

**ILLINOIS
PREKINDERGARTEN
PROGRAM
FOR CHILDREN
AT RISK
OF ACADEMIC
FAILURE**

ISBE

FY 2000 EVALUATION REPORT

Illinois State Board of Education
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**ILLINOIS PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
FOR CHILDREN AT RISK OF ACADEMIC FAILURE
FY 2000 EVALUATION REPORT**

**ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Research Division**

June 2001

**Ronald J. Gidwitz, Chairman
State Board of Education**

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State Superintendent of Education**

The interpretations and conclusions expressed in this report have been prepared by staff and do not necessarily reflect the position or the policy of the Illinois State Board of Education.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FOR FY 2000

The Illinois Prekindergarten Program for Children At Risk of Academic Failure provides state grants to public school districts to conduct preschool education programs for children ages three to five who are at risk of academic failure. General findings are as follows:

- The Early Childhood Block Grant funding increased from \$153.6 million in FY 99 to \$169.6 million in FY 2000. Under the Early Childhood Block Grant the following programs can receive funding: the Prekindergarten At-Risk program, the Parental Training program, and the Prevention Initiative program.
- Statewide, 407 projects received state funds to serve children in 609 districts. Forty-seven of these projects served 202 districts under joint agreements with other districts.
- A total of 53,386 children were served during FY 2000, a 7% increase from FY 99. Of the total served, 13,024 children (24%) were in their second year of the prekindergarten program. Of the children eligible after screening, 73% were served and 7,265 children were on a waiting list at the end of the 2000 school year.
- The average amount spent per child from the appropriation increased by 8%, from \$2,460 in FY 97 to \$2,654 in FY 2000.
- Statewide, teachers ranked 18% of the children who participated in prekindergarten programs as “above average” and 62% as “average” in their kindergarten readiness skills.
- About 30% of the children served were from single-parent homes and 5% were living with adults other than their parents. About 70% of the children were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 56% were minority children.
- Almost 94% of parents were reported to be involved in at least one parent involvement activity. Forty-three percent of the parents participated in four or more parent involvement activities.
- The average teacher-child ratio was 1 to 18 (17.78), and the average adult-child (teacher and teacher’s aide) ratio was 1 to 8.7. Some 1,590 full-time equivalent teachers were paid by the grant, about 256 were employed as parent coordinators, and 1,567 worked as teacher’s aides in FY 2000.
- Statewide, 24% of three-year-olds and 76% of four-year-old children were served in FY 2000.
- Since the beginning of the program (FY 87), ISBE has been collecting data to follow the academic progress of the children who participated in the program. Data for downstate students indicate that across three instructional areas, 76 to 82% of students in kindergarten and 72 to 76% of students in eighth grade were ranked as “above average” or “average” by their teachers. In Chicago, these percentages are 58 to 63 in third grade, and 55% in eighth grade reading and mathematics and 36% in eighth grade language.
- Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) results for downstate previous prekindergarten students in third grade reveal that 55% “meet” or “exceed” the standards in writing and 75% “meet” or “exceed” the standards in mathematics. In eighth grade, 41% of the students “meet” or “exceed” the standards in mathematics, while in writing and science these percentages are 64% and 72% respectively.

- The ISAT results for Chicago students previously enrolled in prekindergarten show that their level of performance is the same as all the other Chicago students in all subjects at all grade levels.
- The Illinois State Board of Education estimates 140,066 three- and four-year-old children to be at risk of academic failure in Illinois. With this estimate as a guide, the Illinois Prekindergarten Program served 38% of the total at-risk children in FY 2000. Head Start programs served another 33,168 (24%) children in FY 2000.

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WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM IN ILLINOIS?

In 1985, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted a policy on early childhood education and was authorized by legislation to administer grants to school districts to operate prekindergarten programs for children three to five years of age. The eligible population to be served in this program was described as "children who were at risk of academic failure because of their home and community environment." Many of the at-risk children come from low-income families and families where English is not spoken as the primary language in the home. Many are children of teen-aged parents who have not yet completed high school. Some are children who were born prematurely or had a low birth weight.

How are participants identified?

Children are identified for the program through individual screening and assessment, not by their membership in a given group or the characteristics of their families. Individual projects establish their own eligibility criteria and methods for screening based on local needs. No single uniform eligibility standard or screening system is applied to all age-appropriate populations. Because the program eligibility is based on local needs, the characteristics and services of the programs vary according to the needs of their participants.

How was information collected?

This report is based on information collected from each project at the end of the school year using the following data collection instruments: Prekindergarten Student Record for information about the characteristics of students served, their status and performance; Prekindergarten Program Record for information regarding program characteristics; and Prekindergarten Follow-Up Report for information to measure performance of participating children in succeeding school years.

For the follow-up study, a random sample of at least 25-33% of the children who previously participated in the program were selected from each grade. Each student's academic performance was determined by Illinois Standards Achievement Test scores (ISAT) in conjunction with local rankings of "above average," "average," "below average," or "deficient." The local rankings were based on subjective judgments influenced by locally defined performance standards and assessment practices.

Because of the variations in programs and student characteristics, assumptions linking program services to participant outcomes should be made with caution. However, the data collected and the subsequent evaluation help identify factors that seem to be related to performance and provide a partial explanation of how students are responding to prekindergarten experiences.

Table 1: The Prekindergarten At-Risk Program in Illinois from FY 86 to FY 2000

	FY 86	FY 87	FY 88	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000
Number of Projects	100	94	94	135	184	236	262	295	312	330	351	376	388	405	407
Participating Districts	232	202	178	279	353	475	496	531	547	578	607	607	na	na	609
Children Screened	24,340	26,749	23,993	32,161	45,770	57,482	67,388	71,470	75,519	73,953	74,663	83,737	82,689	81805	81,070
Eligible after Screening	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	43,319	45,673	54,030	54,044	52785	55,573
Children Served*	na	6953	5394	10,411	17,176	23,372	27,269	29,814	33,204	35,057	38,034	45,614	45,854	49934	53,386
2nd Year in Program	na	1642	na	1,723	2,802	5,056	6,557	7,393	7,362	9,928	9,150	11,597	11,798	12353	13,024
Children Served First Year	na	na	na	8,688	14,374	18,316	20,712	22,421	25,842	25,129	28,884	34,017	35,364	37581	40,362
Eligible Children Served	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	58%	63%	63%	65%	71%	73%
Summer Enrollment	na	na	na	na	9,300	13,559	5,055	4,558	3,538	4,704	4,709	1,453	1574	3616	2,457
Children on Waiting List**	na	na	na	na	na	6,674	7,137	10,235	12,551	na	9,246	13,579	10,352	7939	7,265
Appropriation in Millions	12.1	12.7	12.7	23.9	48	63	71.5	75.5	87.7	92.7	101.9	112.2	123.4	***	@
% Change in Appropriation	na	5	0	88	101	31	13 [†]	6	16	6	10	10	10		

* The row ' Children Served' also includes children served for their second year in the Prekindergarten At-Risk Program.

** Projects reported children on the waiting list only if their parents wanted them on the list. Some parents chose instead to enroll their children in Head Start or another preschool program. Children who were on a waiting list in the previous school year could have been enrolled in the current school year of The Prekindergarten At Risk Program.

na = data not available

*** In FY99, \$153.6 million was appropriated as a part of the Early Childhood Block Grant. The amount spent on prekindergarten programs is not available.

@ In FY2000, \$169.6 million was appropriated as a part of Early Childhood Block Grant.

HOW HAS PARTICIPATION IN THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM CHANGED SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1986?

Early Childhood Block Grant funded 407 prekindergarten projects in fiscal year 2000. Forty-seven projects served more than one district under the joint agreements, making a total of 609 districts served, almost three times the number of districts served during the first full year of the program in FY 87. From a total of 81,070 children screened, 55,573 were eligible and 53,386 were served, 13,024 of whom were in their second year of the program. Projects reported a total of 7,265 children on the waiting list at the end of school year 2000. The number of students on the waiting list has consistently declined for the last three years. Table 1 on page 2 profiles program participation from FY 86 through FY 2000.

The increase in funds for FY 2000 resulted in a 7% increase in the number of children enrolled in the program. This increase may be the result of ISBE's efforts to encourage projects to maximize the use of staff and space resources made available through the program appropriation. Table 1 reveals that even with fewer children being screened in FY 99 and FY 2000, more children were eligible for the program. In FY 97 and in FY 99, 64.5% of the children screened were eligible for the program while in FY 2000, this number increased to 68.5%. About 73% of the eligible children were served and 13% were on a waiting list in FY 2000.

Table 2 shows the number of children who were eligible for the program, the number who received services, and the number of children on waiting lists by downstate, Chicago, and statewide.

Table 2. Program Eligibility and Participation for Downstate, Chicago, and Statewide in FY 2000

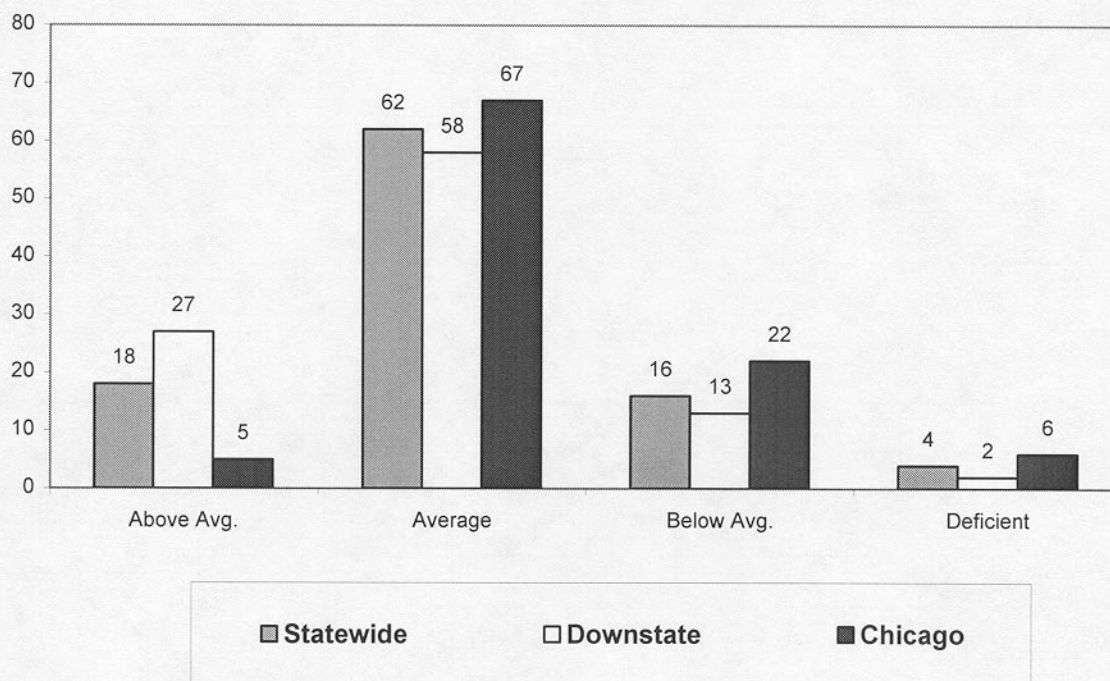
	Downstate	Chicago	Statewide
Children Screened	59,432	21,638	81,070
Eligible after Screening	35,484	20,089	55,573
Children Served First Year	24,213	16,149	40,362
Children Served in their Second Year of the Program	9,527	3,497	13,024
Total Children Served	33,740	19,646	53,386
Children on Waiting Lists	5,354	1,911	7,265
Total Number of Children Served During the Summer	2,457	0	2,457
Number of Children Who Participated only in the Summer Program	346	0	346

HAS THE PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM INCREASED CHILDREN'S READINESS FOR KINDERGARTEN?

At the end of the prekindergarten program, teachers rank each child's readiness for kindergarten according to a four-category scale: "above average," "average," "below average," and "deficient." These rankings are based on teacher judgment influenced by local assessment practices.

In FY 2000, 80% of participating children were ranked as "above average" or "average" in their kindergarten readiness level. In downstate, 85% of the at-risk children were ranked as "average" or "above average" in their readiness skills after participation in the program, and in Chicago the number was 72%. Figure 1 compares the performance of children statewide in FY 2000 with the performance of Chicago and downstate children. It should be emphasized that differences in rankings may be the result of different assessment instruments and performance criteria.

Figure 1: Kindergarten Readiness Level



WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO CHILDREN'S READINESS FOR KINDERGARTEN?

Research has shown that environmental background plays a major role in academic success or failure. To evaluate the characteristics of the children served, projects are asked to report information on each child's ethnicity, family structure, health, primary language, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, and previous preschool experiences.

What are the family structures of students?

About two-thirds (65%) of the children served came from homes where both parents are present (excluding 1% whose family structure was unknown). This percentage has remained about the same since FY 87.

Children who lived with two parents were ranked higher in terms of kindergarten readiness than children from other family structures. Almost 82% were ranked as "above average" or "average" compared to 75% of the children from single-parent families and 76% of the children who lived with an adult other than a parent.

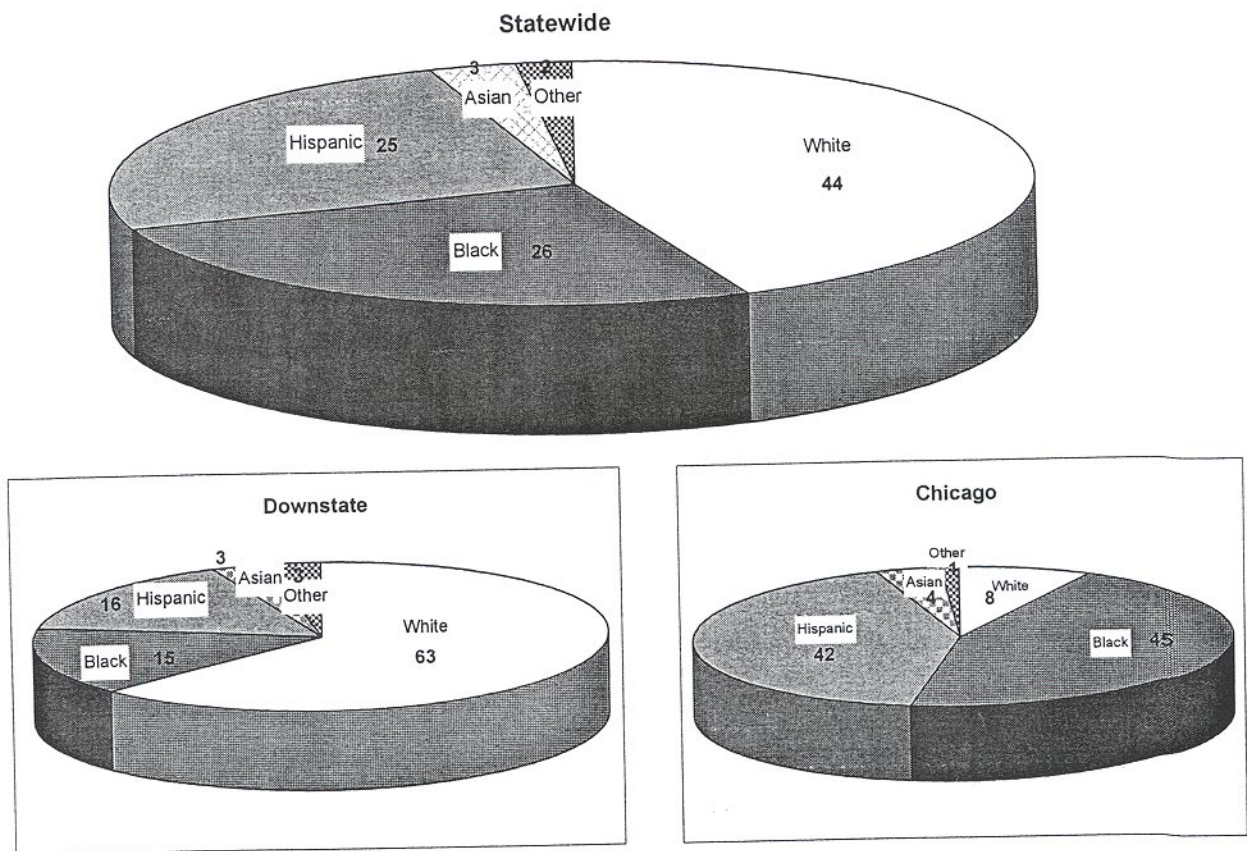
What were the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the children served?

In FY 2000, more than half the children served (56%) were from a minority group. About 44% of the children were white; 26% black; 25% Hispanic; and 3% Asian. "Other" including American Indians accounted for 2%.

Statewide, the program's ethnic and racial configuration has been changing since FY 90. In FY 90, 32% of the participating children were black, compared to 26% in FY 2000. The percentages of white children decreased from 50% in FY 90 to 41% in FY 97 and increased back to 44% in FY 2000, and each year the percent of Hispanic children has gradually increased from 16% in FY 90 to 25% in FY 2000. Figure 2 shows the ethnic breakdown of the children served.

Chicago serves vastly different percentages of ethnic and racial groups than the rest of the state. Most of the children served in Chicago are black (45%) and Hispanic (42%), while projects downstate served 15% black and 17% Hispanic students. The ethnic distribution of children served in the downstate projects has changed slightly with decreases in white and black children served and an increase in Hispanic children. In Chicago, the percentage of Hispanic children increased gradually from 22% in FY 87 to 37% in FY 95 to 41% in FY 97 and has remained the same since, and the percentage of black children decreased from 55% in FY 90 to 48% in FY 97 and 45% in FY 2000.

Figure 2: Percentage of Children Served by Ethnicity



Chicago School District 299 did not submit individual students' racial-ethnicity data, therefore, analysis of readiness level and ethnicity for statewide data is not available.

In downstate Illinois, 86% of white children were ranked by their teachers as "above average" to "average" compared to 83% of black children and 82% of Hispanic children. This difference in ranking between the ethnicities was larger in previous years.

Table 3: Readiness Level by Ethnicity - Downstate

Readiness Level	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Other
Above Average	28.1	26.5	22.9	40.7	24.9
Average	58.3	56.1	59.2	48.5	61.3
Below Average	11.6	15.1	15.7	8.3	11.2
Deficient	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.6

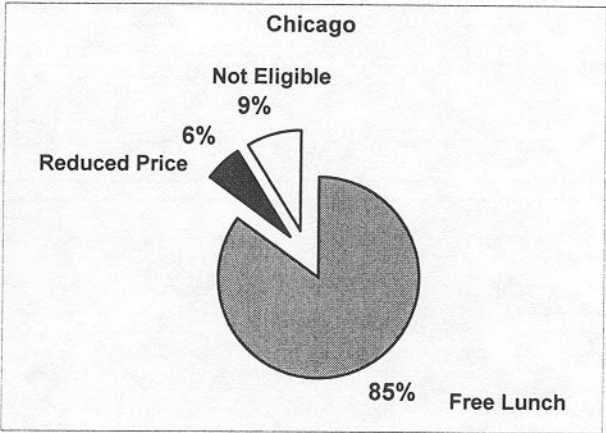
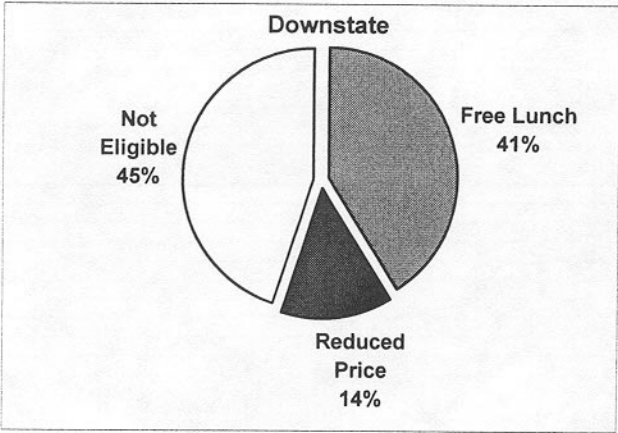
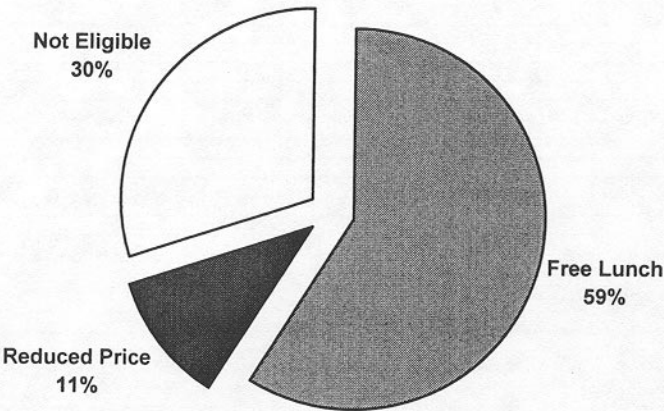
Did the family income level relate to readiness?

Eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch is used to determine which children come from low-income families. Since most programs operate only half days and do not offer meals, the lunch status of 18% of downstate but less than 1% of Chicago participants was unknown in FY 2000.

Fifty-nine percent of the children served statewide were eligible for free lunch and another 11% were eligible for reduced-price lunch. These figures have been slowly shifting since FY 97. In FY 97, 64% of children served were eligible for free lunch and 10% for reduced-price lunch. Chicago programs served many more low-income children, 91% compared to 55% downstate. See Figure 3.

Figure 3:

Figure 3: Percentage of Children Served by Lunch Status
Statewide



Due to significant differences in the population served and the readiness-level criteria between Chicago and downstate, the effect of family income on performance ranking diminishes in statewide data. Separate data analyses for Chicago and downstate reveal that family income

may have some effect on performance rank (see Table 4). In Chicago, 82% of the children who were not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch performed at "average" and "above average" compared to 70% of the children who were eligible for free lunch. In downstate, this difference is 89% and 81%, respectively.

Table 4: Readiness Level by School Lunch Status

Downstate

Readiness Level	Free Lunch	Reduced Price	Not Eligible
Above Average	24.2	28.9	31.2
Average	56.7	57.0	57.9
Below Average	16.1	12.4	9.6
Deficient	3.0	1.6	1.3

Chicago

Above Average	4.5	4.5	3.7
Average	66.0	71.7	78.1
Below Average	23.0	18.7	14.5
Deficient	6.5	5.1	3.6

How are parents involved?

All prekindergarten projects are required to include parent participation and parent education components in their programs. Substantial evidence from research suggests that parent involvement has a major influence on student achievement.

Almost 94% of parents participated in one or more activities, a decrease from 99% in FY 97. Less than half (43%) of the parents participated in four or more activities. Almost one-third (32%) of the parents participated in one or two parent activities. A total of 255.9 full-time equivalent parent-coordinator/facilitators were employed by projects. FY 2000 data suggest that more parents participate in fewer parent involvement activities. In FY 2000, 32% of parents participated in one or two activities compared to 21% in FY 97. ISBE will continue to track participation to determine the reason for this decline. Table 5 shows that high parent involvement may lead to better performance by the children. Almost 26% of the children whose parents participated in five or more activities were ranked as "above average," compared to 11% whose parents participated in only one or two activities, and 8% whose parents did not participate at all.

Table 5: Readiness Level and Parent Participation

Readiness Level	5 or More Activities	Four Activities	Three Activities	One or Two Activities	No Activities
Above Average	26.3	23.1	18.0	10.9	7.9
Average	61.0	62.1	64.5	59.0	68.0
Below Average	11.0	12.8	15.1	23.0	20.1
Deficient	1.7	2.0	2.4	7.1	4.0

Tables 6 and 7 show the number of parents involved in different activities.

Table 6: Number of Parents Served by Parent Education Activities

Type of Parent Education	Number of Parents Served	Percent of Total Parents
One-to-One Consultation/Counseling	24,375	46
Parent-Child Interaction Activities	27,795	52
Parenting Skill Development Activities	23,985	45
Health and Nutrition Workshop/Class	9,683	18
Adult Literacy/Job Development Activities	14,249	27
GED Classes	2,259	4
Parent Resource Library	27,368	51
Linking with Other Community Resources	22,774	43
Other Parent Education/Support Activities	22,871	43

Table 7: Number of Parents Involved by Activity

Type of Activities	Number of Parents Participating	Percent of Total Parents
Contributing Materials	26,329	49
Visiting/Observing in the Classroom	27,753	52
Attending Children's Programs	31,974	60
Attending Social Meetings	21,337	40
Attending Information Meetings	30,896	58
Volunteering Outside the Classroom	12,092	23
Volunteering in the Classroom	28,061	53
Participating in Parent Support Groups	9,798	18
Participating on Parent Advisory Boards	6,533	12
Book/Toy Lending Library	32,652	61
Field Trips	26,252	49
Other	8,466	16

WHAT ARE THE PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS?

The Prekindergarten At-Risk Program allows projects to develop their own unique at-risk programs while continuing to operate within the Illinois State Board of Education's guidelines. The following section explains the differing characteristics of the projects.

How do programs decide which children are eligible for services?

Projects establish their own criteria to determine which children are at risk of academic failure. The Illinois State Board of Education requires the following to be included in screening: fine and gross motor skills, cognitive development, visual motor integration, language and speech development, vocabulary, English proficiency, and social competence.

In FY 2000, almost half of the projects (47%) used the DIAL-R (Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning-Revised) test as their primary screening tool. About 17% of the projects used district-developed or other tests, and the Brigance Diagnostic Inventory of Early Development was used by 7% of the projects. When two screening instruments were used, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test Revised (PPVT-R) was most often used by projects (14%) as the second instrument.

Besides the screening assessments, districts also must use other criteria to determine the children's eligibility to participate in the program. About 96% of the projects consider low income and teenage parents as at-risk criteria. Criteria such as parent's education, drug/alcohol abuse, child living with family other than parent, child's primary language other than English, and a referral from other state agencies were used by 92-94% of the projects. Other major at-risk criteria were: child suffering from chronic illness, one of the parents incarcerated, homeless family, and parents' illness.

What kinds of instructional settings do programs use?

Instructional settings often depend upon available resources and the needs of the children. Some projects offer more than one instructional setting (e.g., half-day classroom and also full-day classroom or classroom and also home-based program). In FY 2000, the 407 projects offered 485 different types of instructional settings. Most of the projects (86%), enrolling 98% of the children, were classroom-based. About 1.2% of the children were served through a combination of classroom and home-based instruction, and less than one percent (0.8%) of the children were served in only home-based settings compared to 1.5% in FY 97 and 1.8% in FY 99.

Ten to 14 hours a week of classroom-based education continues to be the most common instructional setting serving 88.5% of the children. About 4% of the children were served in a classroom setting for the full day. Another one percent were served in 15 to 23 hours per week of classroom instruction. ISBE encouraged projects to offer extended day care to the children who are in a half-day classroom setting either at school or through collaboration with private day care. About 64 districts offered the extended full day care and education in FY 2000, including Chicago public schools.

What are the qualifications of educational staff?

In FY 2000, the projects employed the equivalent of 1,590 full-time teachers, a 5% increase from FY 99 and a 10% increase since FY 97. From FY 99, all teachers have held Early Childhood Education Certificates as required by law. The full-time equivalent number for teacher's aides was 1,567 for FY 2000.

What is the student-teacher ratio?

The largest classes had 20 students with one teacher and one teacher aide. Fifty-five percent of the largest classrooms had 15 to 19 children and 34% had 20 children in their classroom. The average teacher-child ratio was 1 to 17.5. The average adult-child ratio (teacher and teacher's aide) in the class was 1 to 8.7. This is a slight increase from previous years. In FY 97, these ratios were 16 and 7, respectively and in FY 99, these ratios were 17.5 and 8.7. The standard adult-child ratio specified in rules and regulations of the Illinois Prekindergarten Program is one adult to 10 children, with no more than 20 children in each classroom.

What is the total cost of the program?

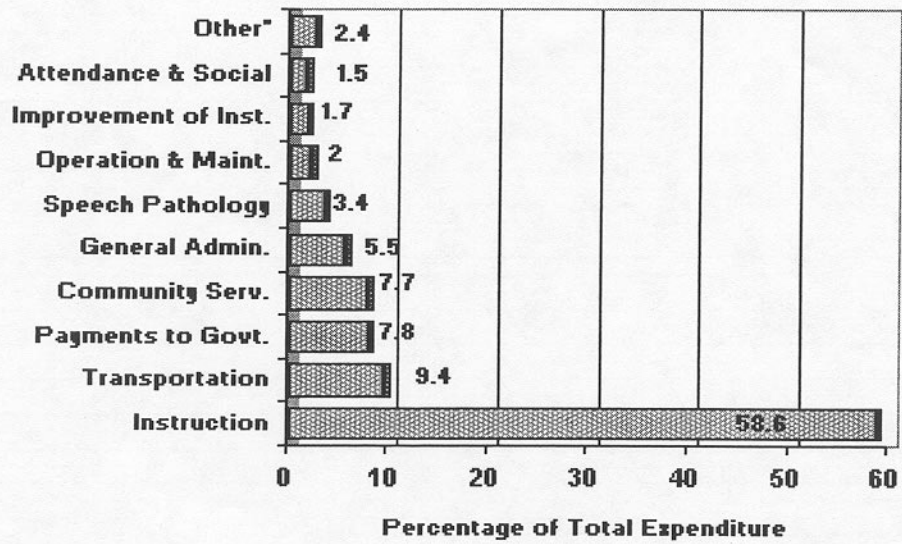
In FY 2000, \$169.6 million dollars was appropriated for the Early Childhood block grant. The following programs can be funded under the Early Childhood Block grant: the Prekindergarten At-Risk program, the Parental Training program, and the Prevention Initiative program.

Chicago School District 299 received 62.7 million dollars for the early childhood programs in a Chicago block grant and as such, they are not required to provide ISBE with expenditure data by services.

Downstate expenditure data reveal that about 46% of the total expenditures paid for instructional salaries and benefits. This percentage has remained relatively constant over the years. The total expenditure for salaries for all services was about 62%. The expense for all supplies and materials was about 6%, out of which 3% was for instructional supplies and materials. Transportation was the next highest expense after the instructional category. Figure 4 shows the percentages of downstate expenditure by services in FY2000.

The average cost per child for FY2000 was \$2,664, an 8% increase from FY97.

Figure 4: Downstate Expenditure by Service



* Other includes Guidance Services, Health Services, Psychological Services and Food Services.

HOW DID STUDENTS WHO HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE PROGRAM PERFORM IN LATER ELEMENTARY GRADES?

The Illinois Prekindergarten At-Risk Program is designed to provide participants with a reasonable chance for academic success in school. Beginning in FY 93, in order to determine the success of the program, ISBE staff selected a random sample of 33% of the children who had previously participated in the prekindergarten program from each grade level. To study the long-term effects of participation, ISBE will continue every year to add another 33% of the current prekindergarten participants to the study.

Teachers in elementary grades were asked to rank children who participated in the prekindergarten program on their academic performance in reading, mathematics, language, and behavior. The four performance categories were "above average," "average," "below average," and "deficient."

Chicago data are not available for kindergarten students who were in a prekindergarten at-risk program in FY 99 due to computer errors. Behavior data for Chicago students are also not available. For these reasons, downstate and Chicago data are not combined to show statewide results. However, the Chicago and downstate students' data are shown separately in Tables 8 through 11.

The downstate follow-up data in Table 8 and Table 9 reveal the following about students who previously participated in prekindergarten programs.

- At the end of the 1999-2000 school year, 77 to 82% of the downstate students who attended a prekindergarten at-risk program were ranked "above average" or "average" in kindergarten in three instructional areas (reading, language, mathematics). Reading rankings were the lowest (77%); mathematics and language were the highest (82%).
- Behavior of about 82-84% of the children was judged "above average" or "average" in kindergarten through eighth grade.
- The large majority of students who were in a prekindergarten program continue to do well. At least 72% (reading) to 77% (mathematics, language) of students were ranked as "average" or "above average" through eighth grade in all three instructional areas.
- Previous prekindergarten participants who were ranked as "above average" by their teachers in kindergarten continue to perform well in all three instructional areas throughout their elementary grades. About 25 to 30% of the students were ranked as "above average."
- In mathematics and language, the percentage of students ranked by teachers as "average" decreased from 57% in kindergarten to 42% in eighth grade mathematics and 46% in language.

- The data reveal that after the fifth grade, the percentage of students ranked as “deficient” increases from sixth grade on in all three instructional areas. In reading, from 1.9% in the fifth grade to 4.3% in eighth grade. In mathematics, these percentages are 2.9% and 6.3%, while in language, students in the “deficient” category increased from 1.9% in the third grade to 6.0% in the seventh grade and 4.3% in the eighth grade.
- Overall, 71 to 77% students were ranked as “average” or “above average” by their teachers in all three instructional areas, even in the eighth grade.
- Overall, 80 to 84% of the students were promoted to the next regular grade each year throughout their elementary career.
- The data also reveal that early retention and early supplementary help was not adequate to sustain the academic progress of some students. In the first and the second grade, some 20% of the students were ranked as “below average” or “deficient” in all three instructional areas, but about 3% of the students were retained in the first grade and 11% to 12% of the students received supplemental academic support.
- Percentages of students receiving supplemental academic services are highest in the first grade (12.7%) and gradually drop to 5.2% in the sixth grade, and to 4.3% and 4.8% in the seventh and eighth grades.
- The retention rate data (Table 9) reveal that the largest retention rates were in kindergarten (2.9%) and first grade (3.2%). From second to fifth grade, the retention rate remains low (one percent and below), increasing to 1.8 to 2.3% from sixth to eighth grade.
- Table 9 also shows that, while the percentage of students receiving supplemental help decreases, the percentage of students receiving special education services increases. The percentage of students receiving special education increased from 5.5% in the first grade, to 9.8% in the fourth grade, and to 11.5% in the seventh grade.

Recommendation:

- These data demonstrate a need for districts to concentrate efforts on students who were ranked “below average” and “deficient” in early elementary grades by providing them with substantial supplemental academic support to prevent later school failure.

Table 8: Teachers Performance Ranking of Previous Prekindergarten At-Risk Students in Elementary Grades, FY 2000-Downstate

READING	ABOVE AVERAGE	AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	DEFICIENT
	%	%	%	%
KINDERGARTEN	27.2	50.3	19.2	3.4
FIRST GRADE	32.2	43.0	20.4	4.4
SECOND GRADE	31.7	44.3	21.2	2.8
THIRD GRADE	31.9	44.7	21.0	2.4
FOURTH GRADE	30.6	46.2	20.5	2.7
FIFTH GRADE	28.7	45.8	23.6	1.9
SIXTH GRADE	31.2	42.4	22.6	3.8
SEVENTH GRADE	32.6	42.0	20.3	5.1
EIGHTH GRADE	30.0	46.7	19.0	4.3
MATHEMATICS				
KINDERGARTEN	25.7	56.7	15.1	2.4
FIRST GRADE	31.1	51.9	14.3	2.7
SECOND GRADE	30.6	52.5	14.5	2.4
THIRD GRADE	31.5	49.5	16.7	2.4
FOURTH GRADE	29.9	48.6	18.9	2.6
FIFTH GRADE	27.1	46.9	23.0	2.9
SIXTH GRADE	28.8	45.8	20.1	5.3
SEVENTH GRADE	31.0	41.1	21.9	6.0
EIGHTH GRADE	29.9	41.6	22.2	6.3
LANGUAGE				
KINDERGARTEN	24.8	57.0	15.9	2.3
FIRST GRADE	27.4	51.8	17.8	2.9
SECOND GRADE	27.3	52.8	17.5	2.4
THIRD GRADE	29.0	50.3	18.6	2.1
FOURTH GRADE	29.7	48.8	19.2	2.3
FIFTH GRADE	29.7	48.4	20.0	1.9
SIXTH GRADE	29.6	46.3	19.5	4.7
SEVENTH GRADE	31.0	41.1	21.9	6.0
EIGHTH GRADE	29.0	46.4	20.3	4.3
BEHAVIOR				
KINDERGARTEN	33.5	51.9	12.6	2.0
FIRST GRADE	36.8	48.9	12.4	1.8
SECOND GRADE	38.1	48.7	11.7	1.6
THIRD GRADE	39.4	47.6	11.3	1.6
FOURTH GRADE	41.5	45.0	11.6	1.8
FIFTH GRADE	40.4	45.3	12.5	1.8
SIXTH GRADE	42.2	43.4	11.1	3.4
SEVENTH GRADE	42.0	43.6	12.1	2.4
EIGHTH GRADE	42.2	46.2	9.9	1.7

Number of students in the follow-up study

Kindergarten	8495	Fourth Grade	2443	Eighth Grade
First Grade	7248	Fifth Grade	1960	
Second Grade	4386	Sixth Grade	1167	
Third Grade	4380	Seventh Grade	886	

**Table 9: Recommended Placement for Previous Program Participants
for 2000-2001 by Elementary Grades -Downstate**

PLACEMENT	KINDER- GARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE	FOURTH GRADE	FIFTH GRADE	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Advance to Next Regular Grade	81.2	77.5	80.0	79.6	79.9	83.6	82.3	80.9	83.8
Advance to Next Grade with Supplemental Services	8.3	12.7	10.9	9.8	8.8	7.3	5.2	4.3	4.8
Advance to Next Grade with Sp.Ed. Services	4.4	5.5	8.1	8.3	9.8	8.0	9.4	11.5	8.9
Advance to Transition Class	0.6	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Refer for Sp.Ed. Placement	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.2	1.3	1.0	0.5
Bilingual Transition Classroom	0.4	0.1	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bilingual Self-Contained	1.7	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Retention	2.9	3.2	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.9	1.8	2.3	2.0
Unknown**	0.3	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	1.1
Number of Children	8495	7248	4386	4380	2443	1960	1167	886	649

**Percentages are calculated without including unknown.

Cohort Longitudinal Study - Downstate

Table 10 provides information on the progress of the downstate students who participated in the 1994-95 prekindergarten at-risk program.

The analysis indicates the following:

- From kindergarten to fourth grade, three-fourths of these students maintained their performance in reading, as 76 to 77% of the students were ranked as “above average” or “average.”
- In mathematics and language, 81% of the students in kindergarten and 78% in fourth grade were ranked as “above average” or “average.” While this decrease is relatively small, a look at the retention rate data is revealing. In kindergarten, 3.5% of the students were retained, reflecting the 3.0% of students in a “deficient” category. The remaining students moved to first grade in FY 97, where another 3 to 4% of the students were ranked as “deficient” and another 2.7% of the children were retained in first grade.
- These data suggest that, in order for some students to maintain performance, substantial supplementary help is needed in the early years. It should be emphasized that all these students were at risk of academic failure, and still more than three-fourths of the children maintained “average” and “above average” performance even in fourth grade.
- The ISAT results for these students reveal that in third and fourth grade these children, who were previously at-risk, perform at relatively the same level of performance as other downstate students.
- About 75% of students “meet” or “exceed” the standards in third grade mathematics, while 66% of students in reading and 55% in writing “meet” or “exceed” the standards.
- In fourth grade, 67% of students “meet” or “exceed” the standards in science while in social science the percentage is 61%.
- The fact that most of these students continue to perform in “average” and “above average” categories reflects the positive effects of the prekindergarten at-risk program.

Table 10: Performance of FY 95 Downstate Prekindergarten At-Risk Children in the Elementary Grades

	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Deficient
READING	%	%	%	%
Kindergarten FY 96	24.0	51.9	21.0	3.1
First Grade FY 97	31.0	44.4	20.3	4.2
Second Grade FY 98	31.4	44.2	22.0	2.3
Third Grade FY 99	30.4	44.2	23.1	2.3
Fourth Grade FY 2000	30.6	46.2	20.5	2.7
MATHEMATICS	%	%	%	%
Kindergarten FY 96	24.2	57.4	16.5	1.9
First Grade FY 97	29.5	53.4	14.7	2.4
Second Grade FY 98	30.0	52.8	15.2	1.8
Third Grade FY 99	29.9	49.4	19.0	1.8
Fourth Grade FY 2000	29.9	48.6	18.9	2.6
LANGUAGE	%	%	%	%
Kindergarten FY 96	21.8	59.3	17.1	1.8
First Grade FY 97	25.3	53.6	18.1	3.0
Second Grade FY 98	26.7	52.4	19.4	1.6
Third Grade FY 99	27.3	51.0	19.9	1.8
Fourth Grade FY 2000	29.7	48.8	19.2	2.3
BEHAVIOR	%	%	%	%
Kindergarten FY 96	31.4	51.6	14.8	2.2
First Grade FY 97	34.3	50.3	13.0	2.3
Second Grade FY 98	36.6	48.1	12.9	2.4
Third Grade FY 99	36.8	48.8	12.2	2.3
Fourth Grade FY 2000	41.5	45.0	11.6	1.8

Total # of Students in the Sample

ISAT

Kindergarten FY 96	3791	
First Grade FY 97	3347	
Second Grade FY 98	2916	
Third Grade FY 99	2603	1964
Fourth Grade FY 2000	2443	1533

Promoted Regular	Supplemental Services	Special Ed. Services	Special Ed. Self-Contained	Retention
80.5	10.2	2.9	0.6	3.5
76.6	14.7	4.5	0.5	2.7
76.9	13.4	7.3	0.7	1.4
77.9	11.8	8.5	0.6	0.8
79.9	8.8	9.8	0.7	0.8

ISAT Results of this Cohort Group

READING		THIRD GRADE		
	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
Prek at-risk	3	31	49	17
All	3	27	45	25
MATHEMATICS		THIRD GRADE		
Prek at-risk	6	20	56	19
All	5	17	50	28
WRITING		THIRD GRADE		
Prek at-risk	5	40	54	1
All	4	34	59	3
SOCIAL SCIENCE		FOURTH GRADE		
Prek at-risk	8	31	56	5
All	7	26	60	7
SCIENCE		FOURTH GRADE		
Prek at-risk	0	33	57	10
All	1	27	57	15

Chicago:

As mentioned earlier, due to computer errors, data on Chicago kindergarten students and behavior rankings of all the previous prekindergarten at-risk program participants in all elementary grades are not available.

The Chicago follow-up data in Tables 11 and 12 reveal the following:

- Almost two-thirds (62%) of the first-grade students who previously participated in a prekindergarten program were ranked as “average” or “above average” in reading and mathematics. In language, 58% of students were ranked as “average” and “above average.”
- Almost two-thirds of the previous participants did not sustain their academic progress according to their teachers’ ranking. According to teacher’s ranking by the third grade, the percentage of students in “average” and “above average” categories decreased substantially in reading (37.8%) and language (26.8%). In language, more than half the students fall behind in their performance.
- Chicago students who were in a previous prekindergarten program, show improvement in reading performance after third grade where the percentage of students in “average” and “above average” categories gradually increases from 37.8% to 55% in the eighth grade.
- In mathematics, more students sustain their performance compared to reading and language. In third grade, 54.9% of students were ranked by their teachers as “above average” or “average,” and in eighth grade, 55.5% of these students continued in this same ranking.
- The data in Table 12 also reveal Chicago’s retention policy. The retention rate increased from 2.1% in the second grade to 5.7% in the third grade. In fourth and fifth grades the retention rate is only 1.2%, but it increased again to 3.9% in the sixth grade. Chicago retains students at the third, sixth, and eighth grade levels if they do not pass the city-wide tests established by the Chicago Board of Education. Students who fail the tests may take summer classes and be retested.
- More than one-third of the students receive supplemental academic services from second grade to eighth grade. In the third and fourth grades almost 39% of students receive supplemental help, the percentages decreased slightly to 36% and 34% in the fifth and seventh grades.
- About 4% to 6% of the students receive special education services and less than one percent of students were placed in special education self-contained classrooms.
- The data reveal that supplemental academic help in later elementary grades is not adequate. Even with almost 50% of the students ranked as “below average” or “deficient” in reading and mathematics and more than 60% of students ranked below their expected performance in language from the third grade on, only 31 to 39% of students receive supplemental help during those years. In the first grade even fewer students received (24.5%) these services.

- Overall, except in language 55% of the students were ranked as “above average” or “average” even in the eighth grade. In language, only about one-third of the students were ranked as “above average” or “average.”
- Overall, 50 to 60% of the students were promoted to the next regular grade.

Recommendation:

- Chicago schools need to provide substantial sustained supplemental academic help to all at-risk students from kindergarten on and not wait until these students fail.
- The data also indicate a need for Chicago to explore why almost 40 to 50% of their previous program participants fall behind. They also need to continue to provide intensive academic support even after third grade to prevent failure in later grades.

Table 11: Teachers Performance Ranking of Previous Prekindergarten At-Risk Students in Elementary Grades, FY 2000-Chicago

READING	ABOVE AVERAGE	AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	DEFICIENT
	%	%	%	%
KINDERGARTEN	na	na	na	na
FIRST GRADE	17.6	44.3	26.3	11.8
SECOND GRADE	13.6	44.2	24.2	18.0
THIRD GRADE	5.8	32.0	39.9	22.3
FOURTH GRADE	8.7	36.5	45.8	9.0
FIFTH GRADE	6.3	42.0	42.0	9.7
SIXTH GRADE	6.5	43.4	39.1	11.1
SEVENTH GRADE	10.1	44.9	36.0	9.0
EIGHTH GRADE	8.6	45.9	37.0	8.4
MATHEMATICS				
KINDERGARTEN	na	na	na	na
FIRST GRADE	21.6	41.6	26.9	10.0
SECOND GRADE	20.2	40.9	26.9	12.0
THIRD GRADE	23.1	31.8	27.2	17.8
FOURTH GRADE	17.9	38.6	31.2	12.2
FIFTH GRADE	16.8	36.4	33.5	13.4
SIXTH GRADE	22.3	38.3	27.8	11.6
SEVENTH GRADE	12.4	39.7	36.1	11.7
EIGHTH GRADE	13.4	42.1	37.5	6.9
LANGUAGE				
KINDERGARTEN	na	na	na	na
FIRST GRADE	15.2	43.0	31.6	10.2
SECOND GRADE	10.9	34.5	35.2	19.4
THIRD GRADE	5.4	21.4	48.6	24.7
FOURTH GRADE	4.2	27.5	45.8	22.5
FIFTH GRADE	5.4	30.5	45.3	18.8
SIXTH GRADE	7.7	31.6	45.8	14.9
SEVENTH GRADE	4.6	33.3	42.5	19.7
EIGHTH GRADE	4.7	31.7	42.8	20.8
BEHAVIOR				
KINDERGARTEN	na	na	na	na
FIRST GRADE	na	na	na	na
SECOND GRADE	na	na	na	na
THIRD GRADE	na	na	na	na
FOURTH GRADE	na	na	na	na
FIFTH GRADE	na	na	na	na
SIXTH GRADE	na	na	na	na
SEVENTH GRADE	na	na	na	na
EIGHTH GRADE	na	na	na	na

na=not available

Number of students in the follow-up study.

First Grade	2124	Fourth Grade	1674	Seventh Grade	1430
Second Grade	1843	Fifth Grade	1879	Eighth Grade	1023
Third Grade	1933	Sixth Grade	1778		

**Table 12: Recommended Placement for Previous Program Participants
for 2000-2001 by Elementary Grades -Chicago**

PLACEMENT	KINDER- GARTEN	FIRST GRADE	SECOND GRADE	THIRD GRADE	FOURTH GRADE	FIFTH GRADE	SIXTH GRADE	SEVENTH GRADE	EIGHTH GRADE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Advance to Next Regular Grade	na	68.6	63.2	49.4	53.0	56.5	58.6	58.2	60.3
Advance to Next Grade with Supplemental Services	na	24.5	30.7	38.3	38.9	35.5	31.3	33.5	32.1
Advance to Next Grade with Sp.Ed. Services	na	1.8	2.1	4.3	5.4	5.5	5.2	5.8	4.8
Advance to Transition Class	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na	na
Refer for Sp.Ed. Placement	na	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.6	1.1	0.3	0.8	0.9
Bilingual Transition Classroom	na	0.5	0.3	1.2	0.3	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.0
Bilingual Self-Contained	na	1.7	1.3	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Retention	na	2.6	2.1	5.7	1.2	1.2	3.9	1.7	1.9
Unknown**	na	0.5	0.4	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.5	0.5	0.7
Number of Children	na	2116	1833	1920	1665	1868	1769	1429	1023

**Percentages are calculated without including unknown.

High School

Since the high school curriculum and structure is different from elementary schools, the data collected for the students who are now in high school are different from the data for elementary school students. Results from those data are shown in Table 13 and Table 14.

For high school students who previously participated in prekindergarten programs, the data on behavior, truancy, discipline, and suspensions were collected in addition to data on absence rates, placement, and graduation rates. Data collection efforts were hindered for several reasons: student mobility, lack of manpower at the school level, and less cooperation from high school administrators. Almost 20% of the students' information was not available from this sample group. The information for another 25% of students from the sample was already missing because of high mobility of students in elementary grades. Some 5% of the students were in special education and no data were available for them. Any conclusions drawn from these data should be considered tentative in view of the small sample size.

Table 13 and 14 reveal the following:

Downstate:

- Out of a total sample of 1,299 downstate high school students who previously participated in a prekindergarten program, data for 207 students (16%) were not available.
- A majority of these high school students (80-85%) are ranked as "average" and "above average" in behavior.
- There is a sharp increase in the number of truants in eleventh grade, from 3.1% in tenth grade to 6.1% in eleventh grade. The average number of days absent remains between 11 and 13.
- A majority of these high school students were promoted to the next regular grade. About 83% of the students moved to the next regular grade in ninth grade and 77.5% in eleventh grade.
- Very few students received supplemental academic help in high school. Only about 2 to 3% of the students received supplemental help and only 5 to 8% of the students received special education services.
- The retention rate of these high school students remain about 3 to 4% from the ninth to eleventh grade. Only one percent of students were retained in twelfth grade and 96% of the students graduated from high school.
- Sixty students' ACT scores were available. The average ACT score of these students was 21.2.

Chicago:

- A majority of Chicago high school students were ranked as "average" or "above average" in behavior in all high school grades.

- Almost 75% of the students were ranked as “average” or “above average” in behavior, 9 to 11% of the students were identified as chronic truants, and only 1 to 2% had suspension records through all four high school grades.
- About 70 to 75% of the students were advanced to the next regular grade from the ninth to the eleventh grade, and 6 to 13% of students were retained from ninth to twelfth grade.
- Out of 262 students in twelfth grade, 96% of the students graduated from high school, and about a total of 3.5% students dropped out of high school.
- ACT scores for Chicago students were not available.

Statewide:

- Statewide, 96% of the students graduated from high school and 3% dropped out of the education system. Less than one percent enrolled in other education systems such as vocational education, trade school, or other alternative programs during the high school years.

Table 13: FY 2000 High School Follow-Up Data for Downstate Students**Percentage of Students by Behavior**

BEHAVIOR	NINTH* GRADE	TENTH* GRADE	ELEVENTH* GRADE	TWELTH* GRADE
	%	%	%	%
Above Average	38.7	37.2	41.6	34.7
Average/No Problem	45.0	37.7	42.1	50.7
Below Average	11.2	19.9	9.6	10.0
Chronic Truant	2.5	3.1	6.1	1.3
Suspension	2.5	1.6	0.5	3.3
Expulsion	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0
Unknown	1.0	7.3	12.8	8.5
Total # of Students	397	206	226	164
Average Days Absent	11.5	13.6	11.9	11.8

* Percentages are calculated without including unknown

Recommended Placement for 2000-01 -Downstate Students

PLACEMENT	NINTH* GRADE	TENTH* GRADE	ELEVENTH* GRADE	TWELTH* GRADE
	%	%	%	%
Advance to Next Regular Grade	82.8	85.3	77.5	na
Advance to Next Grade with Supplemental Serv.	3.5	2.0	2.3	na
Advance to Next Grade with Sp.Ed. Services	7.1	5.1	8.0	na
Bilingual Transition	0.8	0.0	0.0	na
Sp.Ed. Self-Contained Classroom	0.2	1.0	3.7	0.6
Enrolled In Other Education System	0.2	0.0	0.5	0.0
Retention	4.0	3.5	3.3	1.2
Moved Out of District	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0
Dropped Out of Education System	0.8	3.1	3.3	1.9
Graduate	na	na	0.9	96.3
Acquired GED	na	na	0.0	0.0
Unknown	2.7	4.4	5.8	1.2
Total Number of Students	407	206	226	164

* Percentage calculated without including unknown

na = not applicable

Table 14: FY 2000 High School Follow-Up Data for Chicago Students**Percentage of Students by Behavior**

BEHAVIOR	NINTH* GRADE	TENTH* GRADE	ELEVENTH* GRADE	TWELTH* GRADE
	%	%	%	%
Above Average	27.7	27.9	27.2	25.3
Average/No Problem	46.8	46.9	47.3	51.2
Below Average	14.2	14.8	12.9	12.9
Chronic Truant	9.9	9.8	11.6	8.8
Suspension	1.1	0.6	1.0	1.8
Expulsion	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Unknown	11.7	6.0	10.6	17.2
Total # of Students	1072	553	329	262
Average Days Absent	18.7	20.1	20.9	19.4

* Percentages are calculated without including unknown

Recommended Placement for 2000-01 -Chicago Students

PLACEMENT	NINTH* GRADE	TENTH* GRADE	ELEVENTH* GRADE	TWELTH* GRADE
	%	%	%	%
Advance to Next Regular Grade	69.3	72.3	74.9	na
Advance to Next Grade with Supplemental Serv.	8.0	10.0	10.4	na
Advance to Next Grade with Sp.Ed. Services	5.2	5.4	4.9	na
Bilingual Transition	0.4	0.0	0.0	na
Sp.Ed. Self-Contained Classroom	0.9	0.5	0.6	na
Enrolled in Other Education System	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.0
Retention	12.9	10.5	6.4	2.8
Moved Out of District	2.1	0.4	1.2	
Dropped Out of Education System	1.0	0.7	0.6	1.2
Graduate	na	na	0.6	96.0
Acquired GED	na	na	0.0	0.0
Unknown	1.5	0.2	0.6	3.8
Total Number of Students	1072	553	329	262

* Percentage calculated without including unknown

na = not applicable

How did ISAT test scores of former prekindergarten participants compare with the statewide average?

To evaluate the progress of former prekindergarten program participants, the scores on the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) of a sample of third, fourth, fifth, seventh, and eighth graders were compared with statewide ISAT scores. Because ISAT is the only standardized achievement test all students take, it is the best tool to compare prekindergarten at-risk students' achievement with the general Illinois student population. To best judge the effects of the prekindergarten experience, comparison with a control group of students who were eligible for prekindergarten, but were never enrolled, would be more conclusive. However, the data for a comparison group were not available. Problems such as mobility, identification of children, and inadequate records from waiting lists make it very difficult to do a comparison study.

The Illinois State Board of Education developed grade-level performance standards related to what students should know and be able to do in five subjects. According to their scores on the ISAT, students are placed into one of four levels: "Academic Warning," "Below Standards," "Meets Standards," or "Exceeds Standards." The achievement levels of former prekindergarten students were compared with the total population of students in grades three, four, five, seven, and eight.

Independent sampling procedures were used to secure the data for Chicago and downstate participants. There is a disproportionately higher number of students in the Chicago sample than in the downstate sample possibly indicating over-sampling. Therefore, no statewide totals are provided due to the likelihood that the combined data would not be representative of the state. Table 15 on page 40 shows the ISAT data of downstate, Chicago, and all students statewide.

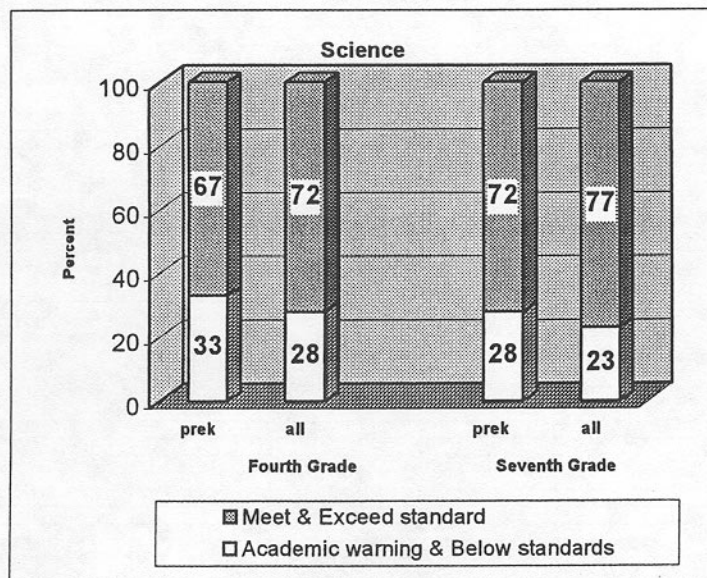
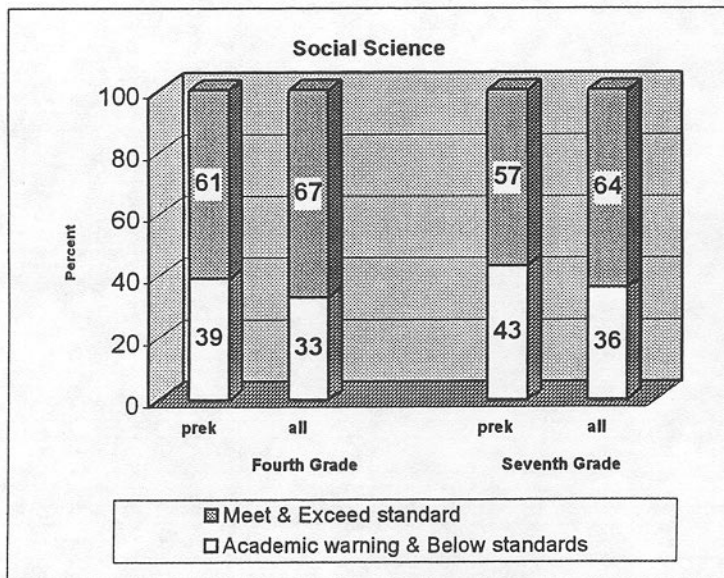
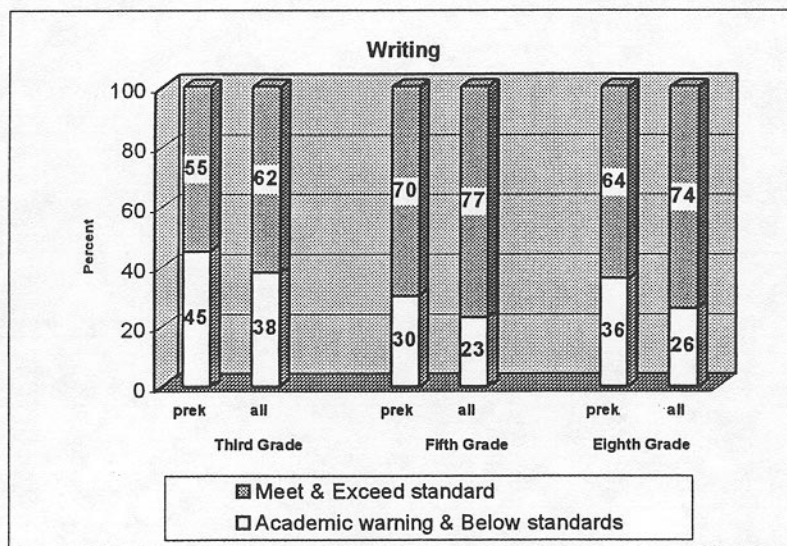
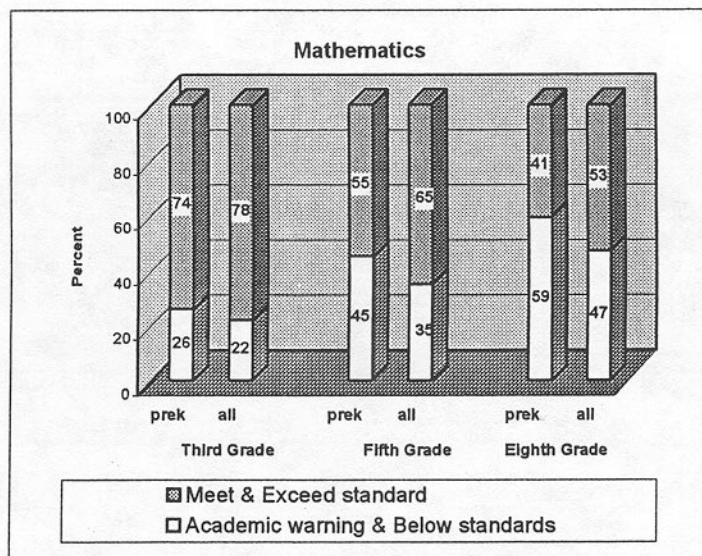
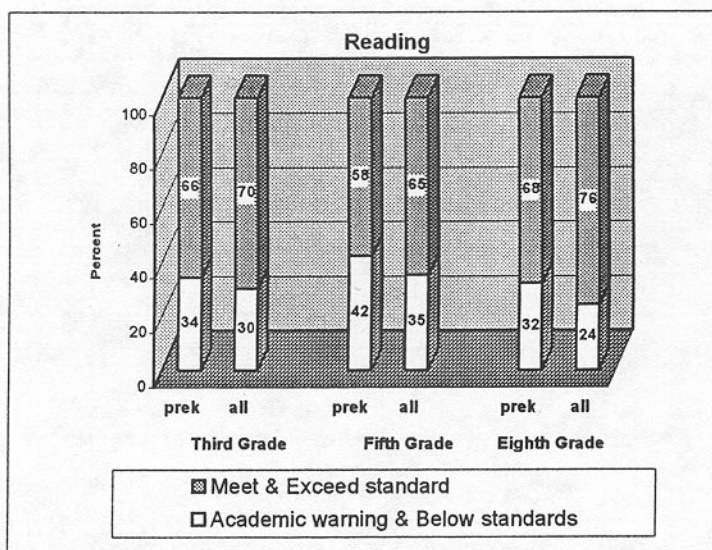
ISAT - Downstate

The ISAT data of downstate students who were previously in a prekindergarten program were collected and compared with other students' achievement. Figure 5 and Table 15 on page 40 shows the following:

- In third grade, almost two-thirds of these previous prekindergarten participants "meet" or "exceed" the standards in reading and mathematics. In writing, 55% of the students "meet" or "exceed" the standards in third grade.
- Overall, more than half the students who previously participated in the prekindergarten at-risk program have met or exceeded the standards through eighth grade in all areas except in mathematics. In mathematics, 41% of these students "meet" or "exceed" the standards.
- In mathematics, previous prekindergarten students' performance decreases sharply in fifth grade and in eighth grade. About 55% of students in the fifth grade and 41% of students in the eighth grade "meet" or "exceed" the standards. In the eighth grade, 64% of these students "meet" or "exceed" the standards.
- The students performance improves in writing as they advance to higher grades. In fifth-grade writing, 70% of previous prekindergarten students "meet" or "exceed" the standards compared to 55% of students in the third grade.

- Previous participants of downstate prekindergarten programs perform comparatively at the same level as all downstate students in all instructional areas in the third and fourth grades. Only about 4 to 5% more of the general population of downstate students “meet” or “exceed” the standards.
- The difference in achievement between previous program participants and all downstate students increases in mathematics and writing as the students advance to higher grades.
- The difference between previous downstate prekindergarten participants and all downstate students remains almost the same in the fourth and seventh grade for social science. In fourth-grade social science, 61% of students “meet” or “exceed” the standards, while in seventh grade the percentage is 57%.
- In fourth-grade science, 67%, and in seventh grade, 72% of previous prekindergarten program participants “meet” or “exceed” the standards compared to 72% of fourth grade and 77% of seventh grade of all downstate students.
- Except in mathematics, overall previous downstate prekindergarten participants sustain their academic performance in the higher elementary grades. About two-thirds of these students “meet” or “exceed” the standards.

Figure 5: Comparison of ISAT Results of Prekindergarten At-Risk Students with All Students by Grades by Subjects - Downstate



ISAT – Chicago

The Chicago prekindergarten students' ISAT data show interesting results. Figure 6 reveals that these previous program participants consistently achieve the same level of performance as all other Chicago students, even in the eighth grade, and in all subject areas.

The Chicago ISAT data reveal the following:

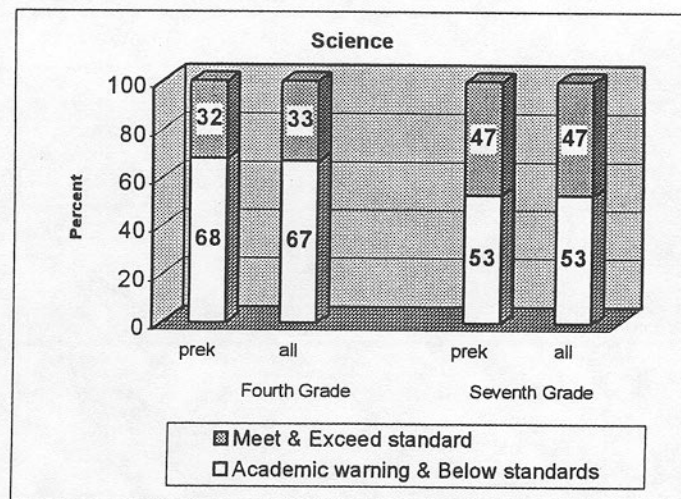
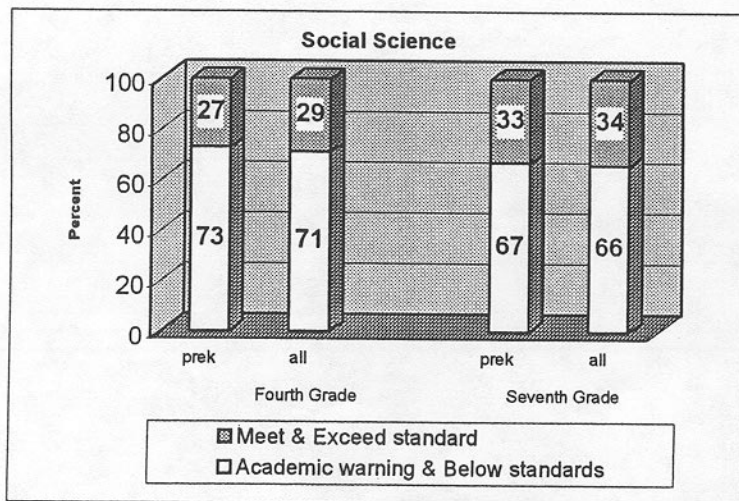
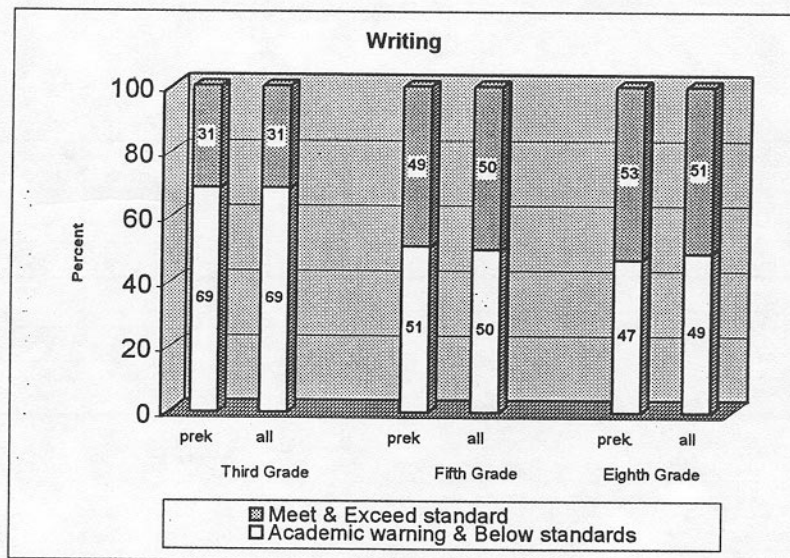
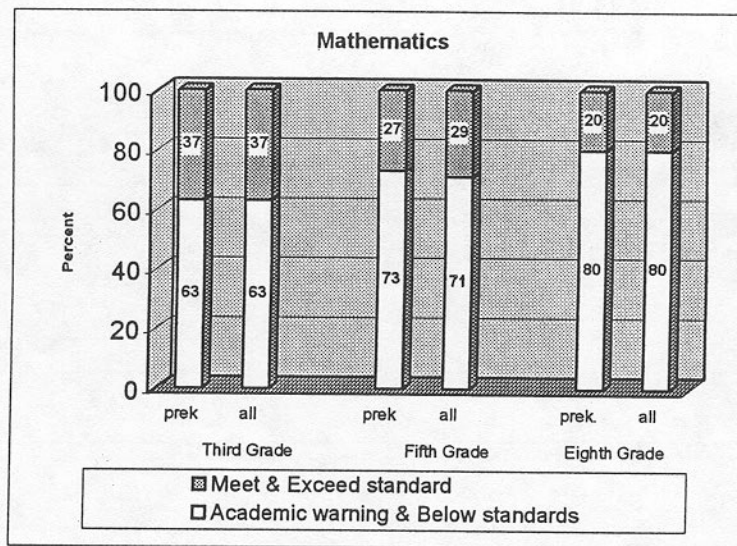
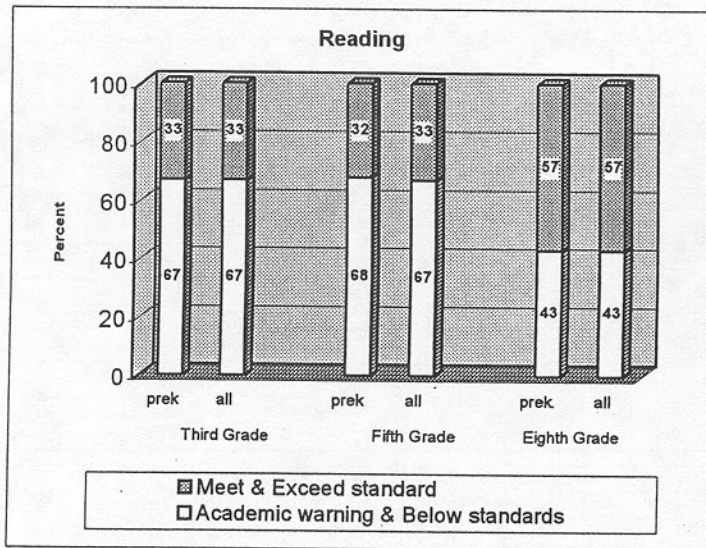
- Overall, in the third and fourth grade, about one-third of the students who previously participated in a prekindergarten program, “meet” or “exceed” the standards in reading (33%), mathematics (37%), writing (31%), and science (32%), except in social science (27%).
- Except in mathematics, performance increased as students moved to higher grades. In eighth grade reading, 57% of these students “meet” or “exceed” the standards compared to 33% in third and fifth grade. In writing, these percentages in the “meet” and “exceed” categories increased from 31% in third grade to 53% in eighth grade, and in science the percent of students in these categories increased from 32% in fourth grade to 47% in seventh grade. In mathematics, the percentages in these categories decreased from 37% in the third grade to only 20% in the eighth grade.
- Overall, by the eighth grade almost half of the students “meet” or “exceed” the standards for reading and writing.
- Mathematics seems to be the weakest area as student performance does not improve as they move into higher grades. In the third grade, 37% of the Chicago students “meet” or “exceed” the standards in mathematics. In the fifth grade, only 27% “meet” or “exceed” the standards, and in the eighth grade this percentage decreases to 20 percent. All Chicago students test scores show this same pattern.

The prekindergarten program needs to continue to address the differences in performance created by socioeconomic conditions. Further analysis of ISAT data indicated that previous prekindergarten participants who were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch have lower ISAT scores than noneligible participants. The elementary schools also need to continue to help and support these at-risk students to assure their success in later school years.

Recommendation:

- A concerted effort needs to be made by the Chicago School District to improve the performance of all its students in all academic areas.
- Additionally, the Prekindergarten and Early Childhood programs need to focus on providing supplemental assistance in order to remediate deficiencies early on.

Figure 6: Comparison of ISAT Results of Prekindergarten At-Risk Students with All Students by Grades by Subjects - Chicago



WHAT ARE THE NEW INITIATIVES FOR THE PREKINDER-GARTEN AT-RISK PROGRAM?

ISBE continues its efforts to improve the quality of the program to meet the needs of children and family and develop a strong foundation of learning so that all children will succeed.

In order to meet the working parent's needs, ISBE is promoting collaboration with child-care organizations to provide full-day high-quality care to these at-risk children, since most current projects provide only half-day services.

In order to make the most efficient use of resources, the three early childhood initiatives (the prekindergarten at-risk program, the model early childhood parent training program, and the prevention initiative program) were combined into a Early Childhood Block Grant.

ISBE's early childhood consultants continue to make sure that developmentally appropriate practices are enforced and that each project provides high-quality parent involvement and parent education to families through professional development training and onsite technical assistance. A total of 78 workshops were offered covering a variety of topics.

ISBE introduced an initiative to expand the early childhood program up to third grade. This initiative focuses on continuity of curriculum instruction and assessment which will flow in a natural progression across the preschool and primary grades. It is designed to provide more sophisticated and complex content matter and to permit progress according to each child's rate and style of learning. It promotes parent education and involvement up to third grade with collaboration from prekindergarten at-risk programs. It also extends professional development components to teachers and administrators from kindergarten through third grade. About 100 districts are already implementing this new initiative or working toward it.

Collaborative support teams are being planned to enhance early childhood education. The goal of this initiative is to build a system that enables all children to achieve the Illinois Learning Standards by grade three. It includes other key agencies such as Head Start, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Children and Family Services, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC). This interagency team will work to support the Standards, and to produce a seamless system of early care and education and technical assistance to Early Childhood Block Grant Programs.

ISBE is developing 0-3 Program Standards and age 3-5 Early Learning Standards for implementation in Early Childhood Programs. The agency is also working toward the development of an early learning website for parents, caregivers, service providers, and teachers of children from birth to five years old.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Prekindergarten At-Risk program has been in operation in Illinois for 14 years and during that time the funding for the program, the number of projects funded, and the number of children participating has increased. Data from this study suggest the beginning of some positive trends, however; without data from a comparison group of students with similar characteristics, particularly those that may place a student at-risk of academic failure, it is not possible to conclusively address the sustaining effect of the program in later elementary grades.

Funding

Since its inception in 1986, the Illinois General Assembly has allocated more and more money to the prekindergarten program. The allocation has increased from \$12.1 million in 1986 to \$169.6 million in 2000. Since FY 93, the average cost per child in the prekindergarten program has increased by 25.7%. The average cost per child in FY 93 was \$2,120 and increased to \$2,664 in FY 2000. With the increase in the cost per child the services offered by the program also increased to include health services, community services for parent education and parent involvement, transportation services, and professional development.

Participants

The number of children served in the prekindergarten program increased from 6,953 in 1986 to 53,386 in 2000. There is no uniform policy among projects in terms of screening for eligibility to participate in the program. About 47% of the projects used DIAL-R as the primary screening tool to determine eligibility. The remaining projects used a variety of other screening tools. Besides screening tests, projects use other at-risk criteria such as: low income status, teenage parents, parent's education, child's primary language other than English, and referral from other state agencies. While the number of eligible children being served has increased, the number of children eligible to be served but on a waiting list has consistently decreased over the years.

The percentages of minority children being served has consistently increased from 50% in FY 90 to 56% in FY 2000. In FY 2000, 25% of the children served were Hispanic compared to 16% in FY 90. This is consistent with the growth of the Hispanic population in Illinois. The percentage of black children being served decreased from 32% in FY 90 to 26% in FY 2000. This is a trend that will likely continue to increase as the population in the state changes.

The number of children being served from low-income families has changed very little from FY 95. In FY 2000, 59% of the children served were eligible for free lunch and another 11% were eligible for reduced-price lunch. Chicago programs tend to serve more low income children (91%) than do downstate programs (55%).

Program Impact

In FY 2000, 80% (85% downstate and 72% in Chicago) of the children served were ranked by their teachers as "above average" or "average" in their kindergarten readiness skill level. The percentage of children in both of these categories has remained about the same since FY 93. While these results are positive, consideration also needs to be given to the 20% of the participants who have, for each year consistently, been ranked by their teachers in the "below average" and "deficient" categories. One puzzling aspect is that children who live in two parent

families were ranked higher in terms of kindergarten readiness than children from other family structures.

The data available on former prekindergarten program participants (kindergarten through 8th grade) indicate that downstate, 70% are ranked as “above average” or “average” by their teachers in reading, mathematics, and language, while 30% are in the “below average” and “deficient” categories. The results from ISAT reveal that except in mathematics, almost two-thirds of these students are in the “meets” or “exceeds” categories. In mathematics, 41% of these students are in the “meets” or “exceeds” category.

Data from Chicago indicate that at least 50% of the former prekindergarten participants are ranked as “above average” or “average” by their teachers in reading and mathematics and about 36% in language from the first grade to the eighth grade. The results from ISAT reveal that about 53 to 57% of these students “meet” or “exceed” the standards in writing and reading and only 20% in mathematics.

Though teacher rankings are a subjective measure of students’ academic progress, they do provide an indication of a student’s relative standing in a given teacher’s classroom and school. While there exists a perceived discrepancy between prekindergarten program success as measured by teacher rankings and ISAT results, the fact that ISAT measures specific academic standards that are still in the early stages of implementation makes it impossible to compare the two measures. However, with the exception of eighth grade mathematics, the percentage of prekindergarten downstate eighth graders “meeting” or “exceeding” the standards across all other subjects is within 5-10 points of the downstate statewide total. This suggests that these students may be performing relatively well. Still, without data from a control group of at-risk students it is not possible to draw conclusions. We do not have a comparison group, and we also do not have general population retention data, nor can all the other factors be excluded that affect these students’ academic performance in later school years; for these reasons, one cannot conclude the success or failure of this program.

Parent Involvement

Much research has shown the strong positive effect of parent involvement in students’ success. Parent involvement and education is a required component of the at-risk program. More than 90% of the parents participated in one or two activities during the preschool years. About 43% of these parents participated in four or more different parent activities. About 50 to 52% of the parents participated in parenting skill development activities.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are being made as a result of this study:

- In order to make sure that previous prekindergarten program participants sustain their academic achievement, and to prevent failure in later grades, there is a need at the district level to continue to provide supplemental services and resources.
- Students leaving the prekindergarten program should be offered sustained supplemental services for at least the first three grades.

- Chicago schools need to provide substantial sustained supplemental academic help to all at-risk students from kindergarten on and not wait until these students fail.
- Chicago needs to explore why almost 40 to 50% of their previous program participants do not meet standards. They also need to continue to provide intensive academic support, even after third grade, to prevent failure in later grades.

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Appendix A

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Early Childhood Care and Education Position Statement

Adopted January 20, 2000

The State Board of Education believes that the educational development and success of all Illinois children can be significantly enhanced when children participate in early childhood programs and services.

For the purposes of this position statement, early childhood is defined as the period in a child's life from birth through eight years of age. Appropriate early childhood programs, practices, and services are defined as those which:

- ❖ are founded on research-based knowledge about child development;
- ❖ promote the child's emotional, physical, mental, and social well-being; and
- ❖ support nurturing families.

The Illinois State Board of Education is actively committed to develop, deliver, and support early childhood programs, practices, and services that will enable all children to be successful students and responsible citizens. The State Board will give particular attention to the following actions:

- 1) Emphasize the need for high-quality early experiences that reflect research and knowledge on program quality and outcomes across the developmental period of birth through eight.
- 2) Encourage Illinois public schools to create coherent early learning systems that minimize major transitions for children and provide stable, consistent educational experiences for young children, ages three through eight years.
- 3) Make prekindergarten programs available for all Illinois children identified as at risk of academic failure and actively seek their participation. Support the provision of full-day prekindergarten for at-risk students who need additional educational experiences.
- 4) Support the availability of full-day kindergarten programs for all Illinois children.
- 5) Collaborate with families and relevant social service providers to provide early identification of and response to educational risk factors among children from birth through three years of age.
- 6) Collaborate with families, community organizations, child care organizations, Head Start, and other state agencies to meet the physical, mental, social, and emotional needs of young children, including their physical care and protection; share resources, services and accountability.
- 7) Emphasize the quality of instructional staff and leadership for early childhood programs in Illinois.

Appendix B

Prekindergarten At-Risk Program Specifications

Section 2-3.71 of the School Code (105 ILCS 5/2-3.71) authorizes the State Board of Education to fund educational programs for children ages 3 to 5 (not age-eligible for kindergarten) who are identified as being at risk of academic failure. These programs must also provide parents of participating children with educational and involvement opportunities.

The prekindergarten at-risk initiative serves children who, because of their home and community environment, are subject to such language, economic and like disadvantages that they have been determined, through a screening process, to be at risk of academic failure. A disproportionate share of all children considered to be at-risk come from low-income families, including low-income working families, homeless families, families where English is not the primary language spoken in the home, 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 nor a child's family situation should determine whether that child is at-risk.

The prekindergarten at-risk initiative is made up of two components: a screening component to determine a child's eligibility and an educational program. Applicants may request funds either to conduct screening and an educational program or to establish an educational program only. If funds are requested only for an educational program, then applicants must provide information about the screening process that will be provided.

Screening Component. Screening should be conducted on a community-wide basis and developed and implemented in cooperation with other similar programs operating in the district (e.g., special education, Head Start, Prevention Initiative, Early Intervention Child and Family Connections, Child Find).

Applicants may conduct the screening themselves, using an existing screening instrument or one that they have developed. In either case, all comprehensive screening procedures must include the following:

- Criteria to determine at what point performance on an approved screening instrument indicates that children are at risk of academic failure. All screening instruments and activities must relate to and 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.
- All screening procedures must include a parent interview (to be conducted in the parents' home language, if necessary). This interview should be designed to obtain a summary of the child's health history and social development, and may include questions about the parent's education level, employment and income, and age; the number of children in the household; and the number of school-aged siblings experiencing academic difficulty.
- Vision and hearing screening, in accordance with 77 Ill. Adm. Code 685 (Vision Screening) and 77 Ill. Adm. Code 675 (Hearing Screening), must be provided.
- Written parental permission for the screening as required by Section 2-3.71(a) of the School Code must be obtained.

- Teaching staff of prekindergarten at-risk initiatives must be involved in the screening process. Results of the screening must be made available to the teaching staff.

Educational Program. Prekindergarten at-risk initiatives must offer an appropriate education program for those children who are eligible to participate, as determined by the screening process. The education program that is established also must include a parent education and involvement component, provide for student progress plans to be shared with parents, and contain a language and literacy development component for each child based on the child's individual assessment. In addition, there should be collaboration with other services and resources available in the community.

The education program may be home-based or classroom-based. For classroom-based programs, the staff-child ratio may not exceed one adult to 10 children, and no more than 20 children can be served in a single classroom. The maximum number of children should be served in each classroom if, following the completion of the screening process, the district has a waiting list of eligible children.

Staff Requirements. All prekindergarten administrators and staff paid by the block grant must hold appropriate certification and/or qualifications for the position for which they are hired.

All teaching staff in the prekindergarten at-risk initiative must hold either a Type 02 or Type 04 Early Childhood Certificate. Evidence of the certification status of all staff must be provided prior to final funding approval. Teacher aides must meet requirements as described in the document titled "Illinois State Board of Education Minimum Requirements for State Certificates." Individuals wishing to be approved as teacher aides must file form ISBE 73-28 with the Regional Superintendent of Schools representing the area in which they will be employed. There is no fee for this service.

Collaboration with Child Care Providers

In order to meet the needs of children requiring full work day and year-round placement, school districts collaborating with child care providers in developing partnerships that combine high-quality education and care for prekindergarten children will be given extra consideration in the approval process.

APPENDIX C

Table 15: FY 2000 ISAT Results of Students Who Were in Prekindergarten At-Risk Program by Performance Category

READING

	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
DOWNSTATE -PREK	3	31	49	17
DOWNSTATE -ALL	3	27	45	25
CHICAGO -PREK	15	52	28	5
CHICAGO -ALL	16	51	27	6
STATE -ALL	6	32	41	21

FIFTH GRADE

% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
0	42	44	14
0	35	42	23
0	68	28	4
1	66	27	6
0	41	39	20

EIGHTH GRADE

% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
0	32	59	9
0	24	58	18
1	42	50	7
1	42	49	8
0	28	56	16

MATHEMATICS

	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
DOWNSTATE -PREK	6	20	56	19
DOWNSTATE -ALL	5	17	50	28
CHICAGO -PREK	26	37	31	6
CHICAGO -ALL	27	36	31	6
STATE -ALL	10	21	46	23

FIFTH GRADE

% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
4	41	53	2
4	31	59	6
12	61	26	1
13	58	28	1
6	37	52	5

EIGHTH GRADE

% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
6	53	34	7
6	41	39	14
15	65	17	3
16	64	17	3
8	46	35	12

WRITING

	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
DOWNSTATE -PREK	5	40	54	1
DOWNSTATE -ALL	4	34	59	3
CHICAGO -PREK	15	54	30	1
CHICAGO -ALL	15	54	30	1
STATE -ALL	6	38	53	2

FIFTH GRADE

% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
3	27	62	8
2	21	60	17
7	44	45	4
6	44	45	5
3	26	57	14

EIGHTH GRADE

% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
3	33	58	6
3	23	62	12
6	41	48	5
6	43	47	4
3	27	59	11

Table 15 cont: FY 2000 ISAT Results of Students Who Were in Prekindergarten At-Risk Program by Performance Category

SOCIAL SCIENCE

FOURTH GRADE

	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
DOWNSTATE -PREK	8	31	56	5
DOWNSTATE -ALL	7	26	60	7
CHICAGO -PREK	26	47	26	1
CHICAGO -ALL	27	44	27	1
STATE -ALL	11	30	53	6

SEVENTH GRADE

	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
	3	40	49	8
	2	34	50	14
	5	62	31	3
	5	61	30	4
	3	39	46	12

SCIENCE

FOURTH GRADE

	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
DOWNSTATE -PREK	0	33	57	10
DOWNSTATE -ALL	1	27	57	15
CHICAGO -PREK	3	65	30	2
CHICAGO -ALL	2	65	30	3
STATE -ALL	1	35	51	13

SEVENTH GRADE

	% Academic Warning	% Below Standards	% Meets Standards	% Exceeds Standards
	13	15	58	14
	9	14	56	21
	24	29	43	4
	26	27	42	5
	12	16	54	18

Table 16: Percentage of Children Served in Prekindergarten At-Risk Program by Ethnicity

STATEWIDE

RACE & ETHNICITY	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000
WHITE non Hispanic	50	47	47	47	47	45	44	41	41	43	44
BLACK non Hispanic	32	31	31	31	29	29	29	30	29	26	26
HISPANIC	16	18	19	19	19	21	22	25	26	26	25
ASIAN	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3
AMERICAN INDIAN & OTHER	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	1	2

DOWNSTATE

RACE & ETHNICITY	FY90	FY91	FY92	FY93	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000
WHITE non Hispanic	68	68	67	67	67	68	65	65	64	64	63
BLACK non Hispanic	20	20	21	19	18	16	17	17	17	16	15
HISPANIC	9	8	9	9	10	12	13	13	15	16	17
ASIAN	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3
AMERICAN INDIAN & OTHER	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2

CHICAGO

RACE & ETHNICITY	FY90	FY91	FY92	FY93	FY94	FY95	FY96	FY97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000
WHITE non Hispanic	11	11	12	10	9	8	8	7	7	8	8
BLACK non Hispanic	55	50	48	50	50	50	49	48	47	45	45
HISPANIC	31	36	37	36	36	37	39	41	42	43	42
ASIAN	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
AMERICAN INDIAN & OTHER	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

Table 17: Percentage of Children Served in Prekindergarten At-Risk Program by Lunch Status

STATEWIDE

FAMILY INCOME	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000
FREE LUNCH	40	48	52	53	55	55	55	58	56	na	52
REDUCED PRICE	5	6	7	7	8	8	9	9	10	na	10
NOT ELIGIBLE	14	17	19	21	23	25	23	23	24	na	26
UNKNOWN	41	29	22	19	14	12	13	10	10	na	12

DOWNSTATE

FAMILY INCOME	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000
FREE LUNCH	56	68	51	51	39	43	47	46	45	42	41
REDUCED PRICE	10	8	11	10	8	12	12	12	13	14	14
NOT ELIGIBLE	34	24	38	39	31	45	41	42	42	44	45
UNKNOWN*	55	29	33	30	22	17	20	17	18	16	18

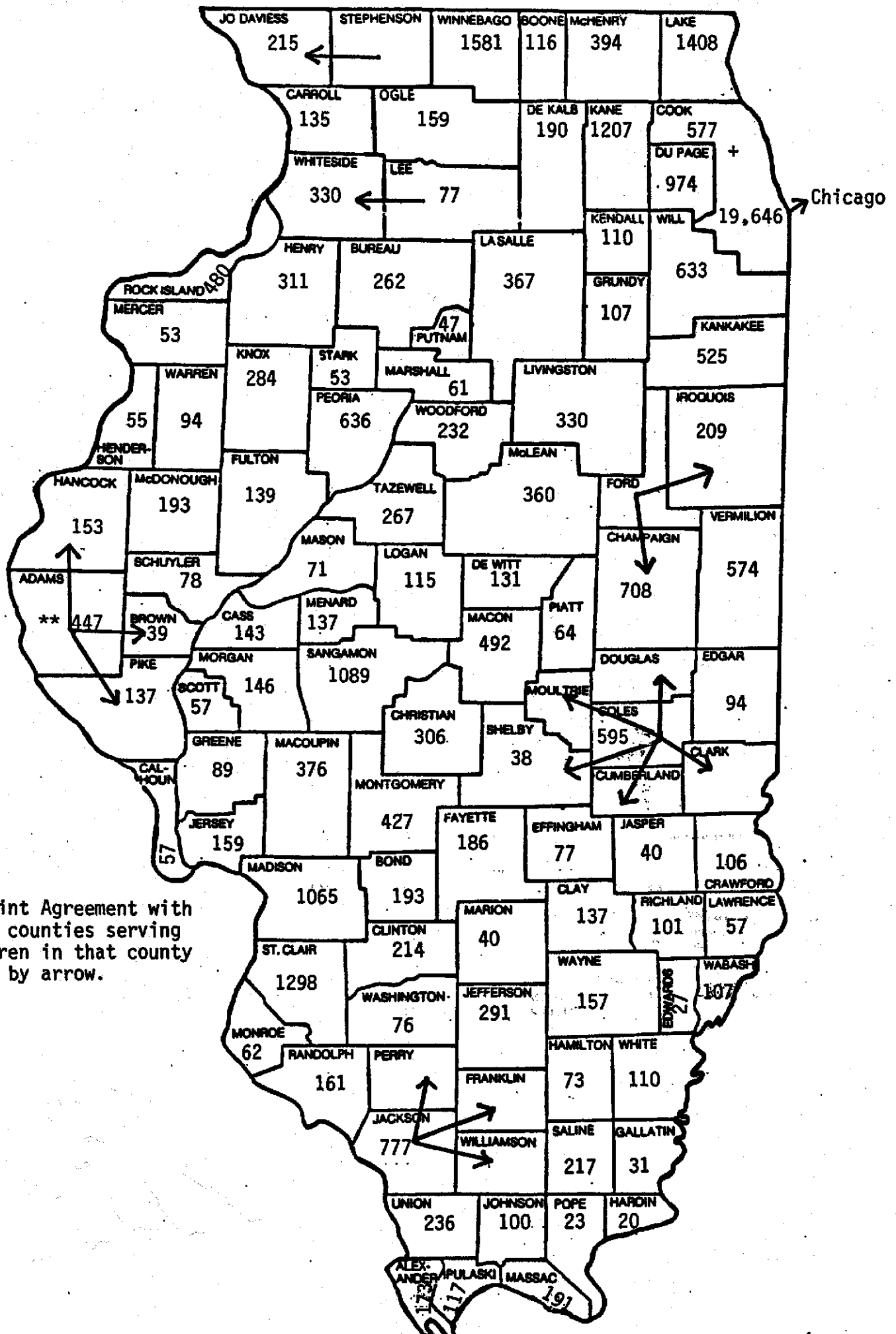
CHICAGO

FAMILY INCOME	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96	FY 97	FY 98	FY 99	FY 2000
FREE LUNCH	81	82	84	84	87	84	86	85	85	na	85
REDUCED PRICE	8	7	7	6	6	7	7	8	8	na	6
NOT ELIGIBLE	11	11	9	9	7	8	7	7	7	na	9
UNKNOWN*	10	3	3	1	1	1	0	0	0.5	na	1

* Unknown are not included in calculating percentages .

APPENDIX D

Number of Children Served in Prekindergarten At-Risk Program by County



**

In Joint Agreement with other counties serving children in that county shown by arrow.