

# EARLY LEARNING USER'S GUIDE

for Illinois School Boards



Dear Illinois Education Leaders:

It is with great pleasure that the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB) and the Ounce of Prevention Fund present to you the Early Learning User's Guide for Illinois School Boards.

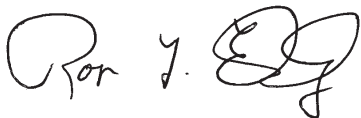
This document represents a collaboration between IASB and the Ounce to support school districts as you pursue proven strategies to improve student achievement. Decades of research demonstrate the power of high-quality early childhood education in reducing some of the most pervasive issues confronted by Illinois's schools. We believe that if school board members understand the available options and the needs of the community's youngest learners, they can make informed decisions about their district's early learning strategy, ultimately establishing a path to success for all students throughout their education.

With this guide, we hope to arm school district leaders with the information they need to make informed and effective decisions about how to support children before they enter kindergarten. Each district and community is unique, and we hope this guide helps district leaders assess the best mechanisms to ensure children have access to high-quality experiences from the start in their community.

While this guide provides a primer for school boards, we encourage you to reach out to the Ounce as you seek early learning strategies for your district. The Ounce has over 30 years of experience supporting high-quality early learning in Illinois and is partnering with IASB to help ensure that school board members have the support they need to make early learning part of their broader education vision. We know that early learning is one of the most effective routes to ensure students are on the path to success from the very beginning, and we are here to support you.

We hope you find this guide useful and informative. Enjoy!

Sincerely,



Roger Eddy  
Executive Director  
Illinois Association of School Boards



Elliot Regenstein  
Senior Vice President, Advocacy and Policy  
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# An Early Learning User's Guide for Illinois School Boards

## Executive Summary

Ultimately, school boards are responsible for ensuring that all children in their districts succeed in school and go on to success in college and careers. Investments in quality early childhood education services, from birth through age five, can be one of the most cost-effective strategies for school districts to fulfill their overall objective. Integrating early learning programs into the district's educational continuum can have significant positive long-term effects on child outcomes. This guide offers methods and resources that school boards can utilize as they integrate early learning into their education strategy for improving student outcomes.

### Why Early Learning Matters

Research has shown that the achievement gap between students in poverty and those in higher socioeconomic environments begins in the first few months of life, and can be significant even before a child turns 1 or 2. Without intervention, this gap can persist throughout a child's academic career. It is also important that early learning programs can have long-term impacts on children in both the "academic" and "non-academic" domains. Well designed and implemented early learning programs help young children develop a foundation of social and emotional skills that will enable them to succeed as academic rigor increases throughout their school career. The same skills that children learn before kindergarten about cooperation have been proven to translate into their abilities to work in teams and problem solve as teenagers and adults.

### Key Principles for School Boards in Supporting Early Learning

School boards that want meaningful long term outcomes will need to be thoughtful in their design and implementation of early learning programs to ensure that they are effectively investing in programs that will contribute to the district's long-term goals. Districts will be most effective in supporting early learning if they do so in a manner that is in alignment with their overarching goals for students, and that is responsive to the needs of their community. There are questions that school boards can ask to guide the planning:

- What is the current status of early learning in the community?
- How is the district—in consultation with community partners—articulating what it is trying to achieve in early learning in conjunction with district goals for students in later years?
- What steps need to be taken for the district to achieve its goals?

The school board should first assess the needs and resources that exist within the district. The board can then articulate a vision for early education that builds on existing community resources and is sensitive to local context. This vision for early childhood should be integrated into the overall educational vision for the district, with consensus about how success will be measured.

## How Districts can Use Early Learning Investments to Improve Student Outcomes and Close the Achievement Gap

Districts can play a primary role in early learning either through providing services directly or through establishing community partnerships that strengthen early childhood systems and promote high-quality early education. Within each of these roles, districts have numerous strategic choices that they can make to establish high-quality early learning opportunities that are connected to the K-12 education system. Districts can directly provide early childhood services in three ways:

- Directly operating early childhood programs—targeting 3- and 4-year-olds and/or children ages birth-to-three, using state and/or federal funding sources
- Providing grants to community-based providers that demonstrate quality standards
- Offering in-kind supports, such as space, transportation, or medical services to community-based providers who may not be able to readily access them.

In its role as a service provider, the district can play a role in increasing the number of high-quality early childhood programs in the community, ensuring that children feeding into district level schools have benefited from enriching early-education experiences that promote school readiness and lay the foundation for academic success in later grades.

In addition to acting as a service provider, school districts can partner with the local early learning community to improve the quality of programs and strengthen systems. School districts can perform this role through strategies such as:

- Partnering with community infant-toddler programs to unify local service providers around quality requirements that are connected to definitions of kindergarten readiness and learning standards
- Inviting early learning providers to professional development opportunities, which can improve understanding kindergarten expectations, inform elementary teachers on early learning instructional approaches, and smooth the transition from early learning to early elementary
- Leading conversations about transition practices that are framed by student and classroom level data and guided by the district's legal responsibility in transition planning for students with special needs

In its partnership role with community programs, the school district can not only improve the quality of local programs, but also strengthen the connections between early learning and early elementary. School districts can pursue some or all of the highlighted approaches as a part of their early learning strategy.

The full guide offers more details about each of these approaches and questions a school board can ask itself in determining the best approach for the community, with an appendix summarizing key early learning funding opportunities that districts can seek to leverage.

# Incorporating Early Childhood Into School District Strategy

Ultimately, school boards are responsible for ensuring that all children in their districts thrive in school, learn the appropriate content and are prepared to succeed in later life.<sup>1</sup> One strategy that many school boards have employed successfully in fulfilling their mission is investment in **high-quality early learning**, which can have significant positive short- and long-term effects on child outcomes and academic achievement.<sup>2</sup>

A child's first five years have been found to be a critical period of brain development, laying the foundation for later behavior and learning.<sup>3</sup> Thus, a high-quality learning experience that begins in those earliest years can enhance a child's readiness to enter the elementary years prepared for success and improve academic performance throughout school, which can be further sustained and enhanced through an integrated learning continuum linking birth through 3rd grade.<sup>4</sup>

Incorporating high-quality early learning services may seem daunting to school districts because it draws on multiple funding streams and requires partnerships with early childhood education community providers who may already be invested in serving the district's youngest children.<sup>5</sup> But savvy districts can take advantage of opportunities in early learning, integrating early learning initiatives into their strategic approach as an essential tool in achieving long-term goals efficiently and effectively. And, in many cases, districts can most effectively improve early learning opportunities through intentional community engagement to learn more about what the community needs to best serve young children.

This *User's Guide* is meant to help Illinois school board members understand:

- **Why they might consider incorporating early learning into their overall strategy**
- **How to support the effective implementation of quality early learning services**
- **How to increase access to quality early childhood programming in their community**

A district's well-defined vision—especially one that clearly defines its objectives and goals for early learning—can help guide day-to-day work and unite leaders and the community in a common purpose.<sup>6</sup> This User's Guide provides the foundation for school districts to successfully engage in planning for early childhood education efforts. Districts can strengthen their capacity to partner effectively with the broader early childhood community; they can develop a more seamless learning continuum that builds on early learning gains and creates a robust educational system that includes birth to 3rd grade and beyond.

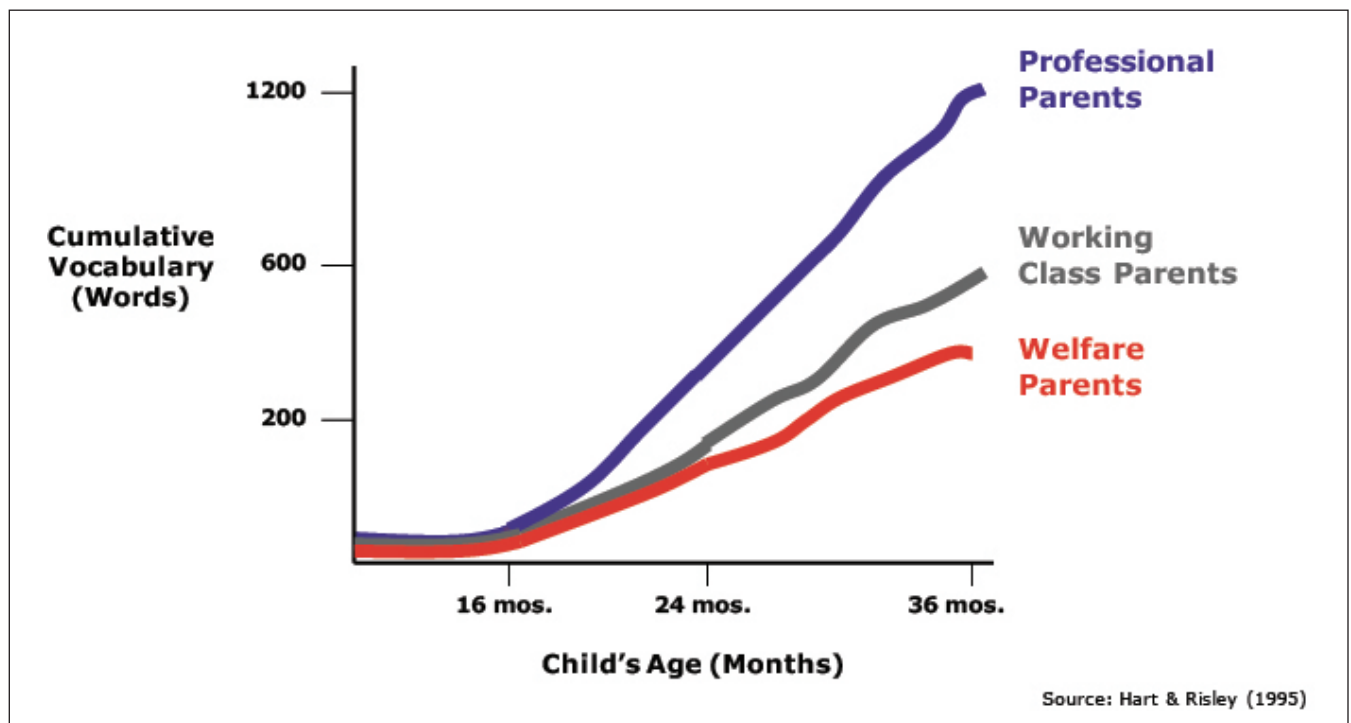
## Why Early Learning Matters

Research has shown that the achievement gap between students living in poverty and those in higher socioeconomic environments begins in the first few months of life and can be significant even before a child turns 1 or 2 years old.<sup>7</sup> Without intervention, this gap can persist throughout a child’s academic career and can have lasting negative effects into adulthood, when it becomes more costly to intervene.<sup>8</sup> Early learning—beginning as early as prenatal care and inclusive of infant, toddler, and preschool services—presents the opportunity for school districts to accelerate student achievement with the aim of closing the distance between academic outcomes for low-income students and those of their more affluent peers, preventing the need to start playing catch-up the moment a child enrolls in kindergarten.

Understanding the many benefits of quality early learning programs can help define the short- and long-term goals for a district, which are vital components of its vision.<sup>9</sup> School districts that achieve sustained systematic improvement often credit their success to focusing on their youngest students and their families, and building from there. “Once we fixed the system, the kids were suddenly okay,” said former Montgomery County Public Schools

Superintendent Jerry Weast. “Same kids, just a different system. And we started at the beginning of the education value- chain—early learning.”<sup>10</sup>

Findings from high-quality early childhood and preschool programs have shown that providing educational and support services early in a child’s life has positive effects on school readiness that include improved cognitive, social-emotional and



language skills.<sup>11</sup> Well-designed and well-implemented early learning programs help young children develop the foundation for skills that will enable them to persist as academic rigor increases.

In addition, the same skills that children learn before kindergarten about cooperation and collaboration with peers have been proven to translate into children's abilities to work in teams and problem solve as teenagers and adults. According to Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, "[e]xecutive function skills do not just appear in adulthood. They are built over time, starting as early as the first year of life, with more complex skills building on the simpler skills that came before."<sup>12</sup>

High-quality early learning has been shown to have positive impacts on student outcomes, particularly for children who are at risk of academic failure. Studies have found that children who participated in quality early education programs are half as likely to be placed into special education programs, 29% more likely to graduate from high school, and four times more likely to earn college degrees than their peers who did not have access to such programs. They were also significantly more likely to have been consistently employed and less likely to have used public assistance as adults.<sup>13</sup>

Participants in Head Start—the comprehensive federal early childhood education program for 3- and 4-year-olds from low-income families—have

Comprehensive early learning not only helps children thrive in kindergarten and elementary school, it is foundational to school districts reaching their overarching student goals.

similarly demonstrated improved long-term life outcomes, including being more likely to graduate from high school, go on to college, have secure employment, lead healthier lives, and have less involvement with the criminal justice system and fewer teen pregnancies, compared to a similar cohort of children who did not participate in the program.<sup>14</sup> The research is quite clear that obtaining these positive outcomes is dependent on the quality of the intervention.<sup>15</sup>

The documented impact of comprehensive early learning programs shows that these programs not only help children thrive in kindergarten and elementary school but, in fact, provide the critical foundation for a school district to be successful in its own overarching student goals and the metrics to which it is held accountable. While district staff may have short-term incentives to focus investments on later years,<sup>16</sup> boards can take the long view and implement policies that improve the district's long-term prognosis.

“Once we fixed the system, the kids were suddenly okay, same kids, just a different system. And we started at the beginning of the education value-chain—early learning.”

—Jerry Weast, Montgomery County Public Schools Superintendent



# Key Principles for School Boards in Supporting Early Learning

Districts will be most effective in supporting early learning if their investments align with their overarching goals for students and they are responsive to the needs of their community. Broadly stated, there are three major questions school boards should have in mind as they focus on early learning strategies.

- **What is the current status of early learning in the community?**
- **How is the district—in consultation with community partners—articulating what it is trying to achieve in early learning in conjunction with district goals for students in later years?**
- **What steps need to be taken for the district to achieve its goals?**

This section addresses the key principles districts need to have in mind when addressing the first two questions and the next section addresses the key activities and policies the district needs to have to implement early learning successfully.

## What is the current status of early learning in the community?

Three important elements should be considered in identifying how the school district can be responsive to the community's need for early childhood programming: the needs of young children in the district, where the children are currently being cared for in the community, and how well children are being prepared for kindergarten and beyond.

Looking at data on the demographics of the community's young children and where they are currently being cared for can help determine how the district can best engage in the early childhood landscape. If most parents in the community have chosen full-day, full-year care and need extensive work supports, this can inform whether a district-run program with limited hours can be successful.

Alternatively, if most parents are sending their children to private-pay preschool options, it may speak to a different type of program that could be successful in a district.

Identifying the existing options for parents looking for child care can also help districts better understand the market and identify any gaps in what is available to families for early education. Many of these programs are likely small businesses or nonprofits that are essential to the community for numerous reasons. For example, they may also be providing after-school care for older children or providing health or other wraparound social services to families that are beyond the school district's capacity to provide. Engaging with these organizations directly to understand how the school board can best support their work in the community, while also strategizing to meet the district's needs for children who are well-prepared for kindergarten, can help define the best value-added a district can have for its early childhood investment.

District leaders should consider the process by which they garner feedback from the community.

In Illinois, one important source of information about services available in a community is the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (<http://iecam.illinois.edu/>), which summarizes available early childhood programming. Local child care resource and referral agencies can also help identify available services.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Head Start grantees are required to do a community-needs assessment each year, which often includes information on available services and an analysis of family needs in the community. Basic demographic information and trends can also be found through the census or other publicly available resources.

### **How is the district—in consultation with community partners—articulating what it is trying to achieve in early learning in conjunction with district goals for students in later years?**

The school board, with its overall investment in the community-improvement process, is in a unique position to engage in ongoing communication with families and local stakeholders regarding aspirations for their schools. That partnership can demonstrate the board's commitment to not only the district but to the broader community.<sup>18</sup>

The community-engagement process should share ideas for the district's vision of quality early learning and larger educational objectives. It can utilize communitywide meetings, a public feedback process and/or targeted meetings engaging stakeholders directly (child-care providers, an early learning council, etc.). Regardless of the process, it is important that these discussions inform the district's investment in early childhood. Getting community input can help provide a clearer understanding of how a district should respond to specific community needs, fill gaps in services, and ensure that programs are accessible to families, meeting rigorous quality standards and offering the necessary supports to prepare children for success.

Districts can be funders of early learning programs, and/or partners in developing an educational continuum from the early years through the elementary grades.

Substantively, goals for early education programs should be integrated into the overall educational vision in the community. Metrics chosen by a district to measure the effectiveness of early childhood investments should be considered in relationship to best practices in early childhood education, supporting the implementation of evidence-based programs and remaining aligned with the district's overall goals for education through college and career readiness. These metrics should include not only the number of children enrolled in programs but also metrics focused on measurable elements like instructional quality, attendance and transition practices into kindergarten.<sup>19</sup> While strategies for accomplishing the educational goals will vary across the grade levels, early childhood policies should be in sync with other grades to ensure a smooth experience for children and families.

### **What steps need to be taken for the district to achieve its goals?**

While the specific needs of a community should drive the types of program investments that are made, there are some principles of quality that can guide district leaders. Overall, districts should aim to invest in a seamless program integrated into the elementary continuum with intentional instructional focus and supportive transitions for children of all demographics and backgrounds. In order to accomplish that, there are a few elements to consider:

- **Build on State Systems:** Illinois is currently rolling out ExceleRate, the new quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) designed as a common definition of quality across early childhood settings. This can be used as a metric of quality for schools looking to partner with strong community-based programs and includes research-based domains of quality like curriculum, teacher credentials and family engagement.
  - **Focus on Instructional Quality and Leadership:** Ensure that school districts and school leaders are focused on teacher supports that are inclusive of early childhood teachers and are aligned with early elementary instruction. High-quality, data-driven instruction requires evidence-based curriculum, assessments and screening mechanisms, as well as preparation time and professional development opportunities to support good implementation. In determining the instructional supports for early childhood, school districts should consider how these elements fit into the scope of the elementary supports to ensure that children experience a seamless transition across the early elementary years.
  - **Instill Family Engagement Practices:** Preparing parents and families to be engaged and involved with their children’s schooling begins when children are young. Every early education program should have methods of connecting parents and families with their child’s education in meaningful ways, incorporating home language and culture. Ensuring the effectiveness of these methods can have long-term impact for a child’s parental support and achievement in school over the long term.
  - **Respond to a Growing Population of Bilingual Children:** Providing distinct early literacy opportunities for young English language learners sets the foundation for the later academic success. Ensuring that children are getting meaningful instruction and parents are supported in their home language is critical for appropriately serving this burgeoning population in Illinois.
  - **Support Comprehensive Services:** Use the school district to eliminate barriers for children coming to school prepared to learn. School districts can help contribute to the provision of the types of comprehensive services children need to be active learners through a variety of mechanisms, including providing physical space, staff (qualified teachers), data systems or other resources that benefit the delivery of these wraparound services for children.
- Another key element of the district’s articulation of its goals should be the creation of a “kindergarten readiness” definition that is shared widely by early learning providers and elementary schools, so that early learning providers can be clear on what they are trying to achieve. In Illinois, the State Board of Education is currently working on the Kindergarten Individual Developmental Survey (KIDS) that will be required of all kindergartners. This is not intended for high-stakes use (i.e., teacher evaluation or child achievement scoring) but instead has the goal of informing our understanding of the competencies children are coming with to kindergarten.<sup>20</sup>
- Using this tool as a way to define kindergarten readiness is only a starting point; school districts can and should also use this tool to help parents, families and other community providers understand how kindergartners are faring developmentally across multiple domains and can assist with defining what types of learning may need to be fostered for children outside of the classroom.
- Using this data, school districts can make strategic decisions to guide the implementation of school readiness efforts. This may include professional development or other quality improvement for child-care providers, or family engagement efforts that target areas in need of improvement in the KIDS.

# How Districts Can Use Early Learning Investments to Achieve Their Goals, Improve Student Outcomes and Close the Achievement Gap

Districts play two primary roles in early learning:

- **Many districts act as a funder of early learning programs, either providing services directly or supporting community providers that do.**
- **Districts are key partners of the early learning community in developing systems that prepare children for kindergarten as part of an educational continuum that extends through the early elementary years.**

Within each of these roles, districts have numerous strategic choices to make. This section identifies some key options and considerations for districts in defining their role.

## Districts as Providers of Service

Many districts provide school-based early learning. Other districts provide grants or in-kind support to community-based early education providers, who then serve families directly. And some districts do a combination of both, depending on local capacity and needs.

### *Directly Operating Early Learning Programs*

There are multiple ways for school districts to use federal and state funds to expand children's access to high-quality early learning opportunities (see appendix). A district may choose to provide preschool within its buildings, either using the Preschool for All grant, Head Start, or Title I funding. In addition, other federal funds can help support the staffing and other expenses related to the operation of a district-run classroom.

In general, early childhood funds are targeted for children at risk for academic difficulty in elementary school, and there are requirements to ensure services are targeted to that population. However, while these can be set up as either stand-alone part-day or full school-day classrooms, they can also be used to blend across funding streams to extend the program and offer comprehensive services.

While most districts focus their early learning efforts on 3- and 4-year-olds, some districts provide direct services for even younger children. School districts are eligible to receive funds to serve children birth to age three from the Illinois State

Board of Education (Prevention Initiative funded through the Early Childhood Block Grant) and the federal government (Early Head Start) or for home visiting services. Districts can build on the progress in infant and toddler systems that Illinois has made to date, including putting education funding through the Early Childhood Block Grant toward children ages birth to age three, and an investment of over \$50 million in home visiting in fiscal year 2013 through the Department of Human Services. This funding targeted for infants and toddlers can be used directly by the district or through various types of partnerships across the community's existing services to enhance quality for children birth to age three. These programs have demanding expectations for quality, but some districts have made the commitment to meeting those standards.

An important consideration for school boards to keep in mind is that many child-care centers depend on enrolling 4-year-olds to remain in business. Given the cost structures relating to child-care funding, it can be hard for providers to remain viable if they are not serving 4-year-olds.<sup>21</sup> If child-care facilities go out of business, it may affect the ability of some working families—particularly single mothers—to obtain care for children too young for kindergarten. This is one reason it is important for districts to engage with their community and understand existing resources and needs. Board members in particular will likely want to be sensitive to community infrastructure and the importance of acting in a way that does not have negative unintended consequences.

School districts can help promote high-quality programs by compensating for a shortage of community resources such as space, staffing or services.

### ***Funding Direct Service Through Community Providers***

Many districts choose to partner with community center providers and family child-care homes—which often are well-positioned to meet the diverse needs of families—to operate early learning programs outside of local school settings. Depending on the local landscape of early education providers that offer services to the district’s students (and the district’s own capacity to provide services), this approach may be the best way to leverage district finances. When districts enter into contracts for service provision, they must ensure that the providers demonstrate characteristics of quality, including instructional excellence that is aligned and supports a positive learning environment.

Partnerships with community providers offer increased access to early learning opportunities that support families as they balance challenging work and life demands. Research on parental choice of early care and learning programs indicates that families—particularly low-income working families—go through a dynamic decision-making process, often under multiple constraints.<sup>22</sup> While families regard quality of programs as one of the most important aspects of their decision making, they also take into account practical considerations that include availability, location and convenience, trusted referral sources and the cost of programs.<sup>23</sup>

Targeting grants to early childhood community providers serving the children who will feed into the district schools can help build capacity in quality early childhood programs, build effective pathways for families into the district system and ensure that children are receiving the types of services that prepare them for long-term success.<sup>24</sup> These types

of partnerships can also help build the type of programming needed by parents that schools may not be well positioned to provide, such as full-day/full-year care for working parents. Districts can tailor grants to specific needs in the community through approaches that include:

- Targeting increased capacity in programs that meet minimal quality benchmarks
- Adding support for increased teacher salaries to attract a more qualified workforce
- Aligning evidence-based curriculum and assessment

These strategies (or a combination of strategies) provide clear added value for community-level providers. Leveraging the district’s leadership role can help community providers lay a foundation for learning in the first five years that helps the district achieve its goals for child outcomes in later years.

### ***Providing In-Kind Support for Comprehensive Services***

While serving as a provider for early learning programs can make a difference to a community and its families, school districts can also help promote high-quality programs by compensating for a shortage of community resources such as facilities space, staffing or coordination across services to ensure their future students receive the full range of supports they need to be prepared, healthy, engaged learners when they walk through the district doors. In early childhood, programs like Head Start and Early Head Start are required to provide comprehensive services to enrolled families. School districts may not be direct providers of these programs but may have systems in place to help support the implementation of some services (e.g., hearing and vision screening, transportation) or may have resources to offer community-based providers to support their work and alignment with the district’s objectives (e.g., space, curriculum coordination, professional development).



As school districts look to improve the implementation of effective programming, many of the services needed for families in the early years mirror those that are needed to support children’s success in early elementary school and beyond. If there are not systems already in place to smoothly integrate early childhood into the elementary years, school boards could be thinking about ways to foster sustainable support systems designed to meet the needs of a wide range of families across the educational continuum. Viewing the school district’s role as a resource in delivering comprehensive services for children can be critical in preparing children for success in school.

### **Districts as Essential Partners in Early Learning Community and Systems Building**

Regardless of whether or not a district provides early learning services, it can play a valuable role in partnering with early learning providers. This can include collaborating with infant-toddler providers, coordinating professional development and supports for early learning and K–12 teachers, and implementing systems that support the transition into kindergarten.

#### ***Partnering with Infant-Toddler Providers***

Particularly in districts that provide preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds, it is important to include birth-to-three providers in community partnerships. Given the vast amount of brain architecture that is established in the first three years of life that sets the stages for later learning, enhancing birth-to-three services that feed into school district preschool and elementary schools can have a dramatic impact on kindergarten readiness skills and quality teaching practices as children get older.<sup>25</sup>

While school buildings are generally not designed to provide out-of-home care services—and the expense of renovating school buildings in order to meet the needs of infants and toddlers can be substantial—school districts can be well-positioned to promote the type of quality in infant and toddler

care settings that helps build the kinds of early skills schools will benefit from in later academic achievement. School districts can use their community-wide voice to help unify potentially disparate infant and toddler programs around child-focused metrics of quality that will serve their long-term educational goals.

By clearly communicating school district expectations for kindergarten readiness and mapping a ladder for readiness from birth that aligns with the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Three<sup>26</sup> and the Illinois Early Learning Standards<sup>27</sup> for preschool-age children, the school district can help build the capacity of infant and toddler teachers and care providers to meet the needs of children for the long term.

In addition, models such as Connecticut’s All Our Kin,<sup>28</sup> in which unlicensed infant and toddler providers were offered toolkits and supports to increase their knowledge base and pursue child-care licensure, demonstrate how moderate time and financial investment can have an impact on the quality of care for infants and toddlers. This quality will help ensure that the achievement gap is mitigated in the early years.

School districts can use their community-wide voice to help unify potentially disparate infant and toddler programs around child-focused metrics of quality that will serve their long-term educational goals.

## Creating systems of inclusive professional development can also have benefits for early elementary teachers.

### ***Coordinating Professional Development and Supports***

Districts can cultivate instructional excellence in teachers and leaders by inviting community providers to participate in professional development opportunities offered by the district. In doing so, districts would be raising the quality of early childhood services serving the its students (present or future) and ensuring that transitions into kindergarten are successful. Whether or not they receive federal or state funds, community-based preschool and child-care providers may have limited capacity to provide or access local professional development opportunities that can help develop deeper insight into the expectations of the K–12 systems and support their own quality instruction.

In many cases, community-based providers would welcome partnership with the school district in this area. Through collaborative partnership and support for the cost of participation for community providers, district-driven professional development can build relationships that strengthen transitions into the elementary years and help early education providers better understand the kindergarten standards.

This may require flexibility in scheduling and thoughtful planning; however, most programs are already engaged in on-going trainings for teachers and leaders, and it may simply be a matter of extending the invitation for community-based providers to attend workshops and establishing mechanisms for them to participate in communities of practice.

Creating systems of inclusive professional development can also have benefits for early elementary teachers. Understanding the instructional tools used by early education and child-care programs their students attend can give them better insight into their students' previous experiences. Best practices in teacher supports suggest that teaching practice is improved when teachers have a chance to work with and learn from each other.<sup>29</sup> Building a community of professionals responsible for ushering a child through their educational continuum has positive impact on the support a child receives through transitions, community-based teachers' access to professional supports and elementary school teachers' community of learning that is intentionally designed to assist in their own continuous quality-improvement process.

In addition, funds used for other K–12 professional development activities can help support the overall inclusion of early childhood into the district-wide strategic agenda. For example, Title I funds may be used to include parents in professional development activities as deemed appropriate by the district and described in its plan. Title II funds, aimed at increased teacher effectiveness, can be used to help ensure early childhood teachers are in sync with those at the elementary level by simply including them in the targeted teacher effectiveness initiatives or devising instructional supports that address the needs of children in preschool through 2nd grade. In both instances, ensuring that early learning programs—in school-based and community-based settings—are part of the overall system of supports aimed at instructional excellence can have significant impact.

### ***Supporting Transitions***

Embedded in all well-designed, quality early learning programs is thoughtful attention to the transitions children must make into and out of each program and system. School districts can be intentional about making these transitions as nondisruptive and supportive to children's development and academic growth as possible.

As Illinois works to define appropriate assessments and metrics of kindergarten readiness state-wide, school districts should create an opportunity to foster a community-wide conversation about where children are developmentally across different domains as they enter kindergarten. Kindergarten entry assessments can help inform this community-wide conversation by providing data around where students are in need of more support prior to school entry. A common, developmentally appropriate tool used across the district to help assess kindergarteners can provide the information needed for a data-driven conversation with early education providers about aligning educational expectations and easing transitions in the early years.

Most high-quality programs with Preschool for All and Head Start funding include developmental continuity and transition activities as a required part of the program model, and districts can ensure that these activities have the greatest impact by incorporating them into the overall district plan for improving student outcomes. Through a strategic, district-wide plan for supporting transitions, districts can ensure that school and program leaders have consistent information to share with families and are aware of each other's engagement in these activities. Often Title I funds can be used to assist children in transitioning from other programs. This can include intentional time for community-based and school-based teachers to plan with each other around supported transitions, incorporating parent education and support into transition activities, or developing streamlined processes and messaging for the community to communicate to families around school entry. Using district funds to support

transition planning and implementation can help make sure that children are able to sustain gains made through quality early learning programs as they enter kindergarten.

School districts are already legally responsible for developing a transition plan for children enrolled in Early Intervention services (special education supports for children birth to three years old) into their IDEA-Part B programming if they are deemed eligible for continued early childhood special education services.<sup>30</sup> Building systems of support for families transitioning from birth-to-three services into preschool and from there into kindergarten can be an opportunity to identify family engagement practices that can have a positive impact on a child's education experience and ensure that best practices in required special education services are embedded within the district's overall approach.



## Conclusion

High-quality early education beginning at birth is a proven strategy for improving long-term child outcomes that all school districts are striving to achieve for students. School boards have a critical role to play in funding, supporting, aligning and overseeing early learning programs, whether delivered in a school building or in the broader community.

While many options exist for a school board looking to support high-quality early education programming for its youngest learners, it is critical that district leaders build a partnership with their community to better understand its needs. The specific needs of a community and its families and children should determine how a district participates in the early childhood landscape.

If school board members understand the available options and the needs of the community's youngest learners, they can make informed decisions about their district's early learning strategy as part of the broader educational vision, ultimately establishing a path for success for all students throughout their education.

### By The Numbers

Research shows that the achievement gap appears long before children reach kindergarten—in fact it can become evident as early as age nine months. And at-risk children who don't receive a high-quality early childhood education are:

25%

MORE LIKELY TO  
**drop out of school**

40%

MORE LIKELY TO  
**become a teen parent**

50%

MORE LIKELY TO BE  
**placed in special education**

60%

MORE LIKELY TO  
**never attend college**

70%

MORE LIKELY TO BE  
**arrested for a violent crime**

## Next Steps:

# Questions a School Board Can Ask to Inform Early Learning Strategy

As a school board looks to begin (or continue) thinking about early childhood as an element of the overall district planning process, below are a few questions to help guide its thinking:

### ► **What are the demographics of our community and what types of services are available/needed in the community?**

Having a preliminary understanding of the needs of the community and what types of programs families have or need access to should help to inform a school district's strategy in engaging in early learning. Having this information can also help identify the types of funding children in the district may qualify for and can help a school board create the best strategy for its community in relationship to the existing early learning landscape.

### ► **What early learning experiences do our children have before they come to kindergarten and how are we measuring their preparedness for kindergarten?**

Identifying the types, quality and offerings of early learning programs children are attending in your community, if any, can help a district design a strategy for the most efficient use of funds. Then looking at any available kindergarten achievement data available to the district can help define target areas for future investment.

### ► **What program-level metrics for success will be put in place for early childhood programs?**

This should be aligned with any other early childhood initiatives in the community, along with K-12 priorities. It is important to ensure that these metrics encourage the type of educational environments that are developmentally appropriate for early learners.<sup>31</sup> Districts may also seek to look beyond program accountability and consider teacher- or leadership-level accountability that improves the instruction for young children.

### ► **In what ways can the district incorporate community-based programs into its district-wide quality improvement efforts?**

Whether this is through supporting teacher's professional practice or developing transition planning process for children, ensuring that the entire educational continuum is considered in a district's planning process can greatly benefit children. This should take into consideration the objectives of the school district as well as the needs of the community-based providers.

### ► **What funding is the district already accessing for early childhood or that could be applied to early childhood efforts? What is already being accessed by the broader community?**

Mapping out the funding that exists in the community—particularly when looked at in relationship to the needs of the district's youngest children—can offer insight into where there may be gaps or overlaps that suggest a need for better coordination.

### ► **What are the needs of community-based providers in engaging in quality improvement efforts?**

Asking community-based leaders what they are lacking in order to improve the services they offer to children and families may help a district identify simple ways it could better support existing early learning services.

### ► **Is there a shared definition of kindergarten readiness within the community?**

Many times early education providers simply do not fully understand how the district is measuring kindergarten readiness or what the expectations for an entering kindergartner may be—and in some cases, kindergarten teachers may have differing expectations themselves. Ensuring that all professionals who support children in the early years have shared expectations for child development can go a long way toward improving services offered to students.

## **Appendix A**

### **Funding Available to Support Early Learning**

A significant challenge to school districts seeking to implement high-quality early learning programs is that there are many funding sources that can be used to support early learning programs. These funding sources were all designed to serve different purposes and frequently have requirements that are inconsistent with each other. School districts frequently seek to use these funding sources in combination to best meet the needs of children. In deciding how best to serve young children in their district, school board members can benefit from an understanding of what these funding sources are and how they operate.

- **State of Illinois Sources**

- Early Childhood Block Grant—Preschool for All (3 through 4 years old)**
- Early Childhood Block Grant—Prevention Initiative (Prenatal to 3 years old)**
- Child Care Assistance Program**
- Home Visiting—Healthy Families and Parents too Soon**

- **Federal Sources**

- Early Head Start (Birth–Age 3)**
- Head Start (Ages 3–5)**
- Title I**
- Individuals With Disabilities Education Act—Part B**

## STATE OF ILLINOIS SOURCES

### 1. Early Childhood Block Grant—Preschool for All (3 through 4 years old)

Illinois' preschool program is a part-day program for 3- and 4-year-olds. All children are eligible for Preschool for All, but the state prioritizes funding to providers serving children with risk factors that contribute to academic difficulty. The program may be provided in schools or community-based settings. Research has shown that "children participating in the state's preschool program showed significant improvements in such school readiness factors as language and social skills. Lower income and at-risk children were particularly likely to demonstrate improved attention and persistence skills."

#### ► What the Program is Designed to Achieve:

Improved kindergarten-readiness outcomes for children at risk of academic failure based on identified factors

Funding Process	Program Description & Components	Target Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual grant with triannual reapplication, based on funding availability</li> <li>• Competitive RFP process contingent upon funding availability</li> <li>• Grant period will begin no sooner than July 1 and extend until June 30 of fiscal program year</li> <li>• Eligible applicants include any public or private not-for-profit or for-profit entity with experience in providing educational, health, social and/or child-development services to young children and their families</li> <li>• Joint applications for funds may be submitted by any combination of eligible applicants</li> <li>• Funding prioritized for programs serving 80% at-risk children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivered in school and community-based settings</li> <li>• At least a part-day program (minimum 2.5 hours)</li> <li>• Typical program year is same as school calendar year</li> <li>• Evidence-based curriculum aligned with Illinois Early Learning Standards</li> <li>• Early childhood licensed teachers (must have Type 04 when s/he starts teaching PFA)</li> <li>• Maximum 20 children per classroom with a certified teacher and teacher assistant</li> <li>• Through collaboration with other funding sources: full-day, full-year early care and education is possible by combining this funding with other child-care and Head Start funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-to-5-year-olds who are not age eligible for kindergarten</li> <li>• District must give priority to children who are at risk of school failure, based on state-approved eligibility criteria and other locally determined risk factors (e.g., birth/prenatal history, English Language Learner)</li> <li>• If the state is able to fund all qualified applicants prioritizing at-risk children, it can then fund programs focused on non-at-risk families at or below four times the federal poverty level (FPL)</li> </ul>

## 2. Early Childhood Block Grant—Prevention Initiative (Prenatal to 3 years old)

For the birth to three-year-old age range, the services provided by the Illinois State Board of Education include home visiting programs and center-based care. In home visiting programs, trained parent educators work directly with parents to create safe, stimulating home environments for their young children. Home visitors model nurturing relationships, offer child-development information and connect families to medical and other supports. Research shows that home visiting programs raise children’s literacy and high school graduation rates, improve health outcomes for children and decrease rates of child abuse and neglect. School districts are eligible grantees for Prevention Initiative funds.

### ► What the Program is Designed to Achieve:

Improved developmental outcomes for children through parental support

Funding Process	Program Description & Components	Target Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual grant, with triannual reapplication, based on funding availability</li> <li>• Competitive RFP process contingent upon funding availability</li> <li>• Eligible applicants include any public or private not-for-profit or for-profit entity with experience in providing educational, health, social and/or child-development services to young children and their families</li> <li>• Joint applications for funds may be submitted by any combination of eligible applicants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research-based models implemented in child-care-center setting or through home visitation</li> <li>• Full-day, full-year, center-based care</li> <li>• Home visits must be scheduled year-round</li> <li>• All models must include intensive parent education and support</li> <li>• Educational, developmental, health and family services can be included</li> <li>• Staff includes paraprofessionals and professionals, with criteria aligned with specific model being chosen</li> <li>• Through collaboration with other funding sources: full-day, full-year early care and education is possible by combining this funding with other child care and Early Head Start funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For center-based services: children birth to age 3 who are at high risk for school failure and who need full-day, full-year care due to their parents’ work or school schedule</li> <li>• For home visitation services: Children birth to age three who are at high risk for school failure, based on the criteria of the specific model being implemented</li> </ul>

### 3. Child Care Assistance Program

Through the Illinois Department of Human Services, the Child Care Assistance Program provides income-eligible families with subsidies to access affordable child care while parents work or go to school. Districts may participate in local collaborations to combine the funding child-care providers receive from parent subsidies with early learning programs like Early Head Start, Head Start or Preschool for All to provide comprehensive high-quality care for children of low-income parents or extend the day to ensure parents can access the programs while working. In Illinois, these collaborative agreements can have the benefit of making the process of maintaining services less cumbersome for families.

► **What the Program is Designed to Achieve:**

Child care as employment support for low-income working families

<b>Funding Process</b>	<b>Program Description &amp; Components</b>	<b>Target Population</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A fee-for-service system in which parents, as consumers, purchase care for their children by paying a sliding scale copayment and the state pays the remaining balance to the program directly</li> <li>• Early childhood programs may apply to be Site Administered Contractors through the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Child Care and Development; allows for receipt of monthly payments directly from local child care and referral agencies based on enrollment rather than individual vouchers from families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides affordable child care to low-income working families</li> <li>• Hours provided by child care depend on hours worked by parents, type of care and age of child (up to 12 hours/day)</li> <li>• Through collaboration with other funding sources: full-day, full-year early care and education is possible using child-care funding</li> <li>• Care may be provided in the home or be center based by licensed or license-exempt providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-income working families</li> <li>• Parents must be Illinois residents, employed and/or engaged in an approved education or training program and have household income of less than 185% of federal poverty level</li> <li>• Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)</li> <li>• Teen parents seeking high school degree or equivalent</li> <li>• Families not receiving TANF who are pursuing additional education to improve their job opportunities</li> </ul>

#### 4. Home Visiting—Healthy Families and Parents too Soon

Through the Illinois Department of Human Services, Healthy Families Illinois provides low-income and at-risk families with trained parent coaches using an appropriate evidence-based model. Districts may use this funding to help provide in-home educational services to families with young children on an ongoing basis. Home visits are focused on educating parents about child development and available resources to support them as their children’s first and most important teacher. In most models, these home visits are supplemented by family socialization opportunities that connect parents with each other to develop a social network. Evidence-based home visiting services have been demonstrated to improve school readiness, health outcomes, parent engagement and other positive child outcomes that can contribute to long-term student success.

► **What the Program is Designed to Achieve:**

- Healthy child development
- Reduce abuse and neglect
- Improve pregnancy outcomes
- Support parents’ economic self-sufficiency
- Increased school readiness
- Specific additional outcomes are defined by each evidence- based model

<b>Funding Process</b>	<b>Program Description &amp; Components</b>	<b>Target Population</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual grant, based on funding availability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of an evidence-based home visitation model</li> <li>• Home visits must be scheduled year-round</li> <li>• Parent education and support, including group activities</li> <li>• Monitoring and support for healthy child development</li> <li>• Staff includes paraprofessionals and professionals</li> </ul>	<p>Target population is defined program chosen program model, all include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families with children birth through age three</li> <li>• Pregnant women</li> <li>• Families who are at risk of child abuse and neglect.</li> </ul>

## **FEDERAL SOURCES**

### **1. Early Head Start and Head Start Ages Birth-Three**

Early Head Start and Head Start are federally funded early care and education programs for children ages birth to 3 and 3- to 4, respectively. Both programs were created in response to research that the effects of high poverty on the youngest children resulted in lower academic achievement than their peers from higher income families.

Early Head Start and Head Start are grant-based programs administered by the Regional Offices of the Administration for Children and Families to various public and private entities, including school districts. These grant recipients may then partner with other providers to operate the programs. School districts may also fulfill this role of partnering entity.



### 1a. Early Head Start (Birth-Age 3)

The goal of Early Head Start is to promote healthy prenatal outcomes, to enhance the development of children birth to three and to promote healthy family functioning. This is accomplished through home visits and/or center-based delivery of comprehensive services, including health, mental health, child development and family support. The program has been shown to have positive effects on cognitive and social-emotional development, with Early Head Start children scoring higher on cognitive and receptive language measures than their equally resourced peers who were not in the program.

► **What the Program is Designed to Achieve:**

- Promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women
- Enhance the development of very young children
- Promote healthy family functioning

<b>Funding Process</b>	<b>Program Description &amp; Components</b>	<b>Target Population</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant-based</li> <li>• Head Start grantees provide the services as described in the Head Start Performance Standards and in accordance with the Head Start Act of 2007</li> <li>• District may apply to be a grantee or partner with existing grantees within the service area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based program</li> <li>• Early education services in a range of developmentally appropriate settings; Home-visits/community child-care provider</li> <li>• Centers: full-year, full-day; home-based: 32 visits of at least 1.5 hours each, 16 group sessions per year</li> <li>• Parent education and parent-child activities</li> <li>• Comprehensive health and mental health services</li> <li>• Staff must have CDA credential or equivalent and be trained in child development with a focus on infant toddler development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women</li> <li>• Income eligibility is 100% or less of FPL</li> <li>• Homeless children and children in child welfare are categorically eligible</li> </ul>

## 1b. Head Start (Ages 3-5)

In Head Start, which serves children ages 3 to 5, services begin to emphasize school readiness in addition to comprehensive child development and family support. Longitudinal studies have shown that children who have participated in Head Start experience significant long-term benefits on measures of educational attainment.

### ► What the Program is Designed to Achieve:

- Improved school readiness
- Increase family's capacity to support child's learning

Funding Process	Program Description & Components	Target Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head Start grantees provide the services as described in the Head Start Performance Standards and in accordance with the Head Start Act of 2007</li> <li>• District may apply to be a grantee or partner with existing grantees within the service area to provide services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be provided in centers, schools, family child-care homes or regular home-based visits</li> <li>• Minimum 3.5 hours/day; 128 days/year; minimum 4 days/week</li> <li>• Maximum 6 hours/day; 160 days/year; minimum 5 days/week</li> <li>• Comprehensive services to enrolled children and their families, including educational, health, nutrition, social and family support</li> <li>• Teachers must have an associate, baccalaureate or advanced degree in early childhood</li> <li>• Maximum 20 children in a full-day classroom, 17 in a half-day classroom, with a qualified teacher and teacher assistant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-income families and their preschool-age children</li> <li>• Income eligibility is 100% or less of FPL</li> <li>• Homeless children and children in child welfare are categorically eligible</li> </ul>

## 2. Title I

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is a formula grant intended to help districts with large numbers or percentages of students from low-income families better meet the needs of these students. One of the many ways a district may choose to use Title I funding is to provide high-quality birth-to-five services. The US Department of Education has issued nonregulatory guidance that outlines possibilities and answers frequently asked questions about how Title I funds may be used to serve preschool children. Options for districts and schools include the following:

- A Title I school may use all or a portion of its Title I funds to operate a preschool program for eligible children.
- A local education agency (LEA) may reserve a portion of funds off the top of its Title I allocation to operate a preschool program for eligible children in the district as a whole or in a portion of the district.
- An LEA may use Title I funds to coordinate with and support eligible children enrolled in other preschool programs, such as Head Start.

### ► What the Program is Designed to Achieve:

Improved school readiness and increased access to early childhood programs for low-income families

Funding Process	Program Description & Components	Target Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formula-based grant, proportional to the percentage of children living in poverty</li> </ul>	<p>Possible uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate a preschool program for eligible children in the district as a whole or targeted to a portion of the district</li> <li>• Coordinate with and support eligible children enrolled in other preschool programs, such as Head Start</li> <li>• Schools with at least 40% poverty are eligible to operate a schoolwide program where Title I funds can be used for a wide range of school-wide activities that support the education of all children, including those living in poverty, as long as the school can demonstrate a need for the activity, and the approach is generally described in the school-wide plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children in districts with high numbers or percentages of low-income families</li> </ul>

### 3. Individuals With Disabilities Education Act—Part B

As part of the Individuals With Disabilities Act, school districts are legally obligated to provide special education and related services to children 3 to 5 years old. Federal funding is distributed by the state through grants to local school districts based on the proportion of eligible children and the services provided.

Local districts can apply to use funds to supplement (not supplant) per-pupil funding to cover the excess costs of providing special education and related services directly attributable to the education of children with disabilities, including professional development for teachers on effective teaching strategies that specifically target students with disabilities. In accordance with best practices for

early childhood and placement of children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE), Part B funding can be strategically blended with other early childhood funding to enhance the quality of services for all children while also improving a district’s adherence to the federal guidance for children with special needs.

► **What the Program is Designed to Achieve:**

- Access to education for children with identified special needs or disabilities
- Improved differentiated instruction for children with a variety of needs, including those with special needs or disabilities

Funding Process	Program Description & Components	Target Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formula-based grant, proportional to the percentage of children ages 3 to 5 with identified special needs or disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide legally required services for children ages 3 to 5 with identified delays, special needs or disabilities</li> </ul> <p>Possible Uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide additional specific special education services for children with identified special needs or disabilities</li> <li>• Collaborate with other local districts or organizations to develop coordinated system for addressing needs of eligible children across localities</li> <li>• Support professional development for teachers to individualize instruction for children with special needs within mainstream classrooms</li> <li>• Conduct developmental screening to identify children in need of early childhood special education services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children ages 3 to 5 with identified special needs or disabilities</li> <li>• Children transitioning out of Early Intervention (targeted to children birth to three) who are in continued need of special education supports</li> </ul>

## Appendix B

### Key Resources

#### **Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant–Preschool for All**

As established by Senate Bill 2594, in Section 2-3.71 of Illinois Public Act 096-0948, 105 ILCS 5/2-3.71. <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=096-0948>.

Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Division. "Implementation Manual: Preschool for All—Nurturing Illinois' Promise." Illinois State Board of Education, 2011. [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi/pdf/ec\\_implementation.pdf](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi/pdf/ec_implementation.pdf).

Illinois Facilities Fund. "Getting Ready: Preparing to House Your Pre-K Program." PowerPoint presentation. Illinois State Board of Education, 2011. [http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/getting\\_ready.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/getting_ready.pdf).

#### **Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant–Prevention Initiative**

*Illinois Early Childhood Block Grant Administrative Rules*. 23 Ill. Adm. 235.40. <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/rules/archive/pdfs/235ARK.pdf>. Accessed July 31, 2013.

Ounce of Prevention Fund Training Institute. *Resource Toolkit for Programs Serving Infants, Toddlers and Their Families: Implementing a Research-Based Program Model*. Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2011. [http://isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/ec\\_0-3\\_resource\\_toolkit.pdf](http://isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/ec_0-3_resource_toolkit.pdf).

#### **Illinois Department of Human Services Home Visitation**

*Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Programs*. 42 U.S.C. 711, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/USCODE-2010-title42/USCODE-2010-title42-chap7-subchapV-sec711/content-detail.html> and <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ148/pdf/PLAW-111publ148.pdf>.

*Illinois Maternal and Child Health Services Code*. 77 Ill. Adm. 630. <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admin-code/077/07700630sections.html>.

*Illinois Department of Human Services Healthy Families and Parents Too Soon Program Manuals*. <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=59594> and <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=59460>.

Ounce of Prevention Fund Training Institute. *Resource Toolkit for Programs Serving Infants, Toddlers and Their Families: Implementing a Research-Based Program Model*. Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2011. [http://isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/ec\\_0-3\\_resource\\_toolkit.pdf](http://isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/ec_0-3_resource_toolkit.pdf).

Program models: Baby Talk <http://www.babytalk.org/>; Healthy Families <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30263>; Nurse Family Partnership Illinois <http://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/locations/Illinois/>; Parents as Teachers <http://patillinois.org/>.

#### **Illinois Department of Human Services Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)**

Illinois Department of Human Services. "DHS Child Care Guide for Parents." <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=32192>.

*Illinois General Program Provisions: Child Care*. 89 Ill. Adm. 50.210. <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/089/089000500B02100R.html>.

Illinois Department of Human Services. *Child Care Program Manual*. <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=9877>.

Illinois Department of Human Services Head Start Collaboration Office. *Illinois Child Care Assistance Program Collaboration Guidebook*. Illinois Department of Human Services, 2005. [http://ilearlychildhoodcollab.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/CCAPGuidebook\\_All\\_Pages.11.05.pdf](http://ilearlychildhoodcollab.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/CCAPGuidebook_All_Pages.11.05.pdf).

Illinois Early Childhood Collaboration. <http://ilearlychildhoodcollab.org/>.

Illinois Department of Human Services. *Site Administered Child Care Program Manual*. <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=59403>.

**US Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families—Early Head  
Start and Head Start**

Head Start Act. 42 U.S.C. 9801 § 635. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/Head%20Start%20Act>.

Head Start and Early Head Start Funding Opportunities. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/foa/office/ohs>.

How to Apply. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/grants/apply.html>.

Illinois Head Start Association (Program Locator). <http://ilheadstart.org/il-head-start-locator/>.

Resource Toolkit for Programs Serving infants, Toddlers and Their Families. [http://isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/ec\\_0-3\\_resource\\_toolkit.pdf](http://isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/ec_0-3_resource_toolkit.pdf).

**US Department of Education—Title I**

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. 20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2010-title20/pdf/USCODE-2010-title20-chap70-subchapl.pdf> and <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/legislation.html>.

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. *Serving Preschool Children Through Title I*. Non-Regulatory Guidance. US Department of Education, 2012. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance2012.pdf>.

Ounce of Prevention Fund. *Summary of Title I Non-Regulatory Guidance Serving Preschool Children*. Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2011. <http://www.ounceofprevention.org/national-policy/Title-I-Guidance-Summary-v2.pdf>.

## End Notes

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