

# **PRESCHOOL FOR ALL FUNDING REPORT**

**(REQUIRED BY PA 94-1054)**

**FISCAL YEAR 2008**

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



**preschool for all**

**NURTURING ILLINOIS' PROMISE**



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**ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
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# **2008 Preschool for All Funding Report**

## **Program Overview and FY 08 New Funds**

Preschool for All is a historic five-year expansion of early childhood programs that makes Illinois the first state in the nation to offer voluntary, high quality preschool to all three- and four-year-olds whose parents want them to participate. The goal of Preschool for All is to ensure that all children 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.

Preschool for All was signed into law in July 2006, after passing the General Assembly with strong bipartisan support. In October, new funding was awarded to 78 preschool and 6 at-risk infant-toddler programs, which will reach approximately 4,000 new children in 2007-08. 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 existing 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 families earning up to four times the federal poverty level, or \$82,600 for a family of four.

For FY08 new funds, one hundred percent of the new FY 2008 Preschool for All funds were awarded to programs serving primarily at-risk children. None of the new Preschool for All funds were awarded to programs serving primarily children with a family income of less than four times the federal poverty level and zero percent of the new Preschool for All funds were awarded to other pre-kindergarten programs.

Preschool for All is administered by the Illinois State Board of Education, except in Chicago, where the program 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-K 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, though 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 for initiatives to improve quality and accountability. Key components include:

- Two year program for 3 and 4-year olds
- Monitoring and accountability
- Training and technical assistance
- Expand supply of certified teachers
- Statewide and program evaluation
- Social/emotional consultation
- Small class size, adult/child ratios
- 180 half-day sessions
- 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 institutionalize its infant-toddler programs to this extent. Extensive information and application guidelines for infant-toddler programs is available on the Illinois State Board of Education website ([www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net)). This commitment reflects the core values that undergird 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.

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

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 children.

### **Who is Eligible for Preschool for All?**

Every three-and four-year-old in Illinois is eligible for Preschool for All. Prior to Preschool for All, only children who were 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 circumstances and use resources in as efficient and fair manner as possible.

Given the considerable interest in and need for preschool services, all Preschool for All classrooms are expected to be fully enrolled with 20 children. 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 local early childhood networks, participating in community fairs, posters in local businesses and state agencies and door-to-door canvassing.

Preschool for All grant awards will be made each year, depending on available funding appropriated by the General Assembly. 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 1<sup>st</sup>, and will extend until June 30 of the program year.

### **Where is Preschool for All?**

Preschool for All will be offered in a diversity of school- and community-based sites and programs. All Preschool for All programs will be funded on a 180 day school year calendar to provide a 2.5 hour, 5 day a week program. Otherwise, local programs will have considerable flexibility with their locations, operational structure and program formats. 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 encourage 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 thought and 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.

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 and clearly delineate the shared responsibilities of each partner. Applicants can participate in only one application for Preschool for All funds. Within these parameters, Preschool for All providers have considerable flexibility to create partnerships that fit local circumstances.

### **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. 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 for 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 (\$82,600 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 the following requirements.

- 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. The education program must meet the following requirements.

- Curriculum and instruction are aligned to the Illinois Early Learning Standards.
- 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 half-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 routinely advise parents of their child's progress.
- 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 should serve the maximum number of children in each 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 by providing more choices among programs and settings that fit their unique needs. Preschool for All programs are expected to engage parents in the educational process and support effective parenting practices. Programs must provide parent education and involvement activities in each of the following areas.

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

The following are examples of effective parent engagement practices.

- Parents, families, staff and community members cooperatively develop a mission statement.
- The program develops and implements a written parent involvement plan.
- Staff partner 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.
- 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 comprehensive services 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 the following elements.

- 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 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 the following.

- All teaching staff in instructional roles hold either an Initial (Type 02) or Standard (Type 04) Early Childhood Certificate.
- Non-certified staff 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.