

Support Preschool for All

Give every young child a better opportunity for success in school and life

For more
information, contact:

Nancy Shier,
Ounce of
Prevention Fund
(312) 922-3863

Sean Noble,
Voices for
Illinois Children
(312) 502-5566

Sessy Nyman,
Action for Children
(773) 315-1309

Tim Carpenter
Fight Crime:
Invest in Kids
Illinois
(312) 986-9200

Emily Harris
Chicago Metropolis
2020
(312) 332-8162

Early Learning
Illinois Agenda

- Reinforce Parents' Role as Children's First Teachers
- Expand Access to High-Quality Early Care & Education
- Improve Early Childhood Infrastructure: Workforce, Facilities, Coordination
- Build Children's Social-Emotional Foundations for Learning

BACKGROUND: Illinois' PreKindergarten program for at-risk, 3- and 4-year-old children began in 1985 and ISBE's birth-to-3 programs were implemented a few years later. Since then, our state's investments in early education have helped thousands of young children who face the greatest learning challenges to begin school better-prepared for academic and social success. Despite difficult budget environments in the past three years, the General Assembly and the Governor have wisely recognized the value of early education by steadily increasing funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant, which supports these programs.

Now, we are poised to build on our success and become the only state to offer voluntary high-quality preschool to all 3- and 4-year olds, while prioritizing our commitment to children who are at-risk of academic failure.

THE PLAN: Preschool for All is drawn from a blueprint provided by the Illinois Early Learning Council, created with bipartisan support by the General Assembly and the Governor in 2003. Over 200 early childhood advocates, service providers, civic and law enforcement leaders, legislators and others provided input to the plan.

Preschool for All is the existing state PreK program, with expanded access and important investments in quality and accountability. It works through the current Early Childhood Block Grant to ensure:

- **Voluntary, high-quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents choose to participate**
- **Priority services for at-risk children with gradual expansion to others**
- **Expanded support for at-risk infants and toddlers**
- **High standards and quality curricula and teaching staff in a variety of settings that parents choose (schools, child care, other community-based providers) – an approach that addresses a shortage of school-based classrooms as well as some families' needs for full day/full year care**

Every child should have access to high-quality education. Research shows that children begin learning long before formal schooling begins, and that underachievement affects children from all communities and income groups – not just the lowest-income households. The K-12 school system and its students benefit greatly when children are prepared by preschool to enter kindergarten ready to learn. Yet working, middle-income families often have the most difficulty because they earn too much to qualify for assistance but cannot afford expensive, high-quality programs on their own.

Preschool for All requires an investment of \$45 million in new funding each of the next three years (totaling \$135 million). The funding will help enroll 32,000 new children in services over that time as well as improve program quality and accountability.

REQUEST: Support the Governor's FY2007 budget request of \$45 million and substantive legislation necessary to implement Preschool for All.