



Issue Brief 2018
Quality Preschool for All Students

Background: Iowa's Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds was phased in over several years, from FY2008 through FY2011. After an initial year of start-up, programs were funded in their second year and beyond through the school funding formula. Originally funding was a weighting of 0.6 (which equates to 60% of the state cost per pupil) but was reduced to 0.5 beginning in FY 2012. The LSA Issue Review estimates that SVPP and the Shared Visions PK program together serve just under 60% of Iowa four-year-olds. The 29,344 preschool students estimated to be served in FY 2017, compared to average K-3rd grade class sizes of 37,425, shows some increased access to PK over time, but still leaves an estimated 8,081 Iowa students without a quality preschool experience.

Why does preschool matter? Once considered a strategy just to support working parents with child care needs, the majority of states now view access to high-quality preschool programs as a long-term investment in the future workforce. Six Rigorous long term evaluation studies have found that children who participated in high-quality preschool programs were:

- 25% less likely to drop out of school.
- 40% less likely to become a teen parent.
- 50% less likely to be placed in special education.
- 60% less likely to never attend college.
- 70% less likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

Other sources also quantify impact in addition to the above Education Commission of the States, Oct. 2014, <http://www.ecs.org/docs/early-learning-primer.pdf>:

- National Conference of State Legislatures quotes studies on long term return on investment. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/human-services/new-research-early-education-as-economic-investme.aspx>
- The Perry Preschool Project, 40 years later, documents \$17 savings for every dollar invested (earlier findings of \$8 saved for every dollar invested are also referenced and often cited.)

Overcome Barriers to Expansion: Improvements in access, especially for students from low income families, requires additional flexibility of funding to overcome barriers, wrap-around services to help working families, and additional weighting for all-day programs for students from low-income families, in addition to consistency, timeliness and predictability of funding.

Extraordinary Student Needs: Childhood Poverty / At-risk / English-Language Learner / Preschool Student Weighting: UEN encourages the Iowa Legislature to support students from low-income or non-English speaking families or at-risk of dropping out through the school foundation formula. Fund districts based on student need. Give districts flexibility to identify students and direct funds to educate them. *UEN supports an elevated commitment to quality PK standards, expanded/universal access for 4-year-olds, state start-up money for expansion (such as on-time modified supplemental authority for PK enrollment growth), flexible use of PK funds for wrap-around services and access for 3-year-old students. Iowa should invest early, to prevent higher costs later.*

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