

Education



Since the 1980s, Illinois has made significant public investments in early childhood development and learning programs. With bipartisan support, advocate collaboration and constituency building, the state embarked on a long-standing commitment to funding and sustaining high-quality early learning initiatives.

Illinois' history of supporting early childhood learning shows in enrollment data over time. Since 1987, public preschool enrollment across the state has steadily grown—increasing 1,125 percent in 20 years.

The biggest gains may be yet to come. In 2006, the Preschool for All legislation made Illinois the first state to commit to offering voluntary, high-quality preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds. Preschool for All expanded the existing State Pre-Kindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure.

The program's promising future holds some uncertainty because it is neither permanently authorized nor fully funded. More time and resources are needed to reach the goal of "for all." During expansion, programs serving children at-risk of school failure are the first priority for new funding, followed by programs serving families earning up to four times the federal poverty level (\$82,600 for a family of four in 2007). In the meantime, Preschool

for All continues to prioritize services for at-risk children, and few programs serving middle-income families have been funded.

Among elementary and secondary public schools, one of the most significant changes has involved student body composition. While overall student enrollment in public schools has climbed steadily from 1985—increasing nearly 14 percent—the Latino student population has more than doubled during that period.

In the 1985-1986 school year, Latinos comprised only 8 percent of the student body. Twenty years later, they make up nearly 20 percent. This follows the trends of race and ethnicity breakdowns for the overall child population in Illinois and is an indicator of the large numbers of Latino families who have settled in the state. Changes in student enrollment, however, have not significantly affected all school districts across Illinois, mainly districts in and around urban areas.

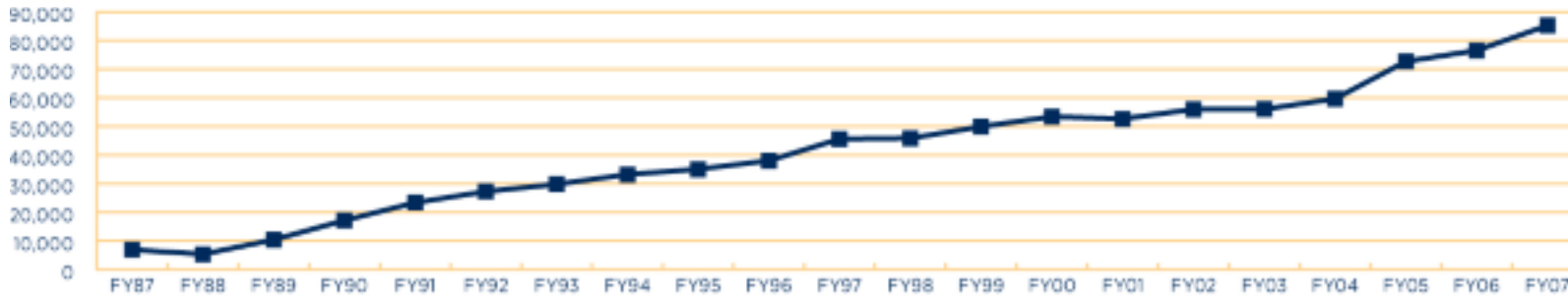
The number of students receiving special education also is rising—a trend that presents both fiscal and educational challenges for public schools. Since 1985, special education enrollment has increased 36 percent—twice the rate of general public school

enrollment. As of fall 2005, children and youth in special education made up approximately 16 percent of the total public school population. Part of the growth is due to the expansion of the "disability" definition under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Additionally, more students with disabilities from birth to age five are being identified and participating in early intervention services.

A key issue for Illinois school districts is education funding. The majority, 57 percent, of Illinois' public school funding comes from local property taxes, leading to wide disparities across districts. State funding is intended to mitigate the gap; however, Illinois contributes a relatively small share, 34 percent, compared with the national average of 47 percent, leaving educational resources dependent on local property values.

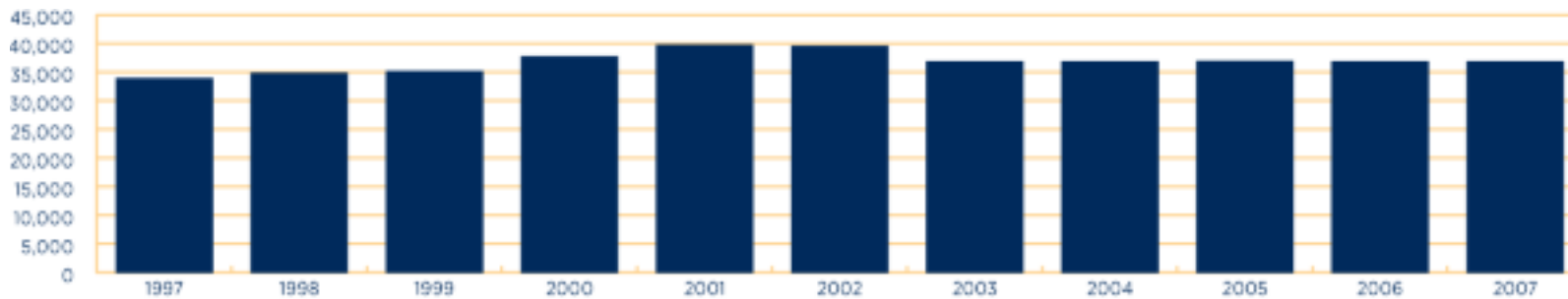
Over the past 20 years, Illinois has made major advancements in early childhood education, but more must be done—and the state lags behind the rest of the country in its public school funding level. One thing is certain: The student body composition will continue to change as new immigrants settle in Illinois and rely on public schools to advance their education, underscoring the need for dedication to better school supports and policies.

Illinois Pre-Kindergarten At-Risk Program Enrollment



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Head Start Enrollment in Illinois



Source: Illinois Department of Human Services Head Start State Collaboration Office

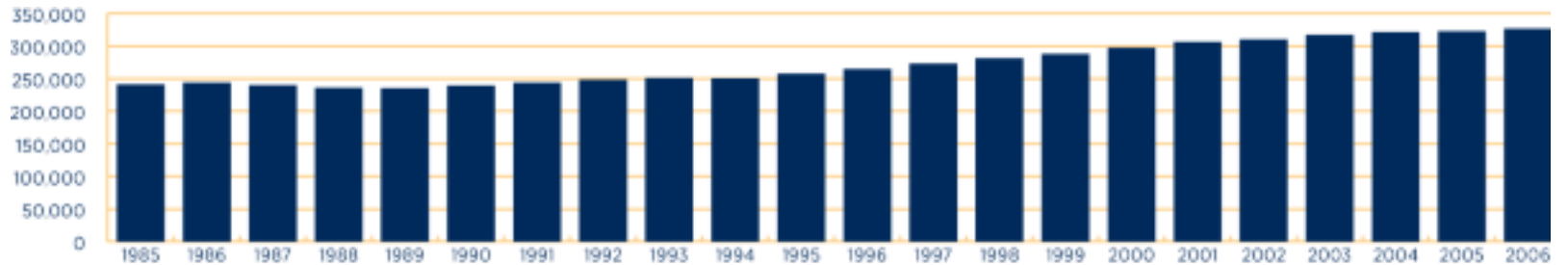
Illinois Public School Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	Fall 1985	Fall 1989	Fall 1993	Fall 1997	Fall 2001	Fall 2005
Total number	1,821,278	1,792,356	1,898,494	1,996,184	2,071,391	2,111,706
White	67%	66%	65%	63%	59%	56%
Black	22%	22%	21%	21%	21%	20%
Latino	8%	9%	11%	13%	16%	19%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

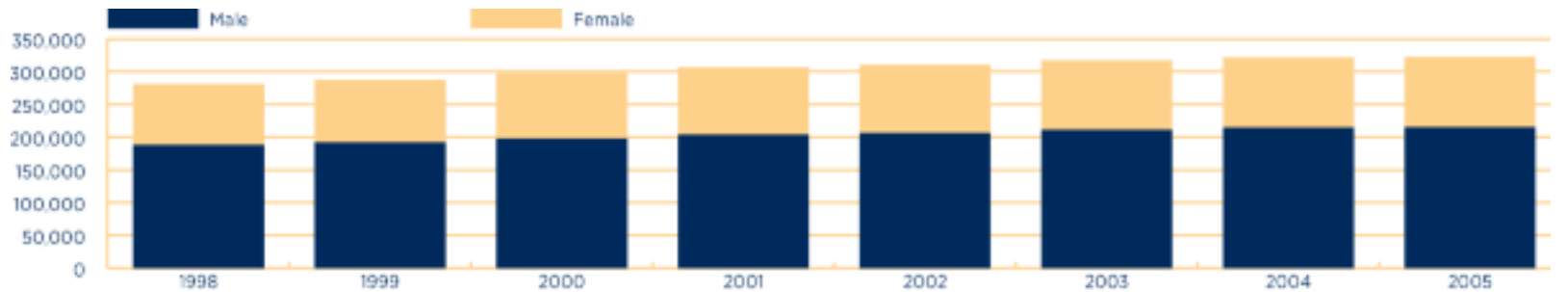
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Illinois Public School Students, Ages 3 to 21, Receiving Special Education



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Illinois Public School Students with Disabilities by Gender, Ages 3 to 21



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Illinois Public School Students with Disabilities by Race/Ethnicity, Ages 3 to 21

	Fall 1998	Fall 1999	Fall 2000	Fall 2001	Fall 2002	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	% Change
White	185,427	188,139	191,047	193,945	194,814	196,487	197,126	195,508	5.4%
Black	64,515	66,061	69,373	71,286	71,590	73,134	73,659	73,314	13.6%
Latino	27,998	29,816	33,118	36,662	39,525	42,690	45,552	48,174	72.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2,959	3,171	3,434	3,759	3,992	4,480	4,738	5,086	71.9%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	248	288	344	345	339	362	426	459	85.1%
Total	281,147	287,475	297,316	305,997	310,260	317,153	321,501	322,541	14.7%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates for Public Secondary Schools, Illinois and U.S.

	Illinois	U.S.
1990-1991	76.6	73.7
1991-1992	77.6	74.2
1992-1993	77.5	73.8
1993-1994	76.3	73.1
1994-1995	74.8	71.8
1995-1996	75.2	71.0
1996-1997	76.1	71.3
1997-1998	76.8	71.3
1998-1999	76.0	71.1
1999-2000	76.3	71.7
2000-2001	75.6	71.7
2001-2002	77.1	72.6
2002-2003	75.9	73.9
2003-2004	80.3	74.3
2004-2005	79.4	74.7

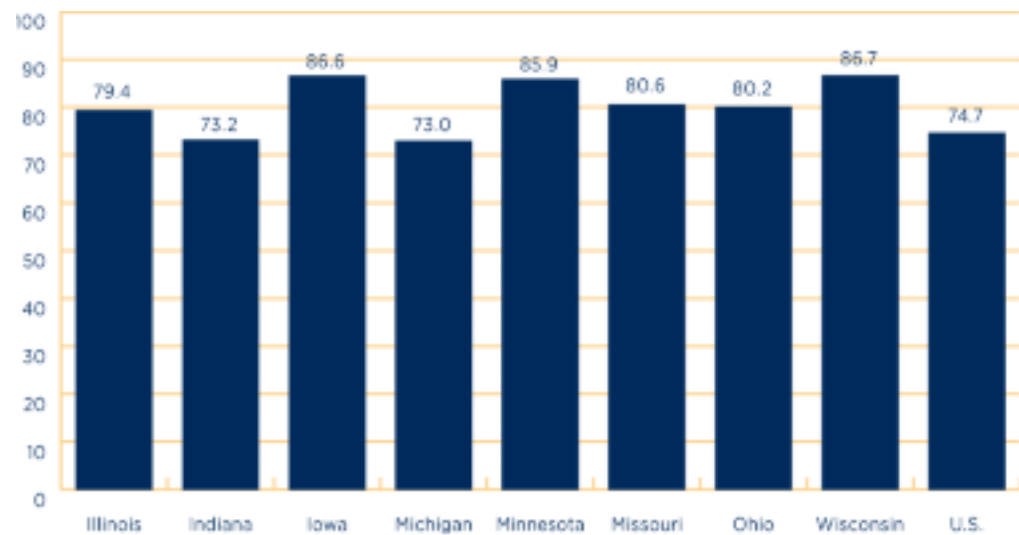
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Event Dropout Rates for Illinois Public School Students in Grades 9-12

1993-1994	6.8
1994-1995	6.6
1995-1996	6.4
1996-1997	6.6
1997-1998	6.9
1998-1999	6.5
1999-2000	6.2
2000-2001	6.0
2001-2002	6.4
2002-2003	5.7
2003-2004	5.3

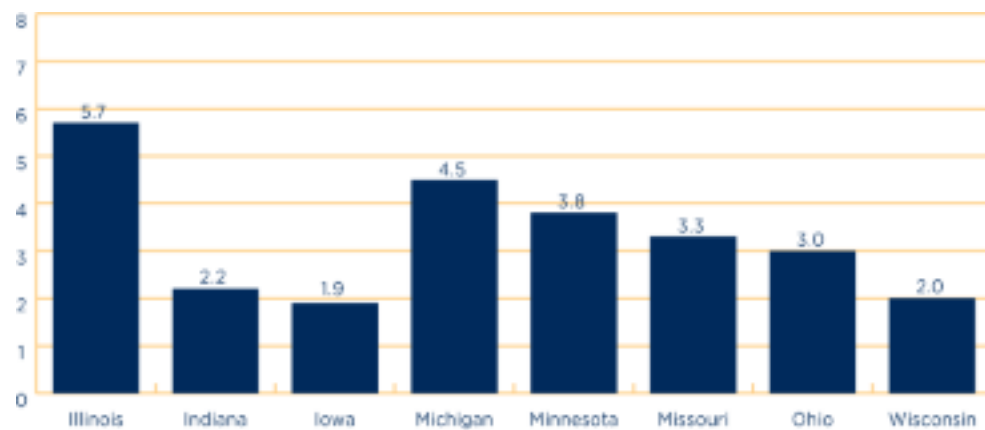
Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Averaged Freshman Graduation Rates for Public Secondary Schools, Midwestern States and U.S., 2004-2005



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Event Dropout Rates for Midwestern Public School Students in Grades 9-12, 2002-2003



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

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Share of Funding for Public Schools, Illinois and U.S.

	1991-1992	1992-1993	1993-1994	1994-1995	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Illinois														
State funds	33.6%	33.1%	33.0%	33.7%	33.1%	33.5%	33.5%	35.9%	37.0%	36.7%	36.7%	35.6%	35.5%	34.1%
Local funds	60.4%	60.9%	61.4%	60.7%	61.2%	60.3%	59.8%	57.2%	55.5%	55.5%	55.6%	55.9%	56.0%	57.2%
Federal funds	6.0%	6.0%	5.6%	5.6%	5.8%	6.3%	6.7%	6.9%	7.5%	7.8%	7.7%	8.5%	8.6%	8.7%
U.S.														
State funds	47.3%	46.4%	45.9%	47.5%	48.1%	48.8%	49.0%	49.5%	49.8%	49.9%	49.4%	49.0%	47.1%	47.0%
Local funds	46.2%	46.9%	47.6%	46.0%	45.5%	44.8%	44.4%	43.6%	43.1%	43.0%	42.8%	42.7%	43.9%	43.9%
Federal funds	6.4%	6.6%	6.5%	6.6%	6.4%	6.4%	6.7%	6.9%	7.1%	7.1%	7.8%	8.4%	8.9%	9.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Fifty-seven percent of Illinois public school funding comes from local property taxes. The state contributes a relatively small share, only 34 percent.

Per Pupil Revenue for Public Schools, Midwestern States and U.S., 2004-2005

	State funds	Local funds
Illinois	\$3,442	\$5,775
Indiana	\$5,149	\$5,378
Iowa	\$4,290	\$4,273
Michigan	\$6,307	\$3,311
Minnesota	\$7,207	\$2,508
Missouri	\$4,027	\$4,359
Ohio	\$4,674	\$5,415
Wisconsin	\$5,551	\$4,788
U.S.	\$4,774	\$4,463

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

A Universal Approach to Improving the Lives of Young Children

By Eboni C. Howard, Ph.D

Director, Herr Research Center for Children and Social Policy at Erikson Institute

In this essay I am charged with focusing on two questions: (1) Which early childhood policies have had the greatest impact on Illinois children; and (2) how can Illinois improve early childhood outcomes for the next generation? In thinking about my response, I found myself stumped by two questions of my own. First, what do we mean by “early childhood policies”? And second, how do we define “impact”? We can measure impact only after we have clearly defined the scope of the problem and our expectations for progress and success.

What is Early Childhood Policy?

The term “early childhood policy” evades definition, for it generally refers to a wide range of policies intended to address individual, family and community problems that influence young children’s development. Although some policies target discrete “stages” of life, such as birth to age 3, early childhood typically spans the prenatal period through the first eight years of life. Examples of such policies can be found across multiple issue areas, such as education, health, housing, poverty, immigration, taxes, social security, child welfare, and public finance—few of which target children directly but all of which have relevance for their development and well-being.

Given this multiplicity, it behooves us to take a broader, more holistic approach in our efforts to improve the lives of young children. We must consider how policies on varying issues work together and work against each other in the interest of young children. From this perspective, no one policy can be said to have “the greatest impact.”

What Does “Impact” Mean?

Even if we could identify a single most important child-centered policy, how can we know if it has had an impact, let alone the greatest impact? Understanding impact starts with examining the original concern that the policy was designed to address. Yet, over the last 20 years, “the social problem,” as it pertains to early childhood, has undergone frequent shifts in perspective and policy direction, often illustrating a gap between what we know and what we do.

Consequently, measuring impact essentially is equated with shooting at a moving target. The target has shifted from health coverage (such as the State Children’s Health Insurance Program) to early intervention services, to prevention (such as home visiting), to state-funded preschool, to child care subsidies, to child support enforcement, to food

assistance, to tax credits, to environmental safety, to the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

In reality, we often negotiate around competing social policy priorities and strategic approaches. I propose that we work to better integrate these priorities to capitalize on their synergy in improving children’s lives. In order for Illinois to improve early childhood outcomes for the next generation, we need to bring forth a common, integrated approach to creating policy based on sound developmental knowledge and supports for positive child-family relationships.

We must be active in creating stronger links between policies specific to children and other policies that do not target children directly, but still end up influencing them. Understanding how discrete policies interact together to affect child development and determining whether such policies are assets, liabilities or neutral influences are not easy tasks. Rather, they are questions that need to be continually pursued and answered in order to achieve solutions to improving the lives of the next generation of children.

Providing the Building Blocks for Educational Success

By Jesse H. Ruiz

Chairman, Illinois State Board of Education

The Illinois State Board of Education strives to provide leadership, advocacy and support for the work of school districts, policymakers and citizens in making Illinois education second to none. It is our vision that our public schools will enable all students to succeed in post-secondary education and career opportunities, to be effective life-long learners, and to participate fully in our democracy.

In order for our students to be successful, we must provide them with the building blocks for educational success at an early age. I am proud to say that Illinois leads the nation in early childhood education, due largely in part to Governor Rod Blagojevich's Preschool for All program. As Chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education and as a parent of two young sons who have had the opportunity to attend preschool, I feel that Preschool for All will have a great impact on the future of our children and the future of Illinois.

The launch of Preschool for All has put Illinois on the path to providing high-quality preschool to

every 3- and 4-year-old child in the state. When fully implemented, Preschool for All will allow every community to offer high-quality preschool in a variety of settings, with experienced teachers fostering social, emotional, physical and cognitive development to help young children achieve success in school and later in life.

The Illinois State Board of Education continues to look at ways to improve the educational outcomes for all our students. In 2007, we entered into the College and Workforce Readiness Partnership, a relationship with the Office of the Governor, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as other vested partners, to re-examine our state standards for high school. We are taking a critical look at whether our current educational programs and standards are preparing our students for success beyond high school—whether at a college or university, vocational school, or in the workforce.

The College and Workforce Readiness Partnership brings together business leaders, advocates, educators

and the State Board to pursue the challenge of high school reform in Illinois. This includes examining rigor, relevance, relationships and results as we work together to prepare today's youth for the ever-changing world in which they will live and work.

As we look forward, we have much to do. We must intensify our work to close the achievement gap and increase our efforts to recruit and retain exceptional educators for our neediest schools. We must focus energies on enhancing literacy and better utilizing data to make informed school management and curriculum decisions. We must continue to expand our partnerships beyond the education community, harnessing the collective energy, ideas and resources in our state to assist all students in reaching their full potential.

I want to thank Voices for Illinois Children for their commitment to Illinois' children. Helping all of our state's children maximize their potential and achieve their dreams is a passion that we share.