

National Center on Education and the Economy
The *New* Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce

**Early Childhood Education: Lessons from the States and Abroad:
2005**

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Introduction

Early childhood education has received an increasing amount of attention in the last two decades in the United States and in other countries. There is now a strong consensus on the many benefits of preschool. Studies have shown that attending a high-quality preschool program not only increases children's readiness for kindergarten, but also causes positive long-term improvements in participants' school performance and social outcomes. Among the documented results of preschool education are lower rates of grade retention, increased rates of high school graduation, and less likelihood of being convicted of a crime for both juveniles and adults. Preschools have the greatest impact on children living in poverty and those who do not speak English at home. High-quality preschool programs act like preventative medicine: the initial investment more than pays for itself both financially and socially.

Overview of Preschool Practices in the United States

Children's participation in center-based preschools and pre-K programs in the United States has increased steadily in the past two decades. According to the Children's Defense Fund, 2 million children attended preschool in 1980, while by 2000 that number had risen to 4.3 million. Poorer children attend preschools at lower rates (44%) than those with incomes above \$50,000 (65%), and are also much more likely to attend public programs than children with higher family incomes. In 2000, just over half of all children ages three to five, but not yet in kindergarten, were enrolled in preschool. This is in contrast to such countries as France and Italy, which each have near 100 percent participation of three, four and five-year olds in preschool programs.

While preschool attendance has been rising, there is a great deal of variation in access to preschool from state to state and even within individual states. Three-fourths of state spending on preschool is concentrated in just ten states, and eleven states provide no funding for preschool. Only a few states have made attempts to make preschool access available to all students; the others with programs focus their resources on students with risk factors for school success. Even in those states that have committed to preschool programs, funding remains extremely tenuous. As an example, New York began implementing a universal pre-K program in 1997 only to freeze it in 2001, with 30 percent of all four-year olds participating, due to budgetary constraints.

There are also wide disparities in program quality, including the amount of funding provided per student, class sizes, student-teacher ratios, teacher qualifications and teacher compensation. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) has developed a list of ten indicators of quality that it uses to rate states' preschool programs. These include curriculum standards; several measures of teacher quality; staffing ratios and class size; screening requirements for vision, hearing and health; support services; and meal provision. Based on this checklist, NIEER rates Arkansas, Illinois, New Jersey and Oklahoma as the leaders in preschool provision (call to ask why Georgia isn't included in this list), with Florida, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and North Carolina being noteworthy for new developments.

Day care versus preschool

In the United States, as in many other countries, there has traditionally been a split in approach between child care centers and preschools: child care centers are designed to meet the childcare needs of working parents, while preschools are designed as first social and academic programs for children whose parents have flexible schedules. Day care centers generally take children as young as six weeks and are open eight to twelve hours a day year-round. Preschools have traditionally provided enrichment and social interaction to children beginning at

age two or three and run on a part-day, school year schedule. Some preschools provide wrap-around care for parents who work full or part-time, but this is generally an add-on to a core program. The majority of parents in most states are responsible for finding and paying for their own child-care arrangements.

Federal Involvement

Support for preschools comes from a number of sources. The federal government funds Head Start, a pre-K program designed to ensure school readiness for poor children. Head Start, which is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, provides a part-day program to poor three- and four-year olds. The Head Start programs are provided at the local level with a great deal of variation among programs. All Head Start programs must meet standards set by the program. These include teacher to student ratios of no more than 1:10 and associate's degrees for at least 50 percent of teachers. In 2004, Head Start served 905,851 children, at a total cost of \$6.774 billion and a per pupil cost of \$7,222. While funding for Head Start tripled between 1990 and 2000, from about \$2 billion to more than \$6 billion, funding for the program has remained flat since 2001. In 2003, Head Start served about half of the preschool-aged children who were eligible for the program, according to the Children's Defense Fund.

IDEA grants for preschool programs served 600,000 children in 2000-2001, at a cost of \$390 million. Other federal funding sources used by states for preschool services include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grants and Title I money.

State Initiatives

A number of states have begun increasing funding for and availability of preschool, particularly pre-K programs. In most states these are targeted for children living in poverty or having other risk factors for school success, such as having disabilities or speaking a language other than English. School districts receiving Title I funds can choose to use their Title I funds for pre-K. In 2001, approximately 300,000 children attended pre-K programs funded by Title I, at a

cost of \$200 million. State spending on pre-K programs increased from about \$700 million in 1991-1992 to \$1.7 billion in 1998-99, according to the Children's Defense Fund. In most cases, states target their pre-K programs to children who are most at risk of school failure: those living in poverty, who have disabilities, or who speak a language other than English at home. Four states – Georgia, Oklahoma, New York and Florida – have passed legislation to make pre-K programs available to all four-year olds. The programs have been implemented to varying degrees, as is discussed in greater detail below.

Table 1: Characteristics of State Preschool Programs

	% of 3-year olds participating (2002-03)	% of 4-year olds participating	Per pupil spending	Total annual spending	Teacher / student ratio	Teacher qualificati
Georgia	0	56%	\$3830	\$261 million	1:10	Associate degree or Montesso diploma
New York	1%	30%	\$3501	\$204.7 million	1:9 or 3:20	BA or MA
Florida	0	N/a – program to begin fall 2005	\$2500 (projected)	\$400 million (budgeted for 2005-6)	1:10	Child developm associate (CDA)
Oklahoma	0	64%	\$2409	\$72.7 million	1:10	BA
New Jersey	15%	25%	\$8725	\$381.7 million	2:15 (Abbott) no limit (non-Abbott)	BA

Source: NIEER, The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook. Except where noted, date are from the 2003-04 school year.

Georgia

Georgia has the country's most comprehensive pre-K program. In 1993, the state began to make public pre-K programs available to all four-year olds. The initiative is funded by a lottery whose profits are directly targeted to the pre-K program. Currently, 70,000 children attend Georgia's public pre-K programs; this represents over half of four-year olds in the state. When students attending Head Start are included, approximately 70 percent of four year-olds are

attending a pre-K program. The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning administers the universal pre-K program as well as overseeing Head Start programs in the state.

Funding for the program as of September 2004 was nearly \$280 million. The average funded cost per student was \$3,870 in 2003-2004. Participation in pre-K is voluntary for families as well as for providers, which means that in some cases, pre-K spots may not be available to all students. The programs can be provided by public or private entities. Providers may choose from a number of curricula.

Oklahoma

In 1998, Oklahoma passed legislation making all four-year olds eligible for pre-K. The program is provided by school districts on a voluntary basis; districts can choose whether or not to participate. Participating districts are reimbursed by the state on a per-pupil basis in the same way as for k-12 students. In 2003-2004, 90 percent of districts in the state were participating, serving 64 percent of four-year olds. Teachers in the pre-K program must have a bachelor's degree and certification in early childhood education. Salaries are commensurate with those for other teachers in public schools. Funding for the 2003-2004 school year was approximately \$72.7 million. Funding per enrolled pupil was \$2,368.

New Jersey

New Jersey currently has two separate state preschool initiatives: the Abbott pre-K initiative, and the Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) program. New Jersey's per-pupil spending on preschool is the highest in the country; state spending for the two programs totaled \$381.7 million in 2003-04, with an average cost per student of \$8725. Fifteen percent of 3-year olds and 24 percent of four-year olds are enrolled in one of the two programs.

The Abbott program grew out of a 1998 ruling by New Jersey's state supreme court mandating that the state provide all three and four-year olds in the highest poverty districts with a high quality preschool education. This program provides full-day preschool programs that must meet standards specified by the

state Supreme Court in the areas of teacher certification, class size, curriculum, facilities, and provision of comprehensive services. The program funds teachers' salaries at a level comparable to those of public school teachers.

The ECPA program, which is available to children living in school districts with between 20 and 40 percent of students qualifying for free and reduced price meals, offers a half-day preschool program to four-year olds. Standards for the ECPA program are in the process of being raised to the level of the Abbott program.

Florida

In January 2005, Florida passed legislation creating a new system of universal, voluntary pre-K for four-year olds beginning in the 2005-2006 school year. This legislation grew out of a 2002 constitutional amendment mandating voluntary universal pre-K. Full funding for the program is expected to be passed in the spring of 2005, although an initial expenditure of \$400 million was included in the bill.

The pre-K program will be available for three hours a day for the regular school year, or for 300 hours total during the summer. Providers can be public, private or religious. The maximum class size will be 18 students, with a student-teacher ratio of no more than ten to one. The primary teacher in the classroom must hold a minimum of a child development associate (CDA) credential. Cost per student has initially been set at \$2,500.

New York

In 1997, New York passed legislation mandating a universal pre-K program. Implementation began with the poorest school districts, and full implementation of the program was intended to take place in the 2001-2002 school year. In 2001, however, the state froze the program to fund only those districts that had already established the pre-K program due to budgetary constraints. Thirty percent of four-year olds participated in the pre-K program in 2003-4, representing 14 percent of districts in the state. New York did more than triple its spending on

pre-K between 1998 and 2001, from \$67 million to \$225 million.

The New York pre-K program is half-day and is operated through the public schools. Teachers in the program must hold a master's degree unless they earned a bachelor's degree before 1978, and they must also hold certification in early childhood.

Overview of Preschool Practices in Other Countries

While there is a wide range of practice in preschool provision in other countries, the trend is toward increasing access to preschool and improving the coordination of early education services. A number of European countries, such as France, Italy, Sweden and Belgium, provide free or heavily subsidized preschool education to nearly all three and four-year olds. In these countries, children have a legal right to preschool regardless of income. Some other countries, such as England, have taken significant steps in recent years to increase provision of preschool, to improve its quality, and to coordinate governance and articulation with elementary school.

Governments pay the majority of the costs of preschool in many countries. According to the OECD, government investment in early childhood education as a percentage of GDP is highest in northern European countries and lowest in countries such as Australia, the United States and England, which have not had coordinated systems of early childhood education.

There is also an international trend to make preschool curricula less academically oriented and more child-directed. Studies in the United States have shown better outcomes for children who attend child-directed programs than those who attend programs that are primarily teacher-directed.

Table 2: Characteristics of Preschool Programs in Selected OECD Countries

	% of 3-year olds participating	% of 4-year olds participating	Per pupil spending	Total annual spending	Teacher/student ratio	Teacher qualifications
France	100%	100%	\$3487			University degree plus additional training
Italy	95%	100%	\$4730		20:1-28:1	University degree
Japan			\$3123			
Sweden	64%	69%	\$3210		6:1	College or university degree
United Kingdom	52%	94%	\$4910		8:1-30:1 depending on type of program	Varies depending on setting – many lack degrees and specialized training

Source: OECD Education Database (2001). Data are from 1998-1999.

Italy

Italy is known not only for its near-universal preschool provision, but also for its innovations in early childhood curricula. About 95 percent of five-year olds and 70 to 90 percent, depending on the region, of three and four-year olds attend some form of preschool. Since 1968, Italian children have had a legal right to preschool education. Preschool is seen as an important first stage of the education system in Italy. The Ministry of Education runs 55 percent of preschools, and local education authorities, religious authorities, or private groups run the others. State and municipal preschools are free. The church-run preschools charge modest fees, and some of the private ones charge higher fees.

Until recently, preschool teachers were only required to have a secondary-level vocational degree in early childhood education and to pass an examination, although some local areas developed their own training programs and exams. Legislation passed in the late 1990s now requires new preschool teachers to earn

a university degree.

There are two innovative approaches to preschool education developed in Italy that have become popular models in the United States. The first is the philosophy of Maria Montessori, a teacher who worked with poor young children in Rome in the early 20th century. The Montessori philosophy is built on the belief that children are highly capable learners who need minimal teacher input to learn from their environments. Key elements of the Montessori method are mixed-age classrooms, student autonomy in choosing learning tasks and experiential learning. The approach continues to be popular in the United States.

The second innovation was developed in the 1960s in the city of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. Schools in this city were built with strong parent involvement to further the goals of promoting critical thinking and collaboration among young children. What is now known as the Reggio Emilia approach focuses on strong home-school relationships, long-term projects, the recognition that children possess multiple symbolic languages, and the role of the child's environment as teacher. Teachers are expected to be continually engaged in the process of learning about young children, both through ongoing professional development and through careful observation of the children in their classes. The teachers then reflect together on what they have learned and use this as a basis for future activities intended to expand on initiatives of the children themselves. In this way, the Reggio Emilia approach bases its success not on formal curricula, but on an approach to educating children that gives the children themselves a significant role in determining classroom activities.

France

France makes public preschools, called *ecoles maternelles*, available to all children between the ages of three and five. Nearly all French three, four and five-year olds and one third of two-years olds attend these schools, which are formally part of the education system. The French preschool system originated in 1826, when nurseries were formed to provide poor children with early education and social skills. These broadened into the *ecoles maternelles* in the 1880's. In 1991, a

law was passed mandating that all children have a legal right to a place in a free, public preschool. The *ecoles maternelles* currently serve about 2.5 million children.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for preschool education for ages three and up. This means the government pays teacher salaries, funds the building of new centers and even pays for the training leading to teacher certification. Parents are responsible only for optional components of the program, including lunch, extended day and summer programs. These are on a sliding fee scale, so poorer parents pay the least.

The French address special needs of children living in poverty through “educational priority zones.” Schools located within these zones receive additional resources to enable them to reduce class sizes, provide extra training to teachers and to give teachers in these zones bonuses to encourage teacher stability. There are currently 558 educational priority zones, most of which are located in large cities. Since French researchers have shown that two-year olds living in poverty benefit from attending preschools, there is a national effort underway to increase their enrollment. Each preschool has a teacher responsible for children with special needs. Teachers are expected to respect a child’s home language and culture, but there is also an explicit goal of assimilating all children into French culture.

Preschools run on the same schedule as elementary schools. This means they are closed on Wednesdays, but open for a half-day on Saturdays. Schools are generally open for six hours a day, but optional childcare is available on Wednesdays and for additional hours during regular school days to accommodate working parents. Class sizes in French preschools are larger – about 25 students with one teacher and one part-time assistant – than most in the United States and in other European countries.

Preschool teachers in France are viewed as respected professionals. They receive the same level of training and the same pay as elementary school teachers. This means they must earn a three-year university degree, plus at least one year of

specialized training in early childhood education. Admission to the training program is competitive, and the number of spots available in the program is linked to the anticipated number of teacher openings that will be available.

Japan

Japan has two different types of arrangements for preschool education. Day nurseries, which provide full-day childcare for children of working parents, are part of the welfare system. Parents pay fees for the nurseries based on a sliding scale. Kindergartens begin at age three and are paid for by parents.

Kindergartens are seen as complementary to the home environment, much like part-day preschools in the U.S., while day nurseries are seen as replacing it. Over 90 percent of children in Japan attend either preschool or a day nursery before they begin formal schooling.

Class sizes in Japanese kindergartens are larger than those in most countries – about 30 students – and are less structured and teacher-focused than in many countries. Observers of Japanese kindergartens have found them chaotic by the standards of many other countries, but this structure reflects a belief that children should develop their own ability to interact with each other and learn consequences of behavior without excessive adult intervention.

The curriculum in Japanese preschools had traditionally had a fairly academic focus, with children expected to learn basic math and reading skills. This has recently been revised, however, to emphasize less academic areas, including health, human relationships, the environment, language, and expression.

Sweden

Sweden has a highly coordinated system of early childhood education and care for children ages one through five. The program has explicit dual goals of providing families with childcare to allow them to continue to work or study and to provide children with a high-quality early education to prepare them for later life. Early childhood education has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science since 1996.

While the country had already reached nearly universal access for its early childhood programs by then, the change was made to facilitate the coordination between the early childhood education system and education and care for older children. In 1998, a national preschool curriculum was introduced for children from ages one through five, further integrating preschool education into the rest of the national education system. Nearly all preschool teachers have specialized training, and most have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree.

England

Historically, England has not had a centralized or coordinated program for early childhood education and has provided it with only minimal government financial support. The government introduced a wide array of early education initiatives in the late 1990's through its new National Childcare Strategy to improve the provision of services to children from birth through age five. These initiatives include a requirement for local education authorities to make at least part-day preschool spaces available for free to all three and four-year olds. Provision of preschool education continues to occur at the same wide range of settings as before the reforms were enacted, but with 1.6 million more children estimated to be participating. Local education authorities and private independent schools provide over 80 percent of preschool places.

Curriculum guidelines for ages three through five were published in 2000, and standards for provision of services are being developed. The curriculum guidelines are based on six "areas of learning": personal, social, and emotional development; communication, language, and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development. To address concerns about low salaries and education levels for teachers, especially of younger children, the government has created the Early Years National Training Organisation (NTO). The NTO's aim is to improve pay and working conditions and to coordinate and improve training programs for early education workers.

Characteristics of High-Quality Programs

In the past decade, a number of studies and reports have described characteristics of high-quality preschool programs. What follows is a brief summary of the latest findings.

Class size and student-teacher ratios

Smaller class size and lower student-teacher ratios are strongly correlated with children's learning and child development. There is substantial research evidence (National Research Council, 2001) linking smaller class size and student-teacher ratios to more interaction between teachers and students, more teacher encouragement and support, less controlling behavior by teachers and more individual attention for each student. These classroom interactions in turn result in higher IQ and achievement test scores and improved classroom behavior. Programs that showed the best results generally had 12 or 13 students with two teachers; increasing class size while keeping the student-teacher ratios the same is not as effective as keeping class sizes small with low student-teacher ratios.

These ideal class sizes and student-teacher ratios are lower than those currently required by NAEYC for certification (as well as the ratios recommended by states). NAEYC's guidelines specify that three, four and five-year olds should be in classes with a maximum size of 20, with a student-teacher ratio of 10 to one. Maximum class sizes and student-teacher ratios required by states often exceed NAEYC's recommendations, although not in all cases. States' class size recommendations currently range from 16 to 30, with student-teacher ratios ranging from 8:1 to 20:1 among those states that specify a ratio.

Teacher qualifications and compensation

The National Research Council's 2001 synthesis of research on preschool education concludes that teachers with strong intellects, education and training are more effective preschool teachers. Specifically, teachers with at least a bachelor's degree are correlated with programs leading to higher-quality programs. Research by the National Institute for Early Education Research also

shows a strong correlation between teacher compensation and preschool program quality, but preschool teachers earn less than half, on average, than kindergarten teachers.

Program type and content

Research (Marcon 2002) shows that children who attend preschool programs that emphasize child-directed activities do significantly better academically in later schooling than children whose preschool experiences are more academic and teacher-directed. There is general consensus, though, that more research needs to be conducted to determine what specific models are most effective.

The Economics of Preschool

There is increasing consensus that investment in high-quality preschool provides substantial return on investment. A 2004 report by the Economic Policy Institute presents a cost-benefit analysis of investment in preschool. This report asserts that there is a three to one return on investment in high-quality preschool programs for poor children, making them more than worth the initial financial outlay. Not only could the budget savings exceed \$60 billion by 2050, but the social gains would be enormous as well.

Research studies on the effects of preschool

A 2004 report on the long-term effects of the Perry Preschool Study showed that the benefits of a high-quality preschool program can have lifelong effects for poor children. The experiment took place in Ypsilanti, Michigan between 1962 and 1967. This is the sixth follow-up study to examine the effects of attending preschool against a control group of students who did not attend preschool. The study concludes that those who attended the Perry Preschool program were more likely to graduate from high school, are more likely to be employed, have higher incomes, are more likely to own their own homes and to be married, and are less likely to have been arrested than those in the control group. The researchers estimate the return on the \$15,166 cost per student of the program is \$258,888, largely due to a reduction in crime-related costs.

The Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes study, which was conducted between 1994 and 1998, examined the effects of preschool quality on children from the time they attended preschool through second grade. This study showed a clear impact of the quality of the preschool on children's performance through second grade. Children attending higher quality preschools had better language, math and social skills than those attending lower quality preschools. Those at risk of school failure benefited the most from attending a higher quality preschool and were most negatively affected by attending a lower quality one. Children at risk of school failure are more likely to attend poor quality preschools than children at less risk of school failure. The Cost, Quality and Outcomes study also showed the closeness of the relationships between children and preschool teachers to have a significant and lasting impact on academic and social abilities.

While there may be a strong argument for the eventual economic benefit of preschool investment, these benefits cannot initially be used to pay for preschool programs. States that have made investments in preschool have used a variety of means of funding them. Georgia, for example, created a lottery with proceeds specifically earmarked for its universal pre-K program. The city of Seattle uses a tax on espresso drinks to fund pre-K, and other states like Florida and New York simply include it as part of their budgets.

Accreditation and Assessment

While there is no single common definition of school readiness or measure for determining whether students have met the criteria for school readiness, there is general agreement that readiness for kindergarten encompasses more than simply academic skills. Most discussions of school readiness focus on a number of different domains of readiness to begin kindergarten, including cognitive, physical, social, emotional and behavioral. Assessments of school readiness do not always encompass all these areas, however.

There are two different ways of assessing preschool programs: by measuring student outcomes or by evaluating program characteristics. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a private, non-profit

organization, has developed program standards for accreditation of childcare and preschool programs. While entirely voluntary, NAEYC accreditation is seen as a mark of high-quality programs. Accreditation costs are paid by the preschools or daycares. The National Institute for Early Education Research has developed a checklist of ten indicators of quality state pre-K programs. In its 2004 State of Preschool Yearbook, NIEER rates the programs of each state based on this checklist. Researchers evaluating preschool programs often use the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS), which evaluates programs in the following areas: physical environment; basic care; curriculum; interaction; schedule and program structure; and parent and staff education.

Assessment of preschool children is controversial, although many states and Head Start include assessment of children as part of their program requirements. One test of kindergarten readiness developed by Scholastic Testing evaluates students in the following areas: vocabulary, letter identification, visual discrimination, phonemic awareness, comprehension and interpretation, and mathematical knowledge.

Head Start has developed the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework, which is intended not as an assessment in itself, but as a guide to help agencies evaluating children participating in Head Start programs. The framework identifies eight broad “domains” of child development, with “domain elements” and “indicators” providing additional detail on the outcomes on which children should be evaluated. The eight domains include: language development, literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, social and emotional development, approaches to learning, and physical health and development.

A number of states have developed their own assessments to determine students’ readiness to begin school. Vermont, for example, has developed an evaluation which assesses students’ school readiness in 24 areas, grouped into eight broad categories: "social and emotional development," "approaches to learning," "communication," "cognitive development and general knowledge," and "physical health and well-being." For each specific item, the skill or ability is

rated as “not observed,” “beginning,” “practicing,” or “performing independently.”

Summary of Recommendations on Early Childhood Education from Recent Reports

National Research Council, Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers:

- ECE teachers should have a bachelor’s degree with specialized ECE courses.
- Teacher preparation programs should give them better knowledge of children’s development and of appropriate pedagogy for young children.
- ECE teachers should go through supervised student teaching or internships.
- ECE programs should have qualified supervisors.
- There should be more research into effective preparation practices for ECE teachers.
- Federal and state agencies should fund curriculum development, field testing and assessments for ECE.
- States should develop program standards for ECE and monitor implementation.
- Content standards should be developed and periodically evaluated/updated.
- States should each develop a single career ladder for ECE teachers.
- The federal government should fund high-quality preschools for all children at risk.
- ECE programs should form strong alliances with families.

The full text of the Executive Summary is available at:

<http://books.nap.edu/books/0309068363/html/1.html>

OECD, Starting Strong: Early Childhood Education and Care:

Eight key elements of successful ECEC policy:

- A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation
- A strong and equal partnership with the education system
- A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support
- Substantial public investment in services and the infrastructure
- A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance
- Appropriate training and working conditions for staff in all forms of provision
- Systematic attention to monitoring and data collection
- A stable framework and long-term agenda for research and evaluation

The full text can be downloaded at:

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/get-it.asp?REF=9101011E.PDF&TYPE=browse>

NGA, *Building the Foundation for Bright Futures*

- Develop a vision and strategic plan for school readiness that considers that considers the role of families, schools and communities and that addresses the developmental needs of children beginning before birth to kindergarten and beyond.
- Build a comprehensive and coordinated statewide system for school readiness.
- Ensure accountability for results across agencies and between the state and local levels.

View the report at:

http://www.nga.org/center/divisions/1,1188,C_ISSUE_BRIEF%5ED_7819,00.html

National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), *The State of Preschool: 2004 State Preschool Yearbook*

- States should increase funding for pre-K programs to improve access to a quality education.
- States should improve standards for preschool education.
- The federal government should improve its role by providing funds to serve all targeted children, setting higher standards for teachers and higher pay in federal programs, addressing quality standards, and providing funding for experiments in service integration.
- States need better data on pre-K enrollment and funding streams.

To learn more go to:

<http://nieer.org/yearbook/>

Economic Policy Institute. *Exceptional Returns: Economic, Fiscal and Social Benefits of Investment in Early Childhood Development.*

- Provide all poor three and four-year olds (approximately 20 percent of those populations) with high-quality preschool programs. The cost savings to the U.S. would be enough to keep Social Security solvent.

Information at:

www.epinet.org/content.cfm/books_exceptional_returns

French-American Foundation. *Ready to Learn: A Call for Preschool for Every Child.*

Promote preschool for every child.

- Clarify national, state and local roles and responsibilities.
- Train and adequately pay teachers of young children.
- Develop core principles for early childhood programs.
- Respond to the needs of children and families.

Read the report at:

<http://www.frenchamerican.org/pubs/Readytol.pdf>

Foundation for Child Development. *Universal Preschool: Much to Gain, but Who Will Pay?*

- Report provides a fairly complex tax proposal for paying for pre-K programs by having parents of 4-year olds pay a federal tax based on income level.

View the report at:

<http://www.fcd-us.org/uploaddocs/uwisc%20wolfe.pdf>

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