Planning for Pre-kindergarten: A Toolkit for School Boards

The Center for Public Education
An initiative of the National School Boards Association and the National School Boards Foundation

January 2009
January 2009

Dear School Board Members:

A high-quality pre-kindergarten experience is one of the most important opportunities we can give our children. High-quality pre-k helps to develop children’s cognitive, social, and emotional skills and sets a positive trajectory for later school success. In fact, research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool programs demonstrate higher achievement levels in the elementary grades, show greater interest in learning, are less likely to require special education, and are more likely to graduate from high school.

Given the powerful impact of preschool education on child outcomes, many school districts are looking at establishing a pre-k plan. School boards are especially well positioned to play a critical role in local efforts to increase the supply and quality of preschool programs. But whether you are designing a new preschool program, revamping an existing one, or just beginning to consider your options, the effort can seem overwhelming. For many school board members, navigating the world of early education brings with it a whole new set of issues, stakeholders, and challenges.

Since 2006, the Center for Public Education has been engaged in a unique partnership with state school board associations to involve school board members more meaningfully in pre-k policy. We began this effort working with three state partners in Kansas, Ohio, and Texas, and we have since expanded the network to include school board associations in Alabama and Kentucky.

This tool kit has evolved from that work. It is designed to help school board members establish a vision for pre-k education and to address some of the key policy decisions you will need to consider when implementing pre-k initiatives in your district. For example: What are the pre-k needs in the community? Which children will be eligible for services? How will the program be funded? Who should be involved in planning? What are the essential elements of a quality program?

Some states provide funds for pre-k programs and specify certain requirements that must be met. But even in these states, there are still many questions that must be answered locally. None of these questions are simple and they often involve difficult choices and policy trade-offs, which we will discuss.

We wish to thank Chrisanne Gayl for the masterful job she did writing and putting this tool kit together. We are also very grateful to The Pew Charitable Trusts for its support of our pre-k initiative. The views expressed in these pages are our own and not necessarily those of The Pew Trusts.

Since elected leaders are responsible for the governance of public education, you can play a critical role in developing pre-k initiatives in your communities. We hope this kit will help you to pursue effective policies and strategies for your district that will benefit the earliest learners in your communities.

Sincerely,

Patte Barth
Director, Center for Public Education

Mike Resnick
Associate Executive Director, Advocacy and Issues Management,
National School Boards Association
In this tool kit

A. School boards and pre-k: Where do you start?

B. Establish a vision: The essential first step
   Toolbox
   - What is pre-k?
   - School board discussion guide
   - Sample pre-k resolution

C. Review the research: Know what works
   Toolbox
   - Brochure: Many happy returns (pdf)
   - What does the research say?

D. Engage the community: Families, private providers, business, and civic leaders all have a stake in a comprehensive pre-k plan
   Toolbox
   - Getting the message out

E. Take inventory: Find out what pre-k resources exist in your community; assess your community’s pre-k needs
   Toolbox
   - A sample district preschool survey

F. Design a program: One size does not fit all, plus there will be inevitable trade-offs
   Toolbox
   - Benefits and challenges of public/private partnerships
   - General governance models for school districts (CSBA tool kit)

G. Ensure quality: Pre-k benefits result from high-quality programs
   Toolbox
   - NIEER quality benchmarks
   - Head Start outcomes framework
   - Comparison of widely used quality indicators for early education programs

H. Secure funding: Find out what federal, state, and local funds may be available for pre-k
   Toolbox
   - States that use school funding formulas to fund pre-k
   - Federal funds that can be used for pre-k

I. Be an advocate: Don’t go it alone; help to generate broader support for pre-k
   Toolbox
   - NSBA’s pre-k committee fact sheet

J. From vision to reality: School boards have a vital role to play in pre-k
   Toolbox
   - Pre-k plan checklist

K. Other resources

Also see the online version of this toolkit at www.centerforpubliceducation.org for more tools and resources.
A. School boards and pre-k

Over the past two years, the Center for Public Education has had many opportunities to talk with school board members about the importance of pre-k education. Overwhelmingly, we found that school board members embrace the message of high-quality pre-k and believe that it is an effective strategy for improving school readiness and long-term student outcomes. However, support for the idea of pre-k doesn’t automatically translate into more or better programs for young children at the local level.

Transitioning from talking about the issue to actual implementation of a pre-k program in the district can seem overwhelming. It often involves multiple steps and strategies that board members, who are traditionally focused on K-12 issues, may not be as familiar with. Our experiences indicate that school board members are eager for more information about the practical aspects of implementing a pre-k program—for example, how to ensure quality, partnerships with various stakeholder groups, and build community support for their initiatives.

There is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to providing high-quality pre-k, since every community has its own unique qualities and needs. But, there are some basic things that school board members can do in considering pre-k initiatives for their districts. This tool kit is designed to lay the groundwork for school board members to think through the issues involved in establishing a high-quality pre-k program. Where appropriate, it includes resources and tools to help you establish policies, implement effective programs, and ultimately become advocates for good pre-k programs in your communities.
B. Establish a vision

Establishing a vision for pre-k in your district is an essential first step for ensuring a successful effort. The vision sets the overall framework for what the board hopes to achieve and guides the district in this direction. A clear and compelling vision will help to define future efforts and unite all leaders in a common purpose. It also sets the tone for communicating with the public about the board’s ideas and for pursuing potential collaborations with outside groups.

In developing your vision, your board should consider how early education fits into the larger education plan for your district and the values and priorities of your members. As a result, it is important to include the district Superintendent in these conversations, since he or she will have responsibility for implementing this vision.

A vision should incorporate both short- and long-term goals. For example, are you looking to establish pre-k experiences for four-year-olds that will help to improve their school readiness? Are you looking to amass district resources to build capacity and/or facilities for a new program? Do you have goals to expand the initiative to ultimately serve all children in your community? A strong vision includes elements that focus on the near-term as well as the future.

It should be noted that “pre-k” can mean different things to different people depending on their background and experiences. Therefore, it is important to have a thorough discussion about the goals and parameters of your board’s vision. To assist in this process, it may be helpful for your board to adopt a policy or resolution that articulates the overall ideological framework that the board will be using.

**Tool Box:**
- What is pre-k?
- School board discussion guide
- Sample resolution
### What is pre-K?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K IS</th>
<th>HIGH-QUALITY PRE-K IS NOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun – “can I go to pre-K?”</td>
<td>High pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned with children’s social/emotional/academic development</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For all plus more for high-needs children</td>
<td>Low-quality/ concerned only with access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often in diverse settings</td>
<td>Academic only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcoming to parents too</td>
<td>One size fits all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely voluntary</td>
<td>Only in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential but not sufficient</td>
<td>Closed to parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A silver bullet</td>
<td>Source: Adapted from The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School board discussion guide

The following questions are intended to focus the school board’s discussion on quality pre-k and to help in the process of formulating a strategic plan.

Part 1. Student achievement and development
- What skills, abilities and attributes do children who are ready for kindergarten demonstrate?
- Do children in the district enter kindergarten with the skills, abilities, and attributes necessary to be successful?
- What does the research show about the relationship between preschool and student achievement and development?

Part 2. Governance
- What role should the district play in supporting quality preschool programs within the community?
- How will the board’s policies on pre-k contribute to its overall vision for the district?

Part 3. Access
- How many children in the district have had a preschool experience?
- What is the supply of preschool programs within the community? Where are available preschool facilities located? Which areas have the shortest supply?
- What is the estimated demand for pre-k programs within the community? Which areas have the highest unmet need?
- What are the unique student characteristics that could be considered when prioritizing services (e.g., English language learners, children from low-income families, children in foster care, special education students)?
- Which schools have the lowest performing students on the state’s standardized test? Do children who would be attending these schools have adequate access to preschool?

Part 4. Finance
- What is the estimated cost of providing new preschool programs?
- What funding options are available to create new or modify existing programs?
- What facilities are available within the district and among partnering organizations?

Part 5. Collaboration
- What are the key community organizations and agencies that work to support the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of preschool-age children?
- What barriers may exist that prevent parents from participating in pre-k programs?

Source: Center for Public Education, 2008
Sample pre-k resolution

A resolution in support of voluntary, quality preschool

The Board of Trustees of ________________________________ does hereby find and resolve as follows:

WHEREAS, quality preschool programs prepare children to do their best by nurturing their social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development; enhancing their self confidence; and fostering a lifelong desire to learn; and

WHEREAS, ensuring access to quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds whose parents choose to send them has proven to be one of the soundest educational investments the public can make, providing demonstrated, significant, long-term savings on the costs of special education, grade retention, welfare and crime; and

WHEREAS, during their K–12 years and beyond, children who attend quality preschool perform better on standardized achievement tests in reading and math; exhibit more positive behaviors in the classroom; are more likely to graduate from high school, continue their education and be more prosperous as adults; and

WHEREAS, quality preschool programs should be funded adequately in order to assure adherence to established standards of quality and to attract and keep professionals who are educated and compensated at levels comparable to those in the State’s K-12 system; be inclusive of children with special needs; be offered in culturally, ethnically and linguistically appropriate settings; be clearly articulated with the K-12 system and programs serving younger children; be linked to full-day, affordable early care and education programs to meet the needs of working families; and be subject to research-based evaluation to assure desired outcomes for children;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of ________________________________ supports state, local, and federal efforts to invest in voluntary, high-quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees will work with a broad spectrum of community members and policy makers to increase voluntary access to high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds in a variety of settings, including schools, child care centers, Head Start programs and family child care homes.

Passed, approved, and adopted this (date) ____________________.

SIGNED:

Source: Center for Public Education, 2008
C. Review the research

Knowing what works is an essential step in formulating any pre-k initiative. School board members should review the research on pre-k education and consult the latest studies to understand the impacts and risks associated with various early education interventions and strategies. This background will help your board members to formulate an action plan that is both realistic and relevant to the environment of your district.

Research indicates that children of all races/ethnicities and income classes can benefit from a high-quality pre-kindergarten program. For many, pre-k can make the difference between struggling through school or doing well in the elementary grades and beyond. Numerous studies have shown both short- and long-term benefits for those who participate in high-quality pre-k. Children enrolled in quality programs not only demonstrate higher academic achievement in the elementary grades, but are far less likely to need costly instructional services down the road and far more likely to succeed in school, both academically and socially, than their peers who did not attend pre-k.

In addition, studies have shown that states and communities that choose to invest in high-quality programs can realize significant financial returns for years to come. Although estimates vary, implementation of a voluntary, universal preschool program for all students could result in an estimated long-term payback of $2 to $4 for every dollar spent. Reductions in special education placements and remediation alone can result in significant savings for your school district.

A host of pre-k research information is available on the Center for Public Education's web site at www.centerforpubliceducation.org. A quick reference guide is also provided in the Tool Box below.

Tool Box:
- Brochure: Many happy returns (pdf)
- What does the research say?
MANY HAPPY RETURNS

Investing in high-quality, pre-kindergarten education yields benefits for kids, schools, and communities.
Many Happy Returns
FOR MOST CHILDREN, TURNING 5 YEARS OLD MEANS TAKING THAT FIRST BIG STEP INTO KINDERGARTEN.

How can we ensure they will be ready for success when they arrive?

All children can benefit from a high-quality pre-kindergarten program. And for many of them, pre-k can make the difference between struggling through school or doing well in the elementary grades and beyond. Indeed, making high-quality pre-k available to all families is an investment that pays for itself many times over. Children who participate in pre-k programs are far less likely to need costly instructional services down the road and far more likely to succeed in school, both academically and socially, all the way to graduation. And it’s not only children who benefit. By investing in high-quality early education programs for families who choose to participate, states and communities can realize significant returns for years to come.
The High/Scope Perry Preschool project is frequently cited as a model early childhood program that demonstrates the positive effects of high-quality pre-k on the future lives of young children. This 1960s program provided 123 low-income African American children with a comprehensive, high-quality pre-k program that offered well-trained and well-compensated teachers and low staff-child ratios. High/Scope remains relevant today because researchers tracked participants from kindergarten through adulthood and compared their progress with the progress of similar individuals who were not in the program.

Other long-term studies have been conducted since the High/Scope project began. These studies also show positive academic and social results for students who attended high-quality pre-k compared to their peers who did not.
Pre-k initiatives that yield the most benefit give priority to two key elements: expanding opportunity for children to participate and assuring high program quality.

**EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY**

By 2005, 38 states provided pre-k programs, although most continue to limit enrollment to the groups they have historically served: disabled and low-income children. Only a few states provide pre-kindergarten to all 4-year-olds who want to attend. As a result, large numbers of young children have no access to pre-k programs.

In 2004–05, 34.8% of the nation’s 4-year-olds were enrolled in a state- or federally-funded pre-kindergarten program. However, the proportion varies considerably by state.

| States with the highest and lowest proportion of 4-year-olds enrolled in pre-k.¹ |
|----------------------------------------|------------------|
| **STATES WITH HIGHEST ENROLLMENT**     |                  |
| OKLAHOMA                              | 92.4%            |
| GEORGIA                               | 67.4%            |
| WEST VIRGINIA                         | 64.6%            |
| VERMONT                                | 64.1%            |
| KENTUCKY                               | 62.1%            |
| **STATES WITH LOWEST ENROLLMENT**     |                  |
| INDIANA²                              | 16.0%            |
| FLORIDA²                              | 15.5%            |
| UTAH²                                 | 14.5%            |
| NEVADA                                 | 13.2%            |
| NEW HAMPSHIRE²                        | 12.5%            |

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research 2005 Yearbook

¹ State and federally funded.
² No state pre-k funding as of 2005.
**ASSURING QUALITY**

Research has shown that improving access to pre-k is not enough on its own. The benefits for children and schools stem from programs that experts consider high quality—programs with college-educated teachers, small class size, low teacher-student ratios, and learning goals tied to state and local K–3 or K–12 standards. Yet, according to reports, in 2005, fewer than half of state-funded pre-k programs met at least seven of ten benchmarks that represented minimum qualifications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY BENCHMARKS FOR STATE PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS</th>
<th>NUMBER OF STATES WITH BENCHMARK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive early learning standards are defined</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher has B.A.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher has specialized training in pre-k</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant teacher has Child Development Associate’s Credential (CDA) or equivalent</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 15 hours in-service training per year is required</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum class size is 20</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff-child ratio is 1:10 or better</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision, hearing, health, and one support service are provided</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one meal is provided</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visits are conducted</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: National Institute for Early Education Research, 2005*
Oklahoma is one of the few states to make pre-k available to all 4-year-olds whose families want them to participate. The state’s experience shows that even on a large scale, it’s possible to deliver high-quality pre-k programs that benefit both individual children and entire school systems.

Operated through the public schools, the program now enrolls 30,000 children, or more than 60% of the state’s eligible 4-year-olds—a higher percentage of eligible youngsters than any other pre-k program nationwide. In addition, 94% of local districts participate, with the option to provide half- or full-day service. Together with enrollment in federally funded programs, nine out of every ten 4-year-olds in Oklahoma are enrolled in pre-k.

Oklahoma’s program is also noteworthy for maintaining high quality with teachers with B.A.s, low staff-child ratios, small classes, and curriculum informed by comprehensive early learning standards.

Researchers examined state-funded pre-k in Tulsa—the largest district in the state and also one of the most diverse—and assessed children on letter/word identification, spelling, and applied problems. They found significant gains for those who had recently completed pre-k compared with the control group—children very close in age who were just about to start the program:

Children who completed the program had test scores that were 16% higher than children who had not.

Children attending pre-k had gains of 52% in letter-word identification, 27% in spelling, and 21% in applied problems.

All racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups showed progress, but children from low-income families demonstrated the LARGEST GAINS, showing that solid pre-k can be an effective gap-closing strategy.
Better Outcomes for Learners and More Savings for Schools

Children do even better when pre-k standards are aligned to elementary school standards. Several national and state studies have found benefits for young children that extended well beyond kindergarten. In Michigan, for example, children from the state pre-k program had higher pass rates on fourth-grade literacy and math tests than students not in pre-k. Maryland documented similar gains in reading and math at fifth, eighth, and ninth grades, and several other states also reported gains for former pre-k children.
In addition to producing educational gains, high-quality pre-k programs provide savings to federal, state, and local governments. Reduced special education placements and remedial costs result in savings to public school systems. Communities also benefit by better preparing young people for skilled jobs and increasing their economic productivity.

Studies show that pre-k pays, many times over, for the cost of establishing these programs. Although estimates vary, state implementation of a voluntary, universal preschool for all students could result in an estimated long-term payback of $2 to $4 for every dollar spent, for a net savings of $150 billion nationwide. A study in Texas, for example, found that every $1 invested in high-quality pre-k yields at least $3.50 to Texas communities. The economic savings pay off in social benefits, too, as students who attend high-quality pre-k are less likely as adults to be arrested or to use drugs and are more likely to hold jobs, have savings accounts, and own homes.

### Estimated benefits of various pre-k initiatives

(costs and benefits in 2003 dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ABECEDARIAN PROJECT 0 to 5 year olds</th>
<th>HIGH/SCOPE PERRY PRESCHOOL 3 and 4 year olds</th>
<th>CHICAGO CHILD-PARENT CENTERS 3 and 4 year olds</th>
<th>META-ANALYSIS(^1) 3 and 4 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cost per child</strong></td>
<td>$42,871</td>
<td>$14,830</td>
<td>$6,913</td>
<td>$6,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net benefit</strong></td>
<td>$138,635</td>
<td>$76,426 (age 27) to $253,154 (age 40)</td>
<td>$49,337</td>
<td>$15,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Savings per dollar invested</strong></td>
<td>$3.23</td>
<td>$5.15 to $17.10</td>
<td>$7.14</td>
<td>$2.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Steps to Take

**Know the research.** Making the case for voluntary pre-k is straightforward once people see the facts. This includes understanding the key characteristics of good pre-k programs.

**Build public awareness** about the qualities of good pre-k programs and their influence on student outcomes. Share this information with your colleagues, parents, and the community at large.

**Explore your state’s funding mechanisms.** Both general revenues and dedicated funds (such as state lottery and gaming revenues, tobacco settlement monies, and sales taxes) can fund pre-k programs. Other funding options include government cost-sharing, endowments, and scholarship programs. It’s also important to know whether your state’s school aid formula reimburses schools for pre-k students or limits reimbursement—and therefore eligibility—to students at risk of educational failure.

**Work closely with providers of pre-k in your community.** A mixed delivery service model—in which a variety of public and private schools and community agencies offer programs—works well in many states and is required by several.

**Form effective coalitions.** Identify and work with pre-k supporters at your state education agency; your state school boards association and school administrator organization; the business community, local colleges, and universities; other local and state policy makers; and providers of pre-k programs in your community. Pre-k is one of the few issues that easily garner bipartisan support.

**Remember that high-quality pre-k programs** will be most effective when they are complemented by continued investments in high-quality elementary and secondary education. Consider creating a continuum of instructional practices and policies from at least pre-k through third grade—beyond would be even better.
Many Happy Returns

The Center for Public Education is an initiative of the National School Boards Association and the National Schools Boards Foundation.
Children with a high-quality pre-kindergarten education can celebrate their fifth birthday with the skills they need to succeed in school. By expanding these opportunities, school districts, communities, and states will share these happy returns as more and more children make their way through school and into productive adult lives.

For more information about pre-k education, visit the Center for Public Education Web site at www.centerforpubliceducation.org

The Center for Public Education is an initiative of the National School Boards Association and the National Schools Boards Foundation. The Center is working in collaboration with the Kansas Association of School Boards, the Ohio School Boards Association, and the Texas Association of School Boards to promote public awareness of the value of pre-kindergarten for all children.

We gratefully acknowledge The Pew Charitable Trusts for its support of this pre-k initiative. The views expressed are those of the Center for Public Education and not necessarily those of The Pew Charitable Trusts.
What does the research say?

A large and growing body of research shows that investing in high-quality pre-kindergarten education yields benefits for children, schools, and communities. This summary describes the short- and long-term benefits of high-quality pre-k programs and the potential cost savings to communities. In addition, it outlines the key program criteria that contribute to pre-k success.

Short-term benefits

There is strong evidence showing that young children who participate in high-quality pre-k programs enter school more ready to learn than their peers. The national Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten Cohort shows that students who attended a pre-k program scored higher on reading and math tests than children receiving parental care.1 Students who attended a child care center or other preschool program also showed gains, although former pre-k students exhibited the greatest achievement.

Several state studies have also documented significant cognitive gains for children who receive pre-k. In Georgia, children who attended the state’s universal program overcame the achievement gap they faced prior to enrolling in pre-k by the time they finished kindergarten.2 Children who received pre-k equaled or exceeded national norms in eight of nine standardized assessments by the end of their kindergarten year. A significant gap remained, however, between white and black children, which researchers attributed in part to factors related to family income differences.

Oklahoma, another state with pre-k for all children, has documented significant academic gains across all income and racial groups. Participation in pre-k was a more powerful predictor of children’s pre-reading and pre-writing scores than demographic variables such as race, family income, and mother’s education level.3 An evaluation of the program in Tulsa, the state’s largest school district, showed significant increases in letter-word identification, spelling, and applied problems among students on free or reduced-priced lunch and those not participating in the subsidy program.

Children of all racial groups also exhibited academic gains. In particular, the study found a narrowing of the achievement gap for Hispanic children. These students exhibited an eleven-month gain in letter/word recognition and six-month gain in applied problem solving compared to the corresponding gains (nine-months and three-months respectively) for white children.4

---

4 Ibid.
One of the most far-reaching recent studies found marked increases in children’s skills across five states—Michigan, New Jersey, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and West Virginia. Overall, children in state pre-k posted vocabulary scores that were 31 percent higher and math gains that were 44 percent higher than those of non-participants. These gains placed pre-k children three to four months ahead of non-participants, largely due to participation in the state program. The greatest gains occurred in print awareness, where participants had an 85 percent increase, which suggests these outcomes strongly predict later reading success.

**Long-term effects**

Most long-term pre-k research has focused on whether program effects fade out over time or produce lasting benefits for participants. Three major longitudinal studies which began in the 1960s and 1970s—the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, the Chicago Parent Centers, and the Abecedarian Project—show demonstrably positive effects of quality pre-k on the future lives of young children. These projects remain relevant since they tracked the short- and long-term progress of participants, including one study that followed former program participants and a control group through age forty.

In the High/Scope study, low-income black children randomly selected to receive the comprehensive preschool program showed impressive long-term results regarding educational progress, delinquency, and earnings. Seventy-seven percent of these youngsters eventually graduated from high school, compared with 60 percent from the control group. In adulthood pre-k participants were also less likely to be arrested for violent crimes, more likely to be employed, and more likely to earn higher wages than those in the comparison group.  

---

1 Professor William Gormley, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Presentation to National School Boards Association, September 8, 2008.
Among states with long-term results is Michigan, where children from the state pre-k program had higher pass rates on the fourth-grade literacy and math tests compared with non-participants.¹

Cost Savings

High-quality pre-k programs also provide substantial cost savings to federal, state, and local governments. Numerous studies have shown a reduced use of special education services and lower grade retention among pre-k participants. In the Abecedarian study, for example, 24 percent of pre-k children received special education services, versus 48 percent of the control group. Given the high cost of these interventions pre-k can produce significant financial benefits for school districts.

Economic analyses have sought to quantify these and other societal outcomes (i.e., less delinquency, decreased dependence on public assistance, increased employment and earnings) in real dollars. Table 1 shows the cost benefits per $1 invested for each of three long-term pre-k studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Costs and Benefits per Participant (2002 dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Scope (at age 27)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits per $1 invested to pre-k participants and the public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Committee for Economic Development, 2006*

Estimates for the long-term payback of a non-targeted voluntary, universal preschool program range from $2- to-$4 for every dollar spent.

Characteristics of Quality

As interest in pre-k has increased and more states have implemented pre-k programs, policymakers have identified core requirements for program success. These include: Highly trained teachers with expertise in early childhood education, learning goals tied to K–12 standards, low child/staff ratios, and small class sizes.

Teacher training

Model pre-k programs such as the Perry Preschool and Chicago Parent Centers validate the benefits of hiring teachers with a strong background in education and training. More recent state pre-k studies also document the effectiveness of programs with BA-certified teachers.² Experts emphasize the need for teachers with college degrees who can deliver educational programming and who are paid at sufficient levels that promote retention. Among thirty-eight states with pre-k programs in 2007:

- Twenty-two require a teacher to have at least a bachelor’s degree.
- Thirty-two require teachers to have specialized training in pre-k or preschool.
- Twenty-nine require pre-k teachers to obtain at least 15 hours of in-service training.³

² Gormley et al. 2004a; Barnett, Lamy, and Jung 2005.
In most cases, state pre-k programs have stronger teacher qualifications than those in the federal Head Start program. Only recently did Head Start require 50 percent of its teachers nationwide to possess at least a bachelor’s degree by October 2013.

**Learning standards and alignment**

There is wide agreement in the field that it is important for programs to have a set of learning guidelines in place to articulate what pre-k children should know and be able to do. As a result, most states have adopted some type of early learning or content standards. Georgia’s universal pre-k program, for example, has content standards in seven areas: Language and literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, arts, health and physical development, and social/emotional competence. Illinois also includes foreign language as a particular content area. The specific details of these standards, however, often differ between states.

Another way to promote learning goals is for states to align curriculum to provide a consistent framework of services for children aged three to eight or PK–3. Alignment of standards may be a necessary first step to sustain the positive effects of pre-k during elementary school, since children who attend low-quality schools often have the highest degree of preschool fadeout. Few studies, however, have examined the strength of this alignment and its impact on the quality of education.

**Licensing and program standards**

After years of researching high-quality programs, pre-k experts have identified several common structural characteristics of quality programs. These include a child/staff ratio of no more than 10:1, and a maximum class size of twenty or less. In model programs such as the High/Scope Project and the Abecedarian study, a single teacher was responsible, on average, for less than seven children. These studies also had small class sizes, from twelve in Abecedarian to seventeen in the Child-Parent Centers program.

**Conclusion**

The evidence is strong that high-quality pre-k can have significant short- and long-term impacts on children and their communities. This summary highlights some of the most recent and compelling research in the field. More in-depth information on the subject can be found on the Center for Public Education’s web site at www.centerforpubliceducation.org.

---

1 (Bogard and Takanishi 2005)
2 (Ackerman and Barnett 2006).
D. Engage the community

In addition to establishing an overall vision and becoming versed on the latest research on the topic, your board should begin sharing its ideas with members in the community. Community engagement is an essential step to help build support for your initiative and for gathering constructive feedback that will help to inform your plans.

Involving others in the discussion also demonstrates your responsiveness to the broader community, not just the school district, and can help to identify potential barriers or opposition that might exist. Inviting outside groups to the table early on can help engender stronger bonds and partnerships than if approached later.

Below are few of the key stakeholder groups that you should make sure to engage:

- **Families**—they are the ultimate consumers of pre-k. Therefore, it is essential that their needs and preferences be considered when developing programs and services.

- **Early care and private pre-k providers**—those already serving young children in child care facilities, at-home day cares, preschools, Head Start, and other settings have valuable experience and vested business interests. Including them in the process early-on demonstrates an appreciation for their role and sends the message that you are looking to work with them, not replace them.

- **K-12 administrators and staff**—principals, teachers, and other education staff will inherit the children that you are looking to serve and may have strong opinions about what constitutes school readiness. They may also be competing for school district resources.

- **State and local early childhood advocacy groups**—these groups are made up of people who are passionate about this issue and can provide information, history, and support for your district’s efforts.

- **Businesses**—they have an interest in providing quality day care options for their workers. In addition, business leaders have a stake in enhancing the quality of their future workforce.

- **Government and civic leaders**—these leaders represent the voice of their constituents and can be powerful advocates for change.

School boards might also consider involving representatives from higher education, social service organizations, and philanthropists in your area—all may be able to provide useful information and resources to assist you in your efforts.
In preparing to talk with outside groups, it is important to note that different pre-k messages will resonate with different stakeholder groups. Therefore, always keep in mind your audience. You may want to draw upon some of the sample pre-k messages contained in the Tool Box below, which have been designed for key constituent groups. Also, be clear about your vision, stay focused on the topic at hand, and listen to people’s concerns. This will help to avoid potential misunderstandings and ensure that all voices are heard.

There are many different ways to engage the community. The tactics that a school board takes will depend in part on the size of the district and the depth and breadth of your initiative. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- Host a communitywide forum for parents, educators, and business leaders to help them learn more about your vision.
- Develop an advisory committee, comprised of representatives from various stakeholder groups, to inform the development of your plan.
- Have individual board members canvass their neighborhoods to reach out to neighbors and friends about your ideas.
- Ask to be included on the city council agenda to discuss your board’s vision at the next meeting.
- Convene stakeholder meetings with key constituencies to gather input about various early education issues in the community.
- Publish a report about the importance of pre-k to share with your community.

**Tool Box:**
- Getting the message out
### Getting the message out: Pre-k messages to use with key stakeholder groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Families</th>
<th>School Administration</th>
<th>Private Providers</th>
<th>Civic Leaders</th>
<th>For Business/Civic Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate personal stories.</td>
<td>Communicate about pre-k in the context of K–12 school reform.</td>
<td>• Opportunity to build bridges between child care programs and public schools before children enter the school system.</td>
<td>Long Term Gains...</td>
<td>• Focus on the economic benefits of pre-k, both for the individual and for the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emphasize social skills children learn, such as following directions, taking turns, and relating well to peers and teachers.</td>
<td>• Children who participate in pre-k are less likely to be held back a grade or need special education services.</td>
<td>• Increased likelihood of graduating from high school</td>
<td>• Talk about pre-k as an economic development tool, keeping our labor force competitive around the world.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Incorporate personal stories</td>
<td>• Opportunities to share or combine professional development for staff.</td>
<td>• Increased likelihood of securing and maintaining employment</td>
<td>• Stress pre-k as the foundation for a highly skilled workforce.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Access to early childhood education experts</td>
<td>• Access to state-endorsed curricula.</td>
<td>• Fewer incidences of incarceration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community views schools as collaborative, not territorial</td>
<td>• Placement of a certified teacher in child care setting</td>
<td>• Pre-k offered in familiar child care environment that reflects family’s culture, language, and value system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reduced transportation costs for children in community settings</td>
<td>• May help meet financial goals.</td>
<td>• “Wrap-around” child care service available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engagement with all four year old children in the community, not just a targeted group</td>
<td>• Increase quality of programs offered.</td>
<td>• Opportunity to educate parents about the benefits of high quality Pre-K and other relevant topics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children enter Kindergarten better prepared</td>
<td>• Possible staff recruitment and/or retention tool.</td>
<td>• Access to early assessment and intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agreement on “high quality” indicators is necessary</td>
<td>• School funding used for certified teacher, resources, supplies, and materials.</td>
<td>• Closes the achievement gap</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Access to special education services for qualifying children.</td>
<td>• Financial barriers to preschool are reduced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Programmatic improvements identified via extensive evaluation and assessment process.</td>
<td>• Early introduction to public schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Certified teachers and child care providers work together to provide information to parents about school readiness, effective study habits, and child rearing tips</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ability to have siblings in same child care environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Early care providers:** Those already serving young children in child care facilities, at-home day cares, Head Start, and other settings have valuable experience and vested business interests. Including them in the process early-on demonstrates an appreciation for their role and sends the message that you are looking to work with them, not replace them.
K–12 administrators and staff: Principals, teachers, and other education staff will inherit the children that you are looking to serve and may have strong opinions about what constitutes school-readiness. They may also be competing for school district resources.

Business: They have an interest in providing quality day care options for their workers. In addition, business leaders have a stake in enhancing the quality of their future workforce.

Government and civic leaders: These leaders represent the voices of their constituents and can be powerful advocates for change in the community.

Source: The Center for Public Education, 2008
E. Take inventory

Once you have examined the research and consulted with members of your community, it is time to start translating your ideas and all that you have learned into concrete actions that will focus your efforts.

Step one in this process is to take inventory of the early childhood services that already exist in your area. As you will have no doubt already discovered from talking with members in your community, there may already be multiple providers offering early care and education services to children and families. Conducting a “needs assessment” that includes information about these programs as well as data on the characteristics of young children and families in the area will help boards to determine where resources are most likely to be needed and used. Such information may help to identify potential partners, underserved populations, or which facilities to use. By understanding the unique assets and needs of the community, school leaders can promote strategies that will maximize resources.

Much of the information that districts will need may be readily available through the school district, state, or county office. However, other important information may need to be collected. There are several excellent resources available to assist boards in conducting a needs assessment, including a comprehensive worksheet in the Tool Box below.

Tool Box:
- Sample district preschool survey
District preschool survey

1. Does your school district offer publicly funded preschool for 3 and/or 4 year olds?
   - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

2. Is your district preschool program targeted to a specific population of children (i.e., low-income English language learners etc.)?
   - [ ] Yes  [ ] No

3. Which providers are eligible to offer services as part of your district’s program? (Check all that apply.)
   - [ ] Community based providers
   - [ ] Public Schools
   - [ ] Private Schools/Non-Profit Providers
   - [ ] Head Start Centers

4. If your program allows for providers outside of public schools, how would you rate their overall delivery of services?
   - [ ] Below Average
   - [ ] Fair
   - [ ] Good
   - [ ] Excellent
   - [ ] N/A

5. Does your district receive state funding to help finance your preschool program?
   - [ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Don’t know

6. If you answered “YES” to the question above, what percentage of the total funding for your district’s preschool program is provided by the state?
   - [ ] Less than 25 percent
   - [ ] 25–50 percent
   - [ ] 50–75 percent
   - [ ] 75–99 percent
   - [ ] All
   - [ ] Don’t Know

7. Does your district use federal Title I money for its preschool program?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Don’t know
8. If you answered “YES” to the question above, what percentage of overall Title I funds does your district devote to preschool?
   - Less than 2 percent
   - 2–5 percent
   - 5–10 percent
   - 10–20 percent
   - More than 20 percent
   - Don’t Know

9. What are the main challenges that you face in the operation of your district preschool program? (Check all that apply.)
   - Limited resources
   - Lack of interest/Under-enrollment
   - Hiring of qualified teachers and staff
   - Coordination and collaboration with eligible providers
   - Lack of clear expectations/standards for school readiness
   - Other (please specify)

10. Does your preschool program offer comprehensive services to children and their families such as medical and dental exams, counseling, and other support services?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don’t know

11. Does your school district ensure that preschool program curriculum is aligned with K–12 academic standards?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don’t know

12. Does your school district offer joint professional development for preschool and early grade (K–3) teachers?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don’t know

13. What are the primary impediments to establishing a preschool program in your school district? (Check all that apply.)
    - Lack of funding
    - Limited classroom space
    - Lack of qualified source providers
    - Differing school readiness expectations among providers
    - Lack of community interest
    - Limited collaboration among community, private, and school providers
    - Other (please specify):

14. Does your state provide any funding to assist districts in offering preschool programs?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don’t know

15. In your view is this state funding adequate to meet program needs?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Don’t know
16. Is this state funding targeted to certain types of children (e.g., low-income, students with disabilities, English language learners)?
   - Yes  - No  - Don’t know

17. If resources were not an issue do you believe your school district should offer voluntary universal preschool?
   - Yes  - No

18. If you answered “NO” to the question above, please tell us why.
   - Children do not need to be formally educated before Kindergarten.
   - Programs should be provided only to specific populations of students (i.e. low-income, students with disabilities, English language learners).
   - Parents should be the primary educators of their children before age five.
   - School districts should not subsidize child care for parents.
   - Resources should be directed to other, more important priorities.
   - Other (please specify):

19. How would you rate the preschool programs by outside providers in your district?
   - Below average
   - Fair
   - Good
   - Excellent
   - N/A (there are no programs in my district)

20. What do you believe are or would be the greatest benefits of preschool in your district? (Choose up to three.)
   - Helps boost student achievement.
   - Reduces the achievement gap between low-income children and their more affluent peers.
   - Reduces placement of children in special education.
   - Reduces need to retain students in the primary grades.
   - Accelerates children’s social, emotional, and cognitive development to become school ready.
   - Increases student interest in school and learning.
   - Provides a safe place for children during the day.
   - Saves district expenses in the long-term by decreasing remediation and special education costs.
   - Increases United States international competitiveness.
   - Other (please specify):
21. What are the most important factors that you believe contribute to a quality preschool education? (Choose up to three.)
- Highly trained teachers and staff
- Small class/group size
- Low teacher-child ratios
- Parental involvement
- Access to comprehensive services
- Clearly defined child outcome standards
- Challenging, developmentally appropriate curriculum

22. What type of certification do you believe an instructor should have to be considered a highly qualified preschool teacher?
- Bachelors Degree
- Specialization/Certificate in Early Childhood Education
- BA and Early Childhood Education Specialization
- High School Diploma Only
- Childcare license
- Neither
- Other (please specify)
F. Design a program

Designing the specific aspects of a publicly funded pre-k program that will embody the school board’s vision requires strategic—often difficult—policy decisions about the services you will provide. For example, will the program be offered full- or part-day, year-round? Will you limit enrollment, and if so, how? Where will the services be provided and by whom?

Some of the answers to these questions may depend on the information that you have gleaned from meeting with groups in the community and your needs assessment. Other aspects, however, may depend on the programmatic requirements imposed by your state. Currently, thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia operate some type of publicly funded pre-k, therefore, it is essential to familiarize yourself with the specific parameters that may exist in law, such as those included in Table I.

In many cases, however, particular aspects of program implementation will involve policy choices at the local level. In working through these issues, school board members may wish to involve various stakeholders in the discussion and form partnerships where necessary.

Eligibility: Universal versus targeted

Perhaps the biggest and most controversial decision to be made when establishing a publicly funded preschool system is who it will serve. In some states, this may already be pre-determined in statute. For example, in Oklahoma and Georgia, the state legislatures created a universal program open to all families who wish their children to attend. This model may work well in small communities where anticipated attendance is small, but can be expensive in more populated areas.

Another approach is to target a program to certain subgroups of children—for example, low-income, disadvantaged or special needs children. Such a model currently exists in Texas where publicly funded programs provide services to specific subgroups including children of military families, English language learners, and those who are economically disadvantaged or homeless. School board members might also consider targeting services to a particular age range of children (e.g., four-year olds versus three-year olds) or those with learning disabilities. Pursuing a targeted approach at first may be a good way to gain support for a program that can then be scaled up over time.

Eligibility criteria may depend in part on the source of your resources (i.e., Title I, IDEA Part C, and/or state program funds), which may have specific population requirements, but it will also depend on the goals of your program and what you are looking to accomplish. Many children who are not in targeted groups can benefit from good preschool programs. Research shows that high-quality pre-k helps to close the achievement gap that exists between low-income children and their more affluent peers prior to entering kindergarten. However, it also indicates that all children benefit. Including more children from middle-income families in the program may help to increase its sustainability over time.

Did you know...

Hispanic children with limited English proficiency achieved twice the gains in language and pre-reading skills compared to white children?
**Length of program day**

One of the most challenging issues is how to make a pre-k program a viable option for all families, including those with two working parents, or single-parent households. The obvious option is to establish a full-day, full-year program. However, with limited funds, this may not be possible.

One alternative may be to provide a part-day program with connections (i.e., transportation, referrals) to other early care and education providers for “wrap around” services in the mornings or afternoons. Yet another approach may be to offer a full day of services on select days of the week as opposed to a half-day program each day, which can help with overhead costs. Some districts may also choose to embed the pre-k program in an existing full-day program at a local child care facility. In this way, funding would be used to improve the quality of at least the part-day portion of the day. Whatever the decision, it is clear that a number of cost and logistical factors will need to be considered before finalizing this programmatic detail.

**Service providers and public/private partnerships**

Who or what entity will deliver the pre-k services of your program is an essential element that requires thoughtful consideration. Some local public schools may wish to provide the services themselves, using their own staff and facilities. While this can be attractive for many reasons, it may not be realistic for districts if they do not have the resources in place to accommodate a new program.

Another option is to adopt a mixed-delivery model in which a variety of public, private, and other community-based entities are eligible to receive funds. In fact, New York state requires that school districts subcontract out a portion of their pre-k funds to community-based providers. The main strength of this approach is that it builds upon existing infrastructure and ties within the community. In most areas, a substantial network of early education and care providers are already providing services to children and families. Community settings may also increase the availability of child care for children and families before or after a half-day pre-k program.

Yet another possibility is to partner with one of these existing providers (e.g., a child care facility, private preschool) to offer a specially designed program. Working together, you can provide additional services or enhanced programming. In this model there is a shared vision and a formal contractual relationship between the district and the partner-provider. The school district may provide various types of support, such as budget and accounting assistance, facilities and physical maintenance, staff development, curriculum, and others.

Public/private partnerships have the ability to maximize resources, minimize barriers to preschool access and provide important, comprehensive services that meet the needs of children and families. But limitations can also impede success. This section’s Tool Box includes information on some of the benefits and challenges of public/private partnerships.

**Tool Box:**
- Benefits and Challenges of Public/Private Partnerships
- *General Governance Models for School Districts Considering Expanding Access to Quality Preschool* (CSBA Tool Kit)
## Benefits and challenges of public-private partnerships

### For School Districts

**Benefits**
- Opportunity to connect with community-based providers before children enter school system
- Access to ready facilities and early education staff
- Allows more children to participate without high costs of building new facilities
- Child care provider takes on responsibility for regulatory and accreditation issues
- Community views schools as collaborative, not territorial
- Opportunity to reach families through existing channels

**Challenges**
- Concerns about program quality
- Philosophical differences across programs
- Private providers may place limits on pre-k “slots” due to financial concerns
- Qualifications and compensation of teachers/staff may vary
- Management issues may be hard to address
- Potential disparities in teacher compensation

### For Private Providers

**Benefits**
- Opportunity to combine professional development for staff
- Access to certified teachers and research-based curriculum
- Access to special education services for children
- May help meet financial goals
- School resources can be used for curriculum and supplies
- Programmatic improvements due to increased evaluation and assessment
- Possible career ladders for staff advancement

**Challenges**
- Real or perceived emphasis on academics rather than whole child development
- Fear that staff will pursue employment within school district
- Possible tension among staff regarding compensation, benefits, and work schedules
- Fear that school district will take over program and draw income away from business
- Potential mistrust of school district controlling

### For Families

**Benefits**
- Access to high-quality pre-k program
- Services offered in familiar community setting
- Certified teachers and child care providers work together to provide information to parents
- Parents receive early introduction to public school system
- Ability to have siblings in the same care environment
- Availability of “wrap around” services for full-day care
- Access to early assessment and intervention services

**Challenges**
- Uncertainty about which entity to turn to with questions or concerns
- Affordability of services
- Lack of choice in providers and settings
- Limited spaces available

---

*Source: Texas Association of School Boards, 2008*
General governance models for school districts considering expanding access to quality preschool

School district leaders considering how to expand access to quality preschool should be aware of a few general governance models or approaches to delivering these services. These approaches are currently being employed in various parts of the state, and have proven successful in providing access to quality preschool. Frequently these models are utilized in combination with one another—that is, a district will rely on multiple approaches in order to expand the availability of programs to children. Often these approaches rely on multiple (or “blended”) funding sources, and involve different types of partnerships or relationships between public and/or private entities, ideally to draw upon the strengths of all participants.

The purpose in describing these models here is to provide school leaders with a better context for understanding the ways local districts can play a meaningful role in the planning and provision of quality preschool services. Building on this context, local leaders should consider which approaches or combination of approaches meet their local needs. From a school district perspective, current service models include:

The school district administers and provides services directly at a site or sites.
This may be done through contracts, such as with the CDE Child Development Division, or as part of a program using other available resources such as Title 1 funds. In this model, the district is responsible for operating all aspects of the preschool program, including facilities, curriculum, funding, human resources and oversight. A blend of program funding is typically used to cover all of the costs.

The school district provides services at school sites through formal partnerships with other organizations.
In this case, the district may sub-contract some or most aspects of operation to one or more partner-providers. For example, in New Haven USD, the school district contracts with Kidango, Inc., which then operates preschool centers on multiple school sites. Another example of this model is the Marina West Child Development Center located on Oxnard School District property in Ventura County. This center-based program is funded through First 5 and parent fees, and operated by the private, non-profit agency, Continuing Development, Inc.

In this model, there is a shared vision and a formal contractual relationship between the district and the partner-provider. The school district may provide or help provide various types of support, such as budget and accounting assistance, facilities and physical maintenance, staff development, curriculum, and others. In this model, preschool instructors, aides and staff may be employed by the partner-providers and not directly by the district.

In both this model and the first model, one of the most commonly cited benefits is the proximity of preschool programs and staff to kindergarten and early elementary grade programs. This improves communication among staff in both programs, as well as with parents, and it helps ensure greater alignment of curriculum.

Some key governance considerations for districts seeking to expand access to quality preschool:

- Should the district run programs independently or in partnership with another government agency?
- Should the district contract out programs to other public or private preschool providers?
- Should the district work in collaboration with public or private preschool providers and not directly run programs?
- Would a combination of these approaches be feasible?
- Who has the local expertise and experience to help ensure program quality?
Preschool and child care services are provided directly by community-based centers, other agencies, or family care homes, while the school district works to maintain positive, collaborative relationships with these local providers to facilitate the successful transition of children into kindergarten.

In this model, no formal contractual relationship exists between the district and local providers, but there are active and consistent efforts by the district to collaborate, and a mutual commitment to ensure successful articulation. This informal collaboration might take the form of frequent, formalized communications between the district and providers, sharing of curriculum and resources, sharing of professional development opportunities, and other efforts.

Some of the advantages of this model include a high degree of flexibility to accommodate parents and families, and—for districts that lack facilities space or funding—an opportunity to become more actively engaged in the preschool arena without incurring new expenses.

Many districts that have already had success expanding access to quality preschool have utilized aspects from more than one of the above models. For instance, districts may provide some services directly to children at school sites using Title I funds or through a state preschool contract, while also operating one or more Head Start centers, formally partnering with other agencies to provide services at other sites, and/or collaborating informally with local providers in still other neighborhoods within the district to strengthen overall articulation.

Bridge models

In addition to these basic models, districts, county offices and other agencies are continually thinking creatively about ways to “bridge” relationships in order to serve more children. For instance, Elk Grove Unified School District is currently testing a new “bridging program” that enables district-hired preschool teachers (who are required to hold a credential) to teach in eligible center-based and family child care home programs for three hours per day, five days per week. This program is designed to meet the needs of children in their existing care settings by bringing services to the child rather than the child to the site; it also maximizes the number of children taught by credentialed teachers.

Each of the potential models has certain strengths and implications for school districts and communities relative to quality assurance, funding, facilities, curriculum, workforce, accountability, and other areas. Many of these issues are examined in more detail in Section 6 of this guide, “Key Issues and Considerations.”

Generally speaking, the first model enables districts to maintain the greatest control over areas such as curriculum, staffing and accountability; however, not all districts have access to the necessary facilities and staffing, and not all districts have the experience to operate programs, especially multiple programs that each have their own set of requirements. A wealth of expertise and experience can be gained by drawing on partners, as well as by collaborating with other nearby districts and the local county office.

Finally, it is important for school leaders to recognize that school districts and county offices, while playing important roles, do not necessarily need to create or operate their own, new preschool programs at each of their sites in order to effectively expand access. Other options and combinations of options exist. In fact, a key component of most recent statewide efforts to expand access has been to encourage local communities to build upon the existing system of providers and structures, of which individual districts and county offices may or may not currently be a part.

In some communities, the vast majority of children may currently be served by non-profit, for-profit and family child care providers. A significant first step for districts might be an effort to become more active in communicating and sharing with these existing preschool providers and the local early childhood education community, in an effort to promote dialogue and understanding about school readiness issues, kindergarten standards, and resources that the district may already have available.

Key Link:

See which districts in the state currently provide or partner to provide preschool services [www.csba.org/is/ps/preschoolmap].

Source: California School Boards Association, 2006
G. Ensure quality

The benefits of pre-k education are impressive; however, they vary greatly depending on the quality of each program. Therefore, it is important for school board members to give thorough consideration to how they will gauge the quality of their programs. School board members are not expected to be experts in early education. However, they should recognize that there are substantial differences between pre-k and K–12 education. High-quality early education encompasses multiple aspects of children’s development—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive—and requires different processes and elements to ensure the same quality than often exist within K–12.

Structure
Some of the most commonly used quality measures are structural benchmarks that are easily determined by numbers and certifications. For example a staff-child ratio of one-to-ten or lower, class size of less than twenty, and a lead teacher with a bachelor’s degree and specialized training in early childhood education have been identified as common benchmarks after years of researching high-quality programs. Many state pre-k programs have adopted one or more of these measures.

The National Institute for Early Education Research has developed a rubric of ten quality indicators to help policymakers in assessing program quality. From long-term research such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, the Abecedarian Project, and the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, they have identified the key characteristics of programs that have produced the strongest economic returns and other significant benefits.

Process
School leaders should not rely solely on the structural aspects of a program to ensure that children will receive a high-quality learning experience. Research shows that what happens inside the classroom—the interactions between teachers and students, the teacher’s implementation of a curriculum, and the learning standards in place—plays a significant role in preparing children for later school success. These process components are important aspects in evaluating the overall quality of a program.

There is wide agreement in the field that it is important to have a set of guidelines to ensure that all aspects of learning are addressed, and that there is a balance of teacher- and child-initiated activities. Tools such as the such as the Early Childhood Education Rating Scale (ECERS) exist to evaluate the various interactions that go on in a classroom between staff and children, parents, and among the children themselves, as well as the interactions children have with the many materials and activities in the environment. Such processes are assessed primarily through observation and have been found in some cases to be more predictive of child outcomes than structural indicators (Whitebook, Howes, and Phillips 1995).

Articulation
A vital element of any quality approach involves coordination between preschool staff and kindergarten and elementary school staff, and parents, about what is expected of children when they enter kindergarten. This also involves making certain there is a consistency in the curriculum and types of instruction that all children receive. Districts should consider the elements and strategies to put in place that will encourage communication and partnerships between preschool and kindergarten staff.
Many states have developed their own early learning standards for what preschool-aged children should know and be able to do. There are also national models such as the *Head Start Outcomes Framework* to help guide policymakers in decisions regarding age-appropriate instruction and assessment.

**Tool Box:**
- NIEER Quality Benchmarks
- Head Start Outcomes Framework
- Comparison of widely used quality indicators for early education programs (TX power point)
Ten Benchmarks of High-Quality Pre-K Programs:
(NIEER) National Institute for Early Education Research

1. Early learning standards
2. Teachers with BA Degree
3. Teachers with Specialized Pre-K – 4th Grade training
4. Assistant teacher with CDA or equivalent
5. Minimum 15 hours early childhood training yearly
6. Maximum class size of 20
7. Staff-child ratio of 1:10
8. Vision, health screening and support services
9. At least 1 meal per day
10. Site visits by regulatory agencies

Source: National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), State of Preschool Yearbook, 2007
The Head Start Child Outcomes Framework

Released in 2000, the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework is intended to guide Head Start programs in their curriculum planning and ongoing assessment of the progress and accomplishments of children. The Framework also is helpful to programs in their efforts to analyze and use data on child outcomes in program self-assessment and continuous improvement. The Framework is composed of 8 general Domains, 27 Domain Elements, and numerous examples of specific Indicators of children’s skills, abilities, knowledge, and behaviors. The Framework is based on the Head Start Program Performance Standards, the Head Start Program Performance Measures, provisions of the Head Start Act as amended in 1998, advice of the Head Start Bureau Technical Work Group on Child Outcomes, and a review of documents on assessment of young children and early childhood program accountability from a variety of state agencies and professional organizations.

- The Domains, Elements, and Indicators are presented as a framework of building blocks that are important for school success. The Framework is not an exhaustive list of everything a child should know or be able to do by the end of Head Start or entry into Kindergarten. The Framework is intended to guide assessment of three- to five-year-old children—not infants or toddlers enrolled in Early Head Start and not infants or toddlers in Migrant Head Start programs.

- The Framework guides agencies in selecting, developing, or adapting an instrument or set of tools for ongoing assessment of children’s progress. It is inappropriate to use the Framework as a checklist for assessing children. It also is inappropriate to use items in the Framework in place of thoughtful curriculum planning and individualization.

- Every Head Start program implements an appropriate child assessment system that aligns with their curriculum and gathers data on children’s progress in each of the 8 Domains of learning and development. At a minimum, because they are legislatively mandated, programs analyze data on 4 specific Domain Elements and 9 Indicators in various language, literacy, and numeracy skills, as indicated with a star ✫ in the chart. Local program child assessment occurs at least three times a year. The National Reporting System (NRS) child assessment includes measures of the mandated child outcomes.

- Information on children’s progress on the Domains, Domain Elements, and Indicators is obtained from multiple sources, such as teacher and home visitor observations, analysis of samples of children’s work and performance, parent reports, or direct assessment of children. Head Start assessment practices should reflect the assumption that children demonstrate progress over time in development and learning on a developmental continuum, in forms such as increasing frequency of a behavior or ability, increasing breadth or depth of knowledge and understanding, or increasing proficiency or independence in exercising a skill or ability.

### The Head Start Child Outcomes Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Domain Element</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Language Development** | Listening & Understanding | ♦ Demonstrates increasing ability to attend to and understand conversations, stories, songs, and poems.  
♦ Shows progress in understanding and following simple and multiple-step directions.  
☆ Understands an increasingly complex and varied vocabulary.  
☆ For non-English-speaking children, progresses in listening to and understanding English. |
|  | Speaking & Communicating | ☆ Develops increasing abilities to understand and use language to communicate information, experiences, ideas, feelings, opinions, needs, questions; and for other varied purposes.  
♦ Progresses in abilities to initiate and respond appropriately in conversation and discussions with peers and adults.  
☆ Uses an increasingly complex and varied spoken vocabulary.  
♦ Progresses in clarity of pronunciation and towards speaking in sentences of increasing length and grammatical complexity.  
☆ For non-English-speaking children, progresses in speaking English. |
|  | Phonological Awareness | ♦ Shows increasing ability to discriminate and identify sounds in spoken language.  
♦ Shows growing awareness of beginning and ending sounds of words.  
♦ Progresses in recognizing matching sounds and rhymes in familiar words, games, songs, stories, and poems.  
♦ Shows growing ability to hear and discriminate separate syllables in words.  
☆ Associates sounds with written words, such as awareness that different words begin with the same sound. |
| **Literacy** | Book Knowledge & Appreciation | ♦ Shows growing interest and involvement in listening to and discussing a variety of fiction and non-fiction books and poetry.  
♦ Shows growing interest in reading-related activities, such as asking to have a favorite book read; choosing to look at books; drawing pictures based on stories; asking to take books home; going to the library; and engaging in pretend-reading with other children.  
♦ Demonstrates progress in abilities to retell and dictate stories from books and experiences; to act out stories in dramatic play; and to predict what will happen next in a story.  
♦ Progresses in learning how to handle and care for books; knowing to view one page at a time in sequence from front to back; and understanding that a book has a title, author, and illustrator. |
|  | Print Awareness & Concepts | ♦ Shows increasing awareness of print in classroom, home, and community settings.  
♦ Develops growing understanding of the different functions of forms of print such as signs, letters, newspapers, lists, messages, and menus.  
♦ Demonstrates increasing awareness of concepts of print, such as that reading in English moves from top to bottom and from left to right, that speech can be written down, and that print conveys a message.  
♦ Shows progress in recognizing the association between spoken and written words by following print as it is read aloud.  
☆ Recognizes a word as a unit of print, or awareness that letters are grouped to form words, and that words are separated by spaces. |

☆ Indicates the 4 specific Domain Elements and 9 Indicators that are legislatively mandated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>DOMAIN ELEMENT</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| LITERACY (CONT)   | Early Writing      | ◆ Develops understanding that writing is a way of communicating for a variety of purposes.  
 ◆ Begins to represent stories and experiences through pictures, dictation, and in play.  
 ◆ Experiments with a growing variety of writing tools and materials, such as pencils, crayons, and computers.  
 ◆ Progresses from using scribbles, shapes, or pictures to represent ideas, to using letter-like symbols, to copying or writing familiar words such as their own name.  |
|                   | Alphabet Knowledge | ◆ Shows progress in associating the names of letters with their shapes and sounds.  
 ◆ Increases in ability to notice the beginning letters in familiar words.  
 ◆ Identifies at least 10 letters of the alphabet, especially those in their own name.  
 ◆ Knows that letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphics that can be individually named.  |
| MATHEMATICS       | ∗ Number & Operations | ◆ Demonstrates increasing interest and awareness of numbers and counting as a means for solving problems and determining quantity.  
 ◆ Begins to associate number concepts, vocabulary, quantities, and written numerals in meaningful ways.  
 ◆ Develops increasing ability to count in sequence to 10 and beyond.  
 ◆ Begins to make use of one-to-one correspondence in counting objects and matching groups of objects.  
 ◆ Begins to use language to compare numbers of objects with terms such as more, less, greater than, fewer, equal to.  
 ◆ Develops increased abilities to combine, separate and name “how many” concrete objects.  |
|                   | Geometry & Spatial Sense | ◆ Begins to recognize, describe, compare, and name common shapes, their parts and attributes.  
 ◆ Progresses in ability to put together and take apart shapes.  
 ◆ Begins to be able to determine whether or not two shapes are the same size and shape.  
 ◆ Shows growth in matching, sorting, putting in a series, and regrouping objects according to one or two attributes such as color, shape, or size.  
 ◆ Builds an increasing understanding of directionality, order, and positions of objects, and words such as up, down, over, under, top, bottom, inside, outside, in front, and behind.  |
|                   | Patterns & Measurement | ◆ Enhances abilities to recognize, duplicate, and extend simple patterns using a variety of materials.  
 ◆ Shows increasing abilities to match, sort, put in a series, and regroup objects according to one or two attributes such as shape or size.  
 ◆ Begins to make comparisons between several objects based on a single attribute.  
 ◆ Shows progress in using standard and non-standard measures for length and area of objects.  |
| SCIENCE           | Scientific Skills & Methods | ◆ Begins to use senses and a variety of tools and simple measuring devices to gather information, investigate materials, and observe processes and relationships.  
 ◆ Develops increased ability to observe and discuss common properties, differences and comparisons among objects and materials.  
 ◆ Begins to participate in simple investigations to test observations, discuss and draw conclusions, and form generalizations.  
 ◆ Develops growing abilities to collect, describe, and record information through a variety of means, including discussion, drawings, maps, and charts.  
 ◆ Begins to describe and discuss predictions, explanations, and generalizations based on past experiences.  |

∗ Indicates the 4 specific Domain Elements and 9 Indicators that are legislatively mandated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>DOMAIN ELEMENT</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| SCIENCE (Cont.)   | Scientific Knowledge | ◆ Expands knowledge of and abilities to observe, describe, and discuss the natural world, materials, living things, and natural processes.  
◆ Expands knowledge of and respect for their bodies and the environment.  
◆ Develops growing awareness of ideas and language related to attributes of time and temperature.  
◆ Shows increased awareness and beginning understanding of changes in materials and cause-effect relationships. |
| CREATIVE ARTS     | Music              | ◆ Participates with increasing interest and enjoyment in a variety of music activities, including listening, singing, finger plays, games, and performances.  
◆ Experiments with a variety of musical instruments. |
|                   | Art                | ◆ Gains ability in using different art media and materials in a variety of ways for creative expression and representation.  
◆ Progresses in abilities to create drawings, paintings, models, and other art creations that are more detailed, creative, or realistic.  
◆ Develops growing abilities to plan, work independently, and demonstrate care and persistence in a variety of art projects.  
◆ Begins to understand and share opinions about artistic products and experiences. |
|                   | Movement           | ◆ Expresses through movement and dancing what is felt and heard in various musical tempos and styles.  
◆ Shows growth in moving in time to different patterns of beat and rhythm in music. |
|                   | Dramatic Play      | ◆ Participates in a variety of dramatic play activities that become more extended and complex.  
◆ Shows growing creativity and imagination in using materials and in assuming different roles in dramatic play situations. |
| SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT | Self-Concept | ◆ Begins to develop and express awareness of self in terms of specific abilities, characteristics, and preferences.  
◆ Develops growing capacity for independence in a range of activities, routines, and tasks.  
◆ Demonstrates growing confidence in a range of abilities and expresses pride in accomplishments. |
|                   | Self-Control       | ◆ Shows progress in expressing feelings, needs, and opinions in difficult situations and conflicts without harming themselves, others, or property.  
◆ Develops growing understanding of how their actions affect others and begins to accept the consequences of their actions.  
◆ Demonstrates increasing capacity to follow rules and routines and use materials purposefully, safely, and respectfully. |
|                   | Cooperation        | ◆ Increases abilities to sustain interactions with peers by helping, sharing, and discussion.  
◆ Shows increasing abilities to use compromise and discussion in working, playing, and resolving conflicts with peers.  
◆ Develops increasing abilities to give and take in interactions; to take turns in games or using materials; and to interact without being overly submissive or directive. |

* Indicates the 4 specific Domain Elements and 9 Indicators that are legislatively mandated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOMAIN</th>
<th>DOMAIN ELEMENT</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL          | Social Relationships            | ◆ Demonstrates increasing comfort in talking with and accepting guidance and directions from a range of familiar adults.  
◆ Shows progress in developing friendships with peers.  
◆ Progresses in responding sympathetically to peers who are in need, upset, hurt, or angry; and in expressing empathy or caring for others.                                                                                                              |
| DEVELOPMENT (CONT.)         | Knowledge of Families &         | ◆ Develops ability to identify personal characteristics including gender and family composition.  
◆ Progresses in understanding similarities and respecting differences among people, such as genders, race, special needs, culture, language, and family structures.  
◆ Develops growing awareness of jobs and what is required to perform them.  
◆ Begins to express and understand concepts and language of geography in the contexts of their classroom, home, and community.                                                                                                           |
|                             | Communities                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| APPROACHES TO LEARNING      | Initiative &                    | ◆ Chooses to participate in an increasing variety of tasks and activities.  
◆ Develops increased ability to make independent choices.  
◆ Approaches tasks and activities with increased flexibility, imagination, and inventiveness.  
◆ Grows in eagerness to learn about and discuss a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks.                                                                                                                   |
|                             | Curiosity                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                             | Engagement &                    | ◆ Grows in abilities to persist in and complete a variety of tasks, activities, projects, and experiences.  
◆ Demonstrates increasing ability to set goals and develop and follow through on plans.  
◆ Shows growing capacity to maintain concentration over time on a task, question, set of directions or interactions, despite distractions and interruptions.                                                                                       |
|                             | Persistence                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                             | Reasoning &                     | ◆ Develops increasing ability to find more than one solution to a question, task, or problem.  
◆ Grows in recognizing and solving problems through active exploration, including trial and error, and interactions and discussions with peers and adults.  
◆ Develops increasing abilities to classify, compare and contrast objects, events, and experiences.                                                                                                              |
|                             | Problem Solving                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| PHYSICAL HEALTH &           | Gross Motor Skills              | ◆ Shows increasing levels of proficiency, control, and balance in walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, and galloping.  
◆ Demonstrates increasing abilities to coordinate movements in throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing balls, and using the slide and swing.                                                                                           |
| DEVELOPMENT                 | Fine Motor Skills               | ◆ Develops growing strength, dexterity, and control needed to use tools such as scissors, paper punch, stapler, and hammer.  
◆ Grows in hand-eye coordination in building with blocks, putting together puzzles, reproducing shapes and patterns, stringing beads, and using scissors.  
◆ Progresses in abilities to use writing, drawing, and art tools including pencils, markers, chalk, paint brushes, and various types of technology.                                                                |
|                             | Health Status &                | ◆ Progresses in physical growth, strength, stamina, and flexibility.  
◆ Participates actively in games, outdoor play, and other forms of exercise that enhance physical fitness.  
◆ Shows growing independence in hygiene, nutrition, and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth, and toileting.  
◆ Builds awareness and ability to follow basic health and safety rules such as fire safety, traffic and pedestrian safety, and responding appropriately to potentially harmful objects, substances, and activities. |
|                             | Practices                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

* Indicates the 4 specific Domain Elements and 9 Indicators that are legislatively mandated.
## Comparison of Different Quality Indicators for Pre-K Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>NIEER National Institute for Early Education Research</th>
<th>CLASS Classroom Assessment Scoring System</th>
<th>QRS Quality Rating Systems</th>
<th>ECERS Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicators</strong></td>
<td>NIEER defines 10 quality standards for state-funded pre-k programs.</td>
<td>CLASS is an observational tool developed by the University of Virginia to evaluate classroom and instructional quality.</td>
<td>QRS is a rating system of quality in early child care and education settings. Currently, 14 states have QRS systems in place.</td>
<td>ECERS is an observational tool developed at the University of North Carolina to evaluate early child care and education settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>According to NIEER, state pre-k programs should require:</td>
<td></td>
<td>QRS systems vary by state, but they share five common elements:</td>
<td>ECERS examines 43 items in 7 categories:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- early learning standards</td>
<td></td>
<td>- standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- teacher with BA</td>
<td></td>
<td>- accountability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- teacher with pre-k training</td>
<td></td>
<td>- program/practitioner outreach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- assistant teacher with CDA</td>
<td></td>
<td>- financing incentives linked to quality standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- min. 15 hrs training yearly</td>
<td></td>
<td>- parent education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- max. class size of 20</td>
<td></td>
<td>Many QRS incorporate the ECERS scale to rate programs (see next column).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- staff-child ratio of 1:10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- vision, health screening &amp; supports</td>
<td></td>
<td>Early child care and education programs are rated on a 1-7 scale with 7 being the highest.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- at least one meal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- site visits by state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scores</strong></td>
<td>States are ranked according to the number of quality standards required by state policy. NIEER publishes the rankings yearly.</td>
<td>Classrooms are rated by trained observers on each “dimension” on a 1-7 with 7 being the highest.</td>
<td>Early child care and education programs are awarded scores which work like hotel or restaurant ratings. Some states use star ratings.</td>
<td>Early child care and education programs are rated on a 1-7 scale with 7 being the highest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used by:</strong></td>
<td>Policymakers and advocates for the purpose of examining state pre-k policy.</td>
<td>Researchers, administrators, policymakers, and practitioners for the purpose of program evaluation and professional development.</td>
<td>Parents and other consumers of early child care and education programs. Also administrators and policymakers for the purpose of program improvement.</td>
<td>Primarily intended for providers and administrators for continuous improvement. Also used frequently by early childhood researchers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**H. Secure funding**

At the local level, the cost of providing pre-k programs and the funding mechanisms used to finance them depends in large part on program design, the qualifications of staff, and the background of children served. Funding issues are complicated further because state and federal programs like Head Start and a state’s preschool program may only serve certain eligible students. Identifying and then securing the necessary funding to implement a high-quality program is one of the toughest pre-k challenges that school board members will face.

While multiple funding streams exist that will support early education efforts, generally none of them are adequate or reliable enough to fulfill the needs of most communities. The most successful approach typically involves leveraging a mixture of local, state, and federal resources. To do this effectively, you need to know what is available at each level.

**Local**

Most cities and towns can raise local tax revenues to help finance pre-k programs. Denver, for example, enacted a specialized sales tax; others have pursued more traditional property tax increases. Business taxes are another option to consider. In addition, some cities such as San Francisco have passed local ballot initiatives that require a portion of their general revenues be spent on early education.

**State**

In Fiscal Year 2008, forty states and the District of Columbia provided funding to support some type of public pre-k program. Only Oklahoma and Georgia, however, currently support universal access for all four-year olds. Most states allocate dollars through competitive or categorical grant programs that award funds to local service providers, including school districts.

In addition, eleven states and the District of Columbia now allocate pre-k funding through their school funding formulas. These states vary in how they fold pre-k into their formulas, and whether they cap the total amount of funds available or target specific groups of students. (See Tool Box)

**Federal**

Funds from a number of different federal education programs can be used to support pre-k efforts in school districts. These generally are not enough to sustain a full-time program in your district; however, they can be helpful in providing additional resources to improve or expand programs.

- **Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):** Part A funds may be used for preschool services for at-risk children within Title I-funded schools and school districts at the discretion of the school or school district.

- **Head Start:** School districts are eligible grantees of this six billion dollar federal program. In addition, some states such as Illinois, New Jersey, and Wisconsin have developed significant collaborations between Head Start and state-funded pre-k programs.

---

**Did you know...**

Missouri uses gaming revenues to fund its pre-k program, while Arkansas relies on a beer tax in additional to general revenue?
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): Part C funds are set aside for three- and four-year olds to attend pre-k in a variety of settings.

School board members may also want to pursue philanthropic funding to support their initiative. Many local foundations have been known to support early education programs in their communities. In addition, national funders may be interested in providing help if there is something unique or compelling about your district’s efforts.

Although the addition of private funds can certainly help to get a program up and running, if there is not a long-term commitment to your program, they can pose challenges for sustainability in future years. School board members should also keep in mind that funding from outside sources can also create additional bureaucratic hurdles.

Tool Box:
- States that Use School Funding Formula to Finance Pre-k
- Federal funds available for pre-k
## States that use school funding formula to finance pre-k

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>UNRESTRICTED ELIGIBILITY</th>
<th>TARGETED PRE-K</th>
<th>CAPPED FUNDING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colorado</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa*†</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maine</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia†</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Iowa will fund pre-k through the school funding formula beginning in FY09.*

† Iowa and West Virginia have laws in place that will fully fund pre-k for all four year olds through the school funding formula by 2011 and 2012 respectively.

Source: Pre-K Now. Funding the Future: States’ Approaches to Pre-K Finance. Washington, DC, 2008
### Federal funds that can be used for pre-K programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Funding Amount</th>
<th>Program Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>$6 billion in FY07 supported approximately one million children in nearly 50,000 classrooms</td>
<td>The only national funding source specifically aimed at school readiness programs and is restricted to children from low-income families with a set aside for children with disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title I, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA),</td>
<td>In 2005–2006, Title I funding was used to support pre-k in 11 states. It is estimated to comprise a small portion of overall funding.</td>
<td>The largest source of federal K–12 education funds for low-income and at-risk children. Funds can be used to establish, supplement, or expand components of early childhood programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Reading First</td>
<td>$117 million provided for competitive grants in FY07</td>
<td>Supports the development of early childhood centers that help low-income pre-k children develop early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)</td>
<td>$2 billion in block grants to states in FY07</td>
<td>The primary federal program, which subsidizes child care for low-income families. Use of CCDBG is subject to income and work requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C</td>
<td>$380 million in FY05 to support 700,000 three- and four-year-olds to attend pre-k in a variety of settings</td>
<td>Guarantees a free, appropriate public education to children with disabilities. Part C of the program specifically supports early intervention efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)</td>
<td>$16.5 billion in block grants to states in FY06 to support low-income families with children.</td>
<td>Funds can be used for state pre-k programs targeted for low-income, at-risk children. Use of funds is subject to requirements regarding parents’ employment status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Impact Aid</td>
<td>$1.2 billion in FY07 to approximately 1,300 local education agencies</td>
<td>Provides funds to school districts that serve military-dependent children and children residing on Indian lands, military bases, or low-rent housing properties, including children in pre-k programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National School Boards Association, 2008
I. Be an advocate

When working to establish a pre-k program in your district or even after you have been successful in your efforts, you can be powerful advocates in helping to generate broader support for early education efforts in your communities, states, and at the federal level. As education leaders in your communities, you have firsthand knowledge of what is needed to ensure that children are able to succeed in school. You also possess the clout needed to raise important issues with your state and federal legislators. Your efforts can help to ensure that your own initiative is successful, but more important, future generations of children will be able to benefit from high-quality pre-k programs.

NSBA offers a key opportunity for you to make your voice heard at the federal level on pre-k through its pre-k Legislative Committee. School board members receive information and tools to support them in lobbying Congress to expand access and improve the quality of voluntary pre-k programs.

Tool Box:

- Pre-k committee fact sheet
Fact Sheet

Overview:
The Pre-K Legislative Committee is a network of school board members that is dedicated to improving access to and the quality of voluntary pre-k programs through federal legislative advocacy. Committee members will play a pivotal role in helping to advance NSBA's federal pre-k agenda to increase the national investment in voluntary pre-k programs across states.

Who can participate?
Invitations to join were sent to all members of the Federal Relations Network (FRN), National Affiliate Advocacy Network (NAAN), and the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE).

Why join?
The committee offers local school board members a unique opportunity to lobby their members of Congress on pre-k issues and to influence policymaking in Washington. Members will also become a resource on pre-k issues for their districts.

What’s expected?
Committee members will be responsible for contacting members of Congress about pre-k issues, sharing information with other school board members and the community to generate support for federal action on pre-k, and providing district data and examples to assist NSBA in its lobbying efforts.

What will NSBA provide?
As a member of the committee, school board members will receive timely information on the latest pre-k developments such as studies from the Center for Public Education and updates from Washington. In addition, committee members will participate in the pre-k network listserv, conference calls and specialized programming at NSBA conferences.

Relationship with National Affiliate Program:
The Pre-K Legislative Committee offers National Affiliate school districts a specialized opportunity to participate more directly in NSBA's federal advocacy efforts. As a committee member, districts will work directly with NSBA's lobbying staff and become a key resource to members of Congress on pre-k issues. In addition, the committee will help strengthen NSBA's advocacy network and build expertise among National Affiliate school board members.

Source: National School Boards Association, 2007
J. From vision to reality

Increasingly, school board members recognize the important benefits that high-quality pre-k has for children, families, and schools in your communities. However, developing a high-quality pre-k initiative takes time and thoughtful consideration. From establishing public support, to determining the specific aspects of the program, to securing funding, there are many decisions and policy choices to be made along the way. The steps and strategies outlined in this tool kit, and summarized in the checklist included in this section’s Tool Box, are intended to help you, the school board member, to navigate your way through this process.

Ultimately, we hope this information will lead you to make more informed choices about pre-k in your districts and to eventually play a larger role in early education policy discussions. School boards have a critical role to play in local efforts to increase the supply and quality of preschool programs in your communities. In addition, they are especially well positioned to provide leadership on statewide and federal efforts to expand access to quality preschool programs.

Tool Box:

- Pre-k plan checklist
Pre-k plan checklist

Below is a list of strategies that school leaders can undertake to help them create or expand access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs in their districts. The list is not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather a quick reference guide for school leaders looking to take action.

Discuss your ideas:
- Develop a vision for the board’s work.
- Adopt a board resolution supporting pre-k.

Learn more about pre-k:
- Review the research on early childhood education, especially pre-k.
- Understand the historical and political context of early childhood education in your state.
- Familiarize yourself with local organizations and preschool providers.

Engage the community:
- Invite local organizations and preschool providers to learn more about the work the school district is doing.
- Conduct district community forums to gather feedback on pre-k.
- Appoint a district preschool committee to discuss ideas and plans.
- Inform the media about the district’s work relative to pre-k.

Lay the foundation:
- Conduct a needs assessment regarding supply and demand.
- Review the cost and financing options for programs.
- Review workforce and facility needs.
- Adopt developmentally appropriate, academic standards for pre-k.

Design a program:
- Determine program details (e.g., full/part-day, universal/targeted).
- Establish partnerships with existing providers to offer services.
- Develop articulation agreements with outside providers.
- Establish accountability measures.

Implement:
- Enroll children.
- Dedicate funding to support programs.

Share your knowledge:
- Educate state and national policymakers about pre-k-related issues.
- Participate in local and statewide events and organizations.

Source: The Center for Public Education, 2008
K. Other resources:

The Center for Public Education: www.centerforpubliceducation.org
The Center is working with state school boards associations on an initiative to inform local school board members, state policymakers, and the general public about the benefits of pre-k education and effective pre-k policies and programs. The web site provides easy-to-access research, information and resources for engaging communities around pre-k. Sign up for the monthly e-newsletter, Pre-K Primer, to learn what states and communities are doing to expand access to high-quality pre-k.

State School Board Association partners:
Kansas Association of School Boards www.kasb.org
Ohio School Boards Association www.osba-ohio.org
Texas Association of School Boards www.tasb.org
Kentucky School Boards Association www.ksba.org
Alabama School Boards Association www.asba.org

NSBA's Pre-k Legislative Committee: http://www.nsba.org/prekcommittee
A committee of school board members who advocate to expand, access, and improve the quality of voluntary pre-k programs through federal action.

National Institute for Early Education Research: www.nieer.org
A research center affiliated with Rutgers University that provides information and research about pre-k. In addition to useful publications and communication tools, NIEER publishes a state-by-state yearbook on the state of pre-k across the country.

The Pew Charitable Trusts: www.pewtrusts.org
A philanthropic foundation that supports pre-k for 3- and 4-year-olds. This web site has information about its Pre-k Initiative along with media resources, fact sheets and other related materials.

Pre-k Now: www.preknow.org
A national advocacy organization that promotes universal high-quality pre-k education for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Committee for Economic Development (CED): www.ced.org
A national organization that has authored several publications aimed at the business community, making the case for effective pre-k programs.
Foundation for Child Development:  http://www.fcd-us.org
A national, private philanthropy focused on children’s education issues PK-3.

A research center at Georgetown University focuses on early childhood education, including research on pre-k programs, child care programs, and Head Start. Their web site houses research information on the Tulsa, OK pre-k study.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): www.naeyc.org
A professional organization that promotes excellence in early childhood education. This web site provides early education curriculum, child assessments, and program evaluation tools.

Provides guidance on the use of Title I dollars for preschool programs and information on Early Reading First grant funding that can be used to prepare young children to enter kindergarten.

Administers the Head Start program.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine: www.nap.edu/books/0309069882/html/
Published From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development (2000)—a seminal review of the research in the neurobiological, behavioral and social sciences relative to the early childhood years.

Council for Chief State School Officers: www.ccsso.org
CCSSO has several initiatives dedicated to improving early education access and quality. This site is a rich source of presentations, data, organizations, and other resources with a state focus.