



preschool for all

NURTURING ILLINOIS' PROMISE

a primer for providers



Illinois State Board of Education

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Jesse H. Ruiz, Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Interim Superintendent

What is Preschool for All?	1
Who is Eligible for Preschool for All?	3
Preschool for All by 2011	5
Where is Preschool for All?	6
Models for Collaboration	6
Staffing Options	8
Preschool for All Program Specifications	9
Preschool for All Planning Calendar	15
What if our program is not funded?	16
Resources for Planning	17

What is Preschool for All?

Preschool for All is a historic expansion of early childhood programs that makes Illinois the first state to offer voluntary preschool to all three- and four-year-olds whose parents want them to participate. The goal of Preschool for All is to nurture the promise of Illinois' young children by ensuring they are well prepared to succeed in school and in life. Preschool for All also includes new resources to expand quality infant-toddler programs targeted to at-risk children and their families.

Governor Rod Blagojevich signed Preschool for All into law in July 2006, after the bill passed the General Assembly with strong bipartisan support. The legislature also approved \$45 million in additional funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant to expand preschool and at-risk infant-toddler programs and enhance the quality of the system overall. These resources will enable approximately 10,000 new children to attend a high quality preschool program in 2006-07. Similar increases will be requested from the General Assembly over the next four years.

When fully implemented, Preschool for All will ensure that 190,000 children in Illinois have access to high-quality preschool. This estimate includes children who are already served in the existing State Pre-Kindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Failure (State Pre-Kindergarten), Head Start and Early Childhood Special Education programs. During expansion, programs serving children at-risk of school failure are the first priority for new funding, followed by programs serving families earning up to four times the federal poverty level, currently \$80,000 for a family of four.

Preschool for All is based on recommendations drafted by the Illinois Early Learning Council, a statewide advisory board created with bipartisan legislative support in 2003. The Governor and leaders of the Illinois General Assembly appoint the Early Learning Council members, which include early childhood practitioners, policymakers, civic and business leaders, advocates and state agencies. Standing committees provide a forum for participation by additional stakeholders.

Preschool for All is administered by the Illinois State Board of Education, except in Chicago, where funding is administered by the Chicago Public Schools using the same criteria. Preschool for All builds on the foundation of the 20-year-old State Pre-Kindergarten program by expanding resources to reach more children and enhance quality in participating schools, community organizations and private providers. As with the State Pre-Kindergarten program, funding for

Preschool for All is provided through the Early Childhood Block Grant. However, Preschool for All expands eligibility to all Illinois three- and four-year-olds whose parents want them to attend, although at-risk and moderate-income children will be prioritized during the expansion period. Preschool for All infant-toddler funds will continue to be targeted to programs that serve at-risk children.

Preschool for All also provides new resources to ensure quality and accountability at the program level and across the system. Key components include:

- Two year program for 3- and 4-yr olds
- Monitoring and accountability
- Training and technical assistance
- Expand supply of certified teachers
- Statewide program evaluation
- Social/emotional consultation
- Maximum class size of 20, with 1 to 10 adult/child ratio.
- Funded programs provide a minimum-number of part-day sessions.
- Part-day preschool can be embedded into full-day, full-year programs
- High quality curriculum/assessment
- Parent education and involvement
- Community collaboration
- Professional development

Eleven percent of Preschool for All funding is directed to infant-toddler programs that serve at-risk children and their families. Illinois is the only state to formalize the connection between its infant-toddler programs and the broader early childhood spectrum to this extent. Extensive information and application guidelines for infant-toddler programs is available on the Illinois State Board of Education website. This commitment to serving children birth to three years of age reflects the core values that underscore Preschool for All – all children deserve a quality early learning experience, but we must start earlier and do more for children who face the greatest challenges.

By building on a strong tradition of quality, Preschool for All places Illinois at the forefront of a national movement to make quality early learning available for all children. Yet many people – from local program directors to leaders of state government – must help sustain the current momentum in order to realize the full vision of Preschool for All.

Who is Eligible for Preschool for All?

Every three- and four-year-old in Illinois is eligible for Preschool for All. Prior to 2006, only children classified as at-risk of school failure were able to take part in State-funded preschool. For the first time, programs are allowed to use State dollars to serve children from the broader community. While funding during the five-year expansion period will be prioritized according to need, these priorities are designed with some flexibility, so that programs can respond to local need and use resources in as efficient and fair manner as possible.

Given the considerable interest in and need for preschool services, during the current statewide expansion all Preschool for All programs are expected to be enrolled to their full licensed capacity. Programs that do not have a full roster of children should actively reach out to parents and the community in order to recruit students to fill each classroom. Recruitment activities can include outreach to nearby school districts, local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and other early childhood networks, participation in community fairs, posters in local businesses, outreach to other agencies that serve families, and door-to-door canvassing.

Preschool for All grant awards will be made each year, depending on available funding appropriated by the General Assembly. Governor Blagojevich has announced his intent to seek successive Preschool for All funding increases until all children are served. While the grant award time frame will vary depending on when the State budget is approved, the Preschool for All grant period will generally begin in the summer of a given program year, no sooner than July 1st, and will extend until June 30 of the program year.

Priority One: Programs Serving Primarily At-Risk Children

First priority in awarding Preschool for All grants must be given to applicants that propose to serve primarily children identified as being at-risk of academic failure. The determination of whether a child is at-risk is made on a community-wide basis using a formal screening tool such as the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, Brigance Screens or the Denver Developmental Screening II, in combination with a parent interview. These tools identify developmental issues and other factors that could contribute to school failure, such as language, cultural, economic and other disadvantages. Children qualify by multiple indicators, rather than just a single criterion.

Many at-risk children come from low-income families, including low-income working families, homeless families, families where English is not the primary language or families where one or both parents are teenagers or have not completed high school. However, neither a child's membership in a certain group or a child's family situation should determine whether that child is at-risk.

For the purposes of Preschool for All, "programs serving primarily at-risk children" are defined as those programs which:

1. Have 51 percent or more of the enrolled children identified as at risk;
2. Prioritize at-risk students over non-at-risk students when making enrollment decisions; and
3. Have taken specific, proactive measures to ensure that parents of potentially at-risk children in the community are aware of the availability of the opportunity for preschool education through the program.

It is important to note that while a majority of children must fall into the at-risk category for a program to be considered "primarily at-risk," if space is still available after a program has proactively reached out to fully enroll its at-risk population, the remaining spaces may be carried over to reach other children, with a preference for children from the family income priority group. Similarly, general population children will be able to fill unused spaces in communities that have reached all children in both priority groups. In all instances, Preschool for All programs should strive to be fully enrolled. Generally this will mean classrooms of 20 children, though in some cases licensure requirements for programs receiving federal funds or unique circumstances in a given community may lead to smaller class sizes.

Priority Two: Family Income Less Than Four Times Federal Poverty Level

Second priority in awarding Preschool for All funds must be given to applicants proposing to serve primarily children whose family's income is less than four times the federal poverty guidelines updated periodically by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Programs must collect evidence of family income for each child whose participation is based on income, such as information collected by school districts for income-based education programs, such as the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program.

2006 HHS Poverty Guidelines

“Programs serving primarily children whose family meets income guidelines” are defined as those programs serving 51 percent or more children from families with incomes below the maximum threshold for their household size. In cases where a program is funded under the income guideline priority but has space available after rigorous, good-faith efforts have been made to serve all children at-risk of school failure and who meet income guidelines, this space may be used for general population children. In all scenarios, at-risk children will always have first priority.

Persons in Family or Household*	Poverty Level	4 Times Poverty Level
1	\$ 9,800	\$39,200
2	\$13,200	\$52,800
3	\$16,600	\$66,400
4	\$20,000	\$80,000
5	\$23,400	\$93,600
6	\$26,800	\$107,200
7	\$30,200	\$120,800
8	\$33,600	\$134,400
For each additional person, add	\$3,400	\$13,600

Source: *Federal Register*, Vol. 71, No. 15, Jan. 24, 2006, pp. 3848-3849

Preschool for All by 2011

Preschool for All funding priorities are intended to guide funding decisions during the build-up period. As new capacity is added each year and prioritized populations are reached, new funds will be targeted toward serving all 3- or 4-year-olds whose parents want them to attend. Governor Blagojevich has announced his intention to seek consecutive funding increases over the next four years in order to make quality preschool available to all families who want it.

Because local needs and capacities differ, some communities may reach the goal of full preschool access sooner than others. For example, one community may have a large at-risk population to serve, but must develop new programs or address facilities issues before it is able to apply for Early Childhood Block Grant Funds. Another community may serve a similar population, but is able to apply for funds to serve more children more quickly, due to prior planning efforts, long-standing relationships between the local child care and public school communities, or other factors. The State Board, Chicago Public Schools, and others can help work with communities that have large numbers of unserved at-risk children, to help them develop successful applications. In all instances, of course, qualified programs serving

primarily at-risk children will be prioritized over applications for programs that would not serve primarily at-risk children

Where is Preschool for All?

Preschool for All is offered in a diverse range of school- and community-based sites and programs. All Preschool for All programs will be funded for a minimum number of days (typically 180) on a school year calendar to provide a minimum of 2.5 hours a day of programming, which can operate within a full-day, full-year program. Programs are expected to provide information about daily schedules, classroom location and facilities as part of their application. Applicants other than public school districts must provide evidence of existing capacity to provide early childhood education programs, including the agency's mission statement, organizational structure, accreditation and other relevant information. Eligible applicants include:

- public school districts
- university laboratory schools
- child care centers
- regional offices of education
- charter schools
- community colleges
- community organizations
- private preschools
- park districts
- faith-based organizations*
- home-based child-care networks
- other settings

* Faith-based organizations are eligible to be funded for Preschool for All, but may not use State funds to support religious instruction.

Models for Collaboration

Preschool for All is designed to promote a comprehensive approach to early childhood development and encourages collaboration among providers and other community stakeholders to foster creative strategies to meet the complete needs of young children and their families. Many agencies are reworking their organizational practice to emphasize cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. Educational, health, and social service agencies are beginning to recognize that only by working together can they provide services that are integrated rather than fragmented, multidimensional rather than one-dimensional, and continuous rather than sporadic. While collaboration is not required, Preschool for All encourages joint applications that maximize limited resources, increase the cohesion of services and provide practical avenues for collaboration. Joint applications must designate a single administrative agent, clearly delineate the shared responsibilities of each partner. Applicants can participate in only one application for Preschool for All funds. Within those parameters, Preschool for All providers have considerable flexibility to create partnerships that fit local circumstances. The State Board and Chicago Public Schools can help to provide information about the broad array of possible collaborations, but on the following pages are two of the proven models for successful community collaboration.

Model 1: Delivering Preschool for All to Eligible Children in Child Care Centers

- Type 04 certified teachers work with child care staff to deliver Preschool for All curriculum.
- Non-certified staff employed to assist in instruction of children must meet relevant training and degree requirements for paraprofessionals by July 1, 2014. (See 23 Ill. Adm. Code 25.510(c) <http://www.isbe.net/rules/achieve/pdfs/25ark.pdf>).
- Preschool for All funds can support a combination of credentialed staff, parent involvement activities, educational supplies and materials, student transportation for educational outings, and other direct services to children.
- Programs are typically funded at a level of roughly \$3,000 per year for each age-eligible child.
- Preschool for All programs must operate a minimum of 2.5 hours on a school year calendar of approximately 180 days per year. However, these programs can be embedded into full-day, full-year programs that wrap child care around preschool.
- Parents may not be charged an additional fee for their child's participation in the Preschool for All program. Programs are allowed to charge for child care services that wrap around Preschool for All.

- Funds provided for Preschool for All must supplement, not supplant, funds received from other sources for the same purpose.

Staffing Options

Depending on local needs, a number of staff arrangements can be deployed to maximize the reach of a certified teacher funded by Preschool for All. The two examples below describe how one full-time teacher can serve 40 children – 20 in the morning session and 20 in the afternoon session. Actual class sizes may vary in settings where federal licensure requirements decrease the number of children who can be served. These are just two examples from a range of possible options, and programs with questions about possible staffing models should contact ISBE or CPS for further guidance.

- A. Teacher Hosts a Morning Class and an Afternoon Class: In this option, each classroom is staffed with one certified (Type 04) teacher as well as child care staff who meet child care licensing standards (often a child care teacher and teacher assistant). These staff members run both morning and afternoon programs for two difference classes of children, doubling the number of children served.
- B. Teacher Brings Preschool into Two Classrooms: In this option, the certified preschool teacher serves children in two classrooms, spending half her time in one classroom and half in the other. The certified teacher supplements the existing child care staff and no other staffing changes are made. This model contributes to joint planning among classrooms.

Model 2: Delivering Preschool for All to Children in Family Child Care Homes

- A certified Preschool for All teacher visits family child care homes on a regular basis to provide Preschool for All services to eligible children.
- Programs also may provide group learning experiences by periodically bringing children to an appropriate central location, such as a child care center, park district field house, or other community space.
- The Preschool for All teacher performs similar functions to the certified teacher in Model 1, including developing an assessment profile of each child, working with family child care providers to develop and implement curriculum plans that address children's individual needs and working with children individually and in groups.

- A family child care provider may pursue teacher certification to become a Preschool for All teacher.
- These programs appear to work best when they build on existing child care home networks that are supported by child care centers or other agencies.
- Professional development is more effective when the family child care providers are included in collaborating agency teacher trainings.

Model 3: Delivering Preschool for All in Partnership with Head Start

- Preschool for All programs and Head Start programs may share the responsibility of early care and education services for Head Start-eligible children who are also determined to be at risk of academic failure.
- For example, Preschool for All funds may support a certified teacher who works with Head Start-funded staff to provide the preschool program and Head Start staff may provide social and health services, as well as collaborate in the educational program.
- Collaborative Head Start/Preschool for All classrooms shall be considered fully enrolled when they reach Head Start guidelines for maximum of number of children in a classroom.

Preschool for All Program Specifications

Preschool for All program specifications are similar to those of the State Pre-Kindergarten program upon which it is modeled. These specifications are built upon the Illinois Early Learning Standards (http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/early_learning_standards.pdf). Preschool for All will enable programs to expand or create new preschool programs, while improving the quality of the overall system. Preschool for All is made up of several required components: 1) Screening; 2) Educational Program; 3) Parent Education and Involvement; 4) Community Collaboration; 5) Staff Requirements and Professional Development.

1. Screening Component

All Preschool for All programs must implement a formal screening process to determine a child's needs and priority for service. While Preschool All establishes that all Illinois three- and four-year-olds are eligible for preschool, new capacity must be built in order to meet expected demand. During the build-up period, funding will be prioritized to

programs which serve primarily at-risk children, followed by programs serving children from families earning up to four times the federal poverty rate (currently \$80,000 for a family of four).

Screening should be conducted on a community-wide basis in cooperation with other programs serving young children (e.g., public schools, child care agencies, special education, Head Start, 0-3 programs and Child Find). Programs may use an existing screening instrument or one that they have developed. All screening procedures must include:

- Criteria to determine at what point an approved screening instrument indicates that children are at-risk of academic failure, as well as to assess other environmental, economic and demographic factors.
- Mechanisms to measure the child's development in these specific areas: vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, English proficiency, fine and gross motor skills, social skills and cognitive development.
- A parent interview that gathers information about a child's health and social development; parent's education, employment, income and age; and other information that indicates risk of school failure or prioritization under income guidelines.
- Vision and hearing screening must be provided.
- Written parental permission for the screening must be obtained.
- Teachers should be involved in the screening process and have access to the results.

2. Educational Program

Preschool for All programs must offer an appropriate education program that addresses all developmental areas. Requirements include:

- Curriculum and instruction are aligned to the Illinois Early Learning Standards (http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/early_learning_standards.pdf)

- The individualized assessment profile for each child is the basis for determining that child's educational program.
- The following domains of development are addressed: vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, English proficiency, fine and gross motor skills, social skills and cognitive development.
- A language and literacy development program shall be implemented for each child based on the child's individual assessment.
- A snack is provided for participating children in a part-day program.
- Student progress is assessed and documented to ensure that the educational program meets the needs of the student.
- A system is established to advise parents/guardians of their children's progress routinely.
- The staff-child ratio for each classroom must not exceed one adult to ten children. No more than twenty children can be served in a single classroom.
- . Programs must serve all at-risk children before enrolling other children. Children whose families make less than four times the federal poverty level will have the next priority.
- Age-eligible children are enrolled in kindergarten upon leaving the program.

3. Parent Education and Involvement

As their children's first teachers, parents are a crucial piece of a successful early learning experience. Preschool for All will empower parents and other guardians by providing more choices among programs and settings that fit their unique needs. Preschool for All programs are expected to engage these adults in the educational process and support effective parenting practices. Required components of Preschool for All parent programs include:

- Communication. There is meaningful, two-way communication between home and the program on a regular basis.
- Parent Education: Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

Sample Screening Instruments

- Ages and Stages Questionnaire
- AGS Early Screening Profiles
- Battelle Developmental Inventory
- Brigance Screens
- CIP (Comprehensive Identification Process) Screen
- Denver Developmental Screening II
- Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning—Third Edition
- Early Screening Inventory
- First STEP-First Screening Test for Evaluating Preschoolers

- Student Learning: Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.
- Involvement: Parents are welcome in the program, and their support and involvement are sought.
- Decision-Making and Advocacy: Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

Examples of effective parent engagement practices include:

- Parents, families, staff and community members cooperatively develop a mission statement.
- The program develops and implements a written parent involvement plan.
- Staff partners with parents to promote children's social/emotional and overall development.
- Family activities such as workshops, field trips and child/parent events are organized.
- The program encourages both mother and father/male involvement in children's lives, and respects the diversity of family arrangements characteristic of today's society.
- Parents are encouraged to volunteer in the classroom.
- The program has a lending library for parents, and a toy/book lending library for children.
- The program has a newsletter and regularly sends information home.

4. Community Collaboration

Preschool for All seeks to ensure that children and families get the services they need with a minimum of bureaucracy, and use public resources wisely by avoiding duplication of efforts. Since many families need full-day, year-round placement that includes not only preschool but other like child care and family programs, extra consideration will be given to Preschool for All partnerships that address these broader needs. Examples include partnerships between school districts and child care agencies, networks of family child care providers who share a preschool teacher, or partnerships between preschool programs and local Head Start initiatives.

Characteristics of effective community collaborations include:

- Programs collaborate with all other nearby programs to address the education, welfare, health and safety needs of young children and their families.
- A clear collaboration and implementation plan is in place.
- Programs have written procedures to assist children with transitions both within the program and between other early childhood programs in the community, including kindergarten.
- Programs establish partnerships with parents/guardians and families and encourage them to make decisions regarding their parenting skills and their children's development.
- The program has a written transition plan with other early childhood programs that addresses the unique needs and situations of families.
- Program staff appreciates the impact of children's home, community and cultural experiences on their development and learning.

5. Staff Requirements and Professional Development

Preschool for All staff will have the knowledge and skills to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners. All program administrators and staff must hold appropriate certifications and/or qualifications for the position for which they are hired. Preschool for All programs are expected to regularly assess the continuing learning needs of the staff and provide appropriate ongoing professional development activities both inside the building and within the broader early childhood community. Major requirements include:

- All teaching staff in instructional roles hold either an Initial (Type 02) or Standard (Type 04) Early Childhood Certificate.
- Non-certified staff members who assist in instruction meet training and degree requirements.
- Administrators and program staff are knowledgeable about high-quality early childhood programs and are effective in explaining, organizing and implementing them.
- Program has written personnel policies and job descriptions on file.
- Program offers opportunities and resources for staff to share and consult with others.
- Staff development needs are regularly assessed and inform an in-service training program and other appropriate ongoing professional development activities.
- The program has a written professional development plan for all staff.

Detailed information about professional development resources for early care and education providers can be found at the Gateways to Opportunity website at www.ilgateways.com.

Preschool for All Planning Calendar

Preschool for All funds are awarded on an annual cycle for both continuation and expansion grants. (Expansion grants are dependent on appropriations by the General Assembly.) Many programs use the data gathering, needs analysis and program review required to complete the application as an opportunity to reflect on their past efforts and plan for continued improvement. Technical assistance is available from ISBE and other partners to help programs prepare their application.

July:	Fiscal year begins July 1. Preschool for All grant awards made. Local programs begin hiring and notify parents of placement
August:	Continue program set-up Recruit additional children if necessary. Some school-based programs begin.
September:	All funded programs begin. Potential applicants begin planning and needs assessment
October:	Early Childhood Administrators conference. Potential applicants build relationships with possible partners
December:	Begin technical assistance/planning support for potential applicants
January:	General Assembly convenes Preschool for All Request for Proposal Issued
February:	Preschool for All bidders' conferences Governor submits FY08 budget to General Assembly
March:	Preschool for All applications due Legislative hearings on expansion
April:	Preschool for All application review
May:	Final State of Illinois budget passed Initial Preschool for All funding recommendations made
June:	Preschool for All awards made

What if our program is not funded?

While funding for preschool has grown dramatically over the past several years, so also has demand for these programs, especially as public awareness of Preschool for All has grown in the wake of the legislation's passage. Funding priorities established by the General Assembly will structure the build-up period in order to distribute resources fairly while moving promptly towards full access for all three- and four-year-olds. Since it is not yet possible to fund all programs at the same time, awards will be based according to both need and the ranking of applications using a competitive grant process.

Programs that are not awarded funds in their first application are encouraged to reapply in subsequent years. The Preschool for All application process is designed to be developmental in nature, in that it provides opportunity for objective feedback and close internal scrutiny.

Proposals that earned sufficient scores to qualify for funding and which fall into the two funding priorities established by the legislature will be eligible for mid-year funding should supplemental resources become available. Programs that fit funding priorities but did not make the score cutoff are encouraged to seek technical assistance and participate in planning workshops, so that their next application will have an improved chance at funding. This learning process should be helpful to all applicants, regardless of their circumstances.

Resources for Planning



Illinois State Board of Education

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

Jesse H. Ruiz, Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Interim Superintendent