READY FOR SUCCESS:

Five State Strategies for Expanding Effective Early Childhood Education

Council of Chief State School Officers

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit organization of the public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Activity, and the five extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. Through its structure of standing and special committees, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership and technical assistance on major educational issues.

Division of State Services and Technical Assistance

The Division of State Services and Technical Assistance supports state education agencies in developing standards-based systems that enable all children to succeed. Initiatives of the division support improved methods for collecting, analyzing and using information for decision-making; development of assessment resources; creation of high-quality professional preparation and development programs; emphasis on instruction suited for diverse learners; and the removal of barriers to academic success. The division combines existing activities of the former Resource Center on Educational Equity and State Education Assessment Center.

Early Childhood and Family Education

The Early Childhood and Family Education activities at the Council are founded on its standing Policy Statement on Early Childhood and Family Education adopted in 1999 that supports early childhood education based on the large body of knowledge about our youngest learners, and the increasing public awareness of their growing need for quality early education experiences to assure success for all in the K-12 years. Current activities are designed to assist chief state school officers and their staffs in implementing research-based education policy and practice for young learners that focus on three important aspects of the field: appropriate standards and assessment development for early education; strengthened professional preparation and development for the early childhood teaching workforce; and enabling and empowering parents and families to provide productive learning environments for their young children.

Table of Contents

Ackowledgments

This report of five case studies of statewide early childhood initiatives was undertaken by the Council of Chief State School Officers with the generous support of the Marion Ewing Kauffman Foundation.

The case studies for Illinois, Missouri and North Carolina were conducted and written by Ruth Gordner, former CCSSO Project Director for Early Childhood and Family Education—with editing and consultation provided by Rima Shore.

The case studies for New Jersey and Texas were conducted and written by Linda Brown-Warren, who also provided compilation and coordination of the overall document and authored the Executive Summary.

Jana Martella, CCSSO Project Director and Oralia Puente, Senior Project Associate for Early Childhood and Family Education, contributed to the editing and production of the final document.

The report was written under the guidance and direction of Julia Lara, CCSSO Deputy Executive Director, Division of State Services and Technical Assistance.

This report was based on study of the five states profiled. We thank all of those who so generously contributed their time during the interviews and site-visits.


Y
Q E Z
S O N

Ready For Success: Five State Approaches to Educating Our Youngest Children

Executive Summary
October 2002

Introduction: A Context for the Early Childhood Initiative of the Council of Chief State School Officers

In 1999, the Council of Chief State School Officers took the bold step of revisiting and revising its 1988 policy statement on early childhood and family education. In addition, the Council was determined to use its representational access to state agency education leadership to provide the information and tools needed to promote an expanded notion of what early childhood education could and should be. The Council's goal was to assess and assemble what is known about the impact of high-quality early educational experiences and what is needed to put programs in place that make these experiences available, particularly to those most in need.

The policy statement, *Early Childhood and Family Education,* was a call to "expand our efforts to see that every child receives the care and education, the skills and knowledge, needed to thrive in a fast-changing world, and to ensure that every family has the information, understanding, and support needed to give their children the best possible start in life." The Council's Early Childhood Initiative builds on its commitment to "ensure that every child has the opportunity for high-quality, universal early care and education at age 3 and 4 through either public or private schools and agencies with funding through public and/or private sources, depending on need" and to "expand and disseminate new knowledge about how to improve early childhood education." These case studies of how five very different states tackled the challenge of expanding effective early childhood and family education over the past decade are just one part of the Council's Early Childhood Initiative. By telling the story of what it took in these five states to promote initiatives aimed at creating systems of early childhood education, the Council hopes to offer state education leaders across the country effective "blueprints" for getting the job done well and renewed energy to apply to their own efforts.

The five case studies included here—from Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Texas—have some striking differences as well as similarities in such matters as leadership, target populations, scope of services, framework for delivery systems, and funding. We hope readers will find situations and strategies that are instructive and encouraging as they look at their own state efforts to help all children come to school ready to learn and succeed.

Impetus for Change

Interviews with state leaders in each of the case study states revealed that their efforts to create a stronger, better, more accessible system of early care and education were driven by many of the same factors. The percentage of mothers of children under the age of 6 who were joining the workforce outside the home had been increasing steadily since the 1970s. By the 1990s, estimates put the percentages of children who receive some kind of childcare at 68% for 3-year-olds, 78% for 4-year-olds, and 84% for 5-year-olds. Clearly, a massive shift had occurred in the responsibility for young children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development: once, families alone were responsible, but now families and caregivers shared responsibility. With this shift, researchers, educators, and policy makers began to look at the consequences of the qualitative differences in the early care and education of preschoolers, particularly as they related to their readiness for school and their later school success. All of our case study states reported discussions about the implications of these trends on education, particularly that of young children. They also cited concerns about welfare reform driving parents in low-income families into jobs and training programs as revised welfare requirements started the clock ticking on limits to assistance. Children from these families were seen as vulnerable to school failure. Their increasing dependence on non-family caregivers provided both a need and an opportunity to examine the quality of that care and to utilize additional resources to help ensure that these children would be ready for school.

School leaders also had their eyes on the rising numbers of youngsters in their schools demonstrating a need for costly special education services. Though many disabled children received early interventions that addressed their developmental delays, many others were not diagnosed as having special education needs until they experienced difficulty in the early grades.

These concerns at the state level were met by information and research generated nationally. *A Nation at Risk*, issued in 1983 as the culmination of the work of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, stressed the rising tide of mediocrity in the nation's schools, putting state and local educators and policy makers on notice that all was not well. The reform movement was launched in earnest. As part of this movement, educators, researchers, and policy makers examined local school practices and measured outcomes, often sharing dismal state comparisons with the public. Long-term investments in new ideas and approaches to teaching and learning were put in place and carefully evaluated, with their results widely disseminated. This gave educators real tools with which to improve their own schools and student outcomes.

Research on the brain not only confirmed that early learning creates the foundation for later achievement but provided data to support the notion that efforts to help children develop to their fullest potential cannot be postponed until they reach age 5 or 6. Neuroscientists' findings, displayed and discussed in understandable terms in a wide range of forums, gave educators concrete

tools with which to work and hope that their efforts would have a significant payoff. Many individuals interviewed in our case study states mentioned the enthusiasm that was generated by investing in prevention models that would help children secure school readiness and avoid the failures that are so difficult and costly to rectify during the later grades, if indeed they can be rectified at all. Further, as school reforms were being implemented at the state and local levels, educators saw that preschool education was the key to making those reforms a success. And it helped that everyone was looking for breakthrough successes that could pave the way for others, that would tell taxpayers that investments in early childhood education and reform models for K–12 were paying off, and that would not only show that public school education in the United States could be better but indicate how to improve it. These case studies describe how five states used the confluence of events, research, and information to give all their children a better opportunity for successful educational experiences.

Common Ingredients, Unique Approaches

While all the states in these case studies have certain common features, their approaches and results varied widely. The case studies approach each state individually, telling the unique story of that state. Here we will look at some of the features that the five states share, though they played out in very different ways.

A Champion and a Plan

To make a successful shift in how any major institution or element of the culture functions, there needs to be a highly placed, well-respected, widely visible individual who will take on the hard work of creating change and keep at it for the long haul. Four of our five states had that person (or persons) and one did not, illustrating how systems change can be attained by an alternate route, with an alternate type of champion. Although we focus on those special champions who were critical to bringing about early childhood education on a broad scale, we also wish to commend the countless others who were central to getting the work done and sustaining the efforts.

Common to all case study states was the use of a broadly representative body to study the issues of early childhood care and education and/or the full array of education reforms and make recommendations to elected leaders and policy makers. This strategy played a larger role than just the academic work of coming up with solutions to problems. It was the mechanism for informing the public and fostering the public will to support change. Including representatives of a wide range of groups and organizations enabled various sectors of the state's population to integrate their interests and concerns into the recommendations. This inclusiveness also built support for the shift in state expenditures that would be required.

Illinois, along with Texas, was among the first states to promote high-quality early childhood education programs as an essential component of

education reform. The champions of these early efforts were in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, which developed Action Goals for the 1970s that embraced the development of models for prekindergarten curriculum and parent education programs, improved screening and diagnostic procedures, and established preschool programs in every district by 1976. Armed with information from Early Childhood Education Task Force research about the great potential of high-quality preschool, in the 1980s state representative Barbara Flynn-Currie was ready to champion legislation that created prekindergarten programs for at-risk children aged 3 to 5 in every school district. The strong support of Governor James Thompson helped ensure the legislation's broad support and passage.

The Texas champions included leadership from the State Department of Education, Commissioner William Kirby, and the support of Governor William P. Clements. Added to the mix was Ross Perot, a well-known and highly regarded businessman with the power and determination to "fix it." The Perot-led Citizens' Commission put together top-to-bottom reforms of the entire education system, including a preschool component for disadvantaged children that passed the legislature and has been the cornerstone of the widely lauded Texas education improvement story.

Because of their early starts, Illinois and Texas have had two decades to work on establishing and upgrading program practices. Over this period, the programs have expanded to serve more and more eligible children, and experience and evaluations have revealed how to make the programs more effective.

North Carolina has not been involved in broad preschool efforts for as long as Illinois and Texas. However, in Governor James Hunt the state had a champion who was able to capitalize on public concerns about supporting parents as a child's first teachers and ensuring good health for all children as the foundations for optimal learning. By bringing all stakeholders to the table, including the business and faith communities, he laid a foundation for early care and education that serves all children and families with a comprehensive array of services. The governor's "design team" created the Smart Start program and a structure that would support it not only financially but with technical assistance and training in the many aspects of program implementation that have been so critical to Smart Start's success.

Missouri, like North Carolina, had a governor who first looked at early childhood education from the perspective of hopes and dreams for the young people in his own family. Governor Christopher Bond and leadership in the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education formed a close working relationship that put education at the top of the governor's agenda through public information campaigns. A series of Conferences for Decision Makers closely examined the need for early childhood and parent education programs as a preventative solution to rising costs of special education and increasing numbers of children in non-home-based care. The governor's willingness to spend considerable political capital to gain passage of Missouri's

parent education program was essential. This program, Parents as Teachers, was the beginning of what is now a two-pronged approach to early childhood education. The second prong is the preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds that grew out of Governor Mel Carnahan's 1997 Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education.

New Jersey found a champion not in the corridors of highly placed elected or civic leaders but rather in the hearts and minds of advocates and state judges who believed it essential and just to end the state's discriminatory practice of providing unequal educational opportunities to poor and non-poor children. In New Jersey, such discrimination largely translated into unfair treatment of low-income minority children in urban areas. Paul Tractenberg founded the Education Law Center (ELC) to be the voice for these children and used the tools of litigation to bring the justice he sought. The ELC, under its current director, David Sciarra, has continued that work through *Abbott v. Burke* and eight State Supreme Court rulings that provide a set of prescriptive reforms of education, including the required offer of a high-quality, well-planned preschool program for urban 3- and 4-year-olds year-round, ten hours a day. Instead of a high-level commission to represent the public's interests in preschool education and to help frame remedies to identified problems, New Jersey was fortunate to have the work of the Early Care and Education Coalition, led by the Association for Children of New Jersey. Once the ELC had established a framework of remedies through the courts, the Coalition carried out a massive public information campaign to help explain the issues and ensure that the courts' rulings were well implemented.

Local Control

Issues related to local control surfaced in each of the case study states in somewhat different ways and for different reasons. Local control is frequently talked about in conjunction with any education issue, but especially with early childhood education. Most education policy makers recognize the importance of respecting parents as a child's first teachers and the protective instincts that drive parents and local communities to want to be full partners in any decisions regarding the care and education of their young children. Letting local needs and concerns drive the shape of programs and services offered to children and families is also a means of minimizing opposition to state-supported early care and education programs, particularly within the faith community and among agencies that have worked with families and children in other capacities over the years.

In Illinois, the Prekindergarten Program, the largest of the three programs that make up the Early Childhood Block Grant, created in 1998, enhanced local district providers' sense of program ownership by allowing local flexibility in the selection of screening instruments used to determine program eligibility and children's school readiness and progress. Missouri operates two distinct but complementary programs. Parents as Teachers (PAT) focuses on home visits, group parenting sessions, developmental screenings, and links to

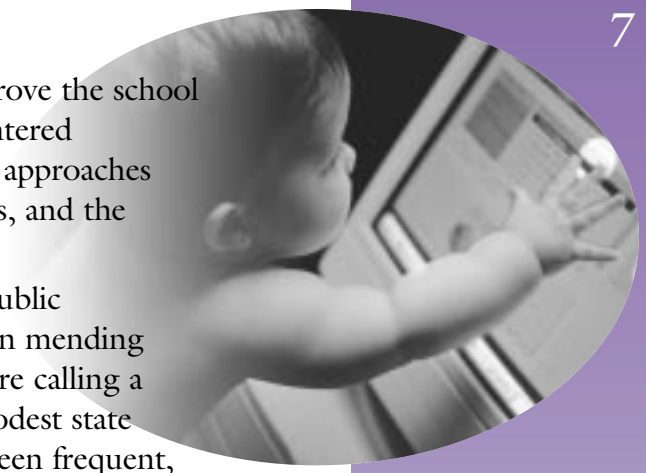
other services as needed. The Missouri Preschool Project for 3- and 4-year-olds was created to enhance the impact of PAT for at-risk youngsters by providing them with high-quality preschool experiences. Local control is central to the PAT program. Most services are provided through the local public school but are centered in the home. They are based on the belief that parents are the key to ensuring that children are ready for school and healthy. Thus, services are driven by parents.

The courts designed much of the New Jersey preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds in urban districts, but researcher Dr. Steven Barnett plainly told the plaintiffs' representative, the Education Law Center, and the courts that the program would need to be tailored to address each community's needs. The current head of the Office of Early Childhood Development, Dr. Ellen Frede, fully endorses this local focus and indeed had called for it in her work as a researcher, teacher of preschool teachers, and advocate before joining the State Department of Education. Programs are delivered by a combination of school districts and private providers, but all must be based on the documented academic, health, social, and other needs, including disability and language-related needs, of the children who will attend the programs.

North Carolina has perhaps the best known of the early care programs among these case studies. Smart Start is heralded for both the depth and the universality of its services. It exists in every one of North Carolina's 100 counties. Many state policy makers may have believed much more rapid improvement to school readiness could have been achieved with state funding of a prescribed narrow band of preschool services. Such an approach, used by several states, would have made it much easier to measure program impact. However, North Carolina decided the political trade-off made by giving program flexibility to local partnerships to create a comprehensive array of family support, health, and early childhood education services would better sustain the program in the long run. Not only has this proved true, but the investment of time and funds to train local partnerships on how to collaborate successfully in designing, providing, promoting, securing funds for, and evaluating programs has been Smart Start's strength.

The Texas Prekindergarten Program operates as a local early childhood education program using state funds provided by the regular Foundation Aid Program that funds public schools for K–12. There are state mandates for a child's eligibility and a count of eligible children that trigger the requirement for a school district to provide prekindergarten, but there are very few other requirements. The state provides detailed, voluntary guidelines for curriculum, has developed a self-assessment tool that can be used for program improvement, and urges local providers not to exceed the student/teacher ratio of 22:1 required for kindergarten, but otherwise, districts are left alone unless they request assistance.

Program Beneficiaries



All of the case study states were driven by the desire to improve the school readiness of young children, especially children who typically entered kindergarten inadequately prepared to succeed. However, their approaches have been unique in terms of services provided, delivery models, and the intended beneficiary population.

Texas began its efforts very early as part of an overhaul of public education. The inclusion of prekindergarten was a critical step in mending what business leaders, educators, policy makers, and parents were calling a failing system of education. While the program is given very modest state oversight, with few mandates, and while evaluations have not been frequent, the program is reaching its intended beneficiaries: 164,359 youngsters in 2001–2002, or 73% of those eligible. The program is for disadvantaged 4-year-olds, and 3-year-olds if districts opt to serve them, whose eligibility is based on their family's low-income status, homelessness, or inability to speak or comprehend English. Respected researchers at Rand and elsewhere credit the Prekindergarten Program in part with the good showing Texas has made on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, especially compared with other states.

The focus of the early childhood education initiatives in Illinois and Missouri is broad and includes both preschools and parent training and education. In 2000–2001 Missouri provided 47% of families with children less than 5 years of age with home visits and developmental screenings through its PAT program. Its preschool program serves a smaller number of children: 1,500 at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds in 2001–2002. Evaluations have indicated that more than half of the PAT children identified with developmental delays had overcome them by age 3 and that gains made by PAT participants were sustained through first grade. While a relatively small number of participants receive both PAT and preschool, together they have brought high-poverty children to above-average levels of school readiness.

Illinois' Early Childhood Block Grant combines three programs—parent training, prevention, and prekindergarten—all aimed at preventing school failure. The largest of the three programs is directed to at-risk youngsters identified through screenings and individual assessments. In 2001–2002 it provided prekindergarten to 52,637 children ages 3 to 5, or about 38% of the eligible population. Evaluation reports for 2000 indicated that 80% of those who attended preschool were ranked by their teachers as "above average" or "average" in their kindergarten readiness skill level.

The focus of the preschool program in New Jersey is a full-day, year-round program for all 3- and 4-year-olds in 30 urban, largely low-income districts (Abbott districts), which include about a quarter of the state's children. A total of 39,392 children, or approximately 73% of those eligible, attended the program in 2002–2003. A companion program that offers similar services in 102 additional districts with disadvantaged children served nearly 7,000 children in 2001–2002. Once funds are directed to a district for the preschool

program, any child of the designated age may attend. There is no further screening for eligibility or individual means test. The emphasis in these programs is on developmentally appropriate education; related services such as social, dental, and health services; and transportation, but services for children with disabilities and limited English proficiency are provided where needed.

The size of Smart Start in North Carolina, with its emphasis on local partnerships, breadth of services, and multiple funding sources, including the federal Title I program, is difficult to quantify in terms of precise numbers of children receiving a specific set of services. The program encompasses a holistic approach to serving the needs of children and families in an effort to ensure readiness for school and success in their school careers. It accomplishes this goal by expanding and improving the availability of quality, affordable childcare and early education services, including preventive health care, for all families needing these services. Funded with $220 million in state money in 1999–2000, it has provided 295,000 children with higher-quality early education experiences and improved childcare services to nearly half a million children.

Common Challenges

Common problems abound for states engaged in sustaining, improving, and expanding their early childhood education programs. All seem to struggle with finding the sufficient numbers of trained and certified teachers to maintain the student/teacher ratios deemed essential for preschool education and at the same time expand services to more children. In addition, many states, New Jersey among them, are in great need of facilities suitable for programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.

All five states seem to struggle with turf conflicts. State agencies that share responsibility for programs that address social welfare and health needs as well as those that are educational have had a history of very different program standards and styles of operation. Equally challenging, local providers of services to families and young children must develop the skills needed for and have experiences with collaboration, whether in formal partnerships or in less structured forms of cooperation.

However, most serious of all, what once looked like perfect timing for launching preschool programs on a very wide scale has become a period of struggle to maintain ground or seek modest gains in fiscal support, the scope of services, and quality programming. The cost-effectiveness data for preschool, which suggest that for every dollar spent on preschool, seven dollars are saved in preventing later difficulties in school, have become popular and help promote preschool programs. Further, now that widely disseminated research has identified what ingredients are critical to the success of programs, policy makers and educators know better than ever what needs to be done and how. Advocates for children and families have the tools to help create the public will that it takes to launch expensive new approaches to addressing children's educational needs. Still, as state budgets fall into deficits in the

billions, legislators must look for areas where they can trim spending. Fiscal issues make it nearly impossible for the five states to tackle the problems they are all facing.

To address the need for more preschool teachers with the necessary degrees and credentials, states will need to offer better compensation for workers in the childcare and early education industries, where wages have typically been low. Fiscal incentives are needed to attract teachers to the most impoverished areas, where needs are greatest, and to encourage childcare workers to seek the training and education that will qualify them to teach in preschool programs.

Preschool programs use a variety of screening devices to determine student eligibility for programs and conduct needs assessments. Screening often uncovers unmet needs that cannot be addressed adequately, if at all, without additional program services and dollars.

Holding on to statewide and local support for preschool increasingly depends upon being able to show that existing programs are having positive results. With so much local investment in and control over the design of programs and scope of services, evaluations are expensive and difficult to conduct. Where early childhood education services are made available on a very broad scale, as in Texas, it is easier to look at the school population as a whole as children advance through the grades and assess their progress. However, even a simplistic approach must consider drop-out rates, grade retention, and family mobility, among other factors.

New Jersey, where preschool programs have just recently gotten off the ground in earnest after years of court battles and foot dragging, was fortunate in this most recent budget go-round. The state faces a deficit, yet the Education Law Center and other advocates were able to secure a $142 million increase in the 2002 state budget for preschool. How this situation will play out in the years ahead as regular school budgets are level-funded and some staff reductions occur is unknown.

North Carolina's Smart Start program suffered a 10% cut in administrative monies and a 50% cut for program evaluation in 2001–2002, just as its best-known champion, Governor James Hunt, moved off center stage. While local advocates were successful in urging that the program be spared deep cuts, the number of children receiving childcare subsidies and health screening was reduced, as were parent education and support activities for families. The cuts in evaluation funding will mean less training and technical assistance to the local partnerships that carry out evaluation design and data collection. However, the evaluation challenge may force the program to be more consistent in standards, program components, fiscal compliance, tracking services, and staff credential and compensation improvement monitoring, which would benefit the program.

Texas, faced with a $5 to $6 billion deficit, is fortunate that its long-standing Prekindergarten Program is part of the regular Foundation Aid program that funds public school K–12. In recent years it has benefited from

additional funds for grants, $200 million in 2000–2001 and a similar amount for 2002–2003, that have helped districts expand their programs from half-day to full-day programs and to start programs on campuses where none had existed. Still, some state leaders feel that far too many children start school unprepared and that the prekindergarten program needs to serve more youngsters. Others worry about the exclusive focus on disadvantaged children when other children who are less poor may need the services as well but not be able to afford to go to private preschool or to pay tuition to the public prekindergarten. With today's economic slowdown, Texas is probably a long way from being able to address this problem. Instead, there is likely to be pressure to provide more intensive services to a greater number of disadvantaged children. As the requirement that Texas third graders who do not pass proficiency tests be retained in grade kicks in, there will be increased pressure on the Prekindergarten Program for higher quality and more intensive services if these third-grade test results show significant numbers of children failing to advance.

Preschool advocates in Illinois are relieved that its Prekindergarten Program was level-funded for the 2002–2003 fiscal year at $184 million. Other education programs did not fare as well. The program's very broad local support, due in part to the large number of children it serves, and positive annual assessments of student progress have been its salvation. Advocates had hoped for a day soon when preschool services would be universally available, though the preschool program for at-risk youngsters has never been fully funded. There is a call for more availability of services in areas where there are children who could benefit from prekindergarten but for whom no program now exists. Educators in Illinois continue to work toward their goals in hopes that the economic picture will eventually support their plans. When it does, they will be ready.

Missouri has been fortunate in securing the Gaming Fund, which was not being fully utilized for the veterans' services for which it had been designated, as a source of funding for a variety of early childhood education services. In addition, the 2001 General Assembly dedicated a large portion of Missouri's tobacco settlement funds—$14.3 million—to early childhood education programs. Unfortunately, the approaching budget deficit of $300 million, modest by some standards, has caused some conflict between Missouri's two premier programs—PAT, which had benefited the most from the new funding sources, and the preschool program. As difficult budget choices are made in the years ahead, the standards and accountability movement will place added pressure on all public education programs to show continuous improvement in student achievement. Although PAT, with its emphasis on helping parents to be better parents, is widely popular in Missouri as well as around the nation and even internationally, the challenge for the future will be to weave it into a more comprehensive system of early childhood education to improve school readiness for all children.

The preschool movement will not disappear or fall away as the nation hunkers down to deal with tough fiscal realities. Too much is known about its

value in making the most of the rest of the investment in public school education. Indeed, it may be a key to meeting the strong accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. It may be the best hope for school districts facing significant competition from private schools and school choice. The prevention approach of preschool may be the best chance public schools have to forge strong partnerships and support within their communities and among the various stakeholders who invest in helping families and children. It may be the best opportunity education has to bring a cadre of skilled, optimistic, dedicated professionals into the field, as prevention has a stronger appeal than attempts to remedy failed learning and its many subsequent related problems. Preschool may place schooling in America in a position of pride among its world competitors, many of which have been providing high-quality preschool for all children for many years. We hope the lessons learned from these case studies will inspire and assist educators, policy makers, and children's advocates to continue to work toward ensuring that all children achieve their highest potential.

Parents As Teachers and Missouri Preschool Project: Stepping Stones to School Readiness in Missouri

I. Background

Missouri has long been known as the "Show-Me State"—a nickname that conveys residents' insistence on common sense and their reluctance to invest in new ideas until they are well proven. This spirit infuses many aspects of public policy in the state, as reflected in Missouri's "Show-Me Standards"—the centerpiece of its approach to educational accountability.

In the realm of early childhood, Missouri has proceeded from the commonsense notion that, since learning begins in infancy, efforts to strengthen learning must begin with parents. Twenty years ago, the state launched Parents as Teachers (PAT), a parent education/family support program geared to improving outcomes for young children that has gained national recognition.

Over the past two decades, labor force trends have combined with concerns about achievement and social outcomes to widen policy makers' lens. In Missouri, 60% of children under age 6 have either both parents or their only parent in the workforce.[i] The great majority of these children are therefore in non-parental care for some part of the day. The focus on parents' roles in early learning continues, but Missouri has also undertaken efforts to expand early learning programs outside the home. In 1998, the state legislature passed the Early Childhood Development Education and Care Fund, expanding school readiness services. This resulted in the creation of the Missouri Preschool Project (MPP).

This report covers both these programs. Its focus is less on what these programs have done than on how they came about—the circumstances and efforts needed to launch and sustain them.

Overview of PAT

The "show me" principle has been essential to PAT's approach. While creating and launching the program, Missouri educators and child advocates were careful to inform the public about the role of early childhood education in promoting academic achievement, economic vitality, and social well-being. PAT has also made intensive efforts to document results.

These are the key features of PAT:

- *PAT offers universal access to all parents who want to participate.* Services are made available to all families with children from birth through age 5. A minimum of one contact per year is available to

parents with children ages 3 and 4. Parent participation in the program is voluntary.

- *Home visitation is offered to all families with infants and toddlers.* A minimum of four home visits and four group sessions per year are offered to parents with children from birth to age 3.
- *Preventive services are built into the program.* Periodic developmental screenings are offered to parents with children from birth through age 4. Additional services, when necessary, can be made available to high-needs families (e.g., families designated as low income through the free or reduced-price lunch program, families whose children have special needs, families with substance abuse histories).
- *PAT is embedded in the public school system.* All public schools must provide PAT services, although they can subcontract with other nonprofit agencies to offer services.

Missouri Parents as Teachers Timeline

1981—A pilot project (originally called New Parents as Teachers) was launched in four sites.

1984—The Missouri legislature passed the Early Childhood Development Act, authorizing PAT and requiring school districts to provide parent education and developmental screenings for children from birth through kindergarten entry.

1993—The Missouri Outstanding Schools Act authorized full state funding of PAT by 1998.

2000–2001—The number of families receiving services through PAT reached 157,237, or 47% of families with children under age 5 (data for families served in 2002 are not yet available).

2001–2002—Funding level totaled $30.3 million.

Overview of the MPP

The MPP provides early learning programs to children ages 3 and 4. Eligible providers include both public and nonpublic agencies. Providers can receive renewal grants for up to 3 years if their performance meets all state requirements. After the first year, renewal grants are reduced by 10% to encourage increased community investments.

To promote high quality, the MPP has set these requirements:

- All providers must comply with the childcare licensing requirements of the State Department of Health and Senior Services.
- Programs must operate a minimum of three hours per day, five days per week.
- Teachers in public school programs must have an early childhood or special education certification; teachers in nonpublic school programs must have at least a Child Development Associate degree, a 1-year certificate of proficiency in child development or childcare, or a 2-year associate degree in childcare/education.
- Programs must complete accreditation through Missouri Accreditation or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) by end of their first 3 years of funding.
- Programs charging tuition must use a sliding fee scale based on family income.
- Ten percent of each grant award must be used to offer professional development opportunities for all licensed childcare providers within a grantee's community.
- A Community Advisory Committee must be established to assist in conducting a community needs assessment and planning the preschool services to be provided.

II. State Support for Early Care and Education: A Brief History

Missouri policy makers began focusing on early education half a century ago. In 1955, for example, a licensing statute was enacted and rules for early care and education programs were promulgated. In the mid-sixties, Head Start programs began to operate in Missouri, and in the mid-seventies these programs began to receive technical assistance aimed at helping them include children with disabilities. As more women entered the workforce, legislators' focus on early education programs began to sharpen. For example, in 1975, the state revised its licensing rules, raising standards for childcare center directors. Over the next two decades, subsequent licensing rule revision further raised standards.[ii]

In that same decade, a movement began to promote increased participation in early childhood and parent education programs. Education leaders within the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) worked closely with Governor Christopher Bond and state education advocates to inform the public about the importance of early childhood education.

In 1972, DESE Commissioner Arthur Mallory appointed Mildred Winter to head a new Early Childhood Division. They convened a series of

Conferences for Decision Makers to educate citizens and high-level policy makers about the need for early childhood and parent education programs. These forums helped define Governor Bond's education agenda and established early childhood education as a priority for state funding.

The sparks ignited by these key leaders were fueled in the mid-seventies by new concern about the growing costs of special education and social welfare programs. The projected costs for special education in particular were expected to increase as a result of new federal mandates requiring the mainstreaming of children with disabilities and other special needs. These concerns convinced state leaders of the need to invest in more preventive solutions, such as early childhood and parent education.

A decision emerged from the discussions fostered by the Conferences for Decision Makers that a prevention model focusing on parent education was preferable to direct services for preschoolers. A primary consideration was how to create the most supportive environments for child development, especially for children whose families lacked sufficient knowledge of how children grow and learn. Furthermore, the DESE leaders believed that a program focusing on parent education was a more appropriate match for Missouri's conservative political environment.

However, Governor Bond lost his bid for re-election in 1976. For four years, the early education agenda that he had helped to shape was set aside. Then, in 1980, Bond won a second term. One of his first steps after re-election was to join with Commissioner Mallory and Early Childhood Director Winter to sponsor another Conference for Decision Makers. Discussions from this Conference led to the launch of a New Parents as Teachers (NPAT) pilot for 300 first-time parents in four school districts.

Personal experience deepened the governor's commitment to investing in early childhood programs and parent education: He became a first-time father during his second term. As he toured the state, the governor offered testimonials about his fears and experiences as a new parent to mobilize grassroots support for a parenting education program. As the end of his second term neared in 1984, he expended considerable political capital to push passage of a parent education program through the state legislature. Indeed, he ultimately threatened to hold up legislators' pay increases until they supported the Early Childhood Development Act, which authorized all school districts to offer a PAT program. The bill passed.

The next year, in 1985, the Missouri General Assembly appropriated funds to implement PAT statewide for 10% of families with children under the age of 3. In 1988, the General Assembly expanded PAT funding to cover developmental screenings and parent education services up to the time of a child's kindergarten entry. By 1993, full state funding of PAT was authorized through Missouri's Outstanding Schools Act.

III. Show Me: Evidence of PAT's Effectiveness

An evaluation component was built into the original four NPAT pilot projects. After 3 years of operation, an evaluation of program effectiveness was conducted through a posttest of children's abilities. The findings showed that children from NPAT families scored higher on measures of intelligence, achievement, verbal and language ability, and social development than children from the comparison group. Moreover, compared with parents in a similar but unserved group, NPAT parents demonstrated more knowledge across a variety of domains and were more likely to believe their school district was responsive to their child's needs. No significant differences were found between NPAT children and the comparison group relative to undetected special needs.

In 1989, evaluation results were released for a follow-up study of the NPAT pilot projects. The data showed that by the end of first grade, participating children were significantly ahead of comparison group children. At the same time, NPAT parents were found to be more involved in their children's school experiences. By 1991, findings from the Second Wave Evaluation of statewide PAT programs found that participating children performed higher than national norms on measures of language and intellectual abilities. This finding was particularly significant in light of the fact that children across all traditional characteristics of risk were over-represented in the Second Wave sample. Additionally, the findings indicated that more than half the children identified with developmental delays had overcome them by age 3. Finally, participating parents' knowledge of child development showed significant growth among all types of families.

In 1993, a follow-up to the Second Wave study was carried out to examine longer-term impacts of PAT. This study looked more closely at participating children's early school performance and how engaged their parents were in their schools and in providing learning activities at home. Again, the findings documented that the higher levels of achievement that PAT children showed at age 3 were sustained through first grade, and PAT parents were found to be more involved in their children's schools.

The most recent look at how PAT children perform later in school was carried out through a 1998 kindergarten readiness assessment project. As part of Governor Mel Carnahan's Show-Me Results initiative, the Missouri School Entry Assessment Project (SEAP) was created. This project was established as a comprehensive early childhood assessment initiative aimed at gathering information about the readiness of children as they enter kindergarten. The 1998 sample included approximately 3,500 kindergartners who were representative of Missouri's public school population across a variety of indicators: they were 51% male and 49% female; 83% of them were non-minority students; 70% of the minority children attended high-poverty schools; and 63% of the non-minority children attended low-poverty schools.

The study sampled all kindergarten teachers and all the children in their classrooms in the schools chosen. The participating kindergarten teachers were trained on how to use the School Entry Profile to rate a child's preparation for kindergarten.

The SEAP summary of findings indicated, "When Parents as Teachers (PAT) is combined with any other pre-kindergarten experience for high-poverty children, the children score above average on all scales when they enter kindergarten." Further, "The highest performing children participate in PAT and preschool or center care. Among children who participate in PAT and attend preschool or center care, both minority and non-minority children score above average. Children in both high-poverty and low-poverty schools who participate in PAT and attend preschool score above average when they enter kindergarten."

IV. School Reform and School Readiness

Despite consistently positive findings from multiple studies of PAT's impact, concerns grew about the program's limited capacity to serve Missouri's high-needs families, especially those from economically deprived or racially diverse communities. These concerns intensified as policy makers and the public at large became more aware of research showing the opportunities and risks of the early years of a child's life, as well as the potential gains possible from high-quality early learning programs. This evidence captured wide attention, in part because it showed the benefits that children in high-poverty communities could realize when they participated in high-quality preschool programs.

In the nineties, efforts to strengthen early education began to be seen as a key component of overall education reform. As standards-based reform efforts took hold in Missouri, high-level state leaders began calling for more systemic efforts to ensure "Children Ready for School, Schools Ready for Children, Families Ready for the Future."

A 1996 report from Governor Carnahan's Policy Academy on Managing Systemic Change in Education called on the governor to develop a strategy for integrating early childhood education with school reform. The report recommended impaneling a broad-based group to study the issue. In response, in May 1997, Governor Carnahan issued an Executive Order creating the Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education.

The governor's charge to the Commission members was "to review early childhood services in the state and provide recommendations of measures needed to ensure that services are delivered through a comprehensive, coordinated, locally focused and cost-effective system that advances the preparation of all Missouri children to enter school ready to achieve."[iii]

The Commission members represented state government, the business community, parent organizations, philanthropic organizations, and state and

local leaders from the field of early childhood education. First Lady Jean Carnahan, a long-time proponent of early childhood education, chaired the Commission.

The premise guiding the Commission's work was that in spite of Missouri's nationally renowned leadership in launching PAT, emerging local initiatives aimed at improving the quality of early childhood education were stymied by gaps in the state's policy structure. Specifically, at the state level, there was no comprehensive policy framework to facilitate coordination of early childhood education programs. Moreover, significant gaps remained in state funding for early childhood education programs, particularly for preschool-aged children. This meant that many of Missouri's children did not have access to the educational supports they needed to enter school ready to succeed.

The Commission based its recommendations for future actions on the growing research base linking participation in high-quality early childhood education programs with later school and life successes. This research also suggested the need for state policy makers to construct an effective system of quality early childhood education across the state. To that end, the Commission's report stated, "Quality programming depends upon an array of services that support and sustain it. These supportive services often are called the *infrastructure of early childhood care and education* and are essential to the provision of quality early care and education programs." Further, the report noted, "An effective and efficient early care and education system is easy for families to access, promotes good child outcomes, supports families as parents and workers, and is accountable for, and adequately funded, to ensure results."[iv] The policy recommendations emanating from the Commission in December 1997 were intended to "move Missouri to a new level of performance and accountability on behalf of its youngest citizens."[v]

Policy Recommendations of the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education

1. Support creation of a cohesive early care and education system.
2. Support expansion of local early care and education initiatives.
3. Set high standards for early childhood care and education.
4. Promote training and education of early care and education practitioners.
5. Establish school-linked programs for 3- and 4-year-olds.
6. Ensure sufficient funding and create incentives to promote high-quality early childhood care and education.

V. Reaching for a Vision of a Comprehensive Early Care and Education System

Governor Carnahan's deep belief in the importance of quality preschool participation to help all children start school ready to succeed enabled him to capitalize quickly on the Commission's recommendations and call

upon key Commission members to push for General Assembly action. Commissioner Robert Bartman from the DESE and State Senator Joseph Maxwell joined forces with the governor to search for resources to create a school-linked preschool program for 3- and 4-year-olds.

The Gaming Fund

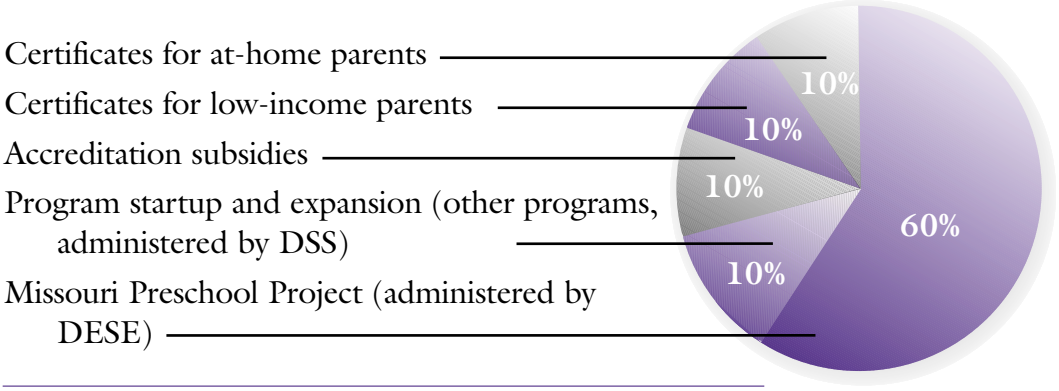
The search led to a pool of money that was underutilized—the Gaming Fund. This fund, which consisted of monies collected from riverboat gambling entrance fees, had a long-standing surplus. The Gaming Fund had originally been established to subsidize services needed by veterans. A key to this new strategy for underwriting preschool services was therefore gaining the support of veterans' groups. The governor and other leaders approached these groups and won their support for reallocating some of the Gaming Fund surplus for educational programs for Missouri's 3- and 4-year-olds.

Once the veterans' groups were on board, it was possible to win legislative support for allocating a portion of the Gaming Fund to pay for a variety of new early childhood education services. The legislation, introduced by Senator Maxwell, became known as the Early Childhood Development Education and Care Fund (ECDECF—frequently referred to in Missouri as House Bill 1519). It is through this legislation that DESE created the MPP.

The governor and other state leaders involved those in the forefront of the early childhood education and policy field in discussions of the new funding strategy. On the basis of these discussions, the Gaming Fund "pie" was cut into several pieces: 60% was set aside for the MPP, including 10% for start-up and expansion of programs, 10% for accreditation subsidies, 10% for certificates to low-income families, and 10% for certificates for stay-at-home parents.

Of the large piece of the pie dedicated to program start-up and expansion, DESE would administer 80%. With this allocation, DESE created the MPP. In 2001–2002, the amount of Gaming Funds available for the MPP totaled about $15 million. The remaining 20% of the Gaming Fund allocation for early childhood education programs is administered by the State Department of Social Services (DSS).

Gaming Fund Dollars Reallocated to Early Childhood Services



Tobacco Settlement Funds

A second source of new funding was identified in 2001, when the General Assembly reached an agreement to dedicate a large portion of Missouri's tobacco settlement funds—a total of $14.3 million—to early childhood education programs. In the final days of the legislative session, a backroom deal was cut to pass along the majority of the tobacco fund allotment for early childhood to PAT.

Through this deal, PAT gained an additional $6 million, enabling the program to expand services to 3- to 5-year-olds for the first time. But the deal disappointed many of the state's early childhood advocates for two reasons. First, the increased PAT allocation in many cases expanded services to families that were already participating in the program, rather than expanding the population of families served. On average, a participating family with a preschooler would have three "service contacts" (e.g., a home visit) each year, rather than only one.

Second, none of the $14.3 million went to the MPP. Some individuals interviewed for this report believed that expanding the MPP would have had a greater impact on improving school readiness. Their comments reflect a tension between two programs that should complement each other but that have often had to compete for scarce resources. The tension intensified during the summer of 2001, when a state budget deficit approaching $300 million came to light. This budget deficit narrowed political options for moving toward a more comprehensive early care and education system—one that would encompass both family support and preschool services.

The budget deficit also intensified the traditional skepticism of the Show-Me State. Early childhood leaders have repeatedly been asked to justify their requests for increased investment in early childhood education. In the process, some hard questions have been asked about PAT's impact on later school achievement. The key question is, Given intense constraints on resources, what kinds of programs should the state invest in to ensure the greatest educational and life gains possible for its youngest children, especially for children from high-need families?

The task of creating a consensus agenda among early childhood advocates and policy makers in response to this core question has been taken on by former State Senator, now Lieutenant Governor, Joseph Maxwell. As the sponsor of the bill that authorized the MPP, Lieutenant Governor Maxwell is well versed in the political dynamics of early childhood education issues specifically and the conservative nature of Missouri policy makers generally.

While serving as a state senator, he also sponsored welfare reform legislation, so he understands the necessity of quality childhood education programs as a work support for parents facing time limits on public assistance. Consequently, he is deeply committed to increasing public investments for quality early childhood education programs for all Missouri's children. This commitment enables him to readily take up the additional charge of serving as

Governor Holden's primary advisor on shaping a consensus agenda on early childhood education investments.

During the summer of 2001, the lieutenant governor started discussions with early childhood leaders around the state on the questions being asked about PAT's impacts. Central to answering these questions was determining how PAT and its important lessons learned could be integrated into a more comprehensive system of early childhood education for Missouri.

Missouri policy makers and early childhood education advocates are proud of PAT's landmark contributions not only in Missouri but around the world. Research shows that thanks to PAT, participating parents' knowledge of and abilities to enhance their child's optimal growth and development are significantly enhanced. The evidence also illustrates that children of PAT parents perform better in school.

However, policy makers are grappling with how to balance state investments in PAT and the families it serves most effectively with the mounting research showing significant educational gains for children who attend preschool. Such educational gains are especially significant when children from high-needs families participate in quality preschool programs. Because PAT has not historically been as effective in serving high-needs families, Missouri policy makers continue pushing for a more comprehensive statewide system for early childhood education.

Furthermore, the standards and accountability movement is placing more and more pressure on the public education system to show continuous improvement in student achievement, especially for poor and minority students. Thus, Missouri's education leaders are among the most vocal advocates for increased investments in early childhood education programs for all young children in their state. State education leaders view the essential nature of their work as finding ways to weave PAT's renowned parent education components into a fabric that enriches more comprehensive approaches to early childhood education and improved school readiness for all children in Missouri.

At the end of the summer of 2001, Missouri policy makers and early childhood education leaders were grappling with constructing a public policy agenda primarily from evidence about PAT program impacts specifically and from early childhood education research generally.

VI. Lessons Learned

Throughout the research for this case study, several themes emerged about what has and has not worked to advance an early childhood education agenda in Missouri. There is no doubt that a good first step in shaping an early childhood education system was to support parents' abilities to be their child's first and most important teachers. Furthermore, the public and policy makers alike have consistently supported the notion that PAT, as well as the MPP, must be made available for all families on a voluntary basis. Designing

programs to serve all families and thereby preventing stigmatization of participants has become a hallmark of many preventive programs across the country.

However, the Missouri case also illustrates the difficulty of promoting an early childhood agenda in a relatively conservative political context. It has taken tireless leadership from the highest levels of Missouri's public and private sector decision makers over three decades to secure relatively modest state investments in early childhood education. This report cites initiatives launched by three governors, three education commissioners, key legislative leaders, high-level philanthropic leaders, and countless unnamed advocates to convince the public and legislators to support these modest investments—$30 million for PAT and $15 million for the MPP. And these investments are now more fragile than ever in view of state budget deficits.

Another feature of PAT and the MPP touted as successful was the decision to make them available across the state, even though the initial small funding levels meant that only baby steps were possible in rolling out services. Additionally, while concerns were expressed about school districts' lack of deepening local investments in these programs, the good news is that the families participating in these programs view schools as trusted partners in educating their children.

The state's emerging deficit has led many leaders to believe passionately in the need for partnerships at the state and local levels and between the public and private sectors to improve the quality of and access to early childhood education programs. Two facets of MPP implementation have reinforced the effectiveness of state policies requiring partnerships and the fact that even greater resources frequently grow out of these partnerships than initially conceived.

One of the most celebrated contributions of the MPP has been the significant expansion of professional development opportunities. Local programs receiving MPP funds must use 10% of their MPP budget to forge professional development activities for all early childhood education professionals in their community. This joint venture has alleviated local private early childhood educational providers' fears that schools would simply try to take over all early childhood education programming; just as important, however, the quantity and quality of new professional development opportunities created through this requirement has frequently exceeded expectations.

There is also widespread agreement that the state has taken several symbolically important steps in defining MPP quality components: (1) teachers in MPP programs who are certified receive higher levels of compensation; (2) all programs (including those based in schools) must comply with the state childcare licensing standards; and (3) all MPP programs must become accredited by the end of their third year of funding. Still, access for all children ages 3 and 4 to the kind of high-quality early childhood programs funded through the MPP is still a long way down the road.

There are downsides to the three requirements, however. The first is that the DESE staff who administer the MPP and who oversee the state's accreditation system still have work to do to alleviate conflicts between some of the State Department of Health and Senior Services regulations for childcare and the state and/or NAEYC accreditation standards. Second, school districts have not previously been required to meet state childcare licensing requirements. Therefore, not all school district MPP administrators feel they can justify the increased costs of meeting state licensing requirements (e.g., fencing off early childhood playground areas from the larger elementary school playgrounds) to their supervisors. This issue is in part a subset of the larger question of why local school districts have not really invested in the MPP or PAT beyond what the state requires them to do to receive funding. Finally, while DSS administrators wholeheartedly endorse the MPP requirement that teachers be certified, they are finding that childcare staff they train while working in DSS-subsidized centers leave to take MPP teaching jobs almost as soon as they become certified. This is another example of an MPP requirement being in conflict with other early childhood education programming standards.

A final lesson learned in Missouri is that the schools cannot do it alone. This message reflects the underlying concern in Missouri, similar to that expressed by leaders from other states, about the mounting pressures on education leaders to improve all children's academic achievement. While these pressures have indeed compelled more educational leaders to promote investments in quality early childhood education, these leaders understand better than many advocates that they cannot single-handedly mold a comprehensive system of early childhood education. This is true in large part because Missouri, like most states, has fiercely guarded the right of parents and local decision makers to choose how best to care for and educate children when parents are working or attending school. As a result of both political and fiscal concerns, PAT and the MPP have been pitted against each other, rather than viewed as complementary.

In summary, a patchwork quilt of early childhood education has been stitched together in Missouri by numerous providers' hands over many long years. Around this patchwork quilt must be woven an enriched fabric of a more comprehensive, systemic approach to early childhood education services.

Early Childhood Education In New Jersey: The Path to Equity

I. Background

The Courts Set the Stage

Early childhood education is the most recent step, though probably not the last, in a hard-fought struggle for equal educational opportunity in New Jersey. This struggle has many valiant heroes, and the winners are the children of New Jersey.

While New Jersey's dominant preschool program is a product of school finance litigation begun in 1970, its roots go back even further. In the mid-1960s, landmark federal legislation called the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was enacted to help school districts with large numbers of educationally disadvantaged children provide compensatory education so these students could catch up with their age-group peers. It is of interest to look briefly at how this effort to achieve educational equity led to New Jersey's current preschool program for disadvantaged children.

The underpinning of Title I of the ESEA was the notion that children from low-income families often come to school less ready to learn than children from families that are not economically stressed. Further, it recognized that school districts with a large proportion of such children need extra fiscal resources. Title I Part A, the central part of the program that provided compensatory aid to school districts, began in 1965. Today this same program, revised and refined many times and now called the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, provides significant funding to local educational agencies in New Jersey, helping disadvantaged children achieve the same high state academic standards as all other students.

By 1970, it had become clear to education advocates in New Jersey that funds for compensatory education programs alone would not bring children from impoverished areas up to the academic level of their wealthier peers. This was true in part because disadvantaged children were clustered in school districts that had far fewer fiscal resources than those in the suburban parts of the state, and Title I alone could not make up the difference. In February 1970, advocates for urban students in New Jersey filed a lawsuit, *Robinson v. Cahill,* charging that the state's system of funding public schools discriminated against poorer districts and created disparities in educational opportunities. They charged a violation of the state's own constitution, amended in 1875 to require the legislature to "provide for the maintenance and support of a thorough and efficient system of free public schools education" (Art. 8, Sec. 4).[vi]

In April 1973, the New Jersey Supreme Court agreed with the advocates and declared the New Jersey funding formula for schools unconstitutional *(Robinson v. Cahill,* 62 NJ 473). While a huge victory for disadvantaged children, and indeed for all children, in New Jersey, the decision ultimately aided children in other states as well with its breadth and subsequent refinements through successive returns to the court.

In 1981 the Education Law Center in New Jersey went back to court claiming that the Public School Education Act, the state's response to the *Robinson* ruling, and its formula for funding public schools were inadequate to ensure a "thorough and efficient" education. The New Jersey Supreme Court issued a ruling in this new case, *Abbott v. Burke,* requiring the state to assure urban children an education enabling them to compete with their suburban peers. This ruling opened the door to broad-scale, systemic reforms and ultimately to a detailed order for the provision of "well-planned, high-quality" preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds in New Jersey's urban school districts. The June 1990 ruling in *Abbott* required the state not only to equalize funding between suburban and urban districts for regular education but to provide extra or "supplemental" programs to "wipe out disadvantages as much as a school district can." This remedy included preschool.[vii]

What New Jersey Looks Like Today

According to U.S. Department of Commerce figures, New Jersey is one of the wealthiest states in the nation, with vast pockets of very rich families concentrated in the suburbs and poor families in the urban areas.[viii] Rulings in *Abbott v. Burke* cover the 30 most urban of New Jersey's 604 school districts. Within these 30 Abbott districts reside one-quarter of all the state's children. Of the 277,240 students in these districts, 86% are of minority origin, compared with 16% in the non-Abbott districts. Seventy-one percent of the Abbott students reside in households that are low income, as defined by their eligibility for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.[ix]

Preschool Programs in New Jersey

By December 2001, the New Jersey Department of Education reported a total preschool enrollment in the Abbott districts of 29,824 children ages 3 and 4, or approximately 55% of the 53,676 eligible preschool children,[x] significantly up from the 39% enrollment rate for the previous school year.[xi] The Education Law Center, which has represented the plaintiffs in the *Abbott* litigation for more than two decades, reports that for the 2002–2003 school year 39,392 children, about 72% of the eligible population, are enrolled.[xii]

Though the statistics highlight that state action is shy of the promise within the *Abbott* decision, the increasing annual preschool enrollments represent a strong new commitment by the state. This comes after years of stalled efforts that the State Supreme Court repeatedly described as a failure to meet its requirements and that Dr. W. Steven Barnett—then director of the Center for Early Education Research (CEER) at Rutgers–The State University

of New Jersey—described as trying "to create the appearance of compliance with the Court, while minimizing state spending."[xiii]

The Abbott children attend preschool in a variety of settings. School districts provide programs for about 30% of the children. Private providers and Head Start agencies conduct programs for the other 70%.

Preschool programs in the Abbott districts cost about $10,000 per child, with state-approved budgets for school year 2002–2003 that total $230 million and will add $150 million designated specifically for preschool to Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) in order to fully fund these budgets. This funding commitment will avoid forcing districts to reallocate funds from their K–12 programs, as they have in the past, in order to support the preschool program.

While the preschool mandates of the *Abbott* rulings cover the 30 Abbott districts, New Jersey also provides ECPA to approximately 100 other non-Abbott districts that have high concentrations of disadvantaged children. These districts are referred to as ECPA districts.

Abbott Requirements for Well-Planned High-Quality Preschool in the Abbott Districts

- Universal eligibility of all 3- and 4-year olds
- Enrollment on demand
- Wraparound services: full day (with at least six of the ten available hours per day used in providing educational programming) and year-round (with at least 180 days of educational programming)
- Maximum class size of 15 children
- A qualified teacher with a state P–3 certificate and an assistant for each class (Teachers in private programs are given until 2004 to complete these certification requirements.)
- A developmentally appropriate curriculum that is aligned with the state's Core Curriculum Content Standards and Elementary whole school reforms, developed after the Abbott VI decision by the Department of Education as the Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality
- Related services, such as social, dental, and health services, transportation, and services for children with disabilities and limited English proficiency
- Collaboration between district and private programs to ensure that all programs meet required quality standards
- Intensive outreach to and recruitment of unserved children
- Assessment of student needs reflected in the design of programs
- Documentation of needs for professional development, staffing, and facilities

Core Preschool Services in the ECPA Districts

- Half-day programs for 4-year-olds in 102 districts with high concentrations of disadvantaged children for school year 2001–2002
- Class size and pupil/teacher ratio at the discretion of the district (However, the Department of Education has always recommended that districts use the Abbott ratio of 1:15 with a teacher and a teacher assistant.)
- Certified teachers in all classes in any Department of Human Services–licensed community-based or Head Start program with which a district subcontracts for services, with no delay to obtain credentials, as in the Abbott districts
- Developmentally appropriate program curricula based on the *Early Childhood Education Program Expectations: Standards of Quality* that emanated from the *Abbott VI* decision requiring substantive educational guidance to the Abbott districts
- District and school-wide planning that also includes community health and social services agencies
- Programs based on a district-wide assessment that includes a needs and resources assessment
- Professional development and training in early childhood education for staff
- Parent education activities[xiv]

The New Jersey Department of Education reported that in the 2001–2002 school year 6,842 children, mostly 4-year-olds, attended the ECPA preschool programs, predominately in programs provided directly by the school districts.[xv] In a survey conducted by the Association for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) and CEER, responding ECPA districts estimated that 81% of eligible 4-year-olds would be enrolled in some kind of preschool program, including special education programs, during 2001–2002.[xvi]

Looking at data for both Abbott and non-Abbott ECPA school districts, it appears that in 2001–2002, a total of 36,666 disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds attended preschool in New Jersey.

II. Advocates Make the Case for Preschool

Education litigation in New Jersey has moved from school financing issues to the court's demand for preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds in urban areas, and now the state has made a commitment to provide full-day "wraparound" preschool services. To understand how this came about, it is instructive to look at the chronology of events that took place in the courthouse and the state house and the arguments that evolved from them.

A Selective Chronology of the Litigation*

July 1975: A new formula and a new tax. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the state's heavy reliance on property taxes to fund public schools discriminated against poorer districts. In response, the state created the Public School Education Act, but it did not raise taxes sufficiently to pay for it. The court ordered the schools closed for eight days. Following a massive information campaign, public pressure resulted in the legislature passing the state's first income tax to help pay for public schooling.

February 1981: An output standard to determine equity. The Education Law Center filed *Abbott v. Burke* on behalf of urban school children, claiming that the 1975 act did not result a "thorough and efficient" education for urban children. The court's 1985 ruling said the 1975 act was satisfactory if given sufficient fiscal support. Further, the court reasoned that for disadvantaged students to receive a "thorough and efficient" education, they would require better than average access to educational resources. Yet children in property-poor urban school districts had less well qualified and less well paid teachers, had classes with more students per teacher, and attended school in deteriorating facilities.

The court concluded: "disadvantaged children will not be able to compete in, and contribute to, the society entered by the relatively advantaged children."[xvii] This reliance on an output standard to examine fairness and equity was crucial to all that followed in subsequent *Abbott* decisions, and to the development of the preschool program for disadvantaged children.

August 1988: Another new formula and additional revenue. Trial Judge Steven LeFelt issued a decision calling for a complete overhaul of the state's system for providing urban education. In May 1990, Governor James Florio introduced the Quality Education Act (QEA). A $2.8 billion state tax increase was introduced to pay for it.

June 1990: New Jersey Supreme Court calls for preschool. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in *Abbott II* that inadequate and unequal funding denied students in urban districts a thorough and efficient education and required the state to equalize funding between suburban and urban districts for regular education and to provide extra or supplemental programs to "wipe out disadvantages as much as a school district can."[xviii]

March 1991: Funds diverted to tax relief. The QEA was amended to divert $360 million to property tax relief. This prompted the Education Law Center to reactivate the *Abbott* case in July 1992, charging the state with failure to comply with the 1990 *Abbott II* ruling.

July 1994: Bridging the gap. The New Jersey Supreme Court declared the QEA unconstitutional because it failed to equalize spending between rich and poor districts. The formula could close the spending gap only if adequately funded and accompanied by a spending cap in wealthy districts. Inadequate funding also meant the QEA could not guarantee sufficient supplemental programming as ordered in *Abbott II*. "A study of the programs and services

to be implemented for disadvantaged students, including their cost, "[xix] as required by the QEA was never completed.

All the parties to the litigation agreed that children in the impoverished districts needed supplemental programs, including preschool, in order to have a fair chance of success. Without significant special programs and services, no amount of money would bridge the achievement gap.

November 1995: The state provides funds for preschool for disadvantaged children. The Comprehensive Education Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA) was passed, capping suburban spending at existing levels while creating a floor in urban districts at $1,200 per pupil *below* the suburban average. It did include $200 million for ECPA in the Abbott districts. However, the court objected to the lack of an explanation of how this amount was selected, the omission of the required assessment of student and district needs, and the delay until the 2001–2002 school year for submission of operational plans for preschool and kindergarten programs.[xx]

January 1997: Elements of what is needed for preschool. The court declared CEIFA unconstitutional and ordered state officials to immediately increase funding in urban districts and to determine the supplemental programs and services disadvantaged children needed. The state added $246 million for the Abbott districts and adopted a plan that called for a "well-planned, high-quality half-day preschool for all four-year olds in small classes with a 1:15 teacher-to-student ratio."[xxi]

January 1998: Needs assessment crucial to preschool program development. Based on recommendations of Remand Judge Michael Patrick King, the New Jersey Supreme Court ordered an unprecedented series of entitlements for urban school children, including whole school reform, full-day kindergarten, and preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, plus a comprehensive facilities program. The court had relied on research testimony presented by Dr. W. Steven Barnett indicating that there was a "very large gap" in school readiness between wealthier and poorer children, and that high-quality preschool programs could provide poor children with the necessary resources to close the gap.

March 2000: Continuing difficulties in getting preschool off the ground. *Abbott VI* attempted to clarify the intention of *Abbott V* that preschool programs be "well planned" and of "high quality." Without substantive standards, the court concluded that the state would be unable to evaluate programs and a two-tiered system was likely to result, in which some children would be offered day care and others would be offered high-quality preschool.[xxii]

May 2000: Funding for facilities. In *Abbott VII* the court reaffirmed its earlier ruling that the state must fully fund the Abbott construction program.

April 2001: Multiple problems persist. An administrative law judge ruled that the state had not properly implemented the Abbott preschool program. Still problematic but critical to providing well-planned, high-quality programs were outreach to the community to inform parents of the opportunity to

enroll their children in preschool; bringing Head Start programs into conformity with required standards; developing a budget process for district programs based on a needs assessment; and renovating and constructing facilities.[xxiii]

February 2002: The court amplifies its order. A frustrated and angry court issued *Abbott VIII,* chiding the state for a pattern of defiance, delay, and neglect. This eighth *Abbott* order provided a schedule for decision making that would help ensure that programs would be in place for the 2002–2003 school year.[xxiv]

February 2002: Governor James McGreevey creates Compliance Council. Governor McGreevey signed an Executive Order pledging to work with the Education Law Center and other stakeholders on implementing the *Abbott* prekindergarten program.

The *Abbott* rulings directed and redirected implementation of a comprehensive remedy for urban schools and children, including well-planned, high-quality preschools. Together, *Abbott II* and the six subsequent rulings in this case represent the first state high court ruling mandating the provision of preschool education as a component of the state's constitutional obligation to provide education to its citizens.

III. Key Participants in Achieving a Model Preschool Framework for Urban Children

While the education drama played out in the courts and state government, another level of activity, which had existed to some degree since the beginning of the *Robinson v. Cahill* battle over school funding, was taking place. It built public support for better, fairer ways of carrying out the state's mandate to provide public education. The public information and education campaign in New Jersey has been extraordinary—a tribute to the dedication and sophistication of several key actors.

The Defendants: State Commissioners of Education

While officially the commissioner of education, the director of budget and accounting, the state treasurer, and members of the New Jersey State Board of Education have been the defendants in this long-running case, the governor and the state legislature made the key decisions, often in the governor's office.[xxv] Likewise, as adequate funding and necessary changes in education funding law took center stage, actions of the legislature were pivotal to the breadth and direction of decisions made by the commissioner. In practical terms, the state functioned as the defendant in the case, but it was also the target of much of the public education campaign.

For example, during the early litigation and school-funding crisis, the legislature passed a new law to respond to the court's ruling against the state's education funding system. However, it did not raise the taxes to pay for it until the court shut down the school system for eight days. Again, in 1990

Governor Florio introduced a revised funding scheme, the QEA, and proposed state tax increases to pay for it. However, at the insistence of the legislature, a significant portion of this revenue went to property tax relief, leaving the QEA under-funded and unable to equalize district resources. A similar episode occurred during the Whitman administration in 1995.

Fiscal resources were not the only problem plaguing the state's efforts to respond to the court in a positive and timely fashion. As early as 1990, the court castigated the commissioner of education for his failure to evaluate curriculum adequacy in relationship to children's needs, to the "thorough and efficient" standard set in the constitution, or to the quality of educational offerings.[xxvi] These problems persisted until a 2002 change in administration signaled new possibilities for the state's response to the court's directives and to the needs of disadvantaged children.

The Plaintiffs: Urban School Children, Given a Voice by the Education Law Center

The Education Law Center (ELC) has served as counsel to the school children in the Abbott districts (about 350,000 at the inception of the case) since the case began in 1981, through all its stages, and continues to represent the class in efforts to ensure implementation of the Abbott remedies, including preschool. This has required enormous time, energy, and commitment for more than 20 years, through eight New Jersey Supreme Court rulings.

The ELC opened its doors in 1973 with a start-up grant from the Ford Foundation and the inspiration of Paul Tractenberg, a professor from the Rutgers School of Law in Newark. He had been involved in *Robinson v. Cahill* from its start and later with the *Abbott* case, and he was convinced that the effort to end New Jersey's discriminatory school funding practices would take many years. Further, Tractenberg believed the effort should be led by school children themselves, since they were the victims of the inadequate education resulting from the state's unequal funding laws.[xxvii] He started the ELC to be the voice for these children, and it continues to be that today. In addition to representing urban children in the *Abbott* litigation, the ELC conducts a broad range of advocacy activities. Central to all these activities is promoting access to an equal and adequate education under state and federal laws, particularly for low-income and minority students and students with disabilities. The ELC's Abbott Schools Initiative provides information, technical assistance, training, research, and legal representation to ensure implementation and compliance with the *Abbott* mandates and has been a partner of other child advocates and researchers in the state.

David Sciarra, the ELC's current executive director, describes two strategies for achieving change in state education policy. The first is to build the political will through grassroots mobilization that pushes the legislature and governor to make needed change. The second is to go to court. While the long *Abbott* struggle has been a story of advocates' inability to muster

enough political will to get the job done on their own, it has demonstrated how to use the courts as an engine for reform.[xxviii] After pursuing educational equity for poor urban children through the courts for many years, largely on its own, the ELC finally obtained a ruling in 1998 that jump-started massive statewide advocacy efforts. With the detailed court-prescribed preschool mandates of *Abbott V* in hand, the ELC created an opportunity for advocacy around the critical implementation issues.

The Advocates

The roots of the ACNJ go back more than 150 years to the Newark Orphans' Asylum, evolving first to a child services agency and citizens' group providing assistance to children in need, and then to a focus on child services and policy. Today it is engaged in every issue involving children and families. Its 15-person staff uses a multifaceted approach to build the public and political will to address children's economic, educational, and social needs. Public debate, research, legislative advocacy, publications, community outreach, and training are among the many tools in its arsenal.[xxix]

About ten years ago the 30-member ACNJ board moved from focusing strictly on child justice to education as a means of preventing so many of the problems with which it had been engaged on behalf of children. The *Abbott* decision provided a strong base from which the ACNJ could work to make the most effective use of its resources, so the organization began to focus much of its capacity on maximizing the potential of the court's decisions. It was the ideal place to start in its efforts to ultimately commit the state to universal preschool.[xxx]

The ACNJ's public education campaign about preschool issues has been massive, sophisticated in its strategies, and well organized. Dubbed the ACNJ Early Learning Initiative, the campaign has been a successful tool for helping the public and policy makers understand the problems and potential solutions surrounding the preschool debate. Its purpose is to "ensure the full, effective and timely implementation of high quality, well-planned preschool programs for three and four-year-olds in the state's poorest districts, as mandated by the New Jersey Supreme Court" and "to promote universal access to high quality early care and education for all children in New Jersey."[xxxi]

According to ACNJ Executive Director Cecelia Zalkind, use of the media is tricky in New Jersey, because of the heavy attention to and competition from the New York City and Philadelphia markets. However, with careful planning and high-quality presentations, the ACNJ has used a wide range of media tools very effectively in its campaign. Some of its specific activities are highlighted below.

Cable Television Programs. A six-part series of cable television programs—accompanied by a printed and widely available Parent Resource Guide—on early care and education was produced with the support of the Prudential Foundation, the nonprofit grant-making organization of the Prudential Insurance Company, and the Communications Consortium Media Center.

The series was widely distributed starting in April/May 2001 and shown multiple times per week for at least a month to a potential audience in the millions. Thanks to their ongoing relevance, many of the half-hour shows continue to be aired. Instead of simply hammering away about the need for high-quality preschool, the television series carefully takes early learning step by step from the beginning and gently instructs the public, particularly parents, about the key issues. Each show includes specialists on a particular aspect of early childhood care and learning who provide tips for parenting, offer advice to policy makers, and describe ways the public can influence early care and education policy and programs.

In exploring how the community benefits from preschool, the final show talks about how to seize the far-reaching opportunities of the *Abbott* decision. It further describes the importance of and techniques for outreach to various target communities so that parents can take advantage of free public preschool for their children. This final show concludes with a description of some of the problems that remain in ensuring that preschool programs will be available, well planned, and of high quality. This carefully scripted, highly instructive series of shows is only one example of the extraordinary expertise the ACNJ has been able to bring to the effort of promoting quality preschool in New Jersey.[xxxii]

Campaign 4 Kids. This strategy was formed to take advantage of the all-important 2001 governor's race and elections in the legislature. Both were considered crucial to the future of the preschool movement since previous administrations and legislatures had been major stumbling blocks in the implementation of *Abbott* mandates. By informing candidates and the public on issues affecting children, the Campaign 4 Kids sought to build the public opinion and will to create the political pressure needed to prompt policy changes. The ACNJ sent questionnaires to gubernatorial candidates explaining issues and seeking responses for a Voters Guide. Information packets were sent to legislative candidates. The Voters Guide, released at a press conference, was made widely available in public places and on the ACNJ web site. ACNJ staff met with newspaper editorial boards to brief them about key children's issues and wrote opinion articles for editorial pages. Information packets were sent to grassroots advocates, parents, and agencies.

The effort did not stop with the election. When the results were in, the ACNJ sought meetings with winning candidates to discuss putting the Campaign 4 Kids agenda into action, and hosted a breakfast meeting with business leaders to garner their support in transforming the Campaign agenda into a policy agenda when the new legislative session began in January 2002.

The Lighthouse Initiative. A consortium of corporations and foundations have come together in a multimillion-dollar, five-year project to provide funding to three preschools in Newark that will become "beacons of early learning excellence." By providing financial aid, technical assistance, training, and other needed resources to these centers, the Initiative will be able to answer the question of what it takes to meet the high standards set by the

court and the legislature for preschool programs. Not only will these centers become examples of what early childhood education could and should be, they will have the opportunity to illuminate problems and overcome them in the transformation to truly high-quality programs. Assessment will be a key component of the project, enabling centers to review what worked, why, and at what cost.[xxxiii]

Early Care and Education Coalition. The ACNJ has been the facilitator of the Coalition. More than two dozen organizations and individuals (see Appendix B for a list of members) came together shortly after the New Jersey Supreme Court issued its unprecedented decision detailing a fast track for state implementation of quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds by September 1999. It includes a wide range of education organizations; child advocacy, parent, and community groups; and researchers dedicated both to development of long-term policy on early childhood education and to the immediate need to monitor and guide the state's actions. The Coalition saw the implementation of the *Abbott* decision as a critical step in developing a comprehensive, quality system of early childhood education throughout the state. Mechanisms put in place to meet the court's standards would become the foundation for any statewide systems in the future and had to be carefully crafted.

Through a series of exhaustive discussions, the Coalition came up with a position statement that addressed recommendations in the following five broad areas:

Quality Teaching. All classroom teachers should be certified in early childhood education. An assessment of current staff and a plan for bringing staff in line with this requirement for certification within a specified time frame are imperative. Staff salaries and benefits should be equalized between programs within communities, with appropriate adjustments for experience.

Program Design. Needs assessments of children and families must drive program design. Class size should be limited to no more than 15 students with two adults for each class. Curriculum must be developmentally appropriate, provide appropriate transitions to kindergarten, and offer necessary health and social services. For Abbott districts, programs must be available ten hours per day, five days per week, 12 months per year, and under the responsibility of a certified teacher for at least six hours of each day.

Collaboration. Collaboration within the broader early childhood community must guide the development of statewide standards for program design, development, and assessment, and must include cooperative agreements among early childhood care and education providers.

Facilities. Development of standards for facilities must be based on the quality program standards, regardless of where the programs are provided. Added costs for upgrading and creating facilities should be borne by the state.

Evaluation and Oversight. These activities should take place at both the state and local levels to set standards, establish time frames, and oversee program development, implementation, and assessment.[xxxiv]

These recommendations, framed by the *Abbott VI* decision, guided the Coalition's activities as it shifted to a monitoring role. Dismayed by the state's minimal progress toward complying with the court's decision, in April 2001 the Coalition urged Acting Governor DiFrancesco to exercise the leadership and commitment needed to make the promise of *Abbott* a reality, imploring him to work with the *Abbott* plaintiffs to resolve conflicts and establish a realistic plan and timeline for compliance that specifically addressed funding issues, teacher preparation needs, and facilities. The Coalition also noted that special education and English as a second language issues needed greater attention as programs were implemented.

The Coalition used its April recommendations in a joint press conference with CEER to announce and publicize the release of CEER's *Fragile Lives, Shattered Dreams: Implementation of Preschool Education in New Jersey's Abbott Districts*. The well-orchestrated, widely attended press conference reported CEER's research findings that "major changes in state policy are required to implement the Court mandate within the next several years."

The lack of significant outreach activities educating parents about the availability and importance of the opportunity to enroll their children in quality preschool programs left program enrollment at a disappointing, static level. At the same time, the preschool programs lacked adequate facilities, posing the dilemma of engaging in recruitment when there would be no appropriate place to house additional students. To assist the state in dealing with the facilities crisis, the Coalition in 1999 established a subcommittee to examine standards for preschool facilities. After considerable deliberation, review of relevant information, and consultation with experts in early childhood education, the subcommittee members determined that they must research and articulate a set of Quality Indicators to guide the assessment and improvement of facilities. The Quality Indicators addressed such matters as classroom space and furnishings; additional indoor rooms; entrances, exits, and security; and outdoor play areas.[xxxv]

In November 2001, the advocates were buoyed by the election of Governor James E. McGreevey. His experience and background in municipal, state, and federal government, along with a law degree and a master's in education, indicated that he had the capacity not only to dig into the issues surrounding the preschool debate, but to fully grasp their ramifications and to use his management skills to help solve problems. The Coalition took this opportunity to develop its *White Paper on Abbott and Early Childhood Program Aid Implementation*. The paper carefully lays out the rationale for effective early childhood education, summarizes the most critical elements of a high-quality early childhood education program, reviews the current status of implementation efforts in the Abbott districts and non-Abbott ECPA districts, and provides a comprehensive set of recommendations for turning the promise of early childhood education into reality.

The Researchers

Research has been a catalyst for action in the struggle to figure out how best to provide an equal educational opportunity to all children in New Jersey. Profound and well-targeted studies have provided cutting-edge, evidence-based, factual information to all parties working to achieve and implement a system of education that is fair, meets the needs of children and families in varied circumstances living in communities with widely divergent resources, and spends the taxpayers' dollars efficiently and wisely.

Notable are the studies conducted by CEER, directed by Dr. W. Steven Barnett, and Dr. Ellen Frede, former professor of early childhood education at the College of New Jersey in Ewing. They are the authors of *Children's Educational Needs and Community Capacity in the Abbott Districts*, which, along with the previously cited *Fragile Lives, Shattered Dreams* by Barnett, have provided a significant body of research to advance the agenda. Their research and that of other experts found its way into the court's detailed prescription for the state's preschool program. As stated by the Harvard Family Research Project in its paper *Lessons in Strategic Communications: Research and Advocacy Collaboration—A New Jersey Case Study,* "One of the most notable features of the Abbott case was the Supreme Court's explicit use of research to inform its rulings."[xxxvi] This is particularly noteworthy because the New Jersey Constitution, the basis of the court's decisions, does not address early care and education. It was up to the plaintiffs to bring persuasive arguments linking equity between children in rich and poor districts to the need for preschool.

These studies informed the highly successful press conferences and media campaigns that helped keep public attention on the issue. The collaboration between CEER and the Coalition also boosted the advocates' credibility. Though the administration challenged the reports' findings, the press did not. Still, the education commissioner chose to ignore portions of the April 2001 administrative law judge's recommendations. Barnett and Zalkind, in an opinion article for *The Times* in June 2001, said that the state's actions meant, "Taxpayers are losing money now because these disadvantaged children continue to enter school unable to take advantage of education reforms made in the K-12 program,"[xxxvii] and they urged Governor DiFrancesco to fix the situation. But the timely actions necessary to implement the law were not taken until James E. McGreevey was elected governor in November 2001.

The New Jersey Supreme Court

And finally, in looking at the characters central to the New Jersey struggle for an adequate and fair system of education, attention comes to the court. Most state court observers point to the New Jersey Supreme Court as one of the most thoughtful and independent in the nation. It is particularly noted for its openness to hearing claims involving violations of state constitutional rights. As the *Abbott* case proceeded through its many phases, the court not only displayed its sympathy and commitment, but worked diligently to absorb

findings from the latest education research.[xxxviii] Presentations by the experts and researchers cited above during the court proceedings became extremely useful to its deliberations and orders.

IV. The Advocates Take the Driver's Seat, Inside and Outside of Government

The election of a new governor in 2001 brought the opportunity for a fresh approach to implementation of the court-ordered preschool programs. An early sign of the new administration's intent after years of government stalling and poorly-thought-through decisions was the appointment of Dr. Ellen Frede, both researcher and advocate, as assistant to the commissioner for early childhood education in the Department of Education (DOE). Based on the research, the DOE through that office has demonstrated the commitment to implementing high-quality services in every classroom from the inception of every program.[xxxix]

Governor McGreevey signaled his determination to end the debate over preschool and move strongly into compliance with a February 2002 Executive Order that created the Abbott Implementation and Compliance Coordinating Council. It would be, he said, "a cooperative board accountable for ensuring compliance with the New Jersey Supreme Court's Abbott decision," and would "move measurable reform from the courtroom debate to classroom performance."[xl]

The Council has seven members: the commissioners of education, human services, and higher education; the assistant commissioner of education for Abbott implementation—currently Gordon MacInnes, a former state senator and executive director of the advocacy organization Citizens for Better Schools; the executive director of the ELC; the attorney general; and a representative of the governor's office. The Council members work as a team, resolving issues before they advance to the court, and they present advice to the court as a unified voice. The Council meets monthly to assess the status of the state's implementation efforts. Work is done in task forces and working groups, drawing upon the expertise needed by state agencies in developing new policies and guidelines to improve program implementation and to help put systems in place.[xli]

One of the first decisions of the newly established Council was to discontinue the five-year, $6 million evaluation of early childhood education programs in the Abbott districts. The study was initiated in the fall of 2000 through a contract from the DOE and Human Services with Westat, a research company located in Rockville, Maryland. Council members believed that the study was poorly designed and a waste of resources. They felt the funding could be better used to conduct the essential needs assessment ordered by the court but never carried out,[xlii] and that redirecting resources would not preclude program evaluation, but rather ensure that needs assessment and technical assistance in program design are the first priorities.

The success of the Compliance Council mechanism for resolving issues was made very apparent in April 2002 when the state requested a "time-out" on further implementation of the Abbott K–12 decision. The state requested this relaxation of the court's implementation timeline in order to address three separate, yet coincidental crises: the state budget deficit, the implementation of Abbott statewide in K—12, and the lack of state data and analysis that directly link programs, funding, and student outcomes. These last two matters had been in continuous litigation since 1998, with few, if any, efforts by the state to address the issues. The Council believed that under the new administration the state's intentions had changed. Still, the DOE needed time to gear up and review existing regulations. A time-out would allow new systems to be put in place to document the needs-based programs and services that the supplemental funding would support. Without this needs assessment, there could be no accountability for the use of funds. After carefully reviewing the matter with the Abbott stakeholders, the ELC backed the state's request for a one-year delay in further implementation.

The time-out did not affect plans for the preschool program. More than $140 million in additional state preschool aid, now up to $380 million for school year 2002–2003, is expected to increase Abbott preschool enrollment by 10,000 students. Further, districts will no longer need to reallocate funds from K–12 programs to support preschool programs, as had been required in prior years.

When the voters of New Jersey ushered in a new state administration, they opened the doors to new cooperation and collaboration. With the commitment of Governor McGreevey and other new leaders, combined with strong advocacy in the DOE, a new spirit of collaboration is not only possible but assured. As David Sciarra put it in his speech at the Public Education Institute Roundtable, "We won!"[xliii] By "we," he means the disadvantaged children of New Jersey.

V. Issues, Challenges, and Hopes for the Future

Remaining Issues and Challenges

"New Jersey is on the verge of becoming the national leader in the implementation of high quality early childhood education."[xliv] Such accolades, echoed by many, describe the program and its potential. A basic framework has been put in place by judicial, legislative, and executive action and extraordinary efforts by public school districts, private childcare providers, advocates, and other key stakeholders to give the program a great start. Finally, visionary leaders from the highest levels of government, beginning with the governor, are offering support. Governor McGreevey's remark that "The state will no longer be an obstacle" is a modest description of the forward momentum his appointments, pronouncements, and actions have provided in his short time in office.[xlv] However, even with these positive

intentions and indicators, early childhood education has a number of hurdles to overcome before the program can meet its promise. Some of these hurdles are briefly described below.

State Capacity to Deliver. Previous administrations did not develop the management capacity to oversee and provide adequate guidance to local providers of preschool programs. Building such capacity takes time and staffing—commodities in short supply. The Office of Early Childhood Education currently has a staff of ten and a half and hopes to add two or three slots in the near future. During the long years of debate over the quality of programs, little work was done on developing detailed standards, conducting the assessment necessary to design and drive program development based on the needs and circumstances of children and families, or instituting a mechanism to ascertain program weaknesses and help target technical assistance to remedy deficiencies. Instead of finding out what parents and children need and want, the state relied on a "one size fits all" approach. Further, the distinction between day care and early childhood education did not seem to be apparent.

Because delivery systems had not been put in place at either the state or local level, they must now be implemented at a vigorous pace. The problem is compounded by the previous administration's additional requirement that all preschool programs offer services up to ten hours per day, 250 days per year, or "wraparound" services, though the court had refrained from mandating more than a half-day school-year program because of concerns that the schools might be overburdened, given their other urgent responsibilities, including whole school reform.[xlvi] Assistant to the Commissioner for Early Childhood Education Frede and researcher Barnett are among those who believe that quality programming is the top priority and that efforts to put it in place must start where the need is greatest. Offering less than top-notch programs will inevitably drag down the very standards that are essential for success.

Local Capacity. The local district capacity to deliver is also a significant challenge. School districts must ensure adequate funding, budgets, and quality. Enormous burdens are placed on school district central offices to provide needed program oversight, assistance, and accountability.

Preschool Transition to the K–12 Program. The preschool requirements of the *Abbott* mandates are only part of the overall remedy the court has put in place for urban students. In addition to basic funding parity in per pupil expenditures between urban and suburban districts, the *Abbott* remedies require several K–12 reforms designed to close the achievement gap. They include standards-based education, full-day kindergarten, and family supports, plus a number of other supplemental programs—such as instructionally based after-school programs as needed. Districts must also implement whole school reform based on a local needs assessment and educational research. It is critical that preschool programs, whether provided by the school district or by

private providers, be linked to the kindergarten and early grade reforms in the schools the children will attend.

Teachers: A Problem of Quality and Quantity. Up to 630 more teachers are needed for preschool programs in the Abbott districts alone. At this juncture, the higher education system in the state does not have the capacity to produce them. In the late 1980s the state eliminated its early childhood education certification and established a first through eighth grade certification. As a consequence, institutions of higher education cut back significantly on the number of professors teaching early childhood education. The preschool through grade three (P–3) endorsement was reinstated in the 1990s; however, it will take colleges and universities time to gear up to meet the staffing needs of preschool programs. Happily, the higher education community is working on the problem. Rutgers University, among others, has added three professors of early childhood education in the past three years. Still, a more systemic approach, with state leadership, is called for.

The court has mandated that teachers in Abbott preschools must hold a P–3 endorsement and that each class, of no more than 15 students, must have a certified teacher and a teaching assistant. Teachers hired before September 1999 have been given until 2004 to meet these certification requirements. Unlike most district-provided preschool programs, many of those operated by community providers, particularly Head Start, have staff who do not have a bachelor's degree, instructional certificate, or P–3 endorsement. Some of the recommendations made to address these problems include the following:

- Providing counseling and mentoring to private provider staff to help them navigate the higher education system
- Using innovative scheduling and locations for higher education course work
- Expanding grant and loan programs
- Instituting loan forgiveness
- Making teachers in the non-Abbott ECPA districts eligible for these financial incentives
- Developing articulation agreements among higher education institutions so that students can maximize their options for completing course work

Additional challenges include attaining parity in pay for certified preschool teachers and teacher assistants regardless of the type of program provider for which they work. Otherwise, instability in teaching staff will result as teachers obtain their credentials and seek jobs in the higher-paying programs. An effective parity scheme must take into account pay incentives in order for those districts with the highest proportion of low-income students to compete successfully for a fair portion of the most qualified staff.

Facilities. After finding that many schools in the Abbott districts were "dilapidated, unsafe, and overcrowded," the New Jersey Supreme Court set January 15, 1999, as a deadline for these districts to submit Five-Year

Facilities Management Plans to the DOE. Facilities for preschool programs were designated by the *Abbott VI* court as the state's "top priority." Coordination and a commonality of standards between the DOE, which is responsible for construction programs in school districts, and the Department of Human Services (DHS), which has oversight of community-provided programs, did not exist prior to the current administration. To prevent a two-tiered system from developing, the DOE and DHS must work together. However, since districts have not in the past been required to include community providers in their long-range facilities plans, there is no full picture of what exists and what is needed.

Turf, Tension, and the Need for Collaboration on Many Fronts. It is obvious that the DOE and DHS must forge a new relationship of cooperation given their dual involvement in preschool, but the history of these two agencies is one of mutual mistrust and turf battles. The governor's office needs to help broker better ties and coordination.

Another locus of tension is the relationship between school districts and private providers of preschool programs. Until recently, the state did little to aid community collaboration or invite any community role in developing plans for preschool programs. For the near future, Abbott districts will have to use private providers that are able and willing to meet the high standards established by the court for many of their preschool programs. There simply is not enough space in existing school facilities for preschool classrooms, and much of what does exist is not suitable for these very young children. Many families prefer to use community providers rather than school districts. They are more familiar with these institutions and tend to find them less intimidating than they do the schools. The previous administration funded private childcare agencies to make their programs suitable for early childhood education, but they were not given guidance on how to do so. Nor did the state monitor how the agencies were meeting Abbott standards. Districts must run the preschool programs under the oversight of the state, and they will have to continue to use existing private providers that can and will meet the state's standards. Children can be counted as "served" only if they attend programs that meet those standards. Upgrading private providers and Head Start programs to required standards of quality is a difficult challenge that will take patience, diplomacy, sensitivity, and assistance from the state.

All of the key stakeholders are examining their roles and relationships under the new administration. The Abbott advocates are not used to receiving cooperation from the state, and it will take time to make adjustments and accommodations. As new structures, such as the Compliance Council, are used for making major decisions, advocates are finding their role of monitoring state actions difficult. However, this kind of tension is natural—and much lower than what existed during the litigation phases of the long effort to secure quality preschool programs for disadvantaged children.

Fragmentation of the Preschool Program. New Jersey now has a segmented approach to preschool. The *Abbott* court order and its declaration of standards

and requirements drive programs in the urban areas where one-quarter of the affected children reside. However, the 102 ECPA districts that receive funds based on their number of disadvantaged children have a different set of standards. One complicating difference is that while teachers hired before September 1999 in Abbott districts have until 2004 to become certified with a bachelor's degree and the P–3 endorsement, all currently employed staff in the preschool programs in the ECPA districts must hold appropriate credentials. This may be why the ECPA districts use almost no private providers for preschool programs, compared to the Abbott district Newark, where there are 62 privately provided preschool programs. In addition, private providers will want to increase the number of students served so that they will receive more state aid, which is based on average daily attendance. These kinds of differences can cause confusion among families and educators alike. Careful monitoring will be required to ensure that class size and other quality requirements are met.

In addition to the Abbott and ECPA districts, there is now a third set of districts to consider. In 2000, a group of 17 rural districts filed an administrative complaint objecting to their exclusion from the roster of Abbott districts. This complaint, as yet unresolved, points to the need for the DOE to set up a procedure for considering inclusion of such districts in the Abbott remedies and their accompanying financial and technical assistance resources. All the key stakeholders agree that working out this issue collaboratively is far preferable to spending additional resources on litigation.

The existence of the complaint supports the view that once parents in other districts see the quality and benefits of preschool programs in the Abbott districts, they are likely to want more state support for preschools in their areas. In fact, the ACNJ *White Paper* recommends a feasibility study of expanding access to preschool beyond the Abbott and ECPA districts and moving toward the provision of universal preschool. To date there appears to have been little backlash from the suburbs over the resources going to the Abbott districts. Still, the state will need to keep a focus on the potential for geographic divisiveness, particularly as the budget crunch calls for reductions in services.

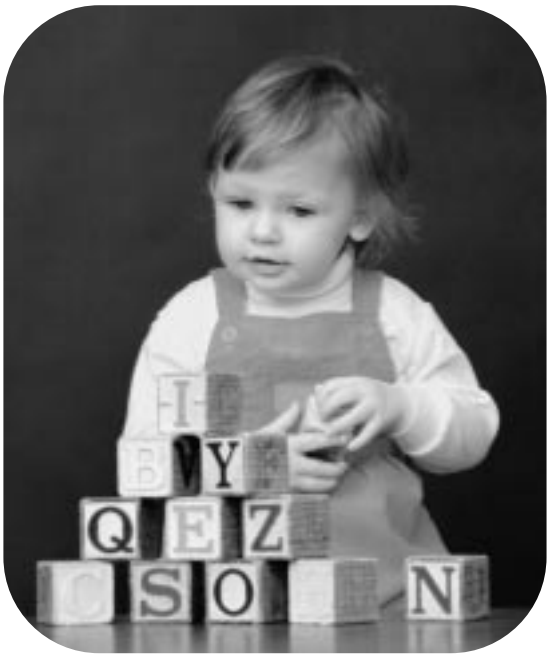
The Budget Deficit. Like most states, New Jersey is operating under a budget deficit. This has not had implications for preschool yet. In fact, the ELC and other advocates successfully secured an additional $142 million for the 2002–2003 state budget for preschool. But other education programs are being level-funded for 2002–2003, with no cost-of-living increases, and will have to make some staff reductions. This situation is likely to cause tension at many levels. As school districts prepare for these cuts and the DOE works through the budget approval process, the ELC will keep a careful eye on decisions that are made to ensure compliance with the court's order. The new spirit of cooperation and collaboration in New Jersey comes none too soon. It is to be hoped that the current cooperative spirit among all stakeholders will ensure the best results possible.

Hopes for the Future

In the years ahead, one of the biggest challenges will be to measure the results of preschool education and determine what young children really need in order to realize the lasting outcomes from their education, pre-K–12, that are desirable and equitable. As programs are put in place, the evaluation mechanisms need to be started as well, although care must be taken to relate specific program outcomes to the degree of program compliance with the standards of the court's order.

State education officials will have their hands full as the agenda is implemented. Ellen Frede notes that a "cleaner" budget and planning process, and comparability among programs, are necessary to ensure that all programs for 3- and 4-year-olds are of the highest quality. And there are even greater dreams for the state—a vision for quality programming available statewide for children from birth to age 5.[xlvii] These scenarios for the future may be aiming very high, but visionary leaders—not just hoping, but working hard to create new realities—are what New Jersey needs.

Advocates and government officials alike expect New Jersey to ultimately have the best school system in the nation. Preschool education will be the cornerstone of that success. The Abbott preschool program will be an important testing ground for how best to improve educational outcomes in urban areas. As the New Jersey saga continues, many across the country will be watching and hoping.



Illinois' Early Childhood Block Grant: Forging Partnerships for School Readiness

I. Background

In 1998, Illinois' Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) combined three programs into a $170 million preschool, parenting, and prevention program for at-risk families. The goal of the ECBG is to give greater flexibility to local school districts in serving children from birth through age 5 and their families. Previously, the three programs had been funded separately. They include the Prekindergarten Program, the Model Early Childhood Parental Training Initiative, and the Prevention Initiative.

While the majority of the funds go for prekindergarten, 8% of ECBG dollars must be used to support programs for infants and toddlers under age 3. Organizations other than school districts can apply for this funding. Proposals are competitively funded and must show a direct link among the three state initiatives.

Illinois' ECBG at a Glance

- 2001–2002—total number of children served was 53,386
- 73% of children screened received services
- 2001–2002—appropriation level of $184 million
- 8% of funds are targeted to programs for infants and toddlers

The Prekindergarten Program seeks to improve the school readiness of children ages 3 to 5 who are deemed to be at risk of academic failure. The program provides screening to determine eligibility. Grants are awarded by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to public school districts to provide participating children with prekindergarten education programs, which are required to encompass developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers in these programs must hold either an Initial or a Standard Early Childhood Certificate. Collaboration with other community service providers is encouraged to meet families' needs for full-day, year-round services. The ISBE is required to develop evaluation requirements and report to the General Assembly every 3 years on the progress of children enrolled in the program.

The Parental Training Initiative provides grants to establish education programs for parents of children from birth to kindergarten enrollment age. Services are provided by appropriately qualified staff, including early childhood teachers, counselors, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Priority is given to parents who are expecting their first child. Coordination with other initiatives funded through the ECBG is key to program implementation.

The Prevention Initiative seeks to assist families in gaining knowledge and skills in child development and health care, and in fostering their ability to develop positive adult/child relationships. It provides grants for partnerships to support the development of children from birth to age 3 through networks of child and family service agencies.

II. Prekindergarten Program as a Cornerstone

The story of Illinois' Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure begins in the 1970s, when a number of demographic and social trends converged, underscoring the need for greater attention to early education. These trends included the rapidly growing number of mothers working outside the home; increases in single parenthood, especially among women whose incomes hovered near poverty; and expanding federal protections for children with special needs. During the decade, these trends led to calls for more early childhood education programs. Responding to these calls, state education leaders encouraged local school districts to implement early childhood and parent education programs. Specifically, in 1971, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instructed developed *Action Goals for the 70's.* This report embraced the following objectives:

- By 1973–1974, implement a cooperative working arrangement among institutions of higher education, parent groups, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and other agencies to establish alternate models for a prekindergarten curriculum and parent education programs.
- By 1975, develop improved procedures and techniques for identification, diagnosis, and prescriptive teaching of exceptional prekindergarten children.
- By the 1976–1977 school term, every school district will need to provide a prekindergarten program for children ages 3 and 4. Enrollment in such programs will not be mandatory.[xlviii]

These goals reflect the fact that Illinois was among the first states to promote high-quality early childhood programs as an essential component of education reform. In fact, by the early 1980s, leaders in only one other state—Texas—had created an education reform initiative that embraced early childhood education.

In the 1980s, several events sharpened Illinois' focus on early education. First, the state's education leaders were heavily influenced by *A Nation at Risk,* a report issued in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report warned of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in our nation's schools and spurred education reform debates across the country.

Education reformers were also influenced by emerging research documenting gains from participation in high-quality early childhood education programs. This evidence was infused into policy deliberations by leading early childhood educators who resided in the state and served on the

Early Childhood Education Task Force convened by the ISBE in 1983. The evidence came largely from a study of the Perry/High Scope Preschool Project that had been released in 1980. The study, which followed children who had experienced a high-quality early education program into adolescence, showed significant improvements in cognitive and social abilities among participants. Its findings shaped policy makers' understanding of the kinds of education policies that could lead to long-term gains.

In April 1983, the ISBE directed its staff to conduct an early childhood education policy study. Several factors led to this directive, including legislative proposals from previous sessions of the state General Assembly related to age of kindergarten entry; encouragement of "latchkey" programs in public schools; initiatives to fund full-day kindergarten; and a prior State Board mandate to study the effects of preschool programs for children with limited English proficiency.

The ISBE directive authorizing the early childhood education study stated:

> While there are numerous reasons for further investigation of the potential benefits of pre-kindergarten education for handicapped and non-English proficient children, a study should include potential benefits, as well as any disadvantages, of pre-kindergarten education for all children. The study would be conducted with the intent of discerning whether any benefits of early childhood education would be sufficient to cause the state to either support or require the provision of such services.[xlix]

During 1983–1984, the Early Childhood Education Task Force examined the following questions:

- What kind of prekindergarten programs and services are provided in Illinois, and how many children are served by them?
- What is known about the effectiveness of these programs and services?
- Who else could benefit from prekindergarten programs and services?

The Task Force's report, *Early Childhood Education Policy Study: An Overview*, issued in April 1985, included the following major findings:

- Across Illinois, a variety of early childhood programs were offered in response to parents' increased demands.
- The number of children who could benefit from early childhood programs far exceeded the number served.
- Research showed that early childhood programs can successfully meet desirable educational and social objectives.
- Full-day, every-day kindergarten has superior academic benefits to half-day, everyday, or full-day, alternate-day programs.
- The training and experience of elementary school principals typically did not encompass the needs of young children.[l]

State educational leaders' long-standing interest in expanding access to early childhood education programs led to quick action in the Illinois General Assembly after issuance of this report. A highly regarded advocate for high-

quality early childhood education, Illinois State Representative Barbara Flynn-Currie, introduced prekindergarten legislation on the House side of the State Assembly as part of an education reform package. This package was also being pushed by Governor Jim Thompson and other key educational leaders in the General Assembly.

Despite vocal opposition from conservative political groups, a new Prekindergarten Program was enacted in 1985. The legislation authorized the ISBE to administer a new grant program enabling school districts to operate prekindergarten programs for children aged 3 to 5. The statute limited eligibility to "children who were at risk of academic failure because of their home and community environment."[li]

The authorizing legislation required the ISBE to report to the General Assembly every 3 years on the progress of students enrolled in this program. The first report was issued in May 1989. This report reiterated policy makers' intent to establish a program for children "at risk of academic failure": "The state-required procedure for identifying children who are at risk of academic failure in the Illinois program is through screening and assessment of individual children, rather than through the child's membership in a given group or the characteristics of a child's family."[lii]

This report set forth the ISBE's criteria for awarding Prekindergarten Program grants. Among the essential components were strong parental involvement; staff/child ratios of no more than 1:10 and group size of no more than 20; definition of standards by which students were determined to be at risk of academic failure; linkages with other childcare providers, including Head Start and family literacy programs; and an evaluation process designed to provide continuous, systematic information.

Further, the state required a description of the procedures used to screen children and inclusion of certain components in the screening process, such as parent interviews and screening instruments/activities that encompassed vocabulary, visual-motor integration, language and speech development, fine and gross motor skills, and social skills.[liii]

III. Impact of the Prekindergarten Program

The ISBE staff developed four key questions that guided their annual data collection:

- What are the characteristics of the children served in the Prekindergarten Program?
- What are the characteristics of the prekindergarten projects in Illinois?
- How well did the children do in prekindergarten and kindergarten?
- What factors seem to be related to children's success in prekindergarten?

The evaluation framework called for the annual collection of information on the characteristics of the children and local projects and on participants' status and performance after leaving the program.

A two-step process was used to measure children's progress after leaving the program. First, at the end of prekindergarten, teachers were asked to rate each child's readiness skills for kindergarten as above average, within the normal range, somewhat below the normal range, or clearly deficient. A year later, using the same rating system, kindergarten teachers were asked to rate Prekindergarten Program participants' readiness skills in reading, mathematics, and language, as well as their social behavior.

In May 1989, a report to the General Assembly documented results for the program's first 3 years of implementation. Key findings included the following:

- Most children served had no previous preschool experience.
- Screening services provided a draw for large numbers of families, which enabled local programs to make appropriate referrals to other services these families often needed, especially health care.
- Of the children screened, on average about 38% received services; however, an additional 50% of the children screened could have been served had sufficient funding been available.
- Screening approaches used by local programs appropriately identified children at risk of academic failure.
- More than 50% of the children served were identified as poor, defined as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- Most programs operated within a single school district, but up to 20% of programs were administered by districts participating in joint agreements or through subcontracts with Head Start, private preschools, or other entities sponsoring educational programs.
- After participating in the program, most children were deemed ready for kindergarten—on average, about 60% of the prekindergarten children eligible for kindergarten were rated by their teachers as either above average or within the normal range of readiness skills for kindergarten.
- After a year in kindergarten, most program participants were performing at the expected level. In FY 1987, 78% of the children were recommended by their teachers for promotion to the first grade.
- The behavior of children who participated in the program was found to be appropriate. In FY 1987, the behavior of nearly 75% of participants was rated by their kindergarten teachers as above average or within the normal range.
- Children who participated in the program for two years performed better than those who participated for only one year.
- Children whose parents were more involved in program activities were more successful than children whose parents were not.[liv]

These results have held steady over time. For example, according to the FY 2000 evaluation report to the General Assembly, between 76% and 82% of program participants were rated above average or in the normal range by their kindergarten teachers. Moreover, results from the Illinois State Achievement Test show that about 67% of participants met or exceeded expectations in reading and language; 41% met or exceeded expectations in mathematics.[lv]

One of the most significant changes over the years was an increase in the proportion of eligible children served. By FY 2000, 73% of the children screened who were found eligible for the Prekindergarten Program actually received services, compared with the 38% reported in the May 1989 progress report.

The populations benefiting from the program have changed little over the program's 15-year history. The percentage of minority children has risen only slightly, from 50% in FY 1990 to 56% in FY 2000. The percentage of children from low-income families has risen from about 51% in FY 1990 to 59% in FY 2000. However, it should be noted that Chicago programs typically serve more children from poor families—91%, compared with 55% in downstate programs.

Thanks to its consistent results, the public and policy makers alike view the Prekindergarten Program as a solid success. Consequently, General Assembly appropriations grew from $12.1 million in 1986 to $184 million in 2001, and the number of children receiving services increased from 6,953 in 1986 to 52,637 in 2001.[lvi]

Most early childhood and education leaders are in general agreement that the Prekindergarten Program has had a significant and sustained impact on children's educational achievement in Illinois. The program's record of accomplishment accounted for the steady growth in the state's investment. But there was a growing undercurrent of concern that investments have not increased rapidly enough to keep pace with the growing demands for prekindergarten services.

IV. Emergence of the ECBG

Some have suggested that the ECBG was intended by a number of early childhood advocates to ensure expanded investment in services for children from birth through age 3. As in most states, funding for early childhood services for this age group was clearly insufficient. The goal of increasing investments for the youngest children led to the 8% set-aside within ECBG for services to infants and toddlers.

Two other forces led legislators and advocates to agree to create the ECBG. A key factor was local superintendents' desire for more flexibility. They wanted the leeway to serve children from birth through the age of kindergarten entry and to design locally responsive approaches to these services. This kind of flexibility was seen as especially vital in poorer communities, where partnerships are more essential.

Responding to this need, Illinois' legislature authorized the ECBG in 1998. It combined three existing initiatives into one program: the Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure, the Model Early Childhood Parental Training Initiative, and the Prevention Initiative for Programs Offering Coordinated Services to At-Risk Children and Their Families. As noted above, the authorizing legislation requires that 8% of these monies be used to fund programs for children from birth to age 3.

However, the focus of each initiative was not changed. Instead, through the consolidated administration of these three initiatives, ECBG applicants are "encouraged to think strategically about the use of early childhood funds so that each element of the effort reinforces and supports the others. Proposals, therefore, must show a direct link between and among the initiatives."[lvii] Grant recipients are also required to collect data on program participants as they progress through school, provided they remain in the same school district.

V. An Exemplary Early Childhood Partnership

To better understand how local communities have woven together the strands of the ECBG, we conducted site visits in the summer of 2001. The stories that unfolded suggested that the kind of flexibility sought through the ECBG was being achieved, thanks to strong leadership emerging from local partnerships. A snapshot of one exemplary local partnership highlights how the ECBG has fostered comprehensive approaches to early childhood services.

Southern Region Early Childhood Programs

This partnership has been in existence since 1986, when it received its first Prekindergarten Program grant. The Southern Region Early Childhood partnership serves 960 young children and their families across four rural counties in southern Illinois. It grew out of collaborative work carried out over the course of many years between the ISBE, 24 public school districts from rural southern Illinois, and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC). It includes Prekindergarten, Parental Training, Prevention Initiative, and Even Start programs:

- The Prekindergarten Program offers classroom-based experiences through public schools in 14 different districts. Home-based experiences are offered in an additional district. The program serves approximately 700 children ages 3 to 5 years old.
- The Parental Training Program offers services to about 150 families across four school districts. It is designed to support parents in their last trimester of pregnancy and parents with children from birth to age 3.
- The Prevention Initiative provides comprehensive services to infants and toddlers and their families. This program offers home-based services to about 75 families, who are visited at least twice a month. Based on Dr. T. Berry Brazelton's Touchpoints Model, the program focuses on parent-child interactions to foster optimal child growth and development.

- The Even Start Family Literacy partnership is sponsored with John Logan and Rend Lake Colleges. Families with children from birth to age 7 receive services across four school districts. Approximately 35 families are served each year. Parents participate in adult education and receive necessary parenting supports to foster healthy child development.

All initiatives sponsored through the Southern Regional Early Childhood partnership are served by the Early Childhood Professional Development Center (ECPDC), located on the SIUC campus. The ECPDC offers resources, research materials, and a reflective environment for program and area professionals, students, community agencies, and parents. Its mission is to articulate developmentally appropriate practices, provide developmental and educational opportunities to early childhood professionals, and disseminate knowledge of current research and innovative strategies for teaching and learning.

The Murphysboro Community Unit School District is responsible for the fiscal and operational oversight of services offered through the ECPDC. The two entities share a long history of offering integrated early childhood program and professional development opportunities across the 24 school districts in southern Illinois. All early childhood and education leaders from this area who were interviewed for this report spoke highly of the remarkable accomplishments of this partnership.

- The most lauded accomplishments included the following:
- Faculty from SIUC and prekindergarten teachers work collaboratively to create professional development activities.
- Continuous attention to supervision of prekindergarten classroom student teachers has fostered a collegial approach to defining and measuring Prekindergarten Program effectiveness.

Continuous attention from SIUC faculty to connecting theory and practice for educational leaders and classroom teachers has become a critical component of classroom successes.

Sponsorship of the Prekindergarten Program by school districts has transformed public school leaders' and teachers' understandings of how to effectively engage parents of young children in their children's education. Subsequently, these understandings have substantially enhanced relationships between parents and teachers across all grades in schools that sponsor this program.

VI. Key Successes and Continuing Challenges

The Prekindergarten Program is the cornerstone of Illinois' state-sponsored early childhood initiatives because of both its longevity and the large population it serves. Of the three ECBG programs, the Prekindergarten Program serves the most students. Its impact on measures of school readiness is not yet matched by the Parental Training and Prevention Initiative components.

Support from the public and policy makers for the Prekindergarten Program has been strong because it is viewed as increasing participants' chances for long-term educational success. This view stems from the results of legislatively mandated annual assessments of student progress. Districts' sense of ownership of the program was enhanced by the ISBE decision to allow local flexibility in selecting the instruments used to screen children for eligibility and measure their school readiness and progress.

Early childhood and educational leaders agree that several program elements have contributed to sustained student progress: targeting children at risk of academic failure; requiring certified teachers; mandating active parent involvement; and requiring sponsorship by local school districts.

It should be noted that sponsorship by local school districts remains a bone of contention among those who would like to see more partnerships between school districts and community-based providers of preschool services. This issue is discussed below. At the same time, school district sponsorship is credited with a number of important accomplishments. Transformations of parent/teacher relationships and professional development supports for early childhood teachers have occurred in many schools. Moreover, in some communities, college and university early childhood and elementary teacher education programs have been transformed through faculty members' active engagement in one or more of the early childhood initiatives funded through the ECBG.

All the early childhood leaders from across the state who were interviewed for this report described the Prekindergarten Program as very successful. The key challenges they noted include the following:

It is has never reached full funding.

The teacher certification requirements mean that some school districts experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining enough qualified teachers from year to year.

Due to the ECBG, increasing numbers of school districts are offering a wider array of services. Many of the children they are serving through the Parental Training and Prevention Initiatives are not designated "at risk of academic failure" but nonetheless could benefit from prekindergarten. However, there are not enough prekindergarten programs in their communities to serve them. Lack of funding for facilities and qualified teachers prohibit many school districts from sponsoring more prekindergarten programs.

Families with infants and toddlers have unmet needs for early intervention, health care, and social services that are being uncovered by ECBG programs. Given current funding levels and community capacity, neither the ECBG programs nor other community agencies can fully address these needs.

Over the long term, a key challenge facing school districts that sponsor prekindergarten programs is developing partnerships with community-based childcare providers. While the linkages required to receive the ECBG funds have motivated some school districts to collaborate with community-based providers of other services, in most places schools remain the sole providers of early education services through the Prekindergarten Program.

However, as growing numbers of parents move from welfare to work, policy makers are under pressure to expand access to full-day, full-year, high-quality early childhood education programs. School districts are therefore forging more partnerships with community-based providers. This trend has grown fastest in the Chicago area because of public school space limitations and strong advocacy from community-based providers, but other school districts are moving in this direction as well.

Advocates and policy makers are looking at the feasibility of providing universal preschool in Illinois. Strategic planning is under way, and a framework is being put in place. As parts of the expansion of the preschool initiative are developed, the need for stronger partnerships at the local and state levels will be even more salient.

In spite of this long history of important gains for children, advocates of school readiness for all children must never stop promoting the importance of early childhood education. The spring 2002 session of the Illinois General Assembly was forced to focus on creating a budget that addressed a substantial deficit in the current state budget and in the pending forecast for FY 2003. Happily, the Prekindergarten Program was level-funded at $184 million for FY 2003. Other education programs did not fare as well. The popularity of the Prekindergarten Program and its strong evaluation findings offer it some measure of protection as economic strictures in the state require tough spending choices. The cost-effectiveness of spending dollars on screenings, addressing needs early in children's lives, helping children achieve readiness for school, and preventing learning failures will safeguard existing preschool efforts for now. Whether they will be a sufficient impetus for expansion of the program in the years just ahead remains to be seen.

North Carolina's SMART START: Keys to Success and Continuing Challenges

I. Background

Few public policy initiatives in the realm of early childhood education have been as influential as Smart Start—North Carolina's public/private initiative that provides funding to all of the state's 100 counties with the aim of enabling all children to enter school healthy and ready to succeed.

Launched in 1993, the program has operated for nearly a decade and has survived changes in political leadership as well as shifts in the economic winds. For years, Smart Start has been studied by other states eager to strengthen school readiness. Staff have provided significant support and advice to colleagues from other states. In 2001, this role was formalized when the North Carolina Partnership for Children established a National Technical Assistance Center to assist other states with the development of their own early education initiatives.

Smart Start has won national attention for five key reasons:

Services are comprehensive. Services—for children from birth to age 5 and their families—are geared to improving the quality of childcare, making childcare more affordable and accessible, expanding access to health services, and offering family support services.

Access to services is universal. Services are made available to all families on a voluntary basis.

Investments are substantial. Smart Start represents a major investment in healthy development and early learning. The current state funding level is $220 million. Funds have also been raised from the private sector. Since Smart Start was launched in 1993, more than $125 million has been raised in private donations.

Effective collaboration between the public and private sectors is fundamental to the program's success. The role of the private sector is not limited to funding. At the heart of the initiative is the North Carolina Partnership for Children, a statewide nonprofit organization that provides oversight and technical assistance to local partnerships, which administer Smart Start funds.

Efforts to document program impacts have been rigorous. Evaluations have looked not only at the services provided to children and families, but also at child outcomes, including school readiness assessments.

These factors are discussed in the pages that follow. The report looks back at the history of Smart Start in order to shed light on its design, evolution, and impact. It also looks forward, identifying key challenges that the initiative faces in coming years.

There is no doubt among the program's shapers that the single most important force behind Smart Start's success was the visionary and sustained leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr., who served as governor from 1977 to 1985 and again from 1993 to 2001.

Prior to Smart Start's development, Governor Hunt's commitment to improving educational opportunities for all children had left an imprint on the K–12 and higher education systems. Most notable among his contributions during his first two terms as governor (1977–1981 and 1981–1985) was the establishment of public kindergarten across North Carolina.[lviii]

As he contemplated another run for governor in the early 1990s, he was attentive to the debates raging across the state about poor education results. The state had among the nation's lowest standards for early childhood education and one of the highest rates of child poverty. North Carolina ranked 49th among states in Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores.

Personal experience also factored into Governor Hunt's thinking. Having become a grandfather during the 1980s, Governor Hunt was responsive to advocates' calls for better-quality early childhood care and education. As he repeated during the interview for this report, he believed that in subsidizing and setting standards for early care and education, North Carolina must make available for all its children "what I want for my grandchildren."[lix]

In 1992, as Hunt planned his campaign, he hosted a gathering with a small group of early childhood leaders to hear their views on how to improve early childhood education. The advocates at this meeting expressed concern that the K–12 education reforms then being implemented across the state could not be fully realized as long as so many young children were entering kindergarten inadequately prepared to succeed. Their plea for greater investment in early childhood services matched Hunt's own convictions. He began the interview for this report by emphasizing, "The advice I would give other leaders is that you cannot have successful schools without good, high-quality early childhood and development experiences."

The ideas generated in meetings with early childhood leaders and advocates formed the basis of Hunt's position on early childhood education. His commitment was fed by the public's strong positive response to this issue during campaign trail talks. As one leader who played a key role in implementing Smart Start reflected, early childhood education became one of the top three issues on which Hunt pinned his re-election hopes. Indeed, Hunt talked about this issue in every campaign speech.

From countless discussions on the campaign trail, Governor Hunt grasped the depth of the public's concern about the status of North Carolina's young children and the fact that underachievement is rooted in early childhood. In his view, the public did not see higher spending on early education as the sole solution. Concern focused more broadly on how best to support parents as

their children's first teachers and how to ensure the good health that is the foundation for optimal learning.

In November 1992, public support for increased investments in a wide range of early childhood services helped Hunt win a third term as governor of North Carolina.

III. Design Team Called to the Table

Within a week after Governor Hunt's re-election, he reconvened the early childhood leadership group to begin transforming their ideas into policy proposals. The governor broadened the membership of this policy team, which became known as the "design team," by asking leaders from the broader education, business, and faith sectors to join. Governor Hunt attended all the meetings in the early months of his new administration. He brought to bear both his programmatic and political sensibilities about what the public and elected officials would support.

The many individuals interviewed for this report agreed that Governor Hunt's vision and persistence were responsible for bringing key stakeholders to the table to help develop what eventually became known as the Smart Start proposal. He understood both the importance of responding to public concerns and the necessity of creating a leadership circle to guide and sustain early childhood investments. Thus, he intentionally expended political capital to bring key business and faith community leaders to the table to help define the parameters of the policy proposal.

Governor Hunt appealed to the business community to see this endeavor as a way to support and retain current employees while improving the qualifications of future employees. This broad view of the benefits of good-quality early care and education helped to persuade business leaders to join him in creating a public/private partnership. If businesses could improve employee retention rates in the short term and attract a more highly educated workforce in the long term, it was not a stretch to sell the idea that early childhood was a shared responsibility. North Carolina's strong economy during the early 1990s helped to garner support for the governor's approach, as the public and the business community saw that Smart Start's "slice" of resources would be coming from a larger pie.

Smart Start was eventually introduced as a public/private partnership. Private sector participants have made significant financial contributions to the state and local partnerships; in addition, many business leaders have served as members of partnerships and used their influence with state legislators to lobby for increased investments in Smart Start.

The faith community was an equally influential group. As is often the case when public funding for early childhood education is proposed, some sectors of the faith community opposed it out of fear that families' influence over their own children's care and education would be eroded. Governor Hunt stressed that more than 60% of North Carolina's mothers with children under

age five were already working outside the home. He called upon a broad cross section of faith leaders to help define better supports for all families, including those with working parents. He wanted the proposal to reflect approaches used by faith communities to strengthen families and to link them with the wide array of resources such communities are able to access.

In short, he asked faith leaders to infuse the emerging early childhood proposal with their wisdom about caring for families. One result was a new collaborative spirit among religious groups that had not previously worked together. For example, one local Smart Start director recalled how several churches, which had not worked closely together before, joined forces to sponsor a health clinic in their community. The need for more health care services for low-income children in this community came to light through information gathered during the local Smart Start partnership's needs assessment process.

IV. Focusing on Sustainability

As the key elements of Smart Start fell into place, the design team turned its attention to the question of sustaining early childhood investments over the long term. The design team reached consensus on a point that would come to be viewed as its single most important decision: local partnerships would be created that would take responsibility for deciding how to care for their community's children.

This approach called for identifying a cadre of local leaders who would champion the cause of improving outcomes for all children in their community. The Smart Start community partnership net was cast wide in order to embrace everyone—parents, early care and education program staff, health and human service practitioners, local government representatives, business and faith community leaders, and other interested citizens.

The Smart Start designers believed that casting community leaders as the program's shepherds, responsible for sustaining investments in young children, was essential over the long term for four reasons.

First, the existing assortment of early care and education services by definition required a wide array of community representatives to identify available services and map unmet needs of children and families.

Second, despite the booming economy of the early nineties, no one foresaw enough state subsidies being allocated in the near term to fully meet the needs of all young children. This reasoning, combined with Governor Hunt's emphasis on workforce issues, solidified agreements to launch Smart Start as a public/private partnership.

Third, the designers believed placing money in the hands of local citizens to make decisions about how best to help families care for their young children was necessary to sustain public engagement. They thought that if members of local partnerships controlled significant early

childhood dollars and could make real funding choices, they would stay actively involved despite the challenging and time-consuming responsibilities they had assumed.

Finally, since North Carolina was heavily driven by county-level decision making, the team recognized that a single state-imposed plan for improving early childhood services would not work. Each county had its own distinctive needs, economic profile, and culture.

In short, the mantra of the design team became "Bring everyone to the table." The framework that evolved had the state partnership setting broad goals for improving early childhood programming and local partnership members coming together to map out their blueprint. The parameters for the blueprint encompassed improving early childhood education, health care, and services for families with children from birth to age five.

Local Smart Start directors interviewed for this report testified repeatedly to the power of this decision-making process. It enables them to foster ongoing participation of parents, program administrators, and policy makers. Moreover, local partnership members have grown more willing to inform state legislative leaders about the difference Smart Start has made in the lives of children in their communities.

Two additional core elements have led to deepening local support for Smart Start: the provision of services on a voluntary basis to all parents, and the provision of a comprehensive array of services. Giving all parents opportunities to meet with other parents in support groups, to access a range of health services more easily, and to choose among higher-quality early childhood education programs has intensified local support. At the same time, the choruses singing the praises of Smart Start's benefits to state legislators have grown louder and more diverse as increasing numbers of families and communities benefit from the program. In the words of one local director, "It's great to have the bank vice president come out to greet you and thank you for their child's recent vision screening!"

Another strategic decision of the design team was to seek the advice of county commissioners and local interagency coordinating councils, which seek to improve services for children with special needs and which include parents. A significant focus of these discussions was the development of a grant application process that would enable as many interested communities as possible to request funds. The governor realized that planting Smart Start seeds across the state was vital to its long-term sustainability. Continuous discussions with these local leaders provided the reviewers of first-year applications with enough good proposals to allow the governor to award grants in all 12 of the state's congressional districts.

This dedication to developing a cadre of local Smart Start champions was universally lauded by all interviewed for this report. A series of additional steps have been taken in subsequent years to bolster the capacity of the local champions to share their success stories.

V. Fast-Track Rollout

By March 1993, just three months after Governor Hunt's re-election, a bill authorizing Smart Start was introduced in the state legislature. Smart Start legislation called for the development of a comprehensive, community-based initiative to ensure that all North Carolina children started school healthy and prepared to succeed. Smart Start funding was to be devoted to three service components:

- Family support programs
- Health services
- Childcare and education[lx]

Services provided through these three areas were to be targeted to children from birth through age 5 and their families.

The legislative mandates for the public/private partnership stipulated that all matching support for Smart Start from the business community or other private sector sources was required to total 5% of the annual Smart Start allocation. In-kind contributions of space and volunteer time were required to account for another 5% each year.

By July 1993, the authorizing legislation had been passed, with an appropriation of $20 million. Other defining elements of the legislation encompassed the following:

- Providing early childhood services for all children, improving standards, establishing incentives to improve the quality of early childhood programs across the state, and making childcare more affordable for working families
- Establishing the North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), a state-level public/private partnership to serve as a catalyst for change, along with local nonprofit public/private partnerships
- Creating 12 initial "pioneer" public/private partnerships to develop comprehensive early childhood programs tailored to the needs and resources of their communities[lxi]

Beyond the $20 million allocated for the state and local partnerships, an additional $1 million was authorized to provide scholarships, training, and wage enhancements for childcare program staff through TEACH (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps). TEACH, like Smart Start, has now been replicated in several other states, but it was conceived and originally implemented by the North Carolina Child Care Services Association.

Within a week of legislative passage, the state staff in charge of administering Smart Start sent notices to every county announcing funding availability. Interested stakeholders were invited to a bidder's conference, and 97 of the state's 100 counties were represented at this meeting. A more detailed explanation of who had to be included in local partnerships was included in bidder's conference discussions. The requirement that each partnership invite not only county government and human service providers

but also representatives from business, civic/community groups, media, local foundations, faith organizations, law enforcement, and early childhood education and family literacy groups was articulated at this meeting.

Selection criteria for partnership funding were presented, including the following:

- An understanding of the needs of young children and families in their communities and resources currently available to meet them
- A willingness among county officials and other community decision makers to adopt a common view of problems and share in a collaborative process to develop solutions
- A commitment to long-range strategic planning and to making changes in the formal and informal systems that serve young children and their families
- A commitment to policy and results-oriented accountability and program evaluation[lxii]

By September 1993, the first 12 pioneer partnership grants were announced, resulting from a review of 81 applications representing 89 counties. In addition to identifying the above criteria, the legislation called for wide geographical distribution. Thus, one county or group of counties was selected from each of the state's congressional districts. This strategy grew out of Governor Hunt's previous experience with establishing public kindergarten programs. Given that demands for Smart Start funding came from 89 counties in the first year, it is not surprising that the governor was able to garner enough monies to send planning grants to all 100 counties by August 1997.[lxiii]

VI. The Hard Work of Partnering

As noted above, one of the key agreements reached by the Smart Start design team was giving community-based partnerships control of funds and the flexibility to determine service delivery within the three core service components. Now, a decade later, local partnerships do in fact have the authority and responsibility for awarding grants and contracts to community agencies for a broad range of services for young children.

Due to the rapid pace of Smart Start implementation, state legislators made changes in Smart Start's authorizing legislation almost annually in response to emerging issues. Thus, "flexibility" in local partnership planning and implementation processes has taken on new meaning.

For example, in Smart Start's second year, a legislative change was made to codify an administrative decision stipulating that only new local nonprofits could be applicants. This change reflected the belief that only new nonprofits could bring the synergy within a community that would foster a clear focus on Smart Start's mission. Further, state policy makers wanted to create a sense of equality and balance among local partners by preventing an existing agency from taking the lead and overpowering newer groups as the partnership was forming.

Another change involved administrative costs. Over time, the legislature decided to reduce the portion of funds that local partnerships could use for administration. A maximum of 8% was eventually set as the overall ceiling for administrative costs. The intent was to ensure that most Smart Start monies would be devoted to services for children and families. Legislators also believed that a cap on administrative costs would encourage partnerships to press harder for local contributions.

Some significant tensions emerged in the early years. The most difficult issues involved differences of opinion between the state and local partnerships about what would be considered an "innovative" service. Other partnerships experienced conflicts among mandated members about who should receive funding. Was it fair for county human services directors or United Way board members to vote on awarding Smart Start funds to agencies that their organizations already sponsored?

Issues like these led to the development, over time, of critical supports. By year three, the legislature required the NCPC to develop standardized accounting and contracting procedures. Eventually, new models for managing local partnerships emerged to deal more efficiently with the cap on administrative costs and strict accounting requirements.

Local partnerships now choose one of three approaches for conducting business:

- A "stand-alone" model whereby a community partnership remains an independent nonprofit organization
- A "regional" or "multi-county" partnership whereby several counties are combined under the leadership of one executive director and board of directors
- A "lead partnership hub" whereby several independent partnerships subcontract their accounting, contracting, and/or evaluation to one partnership to serve as the hub for central administration of these functions

To be sure, working out the dynamics and procedures of local partnerships has proved difficult. However, as most interviewees agreed, the ability of local partnerships to realize the goal of "bringing everyone to the table" has led to a groundswell of commitment to improving early childhood services across the state. Giving local partnerships responsibility for making decisions, in collaboration with families, about the best interests of their youngest citizens has been a transforming policy.

VII. State Support for Local Collaboration

Local leaders had major responsibility for expanding their partnerships' capacity to respond to new challenges and a changing context, but they also had significant help from the state. The state-level Smart Start Partnership made training and consultation with local partnerships a top priority, especially in the early years.

Smart Start's authorizing legislation called for the partnerships to develop a comprehensive plan for services for young children. The plans were to identify those children in each community in greatest need of three core services: childcare (quality, affordable, and available), health, and family support.[lxiv] The legislation further stipulated that each local partnership would receive training in collaborative decision making and strategic planning.

To provide this training, the Smart Start State Partnership Office instituted the county collaboration process. This collaboration training grew out of the widely recognized work of the "Academy" process instituted by the Council of Governor's Policy Advisors (CGPA). The CGPA process was used between 1985 and 1995 to help state governments launch comprehensive child and family policy initiatives.[lxv] The focus of this process was to help leaders see beyond their individual interests and concerns to facilitate the development of community agendas for all children. A multifaceted training and consultation approach to working with the counties was instituted during the first couple of years after Smart Start's implementation. Training was provided to help partnerships develop local plans, coaches were brought in to assist partnerships in organizing agreed-upon tasks, and forums were created so that teams from different communities might learn from each other.

In the early years, all local Smart Start partnerships were expected to participate in this intensive training. The training forums enabled partnership members to spend uninterrupted time together, to share lessons learned and exchange resource information, and to reach consensus more easily about the needs of young children in their communities.

Over time, however, state legislators eliminated funding for the county collaboration process. They did not see that the training had improved services to children. But the wheels of progress kept turning, and in 1998, with the formation of 35 new local partnerships, state legislators heeded the message of Smart Start leaders "to re-ignite the spirit of collaboration and shared involvement" that had characterized the program from its inception.[lxvi]

New partnerships were offered training through the Smart Start Collaboration and Planning Institute from November 1999 through June 2001. The funding for the Institute was made available through new state monies and a grant from Smith Reynolds. The Institute's broad purpose was to enhance local partnership members' knowledge about strategic planning, budgeting, developing and using good data, adopting best practices from other partnerships specifically and delivery of early childhood services generally, and finding alternative approaches for financing services. When funding cuts were made to address the state budget deficit in the summer of 2001, staff of the NCPC picked up responsibility for continuing this training.

VIII. "School Readiness" Trade-offs and Advances

In the decade since Smart Start was launched, the political and economic context has shifted considerably, and many procedural changes have been

made. But two core commitments have remained intact. The overriding goal continues to be ensuring that all of North Carolina's children "enter school healthy and prepared to succeed." And the state remains committed to community-based partnerships as the best path toward this goal.

One of the biggest political trade-offs made in the program's early days was giving local partnerships flexibility to create a comprehensive array of family support, health, and early childhood education services. An alternative approach, adopted by many other states, would have been state funding of a narrow band of preschool services. This narrower, state-driven approach would have responded to mounting pressures to make rapid improvements in school readiness. Program impacts would have been easier to measure.

However, Smart Start was shaped by two additional realities of the times. Governor Hunt's campaign-trail talks brought home to him and other political leaders the powerful impact of the emerging brain research on the public's thinking about early childhood. The scientists who were explaining these findings brought new weight and prestige to early childhood issues, and helped to illustrate why healthy development and early learning matter.

Many North Carolinians integrated these findings into a prevailing belief system that stressed parents' roles as their children's best and most important caregivers and teachers. At the same time, they took seriously research findings that children learn wherever they are, and that healthy development encompasses nurturing social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth. Thus, investing in a comprehensive array of early childhood, health, and family supports was deemed the best approach for North Carolina.

Equally important, leaders from K–12 education could not disagree with the design team's conviction that simply housing more preschools inside public school buildings would not achieve the goal of expanding access to high-quality, affordable care. Well aware of the difficulty of adequately funding the K–12 system, these leaders were not eager to take on the challenge of opening their doors quickly to the state's preschoolers. They readily agreed that charging local partnerships with raising private sector contributions was essential.

In keeping with Smart Start's approach, K–12 education leaders have shaped Smart Start initiatives primarily by holding mandated seats on the state and local partnerships. At the state level, the Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) was one of the representatives mandated to serve on the state board of the NCPC. At the local level, community partnerships are also required to have the school superintendents serve on their boards.

However, three forces have heavily shaped the roles of educational leaders in Smart Start's implementation. First, especially at Smart Start's inception, schools in North Carolina were not very involved in the provision of services to young children. The greatest role some schools played in high-poverty communities was to sponsor preschool for at-risk 4-year-olds. It was estimated by the mid-1990s that about half of the schools in high-poverty

neighborhoods offered onsite prekindergarten programs.[lxvii] But, like most schools across the state, these schools had not yet put out the welcome mat for health care practitioners or family resource centers to set up shop. This meant that relatively few schools were directly involved in providing the three core services sponsored through Smart Start.

Second, where schools were providing preschool within their buildings, they were governed by DPI licensing standards. But most children receiving childcare subsidies through Smart Start are served through community-based organizations such as Head Start, childcare centers, and family childcare homes. These programs are governed by licensing issued by the state Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Consequently, many of the childcare quality improvements driven by Smart Start partnerships are directed at enhancing DHHS's licensing and training processes. This has meant that Smart Start initiatives by and large have not directly affected DPI licensing and standard-setting processes.

However, DPI's advisory role in the state and local Smart Start partnerships has helped move Smart Start closer to defining its impact on school readiness. School readiness initiatives that resulted when DPI staff and local educators joined forces with Smart Start leaders are highlighted below.

"School Readiness" Advances

Five Star ChildCare Licensing System. In late 1999, the Division of Child Development from DHHS began issuing childcare rated licenses. Under the new system, childcare programs can earn up to five stars as a result of points awarded based on their adherence to program standards, their staff's education, and their compliance history. Smart Start quality improvement initiatives are aimed at helping childcare programs to achieve higher levels of distinction. This system enables the state to reimburse programs achieving higher levels of distinction at higher levels of subsidy.[lxviii]

Memorandum of Understanding. In 1999, the superintendent of public instruction and secretary of health and human services signed a Memorandum of Understanding requiring public school preschool programs to meet DHHS's childcare licensing standards. Before this time, these programs had to comply with only DPI standards governing such program components as teacher qualifications and curriculum content. Bringing public school programs under the umbrella of DHHS's Five Star ChildCare Licensing System means they have to comply with health and safety requirements as well. Smart Start funding is available to assist preschool programs in complying with these new requirements.[lxix]

Recommendations for Defining and Assessing School Readiness. In June 2000, a report entitled *School Readiness in North Carolina: Strategies for Defining, Measuring and Promoting Success for All Children* was issued . The report's recommendations were directed toward, and since have been adopted by, the State Board of Education, which convened the team that wrote the report. Subsequently, the board of the NCPC also adopted these recommendations.

The "Ready for School" Goal Team responsible for the producing the report included high-level representatives from Smart Start and the DPI. Report recommendations included the following:

- Defining "school readiness" as both the condition of children entering schools and the capacity of schools to serve all kindergartners effectively
- Designating an approach for assessing children's school readiness
- Identifying components of schools' readiness for children
- Articulating "ready schools" best practice guidelines
- Modifying K–2 assessment to align with new definition of school readiness
- Using a new public school student information system, NC WISE (North Carolina Window of Information for Student Education), to collect and summarize critical data relevant to school readiness[lxx]

School Readiness Assessment. In fall 2000, the first-ever North Carolina School Readiness Assessment (NCSRA) was conducted. A summary report, *North Carolina's Kindergartners & Schools*, was issued in April 2001. This report describes key findings from the Assessment, including information about both children's and schools' readiness. Also included are comparisons between NCSRA measures and national data, where available. The final section of the report synthesizes conclusions and makes recommendations based on findings.

There were two main findings:

- As a group, North Carolina kindergartners' skills in the five areas of development and learning were about the same as or lower than kindergartners' nationally.
- In general, North Carolina schools were similar to schools nationally on most aspects of their capacity to meet the needs of kindergartners.[lxxi]

Last but not least, since supporting local partnerships' development has been the chief focus of the state partnership board, it was always expected that local superintendents would be the locus of educational leadership. Many advances in local educational sponsorship of early childhood services have been realized during Smart Start's lifetime. Examples of such advances are described below.

Local Educational Sponsorship Advances

Through the Down East Partnership for Children, funds from Smart Start are used to support three school/community collaborative initiatives:

- Early Childhood Development and Learning Practices is sponsored by the Nash-Rocky Mount Schools to work with local childcare centers, homes, and Head Start to develop a cooperative relationship to ensure quality early childhood education for preschool children.

- High-quality early childhood education for at-risk 4-year-olds is provided through the Nash-Rocky Mount Schools and the Edgecombe County Schools, along with coordinated activities for local childcare providers and a lending library for parents and childcare providers at Stocks Elementary and Cedar Grove Elementary Schools.
- A Preschool/Kindergarten Transition Program is sponsored by the Edgecombe County Schools to ensure quality early childhood education programs in collaboration with local childcare providers working in centers, homes, and Head Start.

The Lakewood Preschool in Charlotte turned a $72,000 Smart Start grant into nearly $700,000 in services to help children in its community. Lakewood is tuition-free, and operating funds are provided through donations from individuals, churches, foundations, and businesses. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools donated the land for the project, and Charlotte's Habitat for Humanity built the preschool with donations of building materials and services, and volunteer labor, making it the first nonresidential Habitat project in the country.

In Washington County, a poor rural county with fewer than 14,000 residents, the local partnership has joined forces with the school system to work toward offering all families with 4-year-olds access to quality preschool experiences. Building on the Washington County school district's use of local monies and federal Title I funding to support prekindergarten, the local partnership offers Smart Start contributions for use in improving the quality of prekindergarten by reducing child/staff ratios.

IX. Gauging Progress

The design team empowered local partnerships to lead the way to Smart Start's long-term sustainability. It allowed them considerable leeway in achieving their goals. Not surprisingly, this flexibility created difficulties when it came to defining or measuring program impacts. Smart Start's overarching goal was to enable "all North Carolina's children to enter school healthy and prepared to succeed." At the outset, to document improvements realized through Smart Start funding, the program used short-term indicators such as increases in childcare spaces or numbers of additional children receiving health and developmental screenings. But it was not until 2000 that agreement was reached about how to define or measure school readiness.

The authorizing legislation that funded Smart Start in 1993 contained no guidelines for defining or assessing school readiness, but it did provide support for evaluation efforts. The legislation called for both formative evaluations (focusing on process and efficiency issues) and summative evaluations (focusing on outcomes). The task of defining and measuring longer-term impacts has been a continuous endeavor of the Frank Porter Graham Center (FPG) for Child Development at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in Chapel Hill.

The flexibility bestowed on local partnerships in defining how they would deliver early childhood education, health care, and family support services meant that evaluators had to be flexible in designing their studies. Because each local partnership defined its own service delivery strategy, the evaluators could not easily measure impacts across the state.

Evaluators faced many additional challenges. From the outset, the evaluation team, led by FPG researchers but composed of faculty from the UNC Schools of Education, Social Work, and Public Health, has had to contend with local leaders' limited understanding of scientific evaluation approaches. Ongoing technical assistance has been provided to the local partnerships to assist staff and board members in developing appropriate evaluation information.

Moreover, the rapid pace of Smart Start's implementation resulted in legislators' modifying the initiative almost every year, and these changes often required the evaluators to reshape their efforts as well. Finally, according to one member of the evaluation team, finding funding for evaluation has been a significant challenge. Evaluation funding has been subject to the General Assembly's annual appropriations cycle, and this has prevented the evaluation team from planning longer-term, more in-depth studies that could extrapolate the kinds of impact data the General Assembly has increasingly requested.

These challenges suggest the context in which Smart Start evaluation reports have been produced. The good news is that a multitude of studies have documented a variety of positive results. Given the legislative mandate to carry out both formative and summative evaluations, FPG researchers have completed studies examining everything from the effect of quality enhancement efforts on childcare centers, to the effect of increased health care access on kindergartners' health, to the effect of local partnerships' efforts on reducing fragmentation of services for families.

Three facets of FPG evaluators' work should be highlighted. In 1999, they issued a report of findings entitled *A Six-County Study of the Effects of Smart Start Child Care on Kindergarten Entry Skills.* Conclusions from this study suggested that "Smart Start assistance to child care centers helps young children come to school ready to succeed if the assistance is directly related to quality improvement."[lxxii] In other words, children who were served by childcare centers that received Smart Start funding *directly related* to improving quality had better cognitive and language skills at kindergarten entry than children served in other childcare centers or family childcare homes. Furthermore, according to kindergarten teachers, fewer children from these Smart Start–funded centers have had behavioral problems.

The essence of these findings is that funding provided to childcare centers and family childcare homes has the most identifiable impact on later student achievement when services are intensive and aligned with best practices. Two types of direct assistance associated with higher-quality care in centers were on-site technical assistance through observations and feedback to teachers and higher levels of teacher education. Supportive activities funded by Smart Start,

such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation training, developmental screenings, and playground safety,[lxxiii] had less measurable impact on student achievement. The researchers emphasized that the findings from this study were not to be construed to suggest that local partnerships should not fund supportive activities.

As part of the effort to better inform policy makers and the public about kindergartners' readiness for school generally and Smart Start's effects on school readiness specifically, some of the FPG researchers served on the "Ready for School" Goal Team, convened by the State Board of Education to develop recommendations for defining and assessing school readiness, the NCSRA report.

X. Snapshots of Success

Over the ten years since Smart Start was launched, many snapshots have been taken of the program, and many more success stories have occurred than can be documented here. The major markers of the program's development listed here provide an overview of its effects on young children and their families in North Carolina.

- 424,268 children have received higher-quality childcare.
- 56,455 new childcare spaces have been created.
- The number of high-quality childcare centers has increased by more than 60 percent.
- 155,141 children have received Smart Start childcare subsidies so their parents can work.
- The percentage of children with disabilities being served through childcare centers has increased from 40% in 1994 to 59% in 1999.
- 246,488 parents have received parenting and health education and found the resources they needed.
- 387,813 children have received early intervention and preventive health screenings.
- A pressing health need in almost every county in North Carolina is the lack of dental services for young children, especially those on Medicaid. Local partnerships are helping make progress by offering dental clinics and finding dentists to volunteer their time and expertise to serve young children.
- Smart Start is required to raise $1 in private donations for every $10 of state funding it receives, but over its lifetime, more than $125 million in cash and in-kind contributions have been raised.
- Citizens have donated more than 1 million volunteer hours.
- Every community college in North Carolina now has early childhood courses available.

- Since 1993, more than 10,015 teachers have received scholarships funded through TEACH.
- The turnover rate among TEACH participants working toward their associate's degrees has fallen to less than 10% annually, compared with 42% for other childcare workers generally across the state.
- Through a new NC Cares program, staff at every childcare center and family childcare home in the state have the opportunity to participate in a health benefits program.
- All 100 counties around the state received some level of Smart Start funding within its first five years.

XI. Continuing Challenges

Despite remarkable gains, the vexing question of sustaining state funding was at Smart Start's door by the summer of 2001. By that time, the program's most visible champion, Governor Hunt, had left office. Moreover, a budget deficit was imminent. Like all other programs receiving state subsidies, Smart Start now faced the possibility of a cut in its state allocation—something that had not happened before.

Smart Start's prior year funding had reached its highest level ever, $269 million. By the time the dust settled on the state legislature's budget decisions for 2001–2002, Smart Start's funding had been cut to $210 million.

These numbers starkly illustrate Smart Start's most daunting challenges. At the very time the bottom fell out of the booming economy, the initiative's most vocal champion moved off center stage. The good news was that state legislators were receiving more calls and letters than ever before from the multitude of Smart Start's local champions urging that it be spared from deep cuts. Because all state-funded programs had to share in the burden of closing the deficit, Smart Start champions understood that they would have to accept some reduction in funding.

The champions' primary message was that cuts should be minimized in light of the direct effect they would have on the level of services available to vulnerable children and families. Direct reductions in the numbers of children receiving childcare subsidies and health screenings, as well as in the numbers of parent education and support activities for families, were necessary as a result of the cuts.

Additionally, as legislators' demands for information about the impacts of Smart Start's services on school readiness were reaching a crescendo, the halved evaluation budget limited evaluators' capacity to produce longer-term impact studies. Decreases in evaluation funding also mean less training and technical assistance for the local partnerships to carry out evaluation design and data collection. Local partnerships need a great deal of assistance in defining and tracking which Smart Start activities lead to longer-term school readiness gains, and this need is largely unmet.

This huge evaluation challenge may, however, push Smart Start state and local partnerships to work toward more consistency in defining and delivering services. Steps in this direction had already been taken by the summer of 1996. The state partnership has worked with community leaders to come up with a definition of Smart Start's core services:

- Improving the quality of childcare
- Improving access to childcare
- Improving the affordability of childcare
- Meeting the health care needs of young children
- Providing family support services

Further, on July 1, 2001, the NCPC unveiled a new Smart Start Performance-Based Incentive System. This system sets minimum standards for every partnership. The components of the standards range from financial compliance, to the percentage of low-income children served, to tracking families' access to primary health care services, to tracking improvements in early childhood education staff credentialing and compensation.

While significant strides have been made in engaging local school district leaders to sponsor one or more of the three Smart Start service components, the current deficit era also dramatically affects public school budgets. Reductions in their direct K–12 educational funding may cause educational leaders to step back, at least temporarily, from sponsoring Smart Start activities. This will undoubtedly be the case in districts where a lack of facilities had already caused schools to reach outside the box to find alternative space for sponsoring these activities.

While meeting all of these challenges, Smart Start needs to adjust to the presence of a new kid on the block—the More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program. The focus of this new initiative is providing a high-quality community-based voluntary prekindergarten educational program to prepare at-risk 4-year-olds to succeed in school. The good news is that the sponsor of More at Four, Governor Easley, also wants to improve early childhood education. Moreover, the new governor designed this initiative to build on existing early childhood service delivery systems at the community level. This means that local Smart Start partnerships could sponsor this initiative and integrate it into their local continuum of services, which is in keeping with the overall mission of Smart Start. The looming concern among Smart Start partnership members is how future state funding requests for More at Four will affect perceptions of allocations available for Smart Start.

By the fall of 2001, the General Assembly had approved $6.5 million to fund More at Four over a two-year period. As with Smart Start, matching community investments are required. The first round of grants was awarded late in the fall of 2001, and a second round of awards was expected in January 2002.

The endnote to this story reflects a question from a local Smart Start director. North Carolina has seen a clear celebration of state and local investments in early care and education. However, in the face of new fiscal constraints, early childhood initiatives now appear to be pitted against one another for public and political support. Who will take responsibility for creating forums to focus on the bigger questions at hand?

Prekindergarten in Texas: A Fundamental Part of Educating Disadvantaged Children

I. Background

Early childhood education in Texas has been a long-term proposition. Like prekindergarten programs in several other states, it owes its origins to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was enacted in 1965 to offer children in areas of concentrated poverty the opportunity for greater achievement in school. In Texas, the new infusion of federal money under Title I was focused on what educators at that time thought of as the state's youngest children of potential school age—kindergarten-age children. No publicly financed kindergartens existed in Texas at the time, so Title I funds were used to provide half-day educational experiences to help disadvantaged children get ready for the academic challenge of first grade.

Soon, communities of various economic levels throughout the state wanted kindergarten for their children as well. In 1969 Texas education law was amended to permit local school districts to offer kindergarten at local expense if they wanted the program. It was not until the early 1970s that state funds were added to the mix of revenues that could be used to pay for the kindergarten programs.

By the late 1970s, business leaders, educators, policy makers, and parents were becoming more and more concerned about the dismal failure of the public school system to educate the youth of the state and prepare a competent workforce. In 1984, a special legislative session was called for the purpose of considering a major overhaul of education. The Texas Legislature responded by passing reform education legislation that included the provision of preschool for disadvantaged children. The Prekindergarten Program began in the 1985–1986 school year with a special line item in the budget of $30 million to serve 34,412 4-year-olds in half-day programs.

In recent years the Texas Prekindergarten Program has been able to serve close to 133,000 3- and 4-year-olds for school year 2000–2001 (and up to 164,000 in 2001–2002) with $278 million in Foundation School Program money from the state, plus $200 million for 1999–2000 and 2000–2001 for Expansion Grants. Similar amounts have been made available for 2001–2002 and 2002–2003. These figures do not include the amounts districts spend from local funds or, in some districts, a portion of their federal Title I dollars.

Since 1991 prekindergarten has been tucked securely into the regular Foundation Program that funds K–12 education and is considered part of the established way of doing business, at least for disadvantaged children. Indeed, today the number of children attending prekindergarten is about half the

number statewide who attend kindergarten, which school districts must offer to all students, but for which attendance is voluntary. As the state learns how to operate with a significant budget deficit, which some have put at the $5 to $6 billion level, it is hoped that the program will be protected. In fact, some educators have suggested that if "push comes to shove" over the budget for education, the state would be better off shortening the high school years rather than pinching back on early childhood education. Whether such a notion would be seriously considered is unclear, but the state's commitment to prekindergarten education is certain.

II. Getting Started

Every state has its unsung heroes who have championed particular causes. In Texas, early childhood education has had four such heroes, two of them very well known, though not exclusively for their dedication to early childhood education, and two of them not so well known. The Texas story about educating the state's very young children centers on these individuals.

The success of efforts in Texas to close the gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their better-situated age-peers has been heralded, examined—though not all that closely—questioned, and copied. While full answers to the questions of what Texas has accomplished, and how, continue to be elusive, part of the answer and a good part of the credit go to Lyndon Baines Johnson. Dr. William Kirby, former commissioner of education in Texas and another of the state's unsung heroes, gives former President Johnson a lot of the credit for getting it all started with his push for civil rights and war on poverty, with education central to both. When President Johnson championed and introduced the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, his fellow Texans were very proud and took very seriously the recognition in Title I of the Act that children from low-income families have special needs when it comes to education, especially when their families are concentrated in high-poverty areas and school zones.

Dr. William Kirby joined the staff of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in December 1965. As Title I funds began to flow to the states, he became the director of the Division of Program and Staff Development, from which the program was administered. As he puts it, he went to TEA to give away Title I money. With the decision to use its Title I money to start kindergarten programs for disadvantaged children, which were almost nonexistent in Texas at the time except for a few small programs that centered on language development, Kirby traveled throughout the state to help get these new programs off the ground. The program could not have had a stronger advocate. He was and is a firm believer that it is much more cost-effective to prevent educational difficulties than to remedy them later. By 1969 parents throughout the state were calling for kindergarten services for their children. The legislature answered the call by amending state law to permit local school districts to provide kindergarten programs if they so chose. This left the decision to local pressure, or the public will that is so often essential for

getting things done in Texas, a state where education is a very political issue. In 1970, state dollars were added to the resources available to fund half-day kindergartens for disadvantaged students.

At this point, grave concerns across the state about significant and growing numbers of education failures, even in the early grades, aligned with electoral politics at the highest level of state government. For the first time in more than 100 years, a Republican was elected to the governor's post in 1979. Governor William P. Clements, for whom education was not a major issue, served one four-year term and was beaten in his 1983 re-election bid by Mark White, who had garnered the support of teachers' organizations with the promise of a significant pay raise for teachers. However, with growing concerns about the dismal quality of education in the state, legislators insisted that they have something to show toward improvement in educational outcomes to justify the raises. Faced with the inability to make good on his promise to teachers and wide-ranging interest in improving education throughout the state, Governor White called upon H. Ross Perot for help. He asked Perot to head a Citizens' Commission that would figure out "how to fix it," as Perot likes to say.

The Citizens' Commission included laypeople as well as members from the State Board of Education, educators, and representatives from the State House and Senate. Its members traveled around the state for a year, looking into every aspect of education and listening to anyone who had something to say about the system's problems and their possible solutions. Perot met with leaders of the business community, where he was held in high regard and had a personal entrée and influence, in every corner of Texas to encourage their commitment to education reform.

Economically the state was in very good condition and in a period of fiscal growth, which encouraged the Commission to think in bold strokes. In the spring of 1984 the Commission presented recommendations that amounted to a complete overhaul of the educational system. A Special Legislative Session met for the summer of 1984 exclusively to consider the Commission's recommendations, which were introduced as HR 72. The sheer scope of the bill and its implications guaranteed that almost every education organization in the state, especially teachers' groups, had serious problems with it. It called for teacher testing and re-certification and student testing as cornerstones of an accountability system, in addition to strict rules such as "No Pass, No Play; No Pass, No Cheer; No Pass, No Agricultural Display." Teachers and educators, students, and even parents felt the threatening impact of the changes the reforms might bring, as well as their promise of better education. Nearly all education organizations fought the bill, and they were initially successful. The House Committee on Education voted many of the controversial recommendations out of the bill and passed a watered-down version of the education reform legislation that barely deserved the name "reform." However, Perot was prepared for such opposition and had hired several influential lobbyists to fight for the Commission's reforms in their purest form.[lxxiv] Early that same week on the floor of the House, during a

marathon session, one by one, each of the missing reform provisions was added back into the bill. Both kindergarten and prekindergarten were part of HR 72 and the legislation that was finally signed into law.

Under the reform legislation, districts were required to provide kindergarten, although they could choose to make it a half-day or a whole-day program. Attendance was voluntary. School districts with disadvantaged students—that is, children who were eligible for the school's free or reduced-price lunch program or of limited English proficiency (LEP)—would now have to offer a half-day prekindergarten program to 4-year-olds. Bilingual staff would be required in schools having LEP students. All existing teachers would have to be re-certified through a one-time testing program to weed out inadequate teachers, and all new teachers would have to pass state tests to obtain their state certification.

Bold and thoughtful as these new education measures were, for many educators in the state they were simply overwhelming. Approximately 6,000 teachers left the profession as a result of failing the re-certification test or refusing to take it.

Happily, the desperate cry for educators qualified to teach at the prekindergarten level that many states hear as they initiate preschool programs was mitigated by positive circumstances in Texas. Home economics departments in some institutions of higher education, such as the University of Texas at Austin, already offered courses in early childhood education that could prepare early elementary teachers and higher education students for the newly mandated Prekindergarten Program.

In Perot and Kirby, education reform had champions who were in it for the long haul. In a backlash against the education reforms, Clements knocked White out of the governor's office in the 1986 election with the support of teachers who feared the reforms and teacher testing that had already occurred. When Governor Clements sought a $500 million cut in the education budget, money crucial to putting the reforms in place and making them effective, Kirby went to Perot. No one has been able to tell this author just what Perot did or said to whom, except to tell Kirby that he, Perot, would take care of the politics and Kirby, then the commissioner of education, should keep the reforms moving forward. The education budget was actually increased by half a billion dollars, making the overall Texas budget appropriation for education the largest in its history up to that time. Perhaps one of the Texas lessons is that it is important to start with what you can get, get it under way, and then hope the public will demand more and better.

This philosophy has given the state nearly two decades to develop and improve its prekindergarten and regular education programs. The reforms were very tough to put in place and took a number of years of exceptionally hard work. Commissioner Kirby, who held his doctorate degree in reading and early childhood education, traveled the state presenting workshops on how to implement the Prekindergarten Program and the other major reforms without offending political forces that would object to what some would call

intrusive government, over-regulation, and high taxes. Actually, the Prekindergarten Program seems by some measures to be under-regulated, a topic that will be discussed later in this report.

III. Prekindergarten Today

The Texas Prekindergarten Program looks pretty much the same today as it did when it started, except that it has gotten bigger and better. Because of its long tenure, program administrators and teachers have had time to work toward quality at the local level, using guidance from the state and professional development training.

Who Is Served

All school districts that can identify as many as 15 eligible 4-year-olds must provide prekindergarten. If the district has 15 eligible 3-year-olds it may, but is not required to, offer them a program as well. Three- and 4-year-olds may be served in the same classrooms. Since parents are not required to send their children to prekindergarten, making sure the children who need the services actually get them depends on getting the word out in the community about the availability and value of the program. The Texas Education Code requires each school district to develop a system of notification to the community that the program is available. These notifications must be in both Spanish and English. School districts use letters sent home from school with other students, information available at the times and places of school registration for older siblings, newspaper articles, postings in public places, radio announcements, displays on school marquees, and community newsletters. If a school district contracts with another provider for the Prekindergarten Program, the district is still responsible for notifying the public of its availability.

The Prekindergarten Program is designed to help disadvantaged children achieve school readiness and success. Therefore, eligibility for the program has been restricted to children who are at least 3 years old and educationally disadvantaged as defined by family poverty criteria set out in the federal free or reduced-price lunch program, unable to speak and comprehend the English language, or homeless. Districts have the discretion to enroll other children either at the district's expense or through tuition paid by the family. At present fewer than 20 districts allow such students to attend prekindergarten by paying tuition. However, these districts must ensure that serving such students does not interfere with serving eligible children. Further, the tuition rate charged must not exceed the added costs of providing the program to the child and must be approved by the commissioner of education.

The 2001–2002 figure of 164,359 students served represents approximately 73% of the eligible students. These numbers break down as follows:

3-year-olds	22,030 children served (13% LEP students, 66% educationally disadvantaged)
4-year-olds	142,329 children served (39% LEP students, 85% educationally disadvantaged)
Total	164,359 children served (28% LEP students)

In addition to 3- and 4-year-olds attending pre-kindergarten, 37,224 disabled 3- and 4-year-olds are served under Part B of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Program Growth over the Years

School Year	Cost	No. of Students Served	% of Eligible Students Served	No. of Districts with Programs
1985–1986	$30,219,274	34,412	NA	302
1993–1994	$195,000,000	103,357	69%	688
1999–2000	$267,000,000	125,616	72%	NA
2000–2001	$278,000,000	132,870	73%	844
2001–2002	$[to come?]	164,359*	73%	925 (out of 1,264 districts)

**This figure does not include 37,244 disabled 3- and 4-year-olds with disabilities who are served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B.*

NA = not applicable.

Program Purpose

The stated purpose of the Prekindergarten Program is to ensure that disadvantaged children develop the skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, including language, mathematics, and social skills.

What Is Offered

Districts that have a state-funded prekindergarten program must provide at least three hours of programming, although they may expand their program to a full day using either their own local funds, state Expansion Grant funds for which they must apply, federal Title I funds, or Migrant funds.

Transportation is not required, but districts may offer it and include transportation of prekindergarten youngsters in their regular transportation program.

Currently, there is no required class size or student/teacher ratio for prekindergarten. Between 1992 and 1995, prekindergarten programs had to meet the licensing standards for childcare set by the Texas Department of Protection and Regulatory Services. These standards required an 18:1 student/teacher ratio for 4-year-olds and a 15:1 ratio for 3-year-olds. Since 1995, the State Board of Education has lost much of its power in a long-term power struggle between the State Board of Education and the legislature. By law, K–4 classrooms have a 22:1 student/teacher ratio, though this does not apply to prekindergarten. For prekindergarten programs, the student/teacher ratio is a matter of local discretion. However, school districts are encouraged to maintain student/teacher ratios that, at a minimum, do not exceed the 22:1 ratio required for kindergarten through first grade. TEA encourages this limitation on class size through a variety of mechanisms. For example, in the *Frequently Asked Questions and Answers for Prekindergarten* published on the TEA web site and in other documents, the state has said, "Such a decision [not to exceed the 22:1 student/teacher ratio] by a school district will be in the best interest of the district and its prekindergarten students. It is important for school districts to make decisions that will be conducive to enabling prekindergarten students to be as successful as other students in the public school system."[lxxv]

Teachers in the Prekindergarten Program must have a certification that qualifies them to teach in prekindergarten through fourth grade classrooms. In addition, they must have an Early Childhood Education or Kindergarten endorsement. If they are teaching LEP or bilingual students, they also must have an LEP or Bilingual Education endorsement. Districts are not required to provide teacher aides or assistants in the classrooms.

Texas does not have a required curriculum for prekindergarten. In 1991, both the prekindergarten and kindergarten programs were included in a set of Essential Elements describing what students were expected to master at each grade level, pre-K– 12. The Essential Elements for prekindergarten had a "focus on the areas of communication, cognition, motor, fine arts,

social/emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, and physical development."[lxxvi] In 1995 the state legislature passed a law calling for TEA to develop Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for grades K–12, again specifying what a child should know at each grade level. Prekindergarten was explicitly left out of the new requirement, according to some, deliberately. When the TEKS was formally adopted by the State Board of Education in 1997, the Essential Elements were repealed. This left the Prekindergarten Program uncertain of what was expected of local program providers and what kinds of guidance the state could and should give them. To help fill this gap, a working group of educators and community members from across the state convened, under the direction of then Commissioner of Education Mike Moses, to draft guidelines for a prekindergarten curriculum that school districts could use voluntarily. This group called upon Texas educators, nationally known experts outside the state, professional organizations, and university personnel to assist in articulating what 3- and 4-year-olds should know and be able to do. The resulting Curriculum Guidelines were presented to focus groups for input. Released in final form on December 10, 1999, the guidelines help align the Prekindergarten Program with the Kindergarten TEKS and help educators make informed decisions about curriculum content for prekindergarten children.[lxxvii] Reiterated in the final document is the statement that "use of these guidelines is voluntary."[lxxviii]

IV. Evaluation, Accountability, and Program Improvement

Education in Texas is a very political endeavor. It is also subject to strong feelings of local control across the state. One interviewee for this report suggested that Ross Perot, godfather of the education reforms that have brought Texas so much success and national acclaim, must be stunned to see how small a role the state now plays in directing what happens in education. This was not what he envisioned when he championed statewide education reform.

The Early Childhood Education Unit in the Division of Curriculum and Professional Development provides some assistance by answering questions and giving advice when called upon by local program administrators. Generally, however, local school districts are left alone unless they request help.[lxxix] Most of this help must come from the one-person staff of that office, Cami Jones, the final of the four unsung heroes of the early childhood program in Texas. William Kirby calls hiring Cami Jones one of the best decisions he ever made as commissioner of education. She has worked with the Prekindergarten Program for nearly all of its existence and is still on the board at TEA.

The 1989–1995 Evaluation Study

State requirements for the Prekindergarten Program are minimal, as are monitoring and oversight activities by TEA. However, the state remains

concerned about the quality of the program. While education and political leaders in Texas recognized that prekindergarten experiences are critical to the later success of disadvantaged children, many questioned the ability of local school districts to provide sufficiently high-quality early childhood education to make a real difference. In 1989, with funds from Title I, Chapter 2 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, TEA initiated a five-year study of the Prekindergarten Program to examine both implementation features and program outcomes for children.

This intensive examination of the Prekindergarten Program included four components:

- A statewide survey of program characteristics, implementation practices, and parents' perceptions
- A case study of ten schools to look in depth at program implementation in relationship to developmentally appropriate practices
- A self-study in which staff of the case study schools rate their programs in terms of the developmental quality of their classroom practices (The purpose of this portion of the study was to make prekindergarten staff more aware of the quality of their early childhood education practices in the classroom and more receptive to using the findings of the study.)
- A longitudinal study comparing 2,000 program participants with 600 children who were eligible but did not participate, to indicate program outcomes and effectiveness in helping disadvantaged youngsters perform better in the regular academic program of elementary school

Implementation Practices. The first two years of the study focused on implementation practices and parents' perceptions of the Prekindergarten Program as a critical prelude to understanding program effectiveness. The evaluators looked at such factors as classroom materials, teacher-child interactions, and administrative support. Then, they compared findings of these first two years of the study with a second look at these same factors at the end of the five-year study.

Findings from the first two years of the study indicated that classroom practices were not generally developmentally appropriate. In determining what kinds of classroom practices should be considered developmentally appropriate, the study team used the guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The NAEYC framework focuses more on *how* teaching takes place than on *what* is taught and discourages a mere "downward escalation of curriculum" in establishing teaching practices and content for prekindergarten children. Both age appropriateness and individual appropriateness dimensions are critical to determining best practices in early childhood education. While the study's final two-year examination of classroom practices showed increased staff awareness of what practices were developmentally appropriate, teachers still had a difficult time translating what they knew into program practices. Most

staff held an elementary rather than an early childhood education certification, explaining the prevalence of prekindergarten classrooms that mirrored elementary school classrooms. Also, staff did not seem to be aware of strategies for facilitating language development of all children, particularly LEP students.[lxxx]

During the final two years of the study, evaluators found that classroom practices had improved steadily in terms of progress toward developmentally appropriate practices. Scheduling of activities, increased child-initiated activity, improved teacher-child interactions, and the creation of environments better suited to preschool-age children had all been effected. In addition to these indications of program improvements, the self-study reflected movement toward higher-quality prekindergarten programs.[lxxxi] These findings do show encouraging trends over the course of the five-year study. However, much of the change noted through in-depth case studies may have been a result of participation in the study. Training staff to report their activities in the self-study segment of the research may have made teachers and administrators more aware of their actions and practices. This possibility makes generalizing about trends over the five-year period impossible. It does, however, show the significant impact that staff development can have on the program.

Outcomes for Children. The conclusions of the study, published in 1995, were that attending prekindergarten classes made a difference in children's lives and that over time, the program provided them with gains in academic performance. Four years after prekindergarten attendance, the study found that the students who attended were:

- Less likely to be retained
- Closer to being on grade level in their reading comprehension based on data reported by teachers
- Less likely to be referred for special education programs

A comparison of the achievement of similar third graders on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills showed normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores about two points higher in both reading and mathematics for the former prekindergarten students than for those who did not attend prekindergarten. For LEP students these differences were even greater. However, these scores for both LEP and non-LEP students were still lower than the statewide average for third graders in Texas.[lxxxii]

Final Recommendations from the Evaluation Study. Texas educators, administrators, and policy makers can be gratified by changes in the Prekindergarten Program in the direction of improved practices and long-term academic benefits to the children who attend the program. The final report of the study is organized around six areas:

- Program philosophy and classroom practices
- LEP students
- The prekindergarten environment
- Play-based learning and the Prekindergarten Program

- Parents' satisfaction and involvement with the Prekindergarten Program
- Education outcomes of children who attend prekindergarten
- Even more can be accomplished as the study's chapter-by-chapter recommendations are implemented. Final recommendations include the following:
- Provision of staff development to administrators and instructional staff at both the pre-service and in-service levels
- Revision of the state teacher evaluation instrument and process to make it responsive to and accountable for the characteristics that demonstrate developmentally appropriate practices in prekindergarten through early elementary grades
- Development of reflective strategies and evaluation skills of administrators and instructional staff to guide implementation practices in the classroom
- Provision of training and support to prekindergarten and elementary staff in implementing the State Board of Education Policy for Early Childhood and Elementary Education
- Identification of programs that are demonstrating exemplary developmentally appropriate practices to participate in the elementary mentor network and to provide observation sites for developing programs
- Participation in prekindergarten by all children who are eligible for the program[lxxxiii]

State Monitoring of Programs

State monitoring and data collection for the Prekindergarten Program are fairly minimal in Texas. However, state law does require TEA, in consultation with the Department of Human Resources, to do some monitoring as well as evaluation of prekindergarten programs (Education Code, 29.154). The Evaluation Study discussed above has validated the program's success. Additional studies outside of Texas have also credited the size and scope of the Texas Prekindergarten Program with some of the high marks education in Texas receives. The Rand report, *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us*, issued in July 2000, puts Texas at the head of the line in making achievement gains and elevating student performance compared with students of similar racial and socioeconomic background in other states. The Rand analysis cites the large percentage of children in public prekindergarten as one of the three major factors that accounts for the gains made in Texas.[lxxxiv]

Within the state, the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) provides some data for ongoing monitoring of the Prekindergarten Program. However, it is not complete in that it excludes any information on homeless participants, one of the three categories of student eligibility. Carole

Keeton Rylander, the state's comptroller of public accounts, says this makes a complete evaluation impossible. Rylander further considers the TEA District Effectiveness and Compliance monitoring system inadequate in that it includes in its monitoring reviews only prekindergarten programs serving children who are eligible for bilingual and English as a second language programs and for migrant education or state or federal compensatory education funds. Programs that fall outside these parameters do not receive any state oversight. Rylander has recommended that these system gaps be corrected by requiring TEA to collect state PEIMS data on all prekindergarten programs offered by Texas public schools, including their type of funding and demographic information on students served, and that the District Effectiveness and Compliance monitoring system be expanded to include reviews of all prekindergarten programs funded by state or federal dollars.[lxxxv]

Program Improvement Efforts

TEA has done no recent study or broad collection of information on the Prekindergarten Program since the *Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs, Final Report* was released in 1995 to review the extent to which the report's recommendations have been utilized across the state. However, TEA has published and distributed several documents that should contribute to continued program improvement.

Curriculum Guidelines for Prekindergarten. In 1999 voluntary prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines were developed to help educators make informed decisions about the content of curriculum for 3- and 4-year-olds. The guidelines describe specific goals for prekindergarten children in each of the academic content areas. They emphasize that for students whose first language is not English, the students' native language serves as the foundation for English acquisition. Specific guidelines for the language and literacy development of children whose home language is not English but who are in English-only settings for prekindergarten are addressed within each component of language and literacy development.

Incentives for Collaboration. Also in 1999, the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Project of the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin developed two very informative documents: *Texas Core Standards for Early Childhood Programs Side-by-Side Comparison Document* and *Texas Core Standards and Self-Assessment Tool for Center-Based Early Childhood Programs.* Together these documents go a long way toward facilitating collaboration between early care and education programs that operate under different statutory authorities. They provide assistance to program providers, policy decision makers, and parents in cutting through the confusion of what Bess Keller, writing for *Quality Counts 2002,* describes as "a fragmented system of child care" that confounds broad action "to get the youngest Texans ready for school."[lxxxvi]

As early as 1987 the state legislature expressed concern about multiple programs, all with different standards and requirements and goals, serving overlapping populations. HB 500 fueled a landmark investigation of childcare program standards and a report describing their similarities and differences, rules, and standards. The Texas Head Start Collaboration Project took the lead role in developing improved coordination of programs. In 1996 the Project published the *Interagency Workgroup Report on the Coordination of Early Care and Education Programs* with recommendations for achieving greater coordination among Head Start, public school prekindergarten, and childcare programs. One of these recommendations was to standardize program requirements across settings and coordinate the range of services offered at the same site to improve the quality of care and education of young children.

This effort to improve all early childhood care and education programs brought a keen recognition of the difference between coordination and collaboration, the former involving shared goals and some shared resources with partners maintaining their independence, the latter involving partners sharing in a decision-making process to achieve common goals. In Texas, collaboration has been increasingly viewed as essential for early childhood care and education. Otherwise, programs would miss the opportunity to gain from the strength of other partners, and the needs of children and families would be met with confusion, duplication, and gaps in services.

The 1999 documents were developed as a way to identify and reduce the barriers to program and service collaboration. The Program Standards Committee of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Project found eight areas in need of program alignment:

- Program design
- Family involvement
- Community coordination/collaboration
- Human resources
- Administration
- Evaluation
- Eligibility requirements criteria
- Contact with families

The Texas Core Standards for Early Childhood Programs Side-by-Side Comparison Document. This document is helpful and very easy to use as a reference and guide to the fundamentals of all the state's programs for early childhood care and education. It gives the program requirements of the eight major childcare and early education programs or agencies in the areas listed above. The programs addressed in the publication are listed below, with their statutory authority and participation figures for 1996–1997 to give an indication of comparative program size:

Program	Children Served
Prekindergarten Program of TEA (Texas Education Code 29.153)	120,053 disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds
TEA Pre-School Program for Children with Disabilities (IDEA, Part B)	34,398 disabled 3- to 5-year-olds
TEA Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act—Part A (PL 103-382, Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Title I – Part A)	97,500 preschool children on regular campuses targeted to receive Title I funds
TEA Even Start (PL 103-382, Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, Title I – Part B)	3,451 families in "need" with at least one child from birth to age 7
Texas Workforce Commission Childcare Program (Title VI: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, Texas Human Resources Code: Chapter 44 and Title XX of the Social Security Act)	Over 70,000 disadvantaged children from birth to age 12 receiving extended day care through 5,500 vendors and 27 contractors
Head Start and Early Head Start (Head Start Act, Sec. 635 of PL 97-35)	Serving impoverished families with children from birth to age 5—54,230 in Head Start and 493 in Early Head Start
Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (Chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code)	Serving children in out-of-home care in 20,000 regulated, licensed, and registered facilities
Military (the Military Child Care Act of 1989 and 1996 under policy of the Department of Defense)	Serving over 200,000 children daily from birth to age 12 in families of civilian employees working full-time and children of Contract workers and reservists worldwide

Texas Core Standards and Self-Assessment Tool for Center-Based Early Childhood Programs. The Self-Assessment Tool was designed to assist early care and education agencies in identifying their program strengths and weaknesses and aligning their standards in the program areas listed earlier. Its purpose is to help program providers to:

- Gain an overall picture of the program operation from various perspectives

- Identify areas of strength and those needing further improvement
- Develop an Improvement Plan, identify technical support needs and resources, and review progress
- Provide a forum for continuous improvements

As is typical with education in Texas, the effort to align program standards is one of helping program providers examine their programs in relation to other programs with similar or overlapping goals, rather than seeking legislative or regulatory changes or binding requirements.

The Self-Assessment Tool is intended for use by center-based services, not those provided by school districts, family childcare homes, or other home-based services. It includes a helpful glossary of relevant terms and acronyms, suggested directions for its use, tips to consider in using it, potential benefits and outcomes of a self-assessment, a list of additional resources, a format for an Improvement Plan and Improvement Plan Update, a contact and resources form, and a summary of the Texas Early Care and Education Career Development System, as well as the assessment tool itself.

V. Continuing Challenges

Even without extensive monitoring, evaluation, and state oversight, it seems clear that good things are happening in the Texas Prekindergarten Program. The July 2000 Rand study, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores, and analyses by several different agencies all point to students making academic gains in the regular grades, particularly students who are disadvantaged and students for whom English is not their first or home language. However, keeping pace with the fast-growing number of needy students and continuing to fine-tune the Prekindergarten Program during the current economic downturn will be difficult, particularly given very strong anti-tax sentiments among legislators. The state is currently looking at a $5 to $6 billion deficit.

Currently the Prekindergarten Program is serving about 73% of the eligible students. Still, Bill Ratliffe, the lieutenant governor and long-time leader of the Senate, says, "I think we have far too many kids coming into first grade unprepared."[lxxxvii] Recent tightened welfare restrictions in combination with the increased spending on childcare subsidies since the mid-1990s overhaul of the welfare system will further increase the demand for prekindergarten slots.

Student achievement assessments begin with third grade, so it is difficult to identify the precise point at which students start to fall behind, how far behind they are by kindergarten, or how well they are doing. It is hard to assess just what to fix since it is not clear just where the system is "broken," if indeed it is. The pressure to find out will come soon enough. In its 2001 session, the legislature renewed the $200 million ($100 million each for two years) in additional funding for expansion of prekindergarten programs, but it rejected a one-year delay in implementation of a requirement that third

graders who are unprepared not be promoted. This requirement will kick in at the end of the 2002–2003 school year. Policy makers will want to see a payoff for the money they have been putting into the Prekindergarten Program. If it is not there, they are likely to ask why. If too many third graders must be retained, perhaps this will trigger a closer look at how to achieve accountability at each grade level, an assessment of where programs are falling short, and a strategy for further program improvement.

Another challenge likely to strain the education budget in the years to come is the erosion of equity in the Texas school financing system. The current foundation program for funding schools covers only 40% of the overall school cost. Attempts to have the state take over additional schooling cost by creation of a state-run system of health insurance for school employees failed when the $1.2 billion price tag for the first year became apparent.[lxxxviii] Had the measure passed, it might have softened growing discontent with financing inequities.

On top of these fiscal woes are the teacher shortages, especially for LEP students, and facilities shortages faced by many other states as well. Right now the much momentum behind the preschool movement comes from several sources:

- The brain research that tells us that the early years are when certain kinds of learning are critical to children's cognitive development and later school success
- The interest in and cost-effectiveness of prevention rather than remediation
- Research and model programs that tell us what constitutes a quality preschool program
- A renewal of early childhood education preparation programs at institutions of higher education

President George W. Bush, a former Texas governor, has said that the nation's public schools can and must do better, and that all students must be able to read by grade three. This adds pressure on the early grades in all states, but particularly in Texas. Recognition that early childhood education is essential to success in meeting this goal puts even more pressure on the Texas prekindergarten and elementary school programs to excel. Texas can be grateful for all this nationwide attention. It will keep the prekindergarten commitment strong during these tough fiscal times. And the state will meet the challenge, if the past few decades are any indication of the strength of Texan will.

Appendixes

Appendix A

New Jersey: A Selective Chronology of the Litigation

July 1975 *A New Formula and a New Tax.* In response to a New Jersey Supreme Court ruling that the state's heavy reliance on property taxes to fund public school education—at that time composing 67% of total costs—discriminated against poorer districts, the state created the Public School Education Act as its new, fairer formula for funding schools. However, because lawmakers did not raise taxes sufficiently to pay for it, the New Jersey Supreme Court ordered the schools closed for eight days in July 1976. This showdown was accompanied by a public information campaign spearheaded by a coalition of organizations that worked together to inform the public of what was happening and why. It provided a basic primer on school financing and taxing alternatives so that the public could sort out the arguments and claims being made by elected officials, the litigants, researchers, and the court. Public pressure and support from broad sectors of the educational establishment, civic groups, and child advocates resulted in passage of the state's first income tax, New Jersey being one of the few states that did not have one at that time.

February 1981 *An Output Standard to Determine Equity.* The Education Law Center filed *Abbott v. Burke* on behalf of urban school children, claiming before the court that the 1975 act did not result in providing a "thorough and efficient" education to urban children. The New Jersey Supreme Court issued a ruling in 1985 in which it recognized that the 1975 act's definitions of "thorough and efficient" were satisfactory, but only if given sufficient fiscal support, which they were not. In coming to this conclusion, the court reasoned that for disadvantaged students to receive a "thorough and efficient" education, they would require above-average access to educational resources. Factors persuasive to this reasoning included Department of Education records that showed that children in property-poor urban school districts learned significantly less than children in other school districts, had disproportionately high dropout rates, had less well qualified and less well paid teachers, attended classes with more students per teacher, and went to school in deteriorating facilities.

The court concluded that under the system then in effect, "disadvantaged children will not be able to compete in, and contribute to, the society entered by the relatively advantaged children." This reliance on an output standard to examine fairness and equity was crucial to all that followed in subsequent *Abbott* decisions, and ultimately to the development of the preschool program for

disadvantaged children in both the Abbott and non-Abbott districts. The case was sent to the Office of Administrative Law and the Commissioner of Education for a full hearing and fact-finding.

August 1988 *Another New Formula and Additional Revenue*. After a nine-month trial, Judge Steven LeFelt issued a 600-page initial decision calling for the complete overhaul of the state's system for providing urban education. Commissioner of Education Saul Cooperman rejected the judge's decision, but in May 1990, Governor James Florio introduced the Quality Education Act (QEA) in expectation of a ruling (*Abbott II*) from the state's supreme court in favor of the urban children in the *Abbott* case. A $2.8 billion state tax increase was introduced to pay for the new law and the existing budget deficit. In June 1990 the governor's expectation became a reality.

June 1990 *New Jersey Supreme Court Calls for Preschool*. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in *Abbott II* that inadequate and unequal funding denied students in urban districts a thorough and efficient education and required the state to equalize funding between suburban and urban districts for regular education and to provide extra or "supplemental" programs to "wipe out disadvantages as much as a school district can."[lxxxix]

March 1991 *Funds Diverted to Tax Relief*. The QEA was amended to divert $360 million to property tax relief. This prompted the Education Law Center to reactivate the *Abbott* case in July 1992, charging the state with the failure to comply with the 1990 *Abbott II* ruling.

July 1994 *Bridging the Gap*. The New Jersey Supreme Court declared the QEA unconstitutional because it failed to equalize spending between rich and poor districts. Had the legislature authorized a high enough level of funding for the QEA, it could have achieved parity between districts. A key part of the QEA's complex formula for distributing funds was the state's exercise of a non-mandatory spending cap on the wealthy districts and enough money to bring the urban or "special needs districts" up to the level of wealthier districts in the suburban areas. Put simply, the formula could close the spending gap between rich and poor districts only if enough money was put into it and the spending cap was utilized. Inadequate funding also meant the act could not guarantee sufficient supplemental programming as ordered in *Abbott II*. In addition, the court concluded that the legislature or the Department of Education should supervise and regulate the use of additional funds in the special needs districts to help ensure that these funds would be used constructively to meet the most pressing educational needs of children in those districts. To this end, the QEA had required the Commissioner of Education "to undertake a study of the programs and services to be implemented for disadvantaged students, including their cost." xviii However, such a study was never completed.

All the parties to the litigation agreed that children in the special needs districts, but not in the wealthier districts, needed supplemental programs, including preschool, in order to have a fair chance of success, and that without the significant intervention of special programs and services, no amount of money would bridge the achievement gap. The court summed up its conclusion by restating from its initial *Abbott* decision that, "Certainly the urban poor need more than education, but it is hard to believe that their isolation and society's division can be reversed without it" (*Abbott III*). The court gave the state until 1997 to fully comply with its order. The call for preschool in urban districts was clearly planted, as was the state's responsibility to provide it.

November 1995 *The State Provides Funds for Preschool for Disadvantaged Children*. The newly elected administration unveiled a spending plan for schools that would cap spending in suburban districts but ultimately signed into law the Comprehensive Education Improvement and Financing Act (CEIFA) without the caps and maintained spending at existing levels. At the same time, CEIFA limited spending in urban districts at $1,200 per pupil below the suburban average. CEIFA did include two programs to address the special needs of children in the Abbott districts, one of them being Early Childhood Program Aid, to be funded at $200 million. However, the legislature provided no explanation or analysis of how it arrived at this dollar amount, neither conducted nor required any assessment of student and district needs, and gave districts until the school year 2001–2002 to submit operational plans for their preschool and kindergarten programs to be funded with this money. The court objected to this "glaring weakness" of the Act. xix

January 1997 *Elements of What Is Needed for Preschool.* The Education Law Center returned to the state supreme court, which declared CEIFA unconstitutional and ordered state officials to immediately increase funding in urban districts and to determine the supplemental programs and services disadvantaged children needed. The state answered this fourth *Abbott* decision by adding $246 million to the Abbott districts to bring them in line with spending in suburban districts. It further addressed the court's order by contacting urban education specialists at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE). CRHDE conducted a needs assessment, which the state incorporated into *A Study of Supplemental Programs and Recommendations for the Abbott Districts.* The state's plan resulting from the study called for a "well-planned, high quality half-day preschool for all four-year olds in small classes with a 1:15 teacher-to-student ratio." xx

January 1998 *Needs Assessment Crucial to Preschool Program Development.* After two months of hearings, Remand Judge Michael Patrick King recommended to the state supreme court a package of supplemental programs, including preschool, at an additional annual cost of $345 million, and a program to renovate or replace facilities. Three months

later the court ordered an unprecedented series of entitlements for urban school children, among which were whole school reform, full-day kindergarten, and preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds, plus a comprehensive facilities program.

Essential to the court's reasoning and conclusion was testimony presented by Dr. W. Steven Barnett on behalf of the *Abbott* plaintiffs regarding the "very large gap" in school readiness between children from wealthier and poorer districts. He stated that high-quality preschool programs could provide poor children with the resources to close the gap and that a number of studies had shown that early intervention makes a substantial difference. However, he cautioned that any supplemental programs must be based on a needs assessment to justify their design, as the needs of children vary dramatically from community to community.

The additional cost-benefits argument was made that investing in intensive early intervention through preschool would yield significant savings over time. Researchers have estimated that for every dollar spent on preschool, seven dollars are saved over the lifetime of the children who attend such programs. Thus, the per child preschool cost estimate Dr. Barnett gave the court of between $9,000 and $14,000 becomes an enormous savings in the long run. xxi

March 2000 *Continuing Difficulties in Getting Preschool off the Ground.* *Abbott VI* was issued to clarify the intention of *Abbott V* that preschool programs be "well planned" and of "high quality." The plaintiffs in the case had faulted the state for not putting forth curriculum standards for preschool programs geared toward school readiness and not requiring teacher certification standards that would guarantee high-quality preschools. Instead, the state's regulations had permitted the hiring of nonqualified staff and provided Rapid Intervention Teams to work with districts. The mission of these teams was to oversee the opening of preschool programs and to assist day care providers in making the transition from childcare to early childhood education, a distinction not always apparent to those providing services. But without substantive standards, the court concluded that the state would be unable to evaluate programs and a two-tiered system was likely to result, in which some children would be offered day care and others would be offered high-quality preschool. xxii

May 2000 *Funding for Facilities.* In *Abbott VII* the Court reaffirmed its earlier ruling that the state must fully fund the Abbott construction program.

April 2001 *Multiple Problems Persist.* An administrative law judge ruled that the state had not properly implemented the Abbott preschool program, and the state supreme court heard further arguments regarding delays in providing detailed guidance to school districts so that programs would likely be of high quality. Reaching out to the community to inform parents of the opportunity to enroll their children in preschool, bringing Head Start programs into conformity

with required standards, developing a budget process for district programs based on a needs assessment, and renovating and building facilities, all matters critical to conducting well-planned, high-quality programs, remained problems. xxiii

February 2002 *The Court Amplifies Its Order.* A frustrated and angry court issued *Abbott VIII,* chiding the state for its fifteenth visit before the court in 30 years to hear advocates' claims for equal educational opportunity for poor urban children. Once again the court agreed that the state had provided inadequate funding, deficient substantive educational programs, and substandard facilities. It further commented that the history of the *Abbott* case revealed a pattern of defiance, delay, and neglect by several commissioners of education. This eighth *Abbott* order reiterated and amplified its earlier mandates and provided a schedule for decision making to help ensure that programs would be in place for the 2002–2003 school year. xxiv

February 2002 *Governor McGreevey Creates Compliance Council.* Governor McGreevey signed an Executive Order pledging to work with the Education Law Center and other stakeholders on implementing the Abbott prekindergarten program.

Appendix B

New Jersey: Early Care and Education Coalition:

Members Endorsing the Early Childhood Policy Statement

Association for Children of New Jersey

Center for Early Education Research at Rutgers

Coalition for Our Children's Schools

Coalition of Infant and Toddler Education

Education Law Center

Ellen Frede, Ph.D., The College of New Jersey*

Susan L. Golbeck, Graduate School of Education, Rutgers University*

Ironbound Community Corporation, Newark

Nancy Lauter, Montclair State University*

Rosalyn Lenhoff, Kean University*

Ernest M. May

Nicholas M. Mithelli, Montclair State University*

Newark Pre-School Council

Newark Teachers Union—Local 481 American Federation of Teachers

Newark Tenants Council

New Jersey Association for the Education of Young Children

New Jersey Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies

New Jersey Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators

New Jersey Association of School Administrators

New Jersey Early Intervention Coalition

New Jersey Education Association

New Jersey Head Start Association

New Jersey Policy Development Board

New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association

New Jersey Reading Association

New Jersey State Federation of Teachers

New Jersey Statewide Coalition for Child Care

Programs for Parents, Inc.

Antionette Spiotta, Montclair State University*

Statewide Parent Advocacy Network of New Jersey

Janis Strasser, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, Early Education, William Paterson University

Urban School Superintendents Association

Resources

Missouri

Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education. *In the Interest of Minds: The Power of Early Childhood Care and Education* (St. Louis, Missouri: 1997).

Hausman, Bonnie. "Parents as Teachers: The Right Fit for Missouri." *Educational Horizons*, Fall/Winter 1989.

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Missouri Preschool Project, Request for Proposal and Program Guidelines* (Jefferson City, Missouri: DESE, 2001).

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Early Childhood Development Act, Program Guidelines and Administrative Manual* (Jefferson City, Missouri: DESE, 2000).

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *School Entry Assessment Project, Report of Findings* (Jefferson City, Missouri: DESE, 1999).

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Families Served through Missouri's Parents as Teachers Program* (Jefferson City, Missouri: DESE, 2001).

Parents as Teachers National Center. *History of Service to Families* (St. Louis, Missouri: 2001).

Parents as Teachers National Center. *Evaluations of Parents as Teachers* (St. Louis, Missouri: 2000).

New Jersey

Abbott v. Burke (Abbott I) 100 N.J. 269.

Abbott v. Burke (Abbott II) 119 N.J. 287.

Abbott v. Burke (Abbott III) 136 N.J. 444.

Abbott v. Burke (Abbott IV) 149 N.J. 145.

Abbott v. Burke: Report and Decision of the Remand Court, Superior Court of New Jersey, January 22, 1998.

Abbott v. Burke (Abbott V) 153 N.J. 480.

Abbott v. Burke (Abbott VI) 163 N.J. 95.

Abbott v. Burke (Abbott VIII) 170 N.J. 537.

Association for Children of New Jersey. *ACNJ Campaign 4 Kids, ACNJ Early Learning Initiative,* and *Meeting the Abbott Preschool Mandate* (April 2001).

Quality Indicators for Preschool Facilities: Recommendations of the Early Care and Education Coalition, and *The Lighthouse Initiative* (Newark, New Jersey: May 1, 2002).

Association for Children of New Jersey. *Ready, Set, Learn*. Series of videotapes for public television. 2001.

Barnett, W. Steve, et al. *Fragile Lives, Shattered Dreams: Implementation of Preschool Education in New Jersey's Abbott Districts* (Center for Early Education Research, Rutgers–The State University of New Jersey, May 31, 2001).

Barnett, W. Steve, Tarr, Julie, and Frede, Ellen. *Early Childhood Education Needs in Low Income Communities: Final Report of an Assessment of Young Children's Educational Needs and Community Capacity in New Jersey's Abbott Districts* (Center for Early Education at Rutgers Graduate School of Education, May 21, 1999).

Cannon, Kathleen. "A Playing Field That Is Level for All Children." *New York Times,* March 17, 2002.

Coffman, Julia. *Lessons in Strategic Communications: Research and Advocacy Collaboration: A New Jersey Case Study* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Family Research Project, January 2002).

Early Care and Education Coalition. "Position Statement" (Newark, New Jersey).

Early Care and Education Coalition. Press conference, papers, and collection of subsequent newspaper articles (Trenton, New Jersey: May 31, 2002).

Education Law Center. *Abbott Archives*. April 10, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AbbottArchives.htm>.

Education Law Center. *Abbott Preschool Program*. April 10, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AbbottPreschoolProgram.htm>.

Education Law Center. *History of Abbott*. April 11, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AbbottvBurke/AbbottHistory.htm>.

Education Law Center. *History of Education Law Center*. April 11, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AboutELC/History.htm>.

Education Law Center. *Recent News: Remarks of David Sciarra at the Public Education Institute (PEI) Roundtable Meeting on Education Advocacy, April 5, 2002*. April 10, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org>.

Education Law Center. *Recent News: Statement of David Sciarra, Executive Director, Education Law Center on the DOE Application to the Supreme Court for One-Year Relaxation of Further K-12 Abbott Implementation, April 18, 2002*. April 10, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org>.

New Jersey Governor's Office. Press release. "Governor McGreevey Creates Council to Ensure Quality Education in Urban Schools" (Trenton, New Jersey, February 19, 2002).

Resnick, Gary. *The Evaluation of Early Childhood Programming in the 30 Abbott School Districts: First-Year Report on Program Implementation and Descriptions of Children and Families*. Report prepared for the

New Jersey Department of Human Services and the New Jersey Department of Education under Contract No. A43078. (Rockville, Maryland: Westat, June 25, 2001).

Rice, Cynthia, and Nash, David. *White Paper on Abbott and Early Childhood Program Aid Implementation* (Newark, New Jersey: Early Care and Education Coalition, 2002).

Rice, Cynthia C., and Tarr, Julie. *Expanding Our Horizons: Early Childhood Program Implementation in New Jersey's ECPA Districts,* Association for Children of New Jersey and Center for Early Education Research, October 19, 2001).

"The Good Old Days." *New York Times,* April 4, 1967.

Verstegen, D. A., and Whitney, T. "From Courthouses to Schoolhouses: Emerging Judicial Theories of Adequacy and Equity." *Educational Policy,* September 1997: Vol. 11, No. 3.

Illinois

Early Childhood Education Task Force. *Early Childhood Education Policy Study: An Overview* (Springfield, Illinois: April 1985).

Illinois State Board of Education. *Early Childhood Block Grant RFP* (Springfield, Illinois: March 2001).

Illinois State Board of Education. *2000 Evaluation Report* (Springfield, Illinois).

Illinois State Board of Education. *Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure: Progress Report* (Springfield, Illinois: May 1989).

North Carolina

Dombro, Amy Laura. *Getting Started: How Smart Start Began* (New York, New York: Families and Work Institute, 1999).

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina. *Smart Start: Services and Successes* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: June 2000).

Researchers of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center have conducted more than two dozen studies of Smart Start. They may be ordered or, in most cases, downloaded from http://www.fpg.unc.edu?~smartstart.

North Carolina Partnership for Children. *Building Brighter Futures for All North Carolina's Children* (Raleigh, North Carolina: 2001)

Texas

Curriculum and Professional Development, Texas Education Agency. "Frequently Asked Questions: Kindergarten Education." April 9, 2002 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/kfaq.html>.

Early Childhood Education, Curriculum and Professional Development, Texas Education Agency. "Frequently Asked Questions and Answers: Prekindergarten." April 9, 2002 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/prekfaq.html>.

Gallagher, James J., Clayton, Jenna R., and Heinemeier, Sarah E. *Education for Four-Year-Olds: State Initiatives.* Technical Report #2 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: National Center for Early Development and Learning, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, December 12, 2000).

Grissmer, David W., et al. *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us* (Santa Monica, California: Rand, 2000).

Keller, Bess. "Texas: The Lone Star State's Preschool Program Has Grown Fast. The Need for It May Be Growing Even Faster." *Quality Counts 2002 of Education Week,* January 10, 2002.

Nelson, Jim. "To the Administrator Addressed." Texas Education Agency, Correspondence, June 6. 2000. April 11, 2002 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/taa/legal000606.html>.

"PreK and Kindergarten Expansion Grant Program." School Finance, Texas Education Agency. April 9, 2002 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/school.finance/prek/html>.

Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, December 1999).

Programs Standards Workgroup. *Texas Core Standards and Self-Assessment Tool for Center-Based Early Childhood Programs* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, Spring 1999).

Programs Standards Workgroup. *Texas Core Standards for Early Childhood Programs Side-by-Side Comparison Document* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, Spring 1999).

Rylander, Carol Keeton. "A Better Way: Start with Pre-K." Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts: e-Texas. March 2001. April 9, 2002 <http://www.window.state.tx.us/e-texas.org.html>.

Rylander, Carol Keeton. "Chapter 6: Education Makes Pre-kindergarten Programs Accessible to More Texas Children." *Recommendations of the Texas Comptroller: The Report of the e-Texas Commission.* December 2000. April 9, 2002 <http://www.e-texas.org/recommend/ch6.ed15.html>.

"Student Success Initiative: A Parent Guide to Testing Requirements." Curriculum, Assessment, and Technology, Texas Education Agency. April 9, 2002 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/ssi.html>.

"Texas Education Agency Awards $60 Million to 157 School Districts and Charter Schools to Expand Prekindergarten Programs." Texas Education Agency. January 20, 2000. April 11, 2002 — <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/press/pr000120a.html>.

Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs: Final Report. (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, July 1995).

Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs: Interim Findings. Publication No. GE3 410 09 (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency).

Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs: Preliminary Findings. Publication No. GE2 091 08 (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency).

Endnotes

Missouri

[*] For a more in-depth chronology, see Appendix A.

[i] Harold Hodgkinson, *Missouri: The Demographic Context* (Kansas City, Missouri: Missouri Legislative Forum, 2001).

[ii] Kathy Thornburg, *Missouri Early Education* (Kansas City, Missouri: Missouri Legislative Forum, 2001).

[iii] Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education, *In the Interest of Minds: The Power of Early Childhood Care and Education* (St. Louis, Missouri: Missouri Governor's Office, 1997), 27.

[iv] *In the Interest of Minds,* 3.

[v] *In the Interest of Minds,* 4.

New Jersey

[vi] Education Law Center, *History of Abbott*, April 10, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AbbottvBurke/AbbottHistory.htm>.

[vii] *History of Abbott.*

[viii] Julia Coffman, *Lessons in Strategic Communications: Research and Advocacy Collaboration—A New Jersey Case Study* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Family Research Project, January 2002), 2.

[ix] Education Law Center, *Profiles of Abbott Districts*, September 16, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AbbottvBurke/AbbottProfile.htm>.

[x] "Current Enrollment as of December 7, 2001, Abbott Preschool Program Data," provided by the New Jersey Department of Education to author by disk on April 29, 2002.

[xi] Nancy Parello, "State-Funded Preschools Accused of Serious Failings," *The Record*, June 1, 2001.

[xii] Education Law Center, *Abbott Preschool Enrollment*, April 10, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AbbottPreschool/PreschoolEnrollmentChart.htm>

[xiii] W. Steve Barnett et al., *Fragile Lives, Shattered Dreams: Implementation of Preschool Education in New Jersey's Abbott Districts* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Center for Early Education Research, Rutgers–The State University of New Jersey, May 31, 2001), 24.

[xiv] Cynthia C. Rice and Julie Tarr, *Expanding Our Horizons: Early Childhood Programs in New Jersey's ECPA Districts* (Newark and New Brunswick, New Jersey: October 19, 2001), 1–2.

[xv] "Preschool/Kindergarten ECP Enrollments 15-Oct-01," data provided by the New Jersey Department of Education to author by disk on April 29, 2002.

[xvi] *Expanding Our Horizons,* 4.

[xvii] *Abbott v. Burke*, 100 N.J. 269 (July 23, 1985) (*Abbott II*).

[xviii] *Abbott II.*

[xix] *Abbott v. Burke*, 136 N.J. 444 (1994) (*Abbott III*).

[xx] *History of Abbott.*

[xxi] *Abbott v. Burke, Report and Decision of Remand Court.*

[xxii] *Abbott v. Burke*, 163 N.J. 95 (March 7, 2000) (*Abbott VI*).

[xxiii] Acting Chief Judge Jeff Masin of the Office of Administrative Law, Initial Decision *In re: Abbott Global Issues* 920 (April 2001).

[xxiv] *Abbott v. Burke,* 170 N.J. 537 (February 21, 2002) (*Abbott VIII*).

[xxv] Dr. Ellen C. Frede, assistant commissioner for the Office of Early Childhood Education, New Jersey State Department of Education, personal interview on early childhood education in New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey, April 29, 2002.

[xxvi] *Abbott II.*

[xxvii] Education Law Center, *History of Education Law Center*, April 10, 2002 <http://www.edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/AboutElc/History.htm>.

[xxviii] David Sciarra, executive director of the Education Law Center, remarks made at the Public Education Institute Roundtable Meeting on Education Advocacy, Livingston Campus Center at Livingston College of Rutgers University, Piscataway, New Jersey, April 5, 2002.

[xxix] Cecilia Zalkind, esq., executive director of the Association for Children of New Jersey, personal interview on early childhood education in New Jersey, Newark, New Jersey, May 1, 2002.

[xxx] Zalkind, interview.

[xxxi] Association for Children of New Jersey, *ACNJ Early Learning Initiative*, circulated but unpublished, undated paper (Newark, New Jersey).

[xxxii] *Ready, Set, Learn,* Michelle Ruess of ACNJ, producer; Frank Sabatino of the Dumont Television Center Department of Broadcasting at Montclair State University, director (aired on public television stations across New Jersey).

[xxxiii] Association for Children of New Jersey and the New Jersey Community Loan Fund, *The Lighthouse Initiative*, press release (April 11, 2001).

[xxxiv] Early Care and Education Coalition, *Position Statement,* circulated but unpublished, undated.

[xxxv] *Fragile Lives, Shattered Dreams.*

[xxxvi] *Lessons in Strategic Communications.*

[xxxvii] W. Steven Barnett and Cecilia Zalkind, "Getting Preschool Right in New Jersey," *The Times,* June 11, 2001.

[xxxviii] David Sciarra, esq., executive director of the Education Law Center, Newark, New Jersey, <dsciarra@edlawcenter.org>e-mail to Linda Brown Warren, June 6, 2002.

[xxxix] Frede, interview.

[xl] New Jersey Governor's Office, *Governor McGreevey Creates Council to Ensure Quality Education in Urban Schools,* press release, February 19, 2002.

[xli] Frede, interview.

[xlii] Frede, interview.

[xliii] Sciarra, interview.

[xliv] Rice and Nash, 2.

[xlv] Kathleen Cannon, "A Playing Field That Is Level for All Children," *New York Times,* March 17, 2002.

[xlvi] *Fragile Lives, Shattered Dreams,* 1.

[xlvii] Frede, interview.

Illinois

[xlviii] Early Childhood Education Task Force, *Early Childhood Education Policy Statement: An Overview* (Springfield, Illinois: April 1985), 5.

[xlix] *Early Childhood Education Policy Statement,* 1.

[l] *Early Childhood Education Policy Statement,* 39.

[li] Illinois State Board of Education, *Prekindergarten Programs for Children at Risk of Academic Failure: Progress Report* (Springfield, Illinois, May 198-), 1.

[lii] *Prekindergarten Programs for Children at Risk of Academic Failure: Progress Report.*

[liii] *Prekindergarten Programs for Children at Risk of Academic Failure: Progress Report,* 1–2.

[liv] *Prekindergarten Programs for Children at Risk of Academic Failure: Progress Report,* 7.

[lv] Illinois State Board of Education, *FY 2000 Evaluation Report* (Springfield, Illinois), 34.

[lvi] *FY 2000 Evaluation Report*, 33.

[lvii] Illinois State Board of Education, *Early Childhood Block Grant RFP* (Springfield, Illinois: March 2001), 3.

North Carolina

[lviii] Amy Laura Dombro, *Getting Started: How Smart Start Began* (New York, New York: Family and Work Institute, 1999).

[lix] James B. Hunt, Jr., former governor of North Carolina, personal interview with author, June 8, 2001.

[lx] Donna Bryant, *Smart Start: Services & Successes* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina, June 2000), 1.

[lxi] *Getting Started,* 8.

[lxii] *Getting Started,* 11.

[lxiii] Carolyn Kroll and Michele Rivest, *Sharing the Stories: Lessons Learned from 5 Years of Smart Start* (Durham, North Carolina: Early Childhood Initiatives, 2000), 3.

[lxiv] *Building Brighter Futures for All North Carolina's Children* (Raleigh, North Carolina: North Carolina Partnership for Children, 2001), 3.

[lxv] *Getting Started,* 18.

[lxvi] *Smart Start News* (April 2000).

[lxvii] Kelly Maxwell et al., *North Carolina's Kindergartens & Schools* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina, 2000).

[lxviii] *Smart Start News,* 5.

[lxix] Stephanie Fanjul, director of student achievement for the National Education Association and former director of the Office of Child Development in the North Carolina State Department of Education, personal interview with author, March 12, 2001; and Lucy Roberts, chief of the Early Childhood Section of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, personal interview with author, June 6, 2001.

[lxx] *School Readiness in North Carolina: Strategies for Defining, Measuring and Promoting Success for All Children* (Raleigh, North Carolina: State Board of Education, June 2000), 1.

[lxxi] *North Carolina's Kindergartens & Schools.*

[lxxii] Kelly Maxwell, Donna Bryant, and Shari Miller-Johnson, *A Six-County Study of the Effects of Smart Start Child Care on Kindergarten Entry Skills* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, University of North Carolina, 1999), 14.

[lxxiii] *A Six-County Study,* 6.

Texas

[lxxiv] William Kirby, former Texas commissioner of education, personal telephone interview with the author on education and prekindergarten in Texas, April 25, 2002.

[lxxv] Texas Education Agency, *Frequently Asked Questions and Answers—Prekindergarten,* April 8, 2002 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/prekfaq.html>.

[lxxvi] Texas Education Agency, *Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs: Final Report* (Austin, Texas: 1995), 1.

[lxxvii] Texas Education Agency, *Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines* (Austin, Texas: 1999), 1.

[lxxviii] *Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines,* 1.

[lxxix] Cami Jones, director, Early Childhood Education, division of Curriculum and Professional Development, Texas Education Agency, personal telephone interview with the author on education and prekindergarten in Texas, April 23, 2002.

[lxxx] *Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs,* 6.

[lxxxi] *Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs.*

[lxxxii] *Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs,* 65–68.

[lxxxiii] *Texas Evaluation Study of Prekindergarten Programs,* 70.

[lxxxiv] David W. Grissmer et al., *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us* (Santa Monica, California: Rand, 2000), 100.

[lxxxv] Carole Keeton Rylander (Texas Education Agency), "Make Prekindergarten Programs Accessible to More Texas Children," December 2000, April 11, 2002 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ html>.

[lxxxvi] Bess Keller, "Texas: The Lone Star State's Preschool Program Has Grown Fast. The Need for It May Be Growing Even Faster," Quality Counts 2002 of *Education Week* January 10, 2002, 160.

[lxxxvii] "Texas," 160.

[lxxxviii] "Texas," 161.

[lxxxix] *Abbott II.*

Council of Chief State School Officers

Michael E. Ward (North Carolina), President
Ted Stillwell (Iowa), President-elect
Suellen Reed (Indiana), Vice-President
G. Thomas Houlihan, Executive Director
Julia Lara, Deputy Executive Director, Division of
State Services and Technical Assistance

For information please contact:
One Massachusetts Avenue, NW · Suite 700 · Washington, DC 20001-1431
voice: 202.408.5505 · fax: 202.408.8072
http://www.ccsso.org/