*. New York: Families and Work Institute, 1998.

Mitchell, A., C. Ripple, and N. Chanana. *Prekindergarten Programs Funded by the States: Essential Elements for Policy Makers*. New York: Families and Work Institute, 1998. Available at: http://www.nccic.org/pubs/prekinderprog.pdf

Stoney, L., and K. Edwards. *Child Care Financing Matrix*. Viewed November 2003. Available at: http://www.nccic.org/pubs/ccfinancingmatrix.html

Web Resources

Financing strategies in early childhood education

Alliance on Early Childhood Finance
http://www.earlychildhoodfinance.org

National Institute for Early Education Research
http://nieer.org

The Finance Project
http://www.financeproject.org

[1] A. Mitchell, *Prekindergarten Programs in the States: Trends and Issues* (Climax, N.Y.: Early Childhood Policy Research, 2001). Available at: http://www.nccic.org/pubs/prekinderprogtrends.pdf

[2] Ibid.

[3] J. Kaplan, "State-Funded Prekindergarten Programs," *Economic Success Clearinghouse (formerly Welfare Information Network), Issue Notes 2*, no. 9 (1998).

[4] Information collected from the National Center for Early Development & Learning's 2002 state prekindergarten survey. Available at: http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/pre-kprograms/

[5] This is the federal contribution, and does not include the mandated 20 percent local match.

[6] R.M. Clifford and J.J. Gallagher, *Designing a High-Quality Pre-Kindergarten Program* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: North Carolina Education Research Council, 2001). Available at: http://erc.northcarolina.edu/docs/publications/prekprogram.pdf. Also, W.S. Barnett and L.N. Masse, "Funding Issues for Early Childhood Education and Care Programs" in *Early Childhood Education and Care in the USA*, Eds. Cryer and Clifford (Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes, 2003): 137-65.

[7] K. Schulman, H. Blank, and D. Ewen, *Seeds of Success: State Prekindergarten Initiatives 1998-99* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1999).

[8] Barnett, "Funding."

[9] Schulman, *Seeds*.

[10] Ibid.

Section 4: Governance

Typically, multiple state agencies focus on the education and care of three- and four-year-old children, from their physical and mental health to their education to their care in a regulated facility. Even when one agency has sole authority for the state-funded public prekindergarten program, coordination among diverse government offices and personnel is essential for the effective governance of the program. Such coordination allows for increased efficiency and maximum use of resources, which can lead to more children served and better program services.

Collaboration also helps prekindergarten programs navigate turf issues and potentially conflicting program requirements that come from the multiple federal, state, and local efforts to help preschool-age children. For example, a local school district may have a prekindergarten program regulated by its own rules or federal Title I funds. Other federal programs for preschool children include Head Start, Even Start, and IDEA Part B. How these programs operate and integrate into the state-funded prekindergarten program will be a concern for the agency governing the state program.

Most states recognize the need for collaboration among programs that serve young children. In 2002, three out of four states with such programs also had laws requiring coordination among early childhood agencies.[1] For instance, Ohio makes collaboration part of the governance of its prekindergarten program. The Ohio Department of Education, through the Office of Early Childhood Education, administers the state's two prekindergarten programs – Public School Preschool and Ohio Head Start – as well as both the IDEA Part B programs for children with disabilities and Even Start. To ensure coordinated planning among agencies, the Office of Early Childhood Education works in conjunction with the state Bureau of Child Care (Department of Jobs and Family Services), the federal Head Start Bureau, and the Ohio Head Start-State Collaboration Director to achieve unified policies among the different programs.[2]

The issue of governance and coordination is prominent in current discussions related to federal Head Start reauthorization. The U.S. House of Representatives passed HR 2210 authorizing the federal government to shift operation of Head Start

to state governments on a trial basis for a few states. It is unlikely that the U.S. Senate version of this bill will include this provision. Both the House and the Senate are likely to require Head Start-State Collaboration Directors to develop a school readiness plan that includes better coordination between Head Start and the state-funded prekindergarten program, Even Start, Title I preschool, and Early Reading First programs.

Who is in Charge?

In the majority of the states, the State Education Agency (SEA) administers the prekindergarten program. In a smaller number of states, the program is governed by a collaboration among multiple agencies (usually education and human services) or by a special office created just to administer the prekindergarten program. Even when a state agency governs the program, many states allow local units of government authority over decisions such as who provides the prekindergarten program and who manages the day-to-day operations of the program.

Governance by the state education agency. In 2000, thirty-two states assigned responsibility for their public prekindergarten programs to their SEA.[3] Some state agencies work with the local school districts to deliver services, but many run programs completely separate from the K-12 system. The following two examples illustrate the variation in how state education agencies run prekindergarten programs.

- In Massachusetts, the education agency oversees local Community Partnerships for Children councils that coordinate preschool services in response to local unmet needs. Local councils include parents and representatives from public schools, Head Start, and child care agencies. Local preschool grantees monitor their own progress, and the state education agency conducts fiscal and programmatic reviews on a sample of councils each year.[4]

- The Texas Education Agency governs the Public School Prekindergarten program as part of its overall responsibility to oversee K-12 education. The majority of programs are in public schools, and monitoring is part of the process for accrediting schools as a whole.[5]

Governance by the state human services agency. Although state human services agencies generally manage services for young children, including child care, no state designates the human services agency as the sole governing body for the prekindergarten program as defined by this framework. Hawaii's program comes the closest, with the state child care administrator managing the Preschool Open Doors program. Although this program is restricted to three- and four-year-old children, the standards and licensing are the same as the child care program. Parents of eligible children receive certificates worth a set amount of money to enroll their children in private or public programs licensed by the state child care offices.

Governance by multiple agencies. In some states, two or more government agencies or departments share the governance of the prekindergarten program as a way of promoting collaboration among the various agencies that serve children and families. The Connecticut State Legislature mandated that the state departments of education and social services jointly govern the School Readiness and Child Care Initiative. The two agencies monitor the program through site visits and reports submitted by the local School Readiness Councils. The local school superintendent and mayor appoint the local councils.[6]

Governance by the governor's office. A small number of states locate the administration of the prekindergarten program in the governor's office (e.g., North Carolina), or the governor created a special office that reports directly to him/her (e.g., Alabama and Georgia). This arrangement exacts an up-front cost of establishing a new office or agency, but can streamline the administration of the program and prevent turf battles between programs in existing state agencies. In 1996, Georgia Governor Zell Miller overcame the Georgia State Department of Education's opposition to preschool by removing the prekindergarten program and creating a new Office of School Readiness (now the Department of Early Care and Learning).[7]

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Web Resources

Descriptions of programs with different governance structures

Joint governance: Connecticut School Readiness Initiative
http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/readiness/index.htm

New department created by the governor: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning
http://www.decal.state.ga.us/

Governor oversees the program: North Carolina "More at Four" Pre-Kindergarten Program
http://www.governor.state.nc.us/Office/Education/Home.asp

State Department of Education: Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, Ohio Department of Education
http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?Page=2&TopicRelationID=463

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[2] R. Schumacher, M. Greenberg, and J. Lombardi, *State Initiatives to Promote Early Learning: Next Steps in Coordinating Subsidized Child Care, Head Start, and State Prekindergarten* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2001). Available at: http://clasp.org/publications/state_initiatives_rpt.pdf

[3] D. Bryant, R.M. Clifford, G. Saluja, R. Pianta, D. Early, O. Barbarin, et al. *Diversity and Directions in State Pre-kindergarten Programs* (forthcoming).

[4] K. Schulman, H. Blank, and D. Ewen, *Seeds of Success: State Prekindergarten Initiatives 1998-99* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1999).

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] J.J. Gallagher, J.R. Clayton, and S.E. Heinemeier. *Education for Four-Year-Olds: State Initiatives* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Center, National Center for Early Development & Learning, 2001). Available at: http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PDFs/EdFours-tr.pdf

[8] Schumacher, *State Initiatives.*

[9] Gallagher, *Education.*

Section 5: Service Delivery Models

States vary in the way they deliver prekindergarten services: some limit the provision of prekindergarten services to public school settings, others allow for a diversity of service delivery providers. This section outlines the relative benefits of each of the service delivery models.

Service Delivery Limited to Public Schools

Only a handful of states (e.g., Kansas and Louisiana) limit the provision of state prekindergarten services to public schools, but some larger programs (e.g., Oklahoma and Texas) serve the majority of prekindergarten children in public schools.

Prekindergarten programs nested within public schools have the advantages of the infrastructure provided by the school system.

- The flow of funds from the state to the school district is already in place, allowing more streamlined program administration.
- Many infrastructure costs, such as facilities, transportation, and administration, are already capitalized and have only a marginal cost impact on the program.
- Professional development requirements (both pre-service and in-service) and teacher pay tend to be higher for prekindergarten programs housed within public schools, as they generally follow the public school credential and salary schedules.
- Transitions between prekindergarten and kindergarten are generally easier when students stay in the same building.

One disadvantage of limiting state prekindergarten services to public schools is that it restricts the choices parents have in selecting a prekindergarten program for their child. Public schools may also need to make adjustments to accommodate prekindergarten programs. For example, some teachers certified in elementary

education are not certified in prekindergarten, and some schools do not have the appropriate physical environment for very young children.

Diverse Service Delivery

Most states allow multiple service providers to provide prekindergarten services. In addition to public schools, eligible providers may include Head Start centers, child care centers, private schools, home-based sites, educational cooperative sites, churches, vocational and technical schools, YMCAs and YWCAs, military bases, universities, and hospitals. Within the group of states that use diverse service delivery systems, three models have emerged.

1. *State-funded Head Start model.* Head Start is a federal program that funds community-based organizations or school districts to provide preschool education to children living below the poverty level. In the state-funded Head Start model, funding for the program comes from the state, but the program's design is similar to Head Start. Some states limit state supplemental funds to existing Head Start grantees, while others allow new providers to follow the program design defined by the Head Start performance standards. Some states pay for additional children to attend programs, while others may designate a portion of funds to supplement the cost of serving existing children.
   Examples: Delaware, Oregon

2. *Public school subcontracting model.* Public schools are the recipients and fiscal agents for state prekindergarten funds, but this model recognizes the availability of diverse service providers in a community. Schools have the discretion to subcontract with community-based providers; some states even mandate that a set percentage of funds must be subcontracted to the community. This may mean that a child care center receives support for all or part of a prekindergarten classroom, or it may mean that the public school pays the salary of a prekindergarten teacher who is stationed in the community.
   Examples: New York, West Virginia

3. *Community-based model.* In this model, the state provides direct grants to local governing bodies or to community-based providers, including public schools, Head Start centers, child care centers, churches, and youth-serving organizations. It differs from the public school sub-contracting model in that the schools do not always act as the fiscal agent for the state-funded prekindergarten program. Each grantee is its own fiscal agent.
   Examples: Connecticut, Massachusetts

A diverse delivery approach has a number of advantages.

- It offers parents more choices, allowing them to select the program that best meets their needs and the needs of their children.
- It maximizes the use of existing facilities and existing expertise in the community.
- It minimizes the need to transport children who require full-day care when prekindergarten is only a half-day program.
- It can raise program quality in community settings by limiting funding to those service providers who comply with higher state standards.[1]
- There may be a spillover effect that improves the quality of classrooms within the facility that are not part of the pre-k initiative, such as the infant and toddler classrooms. For example, community-based settings that receive funding for Georgia Pre-k receive more attention and assistance from the state prekindergarten office, including access to funding to improve the quality of the infant and toddler classrooms. Other states have expanded access to professional development and training for all early educators in recognition of the demand for more qualified prekindergarten teachers.

States that implement a diverse service delivery system must make concerted efforts to build partnerships between participating providers and related agencies. Each service provider may have different priorities and cultures that can make it challenging for all participants to work together toward the same goals. Providers may also have diverse program standards, making it more difficult to reach the higher minimum standards of some state prekindergarten programs.

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Schumacher, R., M. Greenberg, and J. Lombardi. *States Initiatives to Promote Early Learning: Next Steps in Coordinating Subsidized Child Care, Head Start, and State Prekindergarten.* Washington, D.C.: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2001. Available at: http://clasp.org/publications/state_initiatives_rpt.pdf

Web Resources

State programs with different models of service delivery

Head Start supplement: Oregon Head Start Prekindergarten Program
http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/results/?id=41

Public school subcontracting: New York Statewide Prekindergarten
http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/upk.html

Community-based model: Massachusetts Community Partnerships for Children
http://www.eec.state.ma.us/

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[1] K. Schulman, H. Blank, and D. Ewen. *Seeds of Success: State Prekindergarten Initiatives 1998-99.* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1999).

Section 6: Children Served

- ***6.1*** *Universal or Targeted Programs*
- ***6.2*** *Serving Children with Disabilities*
- ***6.3*** *Serving Children who Do Not Speak English as Their Primary Language*

6.1 Universal or Targeted Programs

Policymakers must decide who to serve, and how to best serve those with the greatest need. This section includes information on how states make decisions about program eligibility, how to integrate state prekindergarten programs with federally mandated programs for children with disabilities, and how to best serve children who are learning to speak English.

Universal Prekindergarten

Universal prekindergarten means that all children of a particular age have access to the state's prekindergarten program. Attendance is voluntary, not compulsory, but all families who wish to enroll their children are able to do so. In order to achieve the goal of universality, states must ensure full funding of programs and expansion of prekindergarten services to all geographical regions with families interested in participating.[1]

As of late 2003, Georgia is the only state that meets this definition of offering universal prekindergarten. New York passed legislation in 1997 with the goal of achieving universality by 2002, but funding constraints have limited the program to less than half of eligible children. Both Georgia and New York gave precedence to at-risk children in the roll-out of their prekindergarten programs.

Universal programs significantly expand access to prekindergarten, even for low-income children who may be eligible for other preschool programs, such as Head Start. They also are more likely to win ongoing political support than programs targeted solely to disadvantaged groups.[2]

The drawback of universal programs is their cost, especially when the program is free to all families. Although not all families will choose to enroll their children in

prekindergarten, states should assume that between 60 percent and 70 percent of eligible children would enroll. In Georgia, approximately 60 percent of eligible four-year-olds attend state-funded prekindergarten (an additional 10 percent attend Head Start).[3] In estimating the cost of universal prekindergarten in Illinois, the Governor's Task Force on Universal Access to Preschool assumed 60 percent of four-year-olds and 50 percent of three-year-olds would attend.[4]

Targeted Prekindergarten

Targeted prekindergarten programs offer services only to children with particular characteristics, or risk factors, associated with high rates of school failure. Some states will target services to all children in a geographic region where there is a high percentage of children with particular risk factors. Each state has a different list of risk factors for targeting resources, and some states define multiple risk factors but let local governments or school districts determine which ones to prioritize for services. Examples of risk factors used by states include that the child:

- is eligible for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program (indicating they are low income);
- has a developmental delay (participates in an Individualized Educational Program or IEP);
- is the child of a single parent;
- is the child of a teen parent;
- was born with a low birthweight;
- has parents with low levels of education;
- is an English language learner, or a language other than English is the primary language spoken at home; or
- has a referral from another agency or program.

Risk factors may be used to guarantee service, or may merely prioritize eligibility based on available resources. Some states require families to have multiple indicators of risk, because children with multiple risks are much more likely to have difficulty in school.[5]

Every state already has two targeted prekindergarten programs: Head Start and the IDEA Part B preschool program for children with disabilities. States funding a third targeted program will want to ensure it builds on these existing programs, reaching more of the target audience instead of creating competition among programs.

When resources are limited, targeted prekindergarten programs offer the benefits of preschool education to those children in greatest need. The evidence of the effectiveness of prekindergarten programs is also most solid for children at risk of school failure. However, public opinion polling shows that targeted programs receive less political support than universal prekindergarten programs because many middle-class families (and especially those who vote) believe their children should also have access to high-quality prekindergarten programs.[6]

For More Information

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Lekies, K., and M. Cochran. *Collaborating for Kids: New York State Universal Prekindergarten 1999-2000*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Early Childhood Program, 2001

Schuster, L. *Steps to Universal Prekindergarten Guidebook: A Resource for Superintendents, School Boards, Prekindergarten Policy Advisory Boards, Teachers,*

Early Childhood Professionals, Policymakers, Parents and Citizens. Albany, N.Y.: State Communities Aid Association, 1998.

Web Resources

Education Commission of the States: Database of eligibility requirements in each state:
http://www.ecs.org/pre-kindergarten

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http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npc/framework/redirect/clasp1.cfm

[2] A. Raden, *Universal Prekindergarten in Georgia: A Case Study of Georgia's Lottery-Funded Pre-K Program* (New York: Foundation for Child Development, 1999). Available at:
http://www.fcd-us.org/uploaddocs/columbia%20upk%20georgia.pdf

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http://www.nccic.org/ccpartnerships

[4] S. Golin, A. Mitchell, and M. Wallen, *The Cost of Universal Access to Quality Preschool in Illinois* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2003). Available at:
http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/preschoolIL.pdf

[5] A.F. Sameroff and B.H. Fiese, "Transactional Regulation and Early Intervention," in *Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention*, Eds. S. J. Meisels and J. P. Shonkoff (New York: Cambridge University Press. 1990): 119-49.

[6] For a synthesis of polling research on early care and education, see: http://www.earlycare.org/pollingtellsus2.htm.
For information on a 2000 Massachusetts opinion leader survey, see: http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/eea/0publications/04_OurYoungChildrenReport.pdf

6.2 Serving Children with Disabilities

New or expanding state-funded prekindergarten programs increase the availability of least-restrictive settings for children with disabilities. Since 1992, all states have ensured that children with disabilities, ages three through five, have universal access to a free, appropriate, public education. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Part B requires children with disabilities to be served in the least-restrictive environment, such as a traditional classroom with typically developing peers, as appropriate according to their needs.

Federal Laws

IDEA is the primary federal education law that guides and funds states to offset the cost of providing free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities, birth through age twenty-one. Part B, Section 619, of IDEA provides additional funding for children ages three through five in recognition of the importance of these years. Children with disabilities are entitled to special education and related services, and the U.S. Department of Education provides grants to State Educational Agencies (SEA) to cover a portion of the cost.

In return, states must implement processes to find children with disabilities, identify the disabilities, and provide appropriate education and related services. This includes conducting outreach to find eligible children, performing nondiscriminatory testing and evaluation, developing an individualized educational program (IEP), and offering special education and related services through an IEP in the least-restrictive environment. Related services may include, but are not limited to: special instruction, assistive technology devices and services, audiology, counseling services, early identification and assessment, medical services for diagnosis or evaluation, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech-language therapy. IDEA also provides children with disabilities and their families with procedural safeguards and protections related to discipline, suspension, and expulsion.

Two other important federal laws also impact services for children with disabilities.

- *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* prohibits discrimination on the basis of disabilities in public and private programs and activities that receive

federal funds. The law creates the responsibility to provide free and appropriate public education. All children have the right to enroll, participate, and benefit from these programs or activities.

- *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* protects individuals with mental or physical disabilities from discrimination in employment, public accommodations, public transportation, and telecommunications. Public accommodations include private programs such as family-run child care facilities, child care centers, nursery schools, preschools, and Head Start programs run by public or nonpublic agencies.

These laws protect children with disabilities from discrimination related, among other things, to enrollment, sufficient staffing, reasonable accommodations, and inappropriate management practices.

Implications for State Prekindergarten Programs

Despite the recent growth in prekindergarten programs, only 53 percent of preschool children with disabilities are included in regular prekindergarten classrooms.[1] The inclusion of children with disabilities will impact the design and administration of new or expanding state prekindergarten programs.

- New prekindergarten classrooms will increase the availability of placements with typically developing peers and reduce the extent to which schools can maintain segregated placements for children with disabilities. Collaborative partnerships between public schools, Head Start centers, and community-based child care centers will provide more choices to serve children with disabilities in the least-restrictive environment.

- Federal law mandates that the State Education Agency provide general supervision of preschool special education. Most state-funded prekindergarten programs are also under the general supervision of the SEA, but those that are not will want to develop collaborative working relationships with the early childhood special education staff in the SEA.

- Teachers who have training in special education and inclusive practices will serve children with disabilities more effectively.[2] In some states, like North Carolina and Massachusetts, certification for prekindergarten and special education is combined, so all certified prekindergarten teachers are also certified in special education.[3]

- Coordination of federal and state funding streams will be necessary if the goal is to ensure children with disabilities receive the highest level of quality in the least-restrictive environment. Pre-existing state funding regulations for prekindergarten and special education may require changes to maximize the flexibility of the placement of the child and the ability of the state to draw down federal funds.

- Special education programs may need to broaden their scope of services to achieve the goals and objectives of the prekindergarten program, such as promoting school readiness. This may necessitate changes in the delivery of special education services (e.g., curriculum, length of school day).[4]

For More Information

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Rose, D. and B.J. Smith. “Providing Public Education Services to Preschoolers with Disabilities in Community-Based Programs: Who's Responsible for What?” *Young Children 49* (1994), vol. 6 : 64-8.

Striffler, N. and N. Fire. “Embedding Personnel Development into Early Intervention Service Delivery: Elements in the Process.” *Infants and Young Children 11* (1999), vol. 3: 50-61.

Web Resources

IDEA Practices
http://www.ideapractices.org

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center – Preschool Grants Program
http://www.nectac.org/sec619/sec619.asp

National Association of State Directors of Special Education
http://www.nasdse.org

Information on state’s policies that serve as models for integrated prekindergarten programs

Kentucky
http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/702/003/250.htm

Ohio
http://www.ode.state.oh.us/ece/superintendent/programs/Preschool_Special_Education/

Wisconsin
http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dltcl/bbfcsp/ecspedhm.html

[1] D. Bailey, *What Can Universal Prekindergarten Learn from Special Education?* (New York: Foundation for Child Development, 2002).

[2] M. B. Bruder, "A Collaborative Model to Increase the Capacity of Childcare Providers to Include Young Children with Disabilities," *Journal of Early Intervention 21* (1998): 177-86.

[3] National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, *Section 619 profile*, 12th ed., J. Danaher, R. Kraus, C. Armijo, & C. Hipps (Eds.), (Chapel Hill, N.C.: National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2003). Available at: http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/sec619_2003.pdf

[4] Bailey, *What Can.*

6.3 Serving Children who Do Not Speak English as Their Primary Language

Children who enter kindergarten and do not speak English are one of the most vulnerable groups for poor educational outcomes. Prekindergarten programs that target children with limited English proficiency can improve their achievement in later grades, but the research on the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching English to preschool children is limited. What we do know is that exposure to a rich language environment during the preschool years is an essential building block for future literacy, regardless of the language spoken.[1]

There are three primary approaches to teaching preschool to English-language learners.[2]

1. First-language classrooms use only the child's home language. English is not spoken.

2. Bilingual classrooms use both the child's home language and English. These programs vary greatly in terms of the emphasis they place on learning English, which may account for the variations in outcomes.

3. English-language classrooms immerse children in classrooms where English is the main language of interaction between teachers and children. The majority of the states do not have any requirements to teach English-language learners in any language other than English.[3]

Who are they?	How many are there?
Terms used to characterize these children include limited English proficient, non-English proficient, linguistic minority student, second-language learner, English-language learner, and bilingual learner.	According to the 2000 Census, 18 percent of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home. In 1999, 25 percent of Latino students in grades K-12 spoke mostly Spanish at home and 17 percent spoke English and Spanish equally.

What the Research Says

Although the research on teaching English during preschool years is limited, some studies support the following knowledge base.

- A rich language environment during the preschool years is an essential building block for future literacy, regardless of the language spoken.[4]
- Preschool programs must pay attention to a child's home culture to ensure a partnership between parents and teachers in providing a rich language environment.[5] Programs that support a child's home language promote continuity between home and school by respecting, valuing, and promoting children's knowledge attained at home,[6] and by preserving effective communication between parents who do not speak English and their children.[7] Supporting the home language does not dictate the approach to teaching prekindergarten, but it does acknowledge the importance of engaging parents and collaboratively designing appropriate language and literacy goals for their children.
- Individuals who are literate in one language can transfer this literacy to another language,[8] but it is unclear how to best teach children who are not yet literate in any language.
- Children with a strong foundation in their primary language can achieve high proficiency levels in their second language.[9] Studies of the Carpintería Preschool, a high-quality program that used the first-language approach, showed this approach did not delay the acquisition of English.[10]
- Bilingualism has cognitive and social benefits that are assets in children's learning.[11] It promotes advanced meta-cognitive, meta-linguistic, and conceptual development, and has been associated with higher levels of cognitive attainment.[12]

Considerations

There are a number of challenges that will influence a state's ability to teach English-language learners.

- It may be difficult to find qualified personnel who speak the different languages used by young children, especially in areas where children come from many different cultures.

- There is a lack of age-appropriate educational materials in languages other than English and Spanish.

- Few professional development programs for teachers include training in understanding, facilitating, and assessing children's second-language acquisition. According to a 1999 national survey of colleges and universities with early childhood professional development programs, only 11 percent require coursework on teaching children who are bilingual or have limited English proficiency.[13]

- When children speak a variety of languages, first-language and bilingual classrooms are challenging to implement. In mixed language classrooms, English language approaches with home language support can provide a common language for communication while promoting overall development and partnerships with diverse families.

State Examples

State law may dictate the design of prekindergarten programs for children learning English. In Kansas, prekindergarten programs must be offered in the child's home language.[14] New York requires a certified bilingual teacher when a prekindergarten class has a certain number of children who do not speak English as their first language.[15]

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Tabors, P. O. *One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Preschool Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language.* Baltimore, Md.: Paul Brookes, 1997.

Web Resources

Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence
http://www.cal.org/crede/pubs

National Association for Bilingual Education
http://www.nabe.org

National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning
http://www.cal.org/Archive/projects/ncrcdsll.htm

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages
http://www.tesol.org

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[2] P.O. Tabors, *One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Preschool Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language* (Baltimore: Paul Brookes, 1997).

[3] K. Schulman, H. Blank, and D. Ewen, *Seeds of Success: State Prekindergarten Initiatives 1998-99* (Washington, D.C.: Children's Defense Fund, 1999).

[4] Dickinson, *Beginning.*

[5] Tabors, *One Child.*
Also, E. Garcia, *Student Cultural Diversity: Understanding and Meeting the Challenge* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2002).

[6] National Association for the Education of Young Children. *Responding to Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: Recommendations for Effective Early Childhood Education* (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995).

[7] L. Wong Fillmore, "When Learning a Second Language Means Losing the First," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly 6* (1991): 323-46.

[8] S. Krashen, *Fundamentals of Language Education* (Torrance, Calif.: Laredo Publishing, 1992).

[9] J. Cummins, "Linguistic Interdependence and the Educational Development of Bilingual Children," *Review of Educational Research 49* (1979): 222-51.

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[12] K. Hakuta and E. Garcia, "Bilingualism and Education," *American Psychologist 44* (1989), no. 2: 374-79.

[13] D.M. Early and P.J. Winton, "Preparing the Workforce: Early Childhood Teacher Preparation at 2- and 4-year Institutions of Higher Education," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly 16* (2001): 285-306.

[14] Schulman, *Seeds.*

[15] Ibid.

Section 7: Program Standards

- ***7.1*** *Teacher Qualifications*
- ***7.2*** *Class Size and Adult-Child Ratio*
- ***7.3*** *Curriculum*
- ***7.4*** *Duration of Program*
- ***7.5*** *Scope of Services*

7.1 Teacher Qualifications

Effective prekindergarten programs meet specific standards of program quality. Each link includes more information on why the specified standard is important, what the research says about it, and the state-of-the-states in implementing the standard.

The education levels of preschool teachers, as well as their specialized training in early childhood and child development, directly relate to the positive learning and development of children.[1] The research has shown the following.

- Teachers with a bachelor's degree and specialized education in early childhood or a related field are more effective than those with less formal education.[2]

- Teachers who have taken community college coursework in the field of early childhood display more developmentally appropriate beliefs and practices in their classrooms than those who have not attended college classes.[3]

- It is not clear whether overall education level in any field is better than less formal education specifically related to early childhood. Studies that focus on the effects of teacher education and specialized training in early childhood find that these factors are often intertwined. Teachers with more years of formal education also tend to have more specialized training.[4]

- Teachers with higher levels of education show higher frequencies of positive initiations with children than teachers with less formal education.[5] Positive initiations include: smiling, touching, or talking; positive responsive behaviors to children's requests; use of language play (e.g., rhyming games,

reading aloud to children); and positive management (e.g., redirect or remind children of the rules for behavior).

- Teacher education is highly correlated with teacher wages and turnover. Teachers with more education are paid more and tend to stay at their jobs longer than those who are less educated and paid less.[6]

As a consequence of these findings, a number of organizations now recommend that early childhood professionals acquire knowledge and skills through college-level preparation in early childhood or child development:

- American Federation of Teachers;
- National Research Council, Committee on Early Childhood Pedagogy;
- National Association for the Education of Young Children; and
- National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.

For information on preparing a qualified workforce, please see Section 8.1, Professional Development.

State of the States

Despite wide recognition of the importance of teacher education and training, only about 50 percent of all teachers of three- and four-year-olds have a bachelor's degree. This figure varies widely by setting, with close to 90 percent of college-educated teachers in public school prekindergarten programs, and less than 40 percent in for-profit child care settings.[7]

Wide variation also exists in teacher credentialing requirements, in part because of the different governing bodies that regulate Head Start, public schools, and community-based preschool and child care programs.[8]

According to credentialing policies in place in 2001-02:[9]

- only Rhode Island and New York City require a bachelor's degree for all teachers in early education programs, including child care;
- twenty-four states require a bachelor's degree to teach in their state-funded prekindergarten program;
- four states require an associate's (two-year) degree with courses in early childhood education;
- eleven states require a Child Development Associates credential (CDA);
- California requires twenty-four credits related to early childhood education; and
- Head Start requires a two-year college degree for half of all teachers, nationwide. The 2003 reauthorization of Head Start may raise the requirement so that 50 percent of Head Start teachers hold a bachelor's degree by 2008, and all new teachers begin to pursue at least an associate's degree within the next three years.

These data represent minimum standards, but should be interpreted cautiously because many states have difficulty finding enough teachers who meet the minimum standard and have offered waivers to include teachers who meet lower standards but who are working toward a higher education level.[10]

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Web Resources

National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators
http://www.naecte.org/

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
http://www.nbpts.org/

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7.2 Class Size and Adult-Child Ratio

The size of a class and the ratio of adults to children in the classroom are two dimensions of program standards that influence the quality of the prekindergarten experience. *Class size* (also called group size) refers to the number of children enrolled in or regularly attending a classroom. *Adult-child ratio* is the number of adults assigned to a classroom compared with the number of children in the classroom. There is a general consensus among early childhood professionals and researchers that smaller classes and higher adult-child ratios improve quality in early childhood programs.

Children with special needs (e.g., children with disabilities, English language learners, and children with behavioral challenges) need more individual instruction to benefit from a prekindergarten program than average children. The main drawback of providing small classes and high adult-child ratios is cost. With smaller classes and higher ratios, prekindergarten programs must hire more qualified teachers and create more classrooms.

In small classes with high adult-child ratios, children are more likely to interact with teachers, receive individualized attention, be emotionally secure with their teachers, be socially competent with their peers, and utilize extensive and complex language.[1] However, classrooms with fewer children and more adults per child also tend to have well-trained teachers and high-quality learning environments. Therefore, it is not possible to isolate class size and adult-child ratio as the only factors that contribute to program quality.

In addition, existing research is not sufficient to determine an optimal number of children in each classroom or an optimal adult-child ratio for prekindergarten programs. Nevertheless, several national organizations interested in the welfare of young children have recommended adequate class sizes and adult-child ratios for preschool classrooms.

Class Size and Adult-Child Ratio Recommendations

Organization	Class Size (maximum)		Adult-Child Ratio	
	3-year-olds	4-year-olds	3-year-olds	4-year-olds
American Academy of Pediatrics; American Public Health Association; National Research Center for Health and Safety in Child Care[3]	14	16	1:7	1:8
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)[4] (Note: New, lower ratios and group sizes are under review.)	16	20	1:8	1:10
National Research Council[5]	13	13	1:7	1:7

State of the States[6]

Wide variation exists across states on the adult-child ratio and the maximum group size in state-financed prekindergarten for four-year-olds.

- Ten states either had no requirement for ratio and class size or allowed local program authorities to set the requirement.
- Eighteen states followed NAEYC standards of 1:10 ratio and a maximum class size of 20 (for four-year-olds).
- Eight states require even lower ratios than in the recommendations, with Washington having the lowest at 1:6.

- Two states have higher ratios than in the recommendations, with Alabama at 1:18 and New Jersey's Early Childhood Program Aid at 2:25.

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Web Resources

Required staff/child ratios in each state

National Center for Early Development and Learning: Public school pre-kindergarten programs: National survey of states
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/pre-kprograms/

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7.3 Curriculum

A prekindergarten curriculum defines the content, goals, methods, and context of teaching. Educators make decisions about what and how to teach, taking into consideration program goals, subject matter, social and cultural values, parental input, and the age and experience of the children.[1] As a result, a variety of curricula have been implemented in diverse early childhood settings.

A comprehensive curriculum will address the multiple areas in which children grow and learn, including cognitive skills (such as emergent literacy, math, science, music, art, social studies), physical health, and social and emotional development.

Research shows that a prekindergarten classroom with a planned curriculum has a more positive impact on child outcomes than one with no set curriculum.[2] However, there is no evidence that one specific curriculum is superior to all others.[3] One review of curriculum comparison studies concluded that all the curricula included in the studies led to better performance for the children when the curricula are carefully implemented.[4]

No state mandates a specific prekindergarten curriculum,[5] but thirty-four states define what children should be learning through standards, and the majority of these standards are specifically written for the state-funded prekindergarten program.[6] A primary purpose for writing the standards in all thirty-four states was to inform curriculum and instruction in the classroom.

A few states monitor the incorporation of learning standards into the curriculum. For example, Louisiana's public prekindergarten program uses a coding system on prekindergarten lesson plans that corresponds to the standards. School principals and directors must keep a record of their lesson plans to demonstrate that the standards were used as a guide in lesson planning.[7]

Whether or not a state requires prekindergarten programs to choose among specified curricula, it is important to provide guidance to programs on how to adopt an effective curriculum.

- The curriculum should be research based.

- The curriculum should be consistent with the goals and objectives of the prekindergarten program.
- The curriculum should address all relevant domains of child development (e.g., physical well-being and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches toward learning; language development; and cognition and general knowledge).
- The curriculum should be appropriate for the age and developmental level of the children served, with special attention to children with special needs.
- The activities should allow a balance between teacher planning and child initiation of learning activities.
- The curriculum content and goals should be culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- The content should be aligned with the state's early learning goals and linked to the assessment of children's abilities (which then informs the implementation of the curriculum).

State of the States[8]

- Twenty-three states have no standard or required prekindergarten curriculum. Of these, Massachusetts and West Virginia are currently in the process of developing curriculum guidance.
- Louisiana, Maryland, New Jersey, and Vermont require prekindergarten curriculum to reflect the state standards.
- Nine states require a curriculum to either be selected from an approved list or be separately approved by the state or local authority.
- Several other states provide general guidance in developing a curriculum, but have no formal approval process.

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Web Resources

Education Commission of the States: Online Interactive Prekindergarten database, includes information about curricula used in different states
http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/27/24/2724.htm

Curriculum selection

Georgia Pre-K Program Guidelines
http://www.decal.state.ga.us/PreK/PrekServices.aspx?Header=2&SubHeader=9&Position=2&HeaderName=Project%20Directors

Missouri Preschool Project IFB Guidelines
http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/earlychild/PreK_Standards/Physical_Standards.pdf

North Carolina's "More at Four" Pre-kindergarten Program
http://www.governor.state.nc.us/Office/Education/_pdf/ProgramGuidelines.pdf

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[7] Scott-Little, *Standards*.

[8] Information collected from the National Center for Early Development & Learning's 2002 state prekindergarten survey. Available at: http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/pre-kprograms/

7.4 Duration of Program

States vary in the intensity and duration of the prekindergarten services they offer to young children. Programs range from 2.5 to 10 hours per day, from one to five days per week, and from 7.5 to 12 months per year. Existing research allows only general conclusions regarding the benefits of program intensity and duration, in part because conclusions must be extrapolated from research on kindergarten programs. Current evaluations of prekindergarten programs show that both part-day part-year, and full-day full-year programs can be effective.[1] More information may be available on this topic within the next year. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) is close to completing two rigorous evaluations of the impact of program duration and intensity on urban preschool children in New Jersey. (See "Web Resources" below for more information.)

Hours per Day

Research on the relationship between the number of hours in the school day and children's achievement is limited to comparisons of full-day versus half-day kindergarten. Several studies suggest that children in full-day kindergarten programs perform better on measures of achievement than children in half-day programs.[2] In high-quality, full-day kindergartens, children engaged in more child-initiated activities and teacher-directed individual activities, and they showed higher levels of active engagement and positive affect when compared with children in half-day kindergartens.[3] Less is known about whether these same outcomes are applicable to prekindergarten children, who are younger and require daily rest times in a program that runs longer than half-day

Months per Year

Most public prekindergarten programs operate on the same calendar as the academic school year, or nine to ten months a year. Some educators advocate for year-round prekindergarten programs based on studies in elementary school settings showing positive gains for students in year-round schools when compared with traditional-calendar schools.[4] Most year-round calendars offer the same amount of vacation time, but by breaking it up into smaller units throughout the

year, children tend to retain more of what they learned through the breaks. The U.S. Department of Education advocates that schools be open all-year long, not only to provide academic instruction to children, but also social and health services for families.[5]

Years of Intervention

Research does exist on the effect of multiple years of intervention, but it is limited to children from low-income homes. Low-income children who participate in early interventions that last longer than one year perform better on achievement and measures of grade retention than those who receive intervention for fewer years.[6] It is less clear whether these same results apply to children from middle- and upper-income families who live in stimulating home environments.[7] In addition to positive child development outcomes, low-income families also seem to benefit from more years of preschool intervention. Families with children who attended two years of Head Start were more active and involved in social, cultural, and intellectual activities with their child, and read more often during the week to their child, as compared with families of children who attended the program only one year.[8]

State of the States[9]

- Twenty-eight states run prekindergarten programs during the school term, or eight to ten months per year.
- Most states offer a half-day program, but seven states (Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) mandate a six-hour school-like day. Many of the half-day states allow a school-like day if the local jurisdiction chooses to implement it.
- Connecticut and New Jersey offer ten-hour days for their highest priority districts.
- Nineteen states offer programs that must meet five days per week.
- Ten states had no requirements on these dimensions and allowed local decisions.

For More Information

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Web Resources

Required hours of operation in each state

National Center for Early Development & Learning: Required hours of operation in each state, found in their national survey of states
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/pre-kprograms/

National Institute for Early Education Research Working Paper: Is More Better? The effects of full-day vs. half-day preschool on early school achievement.
http://nieer.org/docs/?DocID=144

National Association for Year-Round Education
http://www.nayre.org/

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7.5 Scope of Services

The preschool years are a rapid period of growth, not only for children's cognitive and linguistic abilities, but also for their physical, emotional, social, regulatory, and moral capacities.[1] A child who is hungry, has a vision or hearing problem, comes from a family in crisis, or does not have a home will likely have difficulties learning. To address the full range of children's needs, some states fund broader health and development services. Services that extend beyond the typical educational program are often referred to as comprehensive or supplemental services. These services require trained staff who focus on the health and social needs of children and families, and who have the ability to refer families to additional community resources, such as the state's children's health insurance program, dental care providers, mental health counselors, family wellness programs, or family resource centers.

The following are examples of supplemental services that can be offered through prekindergarten programs.

- Child nutrition: Most state prekindergarten programs offer breakfast, lunch, or snacks. Many of these costs are reimbursable through the U.S.D.A.'s Child and Adult Care Food Program. Some programs also offer nutrition counseling to parents.

- Physical health: Children cannot learn if they must compensate for poor vision, hearing loss, or chronic tooth pain. Prekindergarten programs can screen for basic health problems and refer children to available services. Assistance may include helping families sign up for the state-sponsored health insurance program for low-income families and facilitating transportation to these services.

- Mental health: There is growing awareness of the impact that parent and child mental health has on the development of the child. Most prekindergarten programs do not address mental health issues, and very few professionals are trained to treat early childhood mental health problems. However, some states, like Vermont, do provide funding to coordinate mental health care with their prekindergarten program.[2]

- Family support: Home visits, site visits, and parent/teacher conferences are some of the ways prekindergarten programs can identify and then refer families for support services. Prekindergarten programs can also reach out to families to engage them in their child's education through volunteer opportunities or by providing parent education classes on site.

The early childhood literature documents a strong correlation between family socioeconomic status and child health and development.[3] Children from low-income families are more likely to need supplemental services, and they are more likely to succeed in school if they receive these services. The research literature also supports the importance of family involvement in programs for children's development of basic school skills[4] and future achievement in life.[5] Children tend to do better in school when families are given the opportunity to create a home environment conducive to learning; to enrich the curriculum through the family's knowledge and skills; to make the school more responsive to the family needs; and to participate in the school's decision making process.[6]

State of the States

Most states allow local jurisdictions to determine if and what comprehensive services will be offered. Although many states encourage comprehensive services, funding limits what can be offered beyond the classroom education. In some rural areas, access to services is also a barrier.[7] State-funded programs that follow the Head Start performance standards must provide nutrition, health, mental health, and parent outreach services.

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Section 8: Infrastructure

Chapters

- ***8.1*** *Professional Development*
- ***8.2*** *Coordination*
- ***8.3*** *Monitoring and Technical Assistance*
- ***8.4*** *Program Evaluation*

8.1 Professional Development

In addition to meeting high standards of program quality, successful prekindergarten initiatives provide an infrastructure to ensure programs attain and maintain high quality. The four elements of the infrastructure described in this section are essential and often overlooked in the implementation of a state prekindergarten initiative.

One of the most important predictors of quality in early childhood classrooms is the nature and stability of the relationship between the teacher and the child. Teachers with more education receive higher wages, experience lower turnover rates, and have better relationships with their students.[1] A recent literature review on early childhood professional development suggests that a bachelor's degree **and** specialized training in early childhood or a related area is important for providing high quality pre-k services.[2] Although experts debate how much a bachelor's degree improves the quality of the classroom experience, they concur that more education for teachers is better than less, and that a bachelor's degree with specialized training is most likely to produce qualified teachers. The National Research Council's report *Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers* recommends that every group of children in early care and education settings have access to a teacher with a bachelor's degree.[3]

If a bachelor's degree with specialized training becomes the professional development standard for quality in prekindergarten, the existing prekindergarten system will fall far short of meeting the standard. Currently, only half of all teachers of three- and four-years-old have a bachelor's degree, and only 44 percent have a bachelor's degree (or higher) combined with special training in early education.[4]

The percentage of teachers with bachelor's degrees in prekindergarten classrooms is higher, at almost 70 percent,[5] but still short of a minimum standard. The current low levels of education among prekindergarten teachers creates an immediate need to raise the level of education, and state efforts to expand existing prekindergarten programs will only increase the demand for better educated teachers. Two immediate challenges to meeting this demand are an inadequate professional development infrastructure within institutions of higher education, and inadequate incentives to build and retain the supply of highly qualified teachers.

Building an Infrastructure

The existing capacity of two- and four-year institutions of higher education (IHEs) to train qualified prekindergarten teachers does not meet the growing demand. Only 29 percent of IHEs offer some type of early childhood education program, and less than half offer a bachelor's degree in this field.[6] With this level of access to education, it would take ten years to produce enough teachers with bachelor's degrees to meet the current prekindergarten demand, ignoring any expansion in programs during that ten-year period.[7] Policymakers can address the challenge of expanding the professional development infrastructure within higher education in a number of ways.

- Promote articulation between two- and four-year institutions to ensure that students who start a two-year degree program can apply these credits toward a four-year degree. In New Mexico, the state legislature took the lead by passing legislation mandating articulation agreements between early education programs in two- and four-year institutions.

- Promote credit-bearing inservice training. There is a lack of evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of the current inservice training system, in either the content or the method of the training.[8] Linking inservice training to the formal education system is a promising strategy to raise the quality of that training and to promote access to education for the current early education workforce.[9]

- Offer classes for teachers during nontraditional hours and promote alternative access to courses, such as distance education. An evaluation of

one distance education effort in North Carolina showed an increase in access to high-quality courses for rural early childhood educators.[10] The HeadsUp! Network is another model for distance education. This satellite television training network delivers ten hours of training per month to adults who work with young children from birth through age five.

- Promote collaborations between local universities and prekindergarten programs in designing teacher preparation programs so graduates will respond to the needs of local districts. For example, do teachers need more training on literacy, teaching English language learners, or including children with disabilities in the classroom?

- Provide financial incentives to IHEs to expand course offerings. For example, the federal government has funded personnel preparation grants for IHEs to expand and improve their special education training programs.[11]

Building and Retaining the Supply of Teachers

The second challenge is to entice teachers already working with young children to obtain higher levels of education, and then to retain these teachers in the early childhood education profession. The typical early childhood educator is a full-time working mother earning low wages.[12] In September 2002, she earned a median salary of $21,332, less than half that of her kindergarten counterpart.[13] During the year, there is a 25 percent to 50 percent chance that she will leave her job (the lower her pay, the higher the chance of leaving), while the turnover rate of public school teachers is less than 7 percent.[14]

Encouraging early childhood educators to go back to school will require affordable tuition, classes during nontraditional hours, and a promise of better pay when they obtain higher degrees. Georgia, New Jersey, and North Carolina offer examples of how to meet this challenge.

- The Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education offers classes at child care centers for teachers who are beginning their higher education at the associates degree level. These classes are free as part of the HOPE scholarship program.

- North Carolina's T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® program includes scholarships for child care workers to complete course work in early childhood education. Upon completion of their educational requirement, teachers receive a bonus or a raise and must agree to remain teaching in their program for six months to a year (depending on the scholarship). The T.E.A.C.H. model supports the professional development of all early educators, not just prekindergarten teachers. Twenty-three states have replicated T.E.A.C.H. to create an early childhood workforce professional development system that leads to higher compensation and a degree.

- The 1998 *Abbott v. Burke* ruling by the New Jersey Supreme Court mandated universal access to prekindergarten in the thirty poorest school districts, and required prekindergarten teachers to obtain a four-year degree and early childhood certification by September 2004. State dollars fund teacher scholarships, and priority goes to any teacher currently working in a prekindergarten or child care center in an "Abbott district." The state also worked to change the infrastructure of teacher preparatory institutions in New Jersey, create salary parity and compensation packages to recruit and retain teachers, and forge articulation agreements between IHEs to allow for easy transfer of credits. As of July 2003, 80 percent of Abbott teachers had obtained their bachelor's degree.[15]

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Connecticut Charts-A-Course
http://www.ctcharts-a-course.org/forms.htm

HeadsUp! Network
http://www.headsup.org/

National Association for the Education of Young Children: A Conceptual Framework for Early Childhood Professional Development
http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/PSCONF98.PDF

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
http://www.ncate.org/

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® program
http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html

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8.2 Coordination

State-funded prekindergarten programs exist within a larger context of programs that serve children before, during, and after they are four years old. The spectrum begins with prenatal care programs, extends through early intervention and child care programs (both center- and home-based), and ends with successful transitions into elementary school. An essential element of improving child outcomes is ensuring that the prekindergarten program has a positive impact on the existing set of programs and services designed to help children grow and succeed. The goal is to strengthen the overall system of early care and education, not improve one piece to the detriment of others.

Cross-System Coordination

Collaboration among prekindergarten, other early education programs, and the K-12 system helps establish a seamless education path.

Coordination with other early education programs. Children begin learning at birth, and successful prekindergarten programs rely on the healthy growth and development of children before they enter prekindergarten. Publicly funded prekindergarten programs should take steps to ensure they do not weaken the system that cares for and educates children before they enter prekindergarten. For example, community-based programs that lose their three- and four-year-olds to public school prekindergarten programs might be forced to raise tuition for younger children (making the cost prohibitive for many families), or lower the quality of the program to remain economically viable. State prekindergarten programs that include community-based early education programs not only help stabilize the industry, but are likely to increase the consistency in the overall quality of community-based programs by mandating higher standards and providing more oversight and funding.

There are a number of ways that states can use their prekindergarten program to strengthen other early care and education programs.

- In Georgia, the Standards of Care initiative raises the quality of care in child care centers that have state-funded prekindergarten and also serve children ages birth to three. Standards of Care is a voluntary program that provides training and technical assistance, grants to improve the quality of classrooms, and recognition when centers obtain a certain level of quality as measured by environmental rating scales. Recognition includes branding as a Center of Distinction and higher child care subsidy reimbursement rates.

- Illinois has legislated a link between state funding for prekindergarten and funding for infant and toddler services. Similar to the Early Head Start set-aside in the Head Start funding formula, 11 percent of the Illinois Early Childhood Block Grant (the prekindergarten funding stream) must pay for infant and toddler services.

Coordinated transitions. Entering prekindergarten and then kindergarten may require children to attend a new school, adjust to a more formal classroom environment, and adjust to a new schedule. Strengthening social and information links among parents, children, and educators will help smooth these transitions. Examples of social links include strong relationships between parents and teachers (both prekindergarten and kindergarten) to support the educational progress of the child, and prior peer relationships that continue from preschools and neighborhoods into kindergarten.[1] Examples of informational links include early and frequent communication with parents about kindergarten programs through letters, brochures, and open houses[2]; and regular meetings between preschool providers and kindergarten teachers on how to integrate their curricula and transfer student records.[3]

Coordination within the Pre-K–12 system. High-quality prekindergarten programs have standards that define what students should learn, which can smooth transition between grades. Recent surveys of state preschool standards[4] reveal that thirty-four states currently define child-based learning standards for children before they enter kindergarten, and most of these standards apply to the state-funded prekindergarten program. All thirty-four states demonstrated a relationship between the K-12 standards and the early education standards to promote

continuity between ages; fifteen states had direct linkages, with the two sets of standards incorporated in the same document, or referencing one another.

The National Association of State Boards of Education has recommended the creation of early childhood units in public schools for children ages 4-8.[5] Among their concerns were that school reform efforts such as uniform requirements and increased accountability were creating competitive, overly academic environments inappropriate for young children. They cited increased use of standardized tests, workbooks, ability grouping, and retention as evidence of practices that undermine school success. Unfortunately, these are still characteristics of early education programs today,[6] and there has been no major movement toward integrated early childhood units within public schools.

Local Coordination: Meeting Local Needs and Maximizing Local Strengths

Collaboration at the local level enables state-funded prekindergarten programs to build upon and maximize the existing early education services serving three- and four-year-old children (such as Head Start, community-based child care centers, and programs serving preschool children with disabilities). For example, local coordination can allow joint monitoring of programs, joint training programs for staff, joint curriculum development, bulk buying, and coordinated transportation systems.

Although most states allow multiple organizations to provide state-funded prekindergarten, only a few have mechanisms to promote coordination among these programs.

- Connecticut requires the local mayor and school superintendent to appoint a community council. Community councils receive direct funding from the state and distribute funds according to local needs.[7]
- The Massachusetts Community Partnerships for Children requires local towns to establish councils made up of parents, program providers, and other community members. The council is responsible for developing and overseeing a coordinated strategy among existing preschool programs and

services to provide a single comprehensive system of care and education for three- and four-year-olds.[8]

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Web Resources

Transition to kindergarten

Foundation for Child Development: PK-3: A New Beginning for Publicly Supported Education
http://www.fcd-us.org/ourwork/f-index.html

National Center for Early Development & Learning
http://www.ncedl.org

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education: Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success http://naecs.crc.uiuc.edu/position/creating_conditions.pdf

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8.3 Monitoring and Technical Assistance

Monitoring and technical assistance help ensure that prekindergarten programs achieve the program standards during the implementation process and maintain those standards as they mature. In new prekindergarten programs, monitoring can provide early detection of any problems with the program design or implementation; technical assistance allows corrections, either to the programs or the program standards. Supporting programs through monitoring and technical assistance will help the programs achieve and maintain the level of quality intended by the program designers.

Monitoring

There are several basic reasons for monitoring prekindergarten programs. Monitoring enables program administrators to:

- gather basic information about the program (e.g., class size, characteristics of personnel) and children served (e.g., number of children served, characteristics of children served);
- validate program reports (i.e., document whether the program looks like it should based on written descriptions); and
- promote continuous improvement (i.e., use information to shape the program and support services).

Typically, the state agency responsible for administering the prekindergarten program also monitors the program. Most states rely on self-reported data by local program administrators or service providers, but the only way to ensure that programs meet specified standards is to have regularly scheduled monitoring visits. In Tennessee, prekindergarten programs receive two visits per year – one announced and one unannounced.[1] Several other states have monitoring visits every couple of years.

States that have multiple service delivery for the state-funded prekindergarten program may want to coordinate the monitoring of the prekindergarten program

with the monitoring and licensing of community-based early education programs. This may lead to more streamlined monitoring processes, but also may require monitors to understand multiple program standards and programs, and to come to agreement on common program standards. In Georgia, the Office of School Readiness monitors the state prekindergarten program and licenses the child care centers that offer state-funded prekindergarten.

Costs for monitoring programs are generally included in the administrative costs of the program budget, but it is important to earmark resources specifically for the purpose of monitoring. In addition to the cost for the staff to visit the programs, resources are needed to ensure that an adequate data system is in place to support accurate and comprehensive data collection. Without a comprehensive data system, it is difficult to gather and summarize student and operational data, and basic questions that are key to program success will be left unanswered.[2]

Technical Assistance

If a high-quality prekindergarten program is the goal, then technical assistance is an essential piece of the infrastructure. Technical assistance gives programs a resource to ensure they meet program standards. It may take the form of knowledgeable staff who provide consultation and support to individual programs, training seminars, peer mentoring, site visits, or access to information on best practices. It may also encourage programs to develop and implement a continuous improvement plan.

- The Georgia Office of School Readiness uses a website to announce training opportunities for teachers and post best practices for classroom activities.
- The U.S. Department of Defense employs one person per child care center to provide technical assistance to teachers and administrators. The specialist focuses exclusively on training and curriculum and must have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development. An evaluation by RAND found that this position improved curriculum design and staff training and facilitated more centers completing the accreditation process.[3]

- In Illinois, plans to provide universal access to prekindergarten for all three- and four-year-old children included technical assistance to ensure staff incorporated the new standards and learned the new administrative responsibilities. Analysts assumed each prekindergarten would receive technical assistance for one year at an estimated cost of $50 per child.[4]

Three examples of national technical assistance centers follow.

- National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) – State administrators and other key stakeholders can access supports on the implementation of the early childhood provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). NECTAC helps states identify priority issues and develop and implement an individually tailored strategic work plan to fulfill the requirements of IDEA.

- National Head Start Training and Technical Assistance – Revamped in 2003, Head Start provides training and technical assistance to local grantees through twelve regionally managed contracts. Trained staff provide help to grantees on the full implementation of the Head Start performance standards, on the use of uniform protocols to provide qualitative and quantitative data that support existing needs of local grantees, and on developing their own training and technical assistance plans.

- National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) – NCCIC maintains an extensive clearinghouse of information on all aspects of early education, including prekindergarten. Field staff provide customized technical assistance to state child care administrators in each state. The QUILT project offers technical assistance specifically on the collaboration among child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten.

Web Resources

Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning: Training Schedule
http://www.decal.state.ga.us/Training/TrainingServices.aspx?Header=27&SubHeader=132&Position=2&HeaderName=Training%20Details

National Child Care Information Center
http://www.nccic.org

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
http://www.nectac.org

National Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center
http://www.hsnrc.org

National Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health
http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/programs/ta_center/index.html

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8.4 Program Evaluation

As states increase funding for prekindergarten programs, state legislatures will demand more information and data on the effectiveness of the programs. Prekindergarten programs must be prepared to provide results-focused accountability to parents, policymakers, and the public. Program evaluations become essential to providing this information and therefore should be included in the budget of prekindergarten programs. Program evaluation provides information about program performance with the goal of holding programs accountable for obtaining a specified level of quality and meeting expected outcomes.

Evaluations are designed to answer specific questions about the implementation process (implementation evaluation) and the effects of the prekindergarten program (outcome evaluation). For example, evaluations can help to determine:

- whether the program is implemented as intended (e.g., is it high quality?);
- what effects the program has on child outcomes (e.g., are children who participated in the program better prepared for school success?); and
- what effects the program has on the broader early childhood and K-12 systems (e.g., how does the program impact the availability of infant and toddler care?).

Implementation Evaluation

Although public and political interest may focus on the importance of outcome evaluations, it is necessary to first conduct an evaluation to ensure that the prekindergarten program was implemented as intended. If the program is not implemented according to the program guidelines (at either the state or local level), then it will be unlikely to produce the intended positive outcomes. Implementation data can be gathered from the database established to monitor the programs, from classroom observations, and from surveys or interviews with program administrators and service providers.

Outcome Evaluation

Once the implementation evaluation confirms that the program has been implemented as intended, an outcome evaluation can determine whether or not it is successful in improving outcomes for children. There are three important decisions to make prior to evaluating program outcomes.[1]

1. *Define the results*. Program evaluators must have a clear understanding of what the prekindergarten program seeks to accomplish. Some states have defined the intended results of the prekindergarten program through child-based outcome standards.[2] Good prekindergarten programs will ensure outcomes reflect the multiple dimensions of child development (e.g., cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical)[3] and parental engagement. They will clearly communicate learning expectations to parents, teachers, and program administrators.

2. *Define appropriate data collection mechanisms*. Child assessments or observations are typical mechanisms to collect outcome data, although information also can be gathered from personnel and parents through surveys or interviews. Child assessments should be developmentally appropriate, taking into consideration the age and ability of the child. Whenever possible, assessments should be conducted in familiar environments to reduce the burden on the child. To minimize the potential negative impact of child assessments, experts recommend assessing only a sample of children for the purposes of program evaluation,[4] which still allows for conclusions on the effectiveness of the program in improving child outcomes.

3. *Define appropriate uses of results*. The purpose of the data collection is to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, not to label, track, or stigmatize the children. Clearly defining how results will and will not be used will minimize inappropriate uses of results. Safeguards, such as sampling instead of assessing every child, will ensure program evaluation data are not used to evaluate individual children or make high-stakes decisions.

It is important to remember that child assessments are done for purposes other than program evaluation, such as guiding instruction. See *Assessing the State*

of State Assessments: Perspectives on Assessing Young Children for guidelines on appropriate assessments of young children.[5]

Evaluation Design Decisions

Who will conduct the evaluation? Selecting an evaluation organization that is independent from the agency administering the prekindergarten program will minimize the potential for bias and criticism, but an in-house evaluation is better than no evaluation at all. Even when independent evaluators are involved, agency representatives serve as informants and they are often key collaborators in facilitating data collection.

What will it look like? The evaluation should have two components: an implementation component to ensure the program was implemented as designed, and an outcome component to evaluate its effectiveness. Implementation evaluation designs require, at a minimum, observations by the evaluator to assess the degree to which the classroom activity reflects the program's standards. The strongest outcome evaluation design requires randomly assigning children to receive or not receive the prekindergarten program. This design provides the most confidence that any differences observed can be attributed to the prekindergarten intervention and not some other factors. However, random assignment is expensive and it may be difficult to deny prekindergarten services to a group of children, especially in a universal program. Other designs include comparing the skills of a sample of children at the beginning and end of the program, or comparing the skills of children who received the prekindergarten program with a comparable group of children who did not. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these evaluation designs. An evaluation consultant can help policymakers weigh the pros and cons and choose the best design to fit available resources.

How much will it cost? The cost of a program evaluation varies depending on its design. For example, a longitudinal study that gathers information on multiple aspects of program quality and children's development through grade three will require greater resources than an evaluation that only assesses outcomes at the beginning and end of the program. Specific guidelines regarding the level of funding necessary to conduct a thorough evaluation are elusive; however, some funding

agencies require that a set proportion of a program's budget (from 5 percent to 15 percent, depending on the size the program[6]) be devoted to evaluation.

For More Information

Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. *The Program Evaluation Standards*, 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1994.

National Association for the Education of Young Children and The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. *Early Childhood Curriculum, Assessment, and Program Evaluation: Building an Effective, Accountable System in Programs for Children Birth through Age 8.* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children and The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education, 2003. Available at: http://www.naeyc.org/about/positions/pdf/pscape.pdf

Scott-Little, C., S.L. Kagan, and R. Clifford. *Assessing the State of State Assessments: Perspectives on Assessing Young Children*. Greensboro, N.C.: The Regional Education Laboratory at SERVE, 2003.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth and Families. *Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1997.

U.S. General Accounting Office. *Early Childhood Programs: The Use of Impact Evaluations to Assess Program Effects* (GAO-01-542). Washington, DC: U.S. General Accounting Office, 2001.

Web Resources

State prekindergarten evaluations

New York: Cornell University Early Childhood Program Applied Research
http://www.human.cornell.edu/che/HD/CECP/Research/preschool/UPK/index.cfm

North Carolina: FPG Child Development Institute
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~mafeval/index.cfm

Oklahoma: Center for Research on Children in the United States
http://www.crocus.georgetown.edu/projects.html#ok

Georgia: Georgia State University Applied Research Center
http://www.gsu.edu/~wwwsps/publications/2003/earlychildhood.htm

Michigan: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation
http://www.highscope.org/Research/MsrpEvaluation/msrpmain.htm

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[1] S.L. Kagan, *Back to Basics: Essential Components of an American Early Care and Education System*. Available at: http://www.buildinitiative.org/docs/BacktoBasics.pdf. Viewed November 2003. Also, S.L. Kagan, and N.E. Cohen, *Not By Chance: Creating an Early Care and Education System for America's Children* (New Haven, Conn.: The Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy at Yale University, 2000).

[2] C. Scott-Little, S.L. Kagan, and V.S. Frelow, *Standards for Preschool Children's Learning and Development: Who Has Standards, How Were They Developed, and How Are They Used?* (Greensboro, N.C.: Regional Education Laboratory at SERVE, 2003).

[3] Goal 1 Early Childhood Assessments Resource Group, *Principles and Recommendations for Early Childhood Assessments*. Eds. L. Shepard, S.L. Kagan, and E. Wurtz (Washington, D.C.: National Education Goals Panel, 1998).

[4] Ibid.

[5] For more information on the potential dangers of young child assessments, see C. Scott-Little, S.L Kagan, and R. Clifford, *Assessing the State of State Assessments: Perspectives on Assessing Young Children* (Greensboro, N.C.: The Regional Education Laboratory at SERVE, 2003).

[6] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children, Youth, and Families, *Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Service, 1997). Also, S. Golin, A. Mitchell, and M. Wallen, *The Cost of Universal Access to Quality Preschool in Illinois* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2003). Available at: http://www.iwpr.org/pdf/preschoolIL.pdf

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