

The cost of universal access to quality preschool in Illinois ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Available in print for order (see SOURCE) and online for download.

- Full report in pdf ^[3]

Excerpts from executive summary

Responding to research indicating the value of a good early childhood education program, Governor George H. Ryan of Illinois, in Spring 2001, convened the Task Force on Universal Access to Preschool made up of prominent representatives from government and the private sector.

The task force's objective was to design a plan to ensure that all three- and four-year-old children in Illinois have access to high-quality early education. The task force was also instructed to include an estimate of the proposed plan's costs.

Cost estimates were based on research findings identifying key components of program quality, including well trained and compensated teachers in every classroom and significant investments in the state's existing early care and education infrastructure. Assumptions were made about community planning efforts and support for enhanced teacher training. To make assumptions about participation rates, the research team looked at national trends in preschool enrollment and participation rates in Georgia, a state that has taken the lead in providing universal preschool. Because large proportions of children already participate in Georgia's preschool program and in other early care and education programs around the country, we assumed that a large number of children would participate in Illinois Preschool.

This report concludes that instituting improved quality preschool for three- and four-year-olds in Illinois will require a substantial new investment of funds, even when building upon existing state and federally funded early care and education programs. In light of Governor Ryan's and the task force's desire to begin implementing a program within the present environment of fiscal constraints, the authors estimated the cost of phasing in the program over a ten-year period. This phase-in would begin with a small pilot program requiring some investment in infrastructure and would transition to a steady annual increase in the number of participating children and in costs.

Region: United States ^[4]

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