

Overview Brief: Ohio Preliminary Results from Telephone Survey (Revised December 11, 2009)

Policy Debate on Pre-K Expansion

State-funded Pre-K programs represent the most rapidly expanding segment of the U.S. educational system. Debate exists about whether the expansion of state-funded universal Pre-K will positively or negatively affect the supply and quality of child care for low-income working families.

The debate stems from whether Pre-K expansion will contribute to (or detract from) the already available early child care and education resources within communities. Some stakeholders believe Pre-K programs have the potential to positively affect local early education programs and organizations (e.g., child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start, or faith-based providers) by adding funds, elevating standards, and/or introducing more stringent monitoring.

On the contrary, others caution that Pre-K programs may have unintentional negative effects, such as siphoning highly qualified teachers away from local organizations. Another concern is that Pre-K programs will result in the preschool-age population being separated from infants/toddlers and school age children. Still, others argue that low-income working families may not be able to take advantage of Pre-K expansion efforts if such services are not offered via a *mixed-delivery system* that include

collaborative partnerships with local child care centers.

Ohio's Pre-K Programs

There were two state-funded Pre-K programs in Ohio during 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years. Based on data from the National Institute of Early Education Research's (NIEER) *State of Preschool Yearbook 2008*, we describe the characteristics of these programs for the 2007-2008 school year.

The *Early Childhood Education* program provided free education to 3- to 4-year-olds living in families whose income was up to 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL), with those over 100% having to pay a sliding scale fee. School districts can receive funds directly and can then subcontract with Head Start programs or private child care centers, if they choose. The ECE program offered school-day, school-year education services to a total number of 6,092 at a cost of \$4,656.00 per child. The ECE program was only offered in 28% of the state's school districts. In terms of structural quality indicators, the ECE program required teachers in public schools to have an Associate's (AA) Degree and those outside of public school to have a Child Development Associate (CDA). The maximum class size for 4-year-olds in this program was capped at 28, and the teacher-child ratio was 1:14.

The *Early Learning Initiative (ELI)* provided free education to 3- to 4-year-olds living in families that were within 185% of the FPL. Under this Pre-K program, public schools, Head Starts, private and faith-based child care centers received funds directly from the state. These agencies could then further subcontract with like agencies or even family child care providers. ELI provided full-day, full-year academic services to children whose parents were working. This program served 13,049 children at \$8,491.00 per child, and it was available in 91% of the counties. For structural indicators of quality, the ELI program only required teachers to have a high school diploma. For 4-year-olds classes they mandated maximum class sizes and a teacher-child ratio of 20 and 1:10, respectively. (This program was discontinued in the 2009-2010 school year due to state budget cuts.)

Ohio's third pre-k option is not state-wide. It is the **Universal Pre-K Early Childhood Initiative (UPK)** that is specific to Cuyahoga County. Funds for UPK come from local public and private sources, including the investments 23 private foundations. In the 2007-2008 school year, the program was funded at nearly \$3 million, and 998 children were served in 61 classrooms across 24 county sites. The funds were used to provide resources to enhance program quality as well as provide supplemental scholarships to families at/below 400% of the FPL. UPK programs can be delivered in public or private schools, Head Starts, ELI programs, child care centers, and family child care homes. In terms of structural quality indicators, teachers must be working towards a college degree and will be provided with professional development in early

childhood education and training regarding children with special needs. Like the other programs, the teacher-child ratio is set at 1:10 and the group size is maxed at 20 children. This UPK initiative is spearheaded by *Invest in Children*, and the plan comprises a multiphased rollout that extends until 2019.

Description of Our Study

Researchers at the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), together with colleagues at Rutgers University, are engaged in a three-year longitudinal study designed to address questions about the impact of Pre-K expansion on the supply and quality of child care for low-income families. We analyzed existing state and county resource and referral (R&R) datasets and newly collected survey data. Both R&R and telephone survey data were collected in the 2007-2008 (*Wave 1*) and 2008-2009 (*Wave 2*) school years. Part I of our study examines changes in child care supply and quality using R&R data. Part II, the telephone survey, was designed to address questions about how the expansion of Pre-K might provide low-income, working families with access to high quality early learning environments when Pre-K services are delivered in collaborative partnerships with local child care centers.

Data Sources for Part II of Study

Part II of the study compares the telephone survey responses from directors in Pre-K Partnering child care centers with non-Partnering Comparison centers. "Partnership" was defined as a center receiving funds from the county or state to offer Pre-K services to 3- to 5-year-olds.

This research brief summarizes data from the telephone surveys of directors in Cuyahoga and Franklin Counties in Ohio. During a 12-15 minute telephone survey, directors answered questions about their centers' students, staff, and services.

Sample

In the Spring of 2008 (Wave 1), we called 436 child care center directors from Franklin and Cuyahoga Counties, and in the Spring of 2009 (Wave 2) we followed-up with 353 of the original child care directors.

**Figure 1.1:
Pre-K Partnering Centers vs. Comparison Centers**

	2007-08 (n = 435)			2008-09 (n = 353)		
	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Total by Status	Cuyahoga	Franklin	Total by Status
Pre-K Partnering	51% (112)	40% (86)	198	54% (95)	50% (88)	183
Comparison	49% (110)	60% (127)	237	46% (81)	50% (89)	170
Total by County	222	213		176	177	

Key Findings

Funding

- ❖ In both waves, most Pre-K Partnering centers were funded by ELI. More directors from Cuyahoga County reported receiving funds from ELI than Franklin directors reported. In addition, slightly more Cuyahoga directors from Pre-K Partnering centers reported receiving universal pre-k funds from the county.

Children's Access

- ❖ When Pre-K and child care centers partner, children can have access to full-time education. In both waves, approximately two thirds of the children in the centers received Pre-K funds. These funds covered the cost of attending for more than 8 hours per day, 5 days per week. There were no differences across school years. The percentage of children attending full-time did not vary by children's age groups.
- ❖ In the 2007-2008 school year, Pre-K Partnering centers served *fewer* preschoolers than comparison centers, but they served *more* school age children. The age groups of children served changed in 2008-2009: Pre-K Partnering centers served *more* toddlers, *fewer* preschoolers, and *more* school-age children.
- ❖ Although it is true that programs tend to serve age groups separately, this is less the case for Pre-K Partnering centers than it is for Comparison centers, and this effect is seen in both waves.
- ❖ In both waves, Pre-K Partnering centers are more likely to serve minorities than are Comparison centers; however, Pre-K programs are not more likely to serve English Language Learners.
- ❖ On average, across both years, Pre-K Partnering reported serving a higher percentage of low-income families (those with annual incomes of \$32,000 or less).

Health & Education Services

- ❖ When compared to other centers, Pre-K Partnering centers were more likely to refer children to free health and development screenings such as vision, hearing, and

developmental delay screening. This was true in both waves of data collection.

- ❖ Pre-K Partnering centers were more likely to use a standard curriculum in Wave 1 and Wave 2 than were comparison centers.
- ❖ Pre-K centers were not more likely to be NAEYC accredited than comparisons, but they were more likely to report seeking accreditation.

Teaching Staff

- ❖ Pre-K Partnering centers in both waves had a higher percentage of teachers with Child Development Associate's (CDA) credentials versus comparison centers.
- ❖ In Wave 1, directors from Cuyahoga reported employing more preschool teachers with Early Child Education (ECE) credentials than those from Franklin did, and this was true in Wave 2 as well.
- ❖ Pre-K Partnering centers were less likely than comparison centers to employ preschool teachers with Bachelor's degrees, but they were more likely to employ teachers with Associate's degrees. In Wave 1, Cuyahoga County was more likely to have more teachers with AA degrees than Franklin.

Related References

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