

**PRESCHOOL FOR ALL:
High-Quality Early Education For All of Illinois' Children
Illinois Early Learning Council, Spring 2006**

Overview

We know that early experiences affect children's brain development which in turn shapes lifelong learning. Studies have demonstrated the benefits of preschool participation to include financial returns for society/government and lifelong benefits to the participants. The Illinois Early Learning Council has developed a set of recommendations that form the foundation of a five-year plan to make Illinois the first state to offer high-quality preschool to all 3 and 4 year olds.

Part I: Why Preschool For All?

- a. Thousands of preschoolers do not currently qualify for state Pre-K. Preschool for All would provide incentives for new providers to participate and expand access while holding all programs to required statewide high standards.
- b. Many studies have discussed the benefits of preschool, but not all families can afford quality preschool. Pre-school for All makes preschool a reality for all Illinois children.
- c. High-quality preschool raises the odds that investments in K-12 will pay off. Building a strong foundation for children early helps to insure that students reach their highest potential in elementary school and beyond.

Part II: The Cornerstones of Preschool For All

- a. Preschool for All would ensure that every family has access to at least 12.5 hours per week of voluntary, high-quality preschool.
- b. Preschool for All also requires high staff qualifications, supports ongoing learning, research-based curricula and program models.
- c. It is important to consider all of the aspects of school readiness and meet the unique developmental needs of individual students as well as ease the transitions between the settings.
- d. We have accomplished a lot so far which should be built upon to continually improve education in Illinois by building on existing infrastructure and encouraging linkages between schools, communities and families.

Putting the Pieces Together

As the pieces of Preschool for All come together, there is a need to stay focused on the ultimate goal – an early learning system with sufficient capacity to foster the strengths and meet the needs of each and every child. Sufficient capacity means enough knowledge, enough services, enough resources, enough commitment –spread across our state's many and varied communities.

(2006). *Preschool for all: High-quality early education for all of Illinois' children*.
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