

# The universal vs. targeted debate: Should the United States have preschool for all? <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** National Institute for Early Education Research (at Rutgers University)

**Format:** Fact sheet

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## AVAILABILITY

Policy brief in pdf <sup>[2]</sup>

Excerpts from the brief:

The debate over universal vs. targeted preschool programs is explored in this policy brief. While targeted programs traditionally have lower costs, universal programs are more effective at reaching all targeted children. And while the academic achievement gap is most dramatic between children in poverty and those with the most resources, school readiness is not just a problem of the poor. School readiness for the majority of children can improve with better preschool education.

Policy Recommendations:

- The effectiveness and efficiency of investments in preschool could be increased with a shift from targeted to voluntary universal preschool programs.
- High quality standards for all children are required for effective universal preschool programs.
- Children with special needs due to poverty or disabilities may require more intensive services within universal programs.
- Expansion toward universal takes time, and patience is required to build capacity while maintaining or improving quality.
- Preschool programs could move toward universal access by gradually raising thresholds for eligibility.
- Federal matching funds could be used to encourage states to fund high-quality preschool for all.

**Related link:** CRRU occasional paper: Targeting early childhood care and education: Myths and realities <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** United States <sup>[4]</sup>

**Tags:** poverty <sup>[5]</sup>

    funding <sup>[6]</sup>

    federalism <sup>[7]</sup>

    pre-school <sup>[8]</sup>

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**Source URL (modified on 2 Nov 2020):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/04/07/universal-vs-targeted-debate-should-united-states-have>

## Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/04/07/universal-vs-targeted-debate-should-united-states-have>

[2] <http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/6.pdf>

[3] <http://childcarecanada.org/publications/occasional-paper-series/01/08/targeting-early-childhood-care-and-education-myths-and-re>

[4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7865>

[5] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/poverty>

[6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>

[7] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/federalism>

[8] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/pre-school>