The Impact of Publicly Funded Preschool in Illinois: An Analysis of Data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map
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An Analysis of Data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map

Technical Report No. 1

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Contents

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................................................ iv
Introduction .................................................................................................................................................. 1
The Illinois Early Learning Landscape ........................................................................................................ 2
Head Start and PFA ...................................................................................................................................... 2
Child Care .................................................................................................................................................. 5
IECAM ........................................................................................................................................................ 5
What the Data Tell Us about Enrollment ................................................................................................... 6
Statewide Analysis of Publicly Funded Preschool ...................................................................................... 7
Combined Impact of PFA and Head Start .................................................................................................. 10
The Future of Preschool for All and Head Start ....................................................................................... 13
Recommendations ....................................................................................................................................... 16
Notes .......................................................................................................................................................... 19
References .................................................................................................................................................. 21
About IECAM ............................................................................................................................................... 22

Figures, Maps, and Tables

Table 1: Comparison of PFA and Head Start ............................................................................................. 4
Table 2: Preschoolers Living in Poverty and Enrollment Opportunities .................................................... 6
MAP 1: The capacity of Illinois counties (FY2010 data) to provide PFA services to children whose families live at or below 185% FPL ................................................................. 8
MAP 2: The capacity of Illinois counties (FY2010 data) to provide Head Start services to children whose families live at or below 100% FPL ................................................................. 9
MAP 3: The capacity of Illinois counties (FY2010 data) to provide PFA and Head Start services to children whose families live at or below 185% FPL .................................................... 11
Summary of Maps 1-3 ................................................................................................................................ 12
Maps 4A-4D: Enrollment and Capacity Changes over Time .................................................................... 14
Figure 1: Number of Children Served by PFA .......................................................................................... 15
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Introduction

This report is the first in a series that will highlight data presented on the Web site of the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) project and offer analyses and implications of those data.

IECAM combines demographic data—such as population, poverty level, and language use—with early childhood program data from Pre-school for All (PFA), Head Start, and child care. IECAM assists policy makers in determining where program sites are most needed to help create a comprehensive early childhood system for Illinois.

Using data from IECAM, this report offers policy makers, advocates, and the state’s early childhood community an overview of the impact of state and federal dollars on providing access to publicly funded preschool for income-eligible children in Illinois. This report uses IECAM data to measure the capacity of the State of Illinois to provide high-quality early learning experiences to children in poverty or with certain risk factors. It answers the question of whether Illinois would be able to provide high-quality early learning experiences to its most vulnerable children without both Pre-school for All and Head Start.

To answer this question, the report first describes the complex landscape in early learning programs in Illinois, highlighting the importance of early care and education across the state, including what the current enrollment data tell us. The report then provides an analysis of publicly funded preschool in Illinois, showing a series of maps that illustrate the capacity of PFA and Head Start, when considered separately, to provide enrollment slots for eligible preschoolers, and the impact on the state’s enrollment capacity when both PFA and Head Start are considered in combination. The report concludes by reflecting on enrollment capacity during the past 3 years of PFA and Head Start and on the effects of the recession and economic downturn on enrollment opportunities. The report concludes with recommendations for policy makers and for future IECAM development.

To provide some context, research by prominent economists documents that providing early childhood programs for young children helps to reduce the negative effects of poverty on their social, emotional, and physical development and is advantageous for the community at large (Heckman, 2005; Rolnick & Grunewald, 2007).

Educational researchers have similarly documented the importance of high-quality preschool programs to support young children’s cognitive development and get children ready for school (Early et al., 2007; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2007; Saracho & Spodek, 2007). As a result, states have developed guidelines and standards outlining what children should learn during the early years before formal schooling begins.
Illinois is the fifth most populous state in the nation, with a population of 12,901,563. Of this number, 356,426 are 3- and 4-year-old children. Although it is clear that multiple risk factors influence the optimal development of young children, this first report focuses on the single risk factor of poverty, using the parameter of median family income.

We acknowledge that using a single indicator is not the most accurate way of measuring poverty because it does not fully reflect the complexities of poverty (Alkire & Foster, 2008). Using income, however, helps us identify many of the state’s most vulnerable young children and begin the discussion of their opportunities to attend publicly funded preschool.

The census data provided on IECAM use an income-based proxy—the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)—to represent the level of poverty in which many families live. IECAM uses 185% of the FPL as a basis for identifying the percentage of eligible children proposed to be served in PFA classrooms in Illinois. Head Start uses 100% FPL to identify eligible children for enrollment (see Table 1 for further details on eligibility requirements).

Head Start and PFA

Head Start and the state-funded initiative Preschool for All represent the two largest funding sources for addressing the preschool needs of young children and families in Illinois who are affected by poverty.

Since 1985, Illinois has had a long and distinguished history of providing a preschool experience for children who are most at risk for academic failure or who have disabilities. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) and subsequent legislative reauthorizations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) and the Head Start Act (2007), a strong national emphasis has been put on student outcomes, improved program accountability, common learning standards, and a well-prepared workforce.

This emphasis has placed increased pressure on families, communities, and states to prepare all preschool-age children for formal school entry at kindergarten. Illinois strengthened its commitment to the state’s vulnerable children with the establishment in 2006 of Preschool for All, a high-quality educational program for children at academic risk.

According to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), in 2010 one of every four children in America attended a state-funded PreK program. NIEER ranked Illinois 1st in the country in 2010 in access for 3-year-olds (19%
enrolled) and 14th in access for 4-year-olds (31% enrolled).

PFA funds in Illinois are administered by two fiscal agents—the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Both agents require applications for PFA funding. CPS uses free and reduced lunch (approximately 185% FPL) as the criterion for funding applications within Chicago. ISBE allocates funds to applicants in the rest of the state based on a broad array of risk factors (e.g., teen parents, single parents, unemployed parents, linguistic isolation) in addition to a poverty level.

All successful applicants are expected to screen individual children for eligibility and consider environmental, cultural, and linguistic risk factors in addition to poverty. Thus, Illinois PFA programs can be accessed by families whose children qualify according to risk factors and/or poverty.

Head Start is a federal-to-local grant program that provides services directed at school readiness, including comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and social services for children and families with incomes at or below the FPL ($22,350 for a family of four). Head Start eligibility is determined not only by family income (100% FPL) but by environmental, cultural, and linguistic risk factors that affect the optimal development of children. Head Start funds are obtained through competitive grants, with each site holding at least 10% of its enrollment slots for children with disabilities.

According to IECAM, in 2010, 20% ($n = 210,751) of Illinois children ages 5 and younger lived in households with an income at or below 100% FPL.

Head Start’s annual Program Information Report (PIR) for 2009 ranked Illinois 9th in the nation in terms of numbers of preschool children being served (term ed actual enrollment). Illinois is one of the few states serving over 50% of its children eligible for Head Start.

Some preschool-age children may be enrolled in both of these programs. That is, a small percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds may participate in Head Start programs that receive PFA funding and embed the PFA program with certified teachers into part of the day. Other children may attend a PFA-funded program in the morning and a Head Start program in the afternoon. Data are not readily available on the percentage of children who attend both programs.
## Table 1: Comparison of PFA and Head Start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Preschool for All <em>(includes Chicago Public Schools)</em></th>
<th>Head Start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>State funding (competitive grants to local providers)</td>
<td>Federal funding (competitive grants to local providers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Early Childhood Block Grant/Illinois State Board of Education</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Administration of Children Services/Office of Head Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expands the Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure (PreK)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eligibility</strong></td>
<td>Services to 3- and 4-year-old children</td>
<td>Services to preschool children and their families living at or below 100% FPL (in combination with risk factors affecting optimal child development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at risk of academic failure</td>
<td>Grantees may serve families with incomes up to 130% FPL when evidence suggests that all eligible children are being served</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First priority level: families experiencing risk factors affecting optimal child development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second priority level: families with incomes at or below 400% FPL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk Factors / Family Priority List</strong></td>
<td><em>(This list is not inclusive and is based on community assessment.)</em></td>
<td><em>(This list is not inclusive and is based on community assessment.)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home language other than English</td>
<td>Income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children’s delayed development</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>Diagnosed disability with IEP or IFSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teen parenthood</td>
<td>Parental status (teen parent, single parent home, other guardian/relative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School dropout and grade retention/truancy</td>
<td>Program factors (family with TANF/SS/child care subsidy, homeless, foster child, transitioning from EHS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents on active military duty</td>
<td>Social service factors (domestic violence, linguistic isolation, medically underserved community, active military)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents with low education attainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infant mortality, birth trauma, low birth weight, and prematurity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child abuse and neglect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chicago Public Schools: free and reduced lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children with Disabilities</strong></td>
<td>Enrolled in PFA classrooms</td>
<td>10% of enrollment opportunities designated for children with disabilities (may be in families with incomes above 100% FPL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Readiness</strong></td>
<td>Promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational services</td>
<td>Promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of comprehensive education, health, social, and other services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Services</strong></td>
<td>Provides academic and social opportunities for young children</td>
<td>Provides comprehensive services for children and families (e.g., immunizations, nutrition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>Minimum of 2.5 hours per day; 9 months of the year</td>
<td>Half-day and full-day sessions; 9 to 12 months of the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Qualifications in Each Classroom</strong></td>
<td>Required to hold a Type 04 teaching certificate (early childhood birth to age 8) regardless of where the service takes place (e.g., community-based, school district, Head Start)</td>
<td>Required to have an associate, baccalaureate, or advanced degree in early childhood education (or equivalent coursework and experience teaching preschool-age children) (by October 1, 2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Child Care

In addition to Head Start and PFA, child care programs—private and public, profit and not-for-profit—serve thousands of Illinois children; many of these programs endeavor to address school readiness and help young children meet early learning standards.

According to the *Illinois Annual Child Care Report FY09*, 155,520 families (272,401 children) are enrolled in the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which provides financial assistance to the child care programs that enroll these children. Sixty percent of children enrolled in CCAP are ages 6 and under. They live in families who are headed by one parent (95%), or who have very low income levels (53% at or below 100% FPL), or who need help so that parents can maintain their employment (88% of enrolled families).

PFA programs are typically part-day, as are many Head Start programs. The extent to which vulnerable children are supported by a combination of PFA, Head Start, and/or CCAP funds in order to be in full-day services is not known. Although the effects of child care and its emerging system across the state are important, the objective of this paper is to focus on the combined impact of the two publicly funded preschool programs in Illinois—Head Start and PFA—whose primary missions are school readiness.

IECAM

IECAM, which was created in 2006, allows policy makers in Illinois to make decisions using quantitative data and demographic information. Based at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IECAM is intended (1) to assist policy makers in allocating resources for early care and education programs to areas where they are most needed, (2) to make public resource allocation transparent by showing the changes in demographics and funding of services from year to year, and (3) to provide a one-stop source for early care and education data gathered from multiple sources in Illinois. The sources for the data found on IECAM are ISBE, IDHS, Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), Head Start, and the U.S. Census Bureau.

IECAM facilitates analysis of location-based and demographic data for different geographic entities in the state, including legislative districts, counties, municipalities, and townships.

IECAM informs ongoing conversations about collaboration at the local and state levels by providing information and statistical data pertinent to the capacity and location of programs and classrooms that provide services to young children and their families. IECAM assists legislators, advocates, and administrators as they seek equitable distribution of resources across the most disadvantaged areas of Illinois, particularly in light of the increased focus on school readiness, academic standards, and testing in the early grades.

Currently, over one million children living in Illinois are 5 years old or younger; of these, nearly 400,000 (or 40%) live in families with annual incomes at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). More than two-thirds of these children live outside the City of Chicago.
What the Data Tell Us about Enrollment

According to IECAM estimates, in both 2009 and 2010, Head Start and PFA together had the capacity to serve 124,448 children, ages 3 and 4 years old, across the state—or 95% of the children in Illinois who live in families with incomes at or below 185% FPL. However, it is an underestimate of the number of children needing services to be ready for school, because the State cannot accurately count the number of children who live above 185% FPL who experience risk factors other than poverty.

Table 2 provides demographic data on the number of 3- and 4-year-olds in Illinois whose families live in poverty and the number of enrollment opportunities in Head Start and PFA. The number of children potentially left without access to publicly funded preschool based on the poverty index alone is also indicated.

Table 2: Preschoolers Living in Poverty and Enrollment Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children (3 and 4 years) in Families at or Below 185% FPL</td>
<td>124,077 (2007 estimates)</td>
<td>130,693 (2008 estimates)</td>
<td>130,693 (2008 estimates)</td>
<td>139,055 (2009 estimates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Enrollment Slots in Head Start</td>
<td>34,310</td>
<td>35,588</td>
<td>36,347</td>
<td>37,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Enrollment Slots in PFA</td>
<td>76,782</td>
<td>83,631</td>
<td>88,399</td>
<td>86,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number/Percentage of Children in Families at or Below 185% FPL Who Are Potentially Unserved</td>
<td>12,985 10%</td>
<td>11,474 9%</td>
<td>5,947 5%</td>
<td>14,569 12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although Illinois appears to be near capacity for serving children identified as poor, PFA is designed to serve children who experience an array of risk factors. These risk factors may co-occur with poverty, but they may also be experienced by many families living above 185% FPL. As a result, Illinois is making progress, but many children (whose school performance and social-emotional development would benefit from preschool experiences) remain unserved.

According to the American Community Survey (ACS, Sample 2009), 31% (\( n = 110,492 \)) of 3- and 4-year-old children in Illinois live with a single parent; of this group, 35% (\( n = 38,672 \)) of the parents are neither working nor looking for work. ACS also estimates that a quarter (\( n = 85,542 \)) of all 3- and 4-year-olds living in Illinois are English Language Learners (ELL) with a home language other than English.

### Statewide Analysis of Publicly Funded Preschool

The aggregated data above show the overall reach of publicly funded early learning programs, and this section provides a county-by-county analysis of the impact of Head Start and Preschool for All. Analyses of the state-funded PFA (Map 1), the federally funded Head Start (Map 2), and the combined impact of both (Map 3) are presented here with maps and charts taken from IECAM’s quantitative and demographic data.

The following color-coded maps show the capacity (number of children proposed to be served) of publicly funded preschool programs (PFA and Head Start) to serve eligible 3- and 4-year-old children in each Illinois county. These numbers reflect potential access to PFA and not end-of-year, total enrollment of children who took part in the preschool program. (The number of children actually served in PFA sometimes exceeds program capacity because it includes the total number of children who attend a program part of the school year.) Ideally, proposed capacity and final enrollment should be equivalent; however, children come and go from the programs because families are mobile.

The following maps were prepared using two data sets for each of the 102 counties in Illinois. First, demographic data on the number of children living in families at or below 100% FPL and at or below 185% FPL were taken from the IECAM Web site. These data are 2009 estimates (the latest data available) prepared by IECAM demographers based on the 2000 U.S. Census. Second, data on the proposed capacity for PFA (original source: ISBE) and on the funded enrollment for Head Start (original source: Head Start) were also taken from the IECAM Web site. These data are for FY2010 (i.e., school year 2009-2010). The numbers paint both a positive picture for some counties in Illinois and a bleak picture for others.
MAP 1: The capacity of Illinois counties (FY2010 data) to provide PFA services to children whose families live at or below 185% FPL

Map 1 focuses on PFA capacity using 185% FPL as a proxy for risk. For this map, the proposed capacity for PFA was divided by the number of children living in families at or below 185% FPL. For example, if there are 100 such children in County X, and the county has a proposed capacity of 60 PFA slots, the capacity to serve is 60/100 or 60%.

In 51 counties (dark brown), PFA grantees have a proposed capacity to serve more than 90% of children who live in households at or below 185% FPL (the IECAM proxy for risk factors experienced by families.)

PFA sites in 31 counties (tan) have sufficient funding (or slots) to serve more than half of the eligible children (60% to 90%), while enrollment opportunities for eligible preschoolers in 20 counties are less than 60%.

The past decade has brought a major expansion of the PreK movement to Illinois; IECAM reports a total of 1,573 PFA sites across Illinois, with a proposed capacity to serve close to 87,000 children in 2010.
MAP 2: The capacity of Illinois counties (FY2010 data) to provide Head Start services to children whose families live at or below 100% FPL

Head Start programs in 15 counties (dark brown) are able to provide more than 90% of enrollment opportunities for children living in households with incomes at or below 100% FPL. Programs in 25 counties (tan) are able to serve only 60% to 90% of eligible children.

In contrast, Head Start programs in 62 counties (gold and yellow) have the funded enrollment to serve less than 60% of eligible preschoolers. Of these counties, 30 have the capacity to serve less than 30% of 3- and 4-year-olds living in families with an income at or below 100% FPL. Four of the 20 are the collar counties around Chicago.

IECAM reports that there are 697 Head Start sites in the 102 Illinois counties, with funded enrollment to serve 37,771 eligible children, in 2010.
Combined Impact of PFA and Head Start

Given that the public funding of preschool services in Illinois depends on both state and federal sources, it makes sense to examine the impact of both preschool programs in combination (Head Start and PFA). Map 3 shows the landscape of Illinois counties when the numbers of children who can be served in PFA and Head Start are combined. The combination of both publicly funded programs has greater impact on early childhood education services to young children than either program alone in a populous state like Illinois.

It is important to note that PFA has been the variable in terms of providing needed enrollment slots in Illinois counties. Head Start funding has been relatively flat for several years (outside of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act monies), so the growth and movement in publicly funded preschool in Illinois has come from PFA. To the extent that there are enrollment gaps to be filled in preschool services, particularly for young children living at or below 185% FPL, the state’s only opportunity to fill them is through the judicious use of PFA funds.

Since its inception, IECAM has provided policy makers in Illinois with the data pertinent to making informed decisions on resource allocation for PFA sites across the state. IECAM is the only Web-based tool of its kind in the nation that combines early care and education data about the state (PFA, Head Start, and child care) with demographic data.
MAP 3: The capacity of Illinois counties (FY2010 data) to provide PFA and Head Start services to children whose families live at or below 185% FPL.

For Map 3, we divided the sum of proposed capacity for PFA and funded enrollment for Head Start by the number of children living in families at or below 185% FPL. Continuing the example above, in County X, there is a total capacity + funded enrollment of 60 + 20 = 80. Therefore, the capacity to serve is 80/100 or 80%.

The third map illustrates the combined capacity of Head Start and PFA programs to serve eligible 3- and 4-year-olds using 185% FPL. This third map demonstrates that, when poverty is considered as a risk parameter, both programs are needed in Illinois to ensure that the highest possible number of eligible children have access to high-quality preschool programs.

Publicly funded preschool programs in 82 counties (dark brown) have the capacity to serve more than 90% of eligible children when PFA and Head Start are considered together. Programs in 12 counties (tan) have enrollment opportunities to serve between 60% and 90% of eligible preschoolers, with 8 counties (gold) able to serve only 30% to 60% of eligible children. No counties have the capacity to serve less than 30% of eligible 3- and 4-year-olds.

Importantly, neither Head Start nor PFA, when considered alone, can cover the needs of many counties; it is the combined resources of the two programs that make it possible to come close to serving all eligible children in a majority of Illinois counties.
Although Map 3 indicates that programs in the dark brown counties have sufficient funded capacity to serve 3- and 4-year-olds in impoverished families, it does not take into account (1) the need to serve children who have risk factors other than poverty and (2) the number of children in families with incomes from 185% FPL to 400% FPL who are enrolled in these programs and occupying slots that could be filled by low-income children in hard-to-reach families.
The Future of Preschool for All and Head Start

The following maps combine data from both Head Start and PFA. Maps 4A-4D highlight the proposed capacity (i.e., funded enrollment) for children living in households with incomes at or below 185% FPL for funding years 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010, respectively. Note that while the maps are based on poverty as a proxy for academic risk, both PFA and Head Start enroll children who meet criteria for other risk factors (e.g., English as a second language, parental circumstances). As a guide in reading the maps, pertinent data have been provided in table format below each map.

The evidence is now very strong that any provisions for young children—whether within the home or outside of it—that are less than top quality represent missed opportunities to make a substantial contribution to the rest of the children’s lives. Today, no one argues with that statement.

—Lilian G. Katz
Maps 4A-4D: Enrollment and Capacity Changes over Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Year</th>
<th>FY2007</th>
<th>FY2008</th>
<th>FY2009</th>
<th>FY2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HS Funded Enrollment</td>
<td>34,310</td>
<td>35,588</td>
<td>36,347</td>
<td>37,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFA Proposed Capacity</td>
<td>76,782</td>
<td>83,631</td>
<td>88,399</td>
<td>86,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111,092</td>
<td>119,219</td>
<td>124,746</td>
<td>124,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Change</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>+ 7.3%</td>
<td>+ 4.6%</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The maps show that the distribution of available enrollment slots varies across the state. Eligible children appear to be underserved in several rural counties in the east central part of Illinois. This variance may be because of a lack of proposals from agencies in the counties to obtain PFA grants or transportation issues that some families face in reaching programs.

Publicly funded preschools in the counties that are able to serve less than 90% of income-eligible children tend to be in areas that have seen significant population growth, particularly in immigrant populations whose children’s first language is not English. The collar counties around Chicago have seen an increase in Latinos who have moved out of Chicago as well as increases in new immigrants. The immigrant population in Illinois is increasing. According to Hall and Lubotsky (2011) from the University of Illinois, “the immigrant population in Illinois is larger, in absolute terms, today than at any point in the state’s history” (p. 1).10

While much of the immigrant population resides in Cook County and the surrounding collar counties, 57 of the 102 counties in Illinois have seen their immigrant populations at least double in the past 20 years. IECAM currently provides tabular data on linguistic isolation by household (2008 estimate, U.S. Census data) and languages spoken by children in Illinois (as determined by maternal language data).

Over the first three years depicted in the maps, the capacity to serve children increased by 12% (predominantly through increases in PFA funding). The State’s investment in PFA peaked in 2009. Because of the current economic downturn, funding for PFA was reduced in FY2011 by 10% and again by another 5% for FY2012. Head Start funding peaked in 2010, most likely as a result of the influx of funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The recent reduction of state funds has cut proposed capacity for PFA by 1,671 enrollment slots (about 2%). The actual number of children served in PFA has declined dramatically, dropping from a high of 95,123 children in 2009 to 91,910 children in 2010. An even greater decrease is estimated for 2011 (the number of children receiving services is expected to decline to approximately 81,000 children). The combination of funding reductions and late payments by the State to grantees resulted in the closure of some programs prior to the end of the 2010 school year. Some of these closures continued through the 2011 school year. Figure 1 shows a graph of the declining numbers of children actually served in PFA sites across Illinois.

**Figure 1: Number of Children Served by PFA**

![Graph showing the number of children served by PFA](image)

*English language learners (ELLs) comprise the fastest growing segment of student population in the nation.*11 Although the U.S. Census Bureau does not collect statistics on the home language spoken by preschool children, statistics on the K-12 school-age population are available. Based on these statistics, Illinois expanded the School Administrative Code in 2011 to include wording that established requirements for school districts to provide services to students in preschool through grade 12 who have been identified as limited English proficient.12 According to the Illinois State Board of Education, school districts (and their early childhood programs) are to provide “equitable access to language support services for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds . . . [to] assist them to become lifelong learners, able to contribute to and function in a multicultural and globally competitive world” (ISBE).13 The expanded wording in the School Administrative Code and the increased number of immigrant families are likely to further increase the demand for PFA programs.
The following recommendations are based on the findings from this technical report. They also reflect the research relevant to early care and education and the PFA and Head Start objectives of serving those most in need.

**Recommendation 1: Use the IECAM data to guide strategic planning and thinking at the state level.**
Lisbeth Schorr of Harvard University asserts that “state policy makers play a critical role in allocating resources to support the school readiness of young children.”

What information do Illinois policy makers and planners need in order to fulfill this essential role? Clearly, accurate and timely early care and education data are necessary for policy makers in the state to be able to make funding and programming decisions for young children. IECAM provides a wealth of data that can be tapped to guide planning services for all young children and their families in Illinois. This paper presents one example—the use of IECAM to assess the impact of two funding streams, PFA and Head Start, for families in poverty. IECAM also can be used to investigate the capacity of communities to provide various forms of early care and education to infants and toddlers, as well as to determine the types of care available and the quality of that care.

The Illinois State Board of Education currently uses IECAM to assist in resource allocation. Early care and education providers are encouraged to use IECAM to collect information and data to develop their proposal applications for PFA funding, particularly the required statement of need. The Illinois legislature and the Early Learning Council should use IECAM as they plan to meet the needs of Illinois citizens with young children. IECAM has the potential to be a one-stop source for policy makers and community planners as they examine how funds from multiple funding streams are blended in their own communities. At present, this information is held by separate funding entities, such as ISBE, IDHS, and Head Start. Early childhood providers know and understand the way in which funding streams are blended for optimal utilization of money for early childhood services, but an overall picture of this information is lacking because of the disparate way in which the data is handled.

IECAM should be expanded to include all funding streams for early care and education services, including infant and toddler services and early childhood special education.

**Recommendation 2: Ensure that all families experiencing multiple risk factors affecting child development (and thus school readiness) who wish to take part in PFA are able to participate.**

It is time for state policy makers to move beyond the status quo of the current funding level. In fact, recent state budget reductions to PFA have decreased the number of families able to access services in 2010 and 2011. The annual cumulative number of children served has declined from a high in 2009 of 95,000 to 81,000 in 2011. Policy makers should reverse these reductions and reinvest in PFA. One strategy is to identify annual funding benchmarks that will enable the state to develop the capacity to serve 100% of eligible children (according to the risk factors identified in the original Preschool for All legislation) by 2014.

**Recommendation 3: Use IECAM data to build the case to increase support for the growing number of**
children in Illinois born in immigrant families and for whom English is not their first language.

PFA programs must be available in counties with a high concentration of children who are English Language Learners. IECAM provides data on language isolation, using maternal language as a proxy for information on the primary language spoken by children under 5 years of age. Language isolation is a quantifiable risk factor that policy makers should use to make decisions relevant to resource allocation of public preschool funds in the state. These data can also be used by communities as part of the needs assessment required to seek or continue funding from Head Start.

Recommendation 4: Continue and expand the partnership between regional and state-level entities responsible for publicly funded early care and education.

IECAM data show that around the state no single publicly funded preschool program is meeting the needs of families. It is important for these programs to work together, and for those efforts to continue. For several years, regional and state-level leaders from Head Start, PFA, and the Bureau of Child Care and Development have been meeting monthly (either face-to-face or by teleconference) to discuss ongoing collaboration efforts among their programs. This collaborative effort should be highlighted and nourished, given the increased use of multiple funding streams by local programs. The days in which one program served a child exclusively are over. PFA programs may be located in Head Start Centers, child care programs, or local schools. Likewise, Head Start may be sharing or renting space from local school districts or collaborating with community child care. Leaders who are responsible for early childhood special education and early intervention services also should be included in these discussions, because children with developmental delays or disabilities are increasingly included in local school and community settings.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen collaborations at the community level through Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to ensure that public funds are being used effectively.

The Head Start Act and the Illinois School Code both contain robust language regarding local collaborations based on the development of MOUs between local Head Start and PFA programs. The IECAM data presented in this paper indicate the need for ongoing collaboration between Head Start and PFA to serve the greatest number of our eligible children. These MOUs should also serve as a template for broader community collaboration.

MOUs, also known as interagency agreements, specify the pathways and constraints involved in the collaboration. Local agreements between Head Start and PFA offer several benefits to both programs, including:

- bringing clarity of roles and activities, particularly when sites are shared, funding is blended, and children are dually enrolled in programs;
- ensuring that neither program competes for children, thereby limiting the total number of children enrolled;
- providing joint professional development opportunities; and
- facilitating smooth transition planning from preschool, Head Start, and child care to kindergarten.

Although MOUs are required by law, it is unclear whether effective MOU agreements exist in all areas of the state. Surveys of Head Start and PFA grantees could provide a starting point for determining the nature of existing MOUs and for making recommendations
about strengthening the agreements through involving other community early care and education providers.
Notes

1. IECAM provides demographic data on population, poverty, language, and working families. These demographic data include estimates prepared by IECAM demographers for each year beginning with 2005, based on U.S. Census Bureau data products (which are themselves estimates). Each year, the Census Bureau publishes data for a new year and revises its estimates for previous years (making them more accurate). Based on each year’s new and revised data, IECAM re-estimates and re-publishes its own data. Each year’s publication of data is known as a “release.” The data in each release cover 5 years and are two years behind the date of the release. For example, IECAM’s 2011 release provides new data for 2009 and revises data for 2008, 2007, 2006, and 2005.

2. Community risk factors that have long been documented as contributing to developmental delays or risk of academic failure include, but are not limited to, poverty, teen parenthood, low birth weight, parents with low educational attainment, parental unemployment, parental substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, and linguistic isolation.

3. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released definitions and updated data for Poverty Thresholds (issued by U.S. Census Bureau) and Poverty Guidelines (issued by HHS) in a Federal Register in January 2011. Poverty Thresholds are a statistical measurement used in calculating the number of people in poverty. Poverty Guidelines are administrative and are used to determine financial eligibility for certain programs. IECAM uses the term Federal Poverty Level (FPL) to refer to median family income. For more detailed information, see http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/faq.shtml#differences.

4. For more details on the methodology related to data used on IECAM, please see http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu/data/methodology.html.


6. In the past 25 years, educational researchers have examined issues related to school readiness, including individual skills and behaviors that children should have before entering school (Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2000), relationships that may exist between kindergarten readiness and later academic achievement (Duncan et al., 2007), and the importance of young children’s emotional development for formal school entry (Raver, 2002).

7. Data are from The State of Preschool 2010: State Preschool Yearbook, a publication of NIEER. Child eligibility in the NIEER report is based on each state’s determination of what constitutes risk. For instance, eligibility in PFA in Illinois is determined locally by weighted criteria in a screening process.

8. These data were formulated using the 2009 PIR database. It is important to acknowledge that the percentage of 50% refers to the percent of children who are actually enrolled and served in Head Start classrooms rather than funded enrollment. IECAM information presented in this report is capacity data, which refers to a program’s funded capability to enroll children in a Head Start program.

9. See the ACF-IM-HS-08-12 “Statutory Degree and Credentialing Requirements for Head Start Teaching Staff” at http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/.


15. The U.S. Census Bureau does not collect data on the primary language spoken by children under 5 years of age.

16. The 2007 reauthorization of the Head Start Act (Public Law 110-134 "Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007") mandates collaboration between local Head Start programs and those entities that provide prekindergarten services to young children in their areas. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), which funds Preschool for All, similarly emphasizes coordination with other programs in the same service area and actually mandates collaboration with Head Start.
References


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Purpose

The Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) is intended (1) to assist policy makers in allocating resources for early care and education programs to areas where they are most needed, (2) to make public resource allocation transparent by showing the changes in funding of services from year to year, and (3) to provide a one-stop source for early care and education data gathered from multiple agencies in Illinois. IECAM accomplishes these goals by providing information on both the capacity of existing services and the demographic characteristics of young children and their families.

IECAM presents data on early care and education services in both table and map format. These services are funded by federal agencies (which fund Head Start and Early Head Start), state agencies (which fund Preschool for All, Early Intervention, and the Child Care Assistance program), and families (who fund child care in centers and family child care homes). IECAM also presents demographic data on the population, poverty level, linguistic isolation, and employment characteristics of families with children ages birth through age 5. Data are presented at various geographic levels (e.g., counties, legislative districts). Thus IECAM provides a quick snapshot of where children live and the capacity of services available to them in those geographical areas.

IECAM is currently expanding its database to include information on the quality and coordination of early care and education services. Soon, IECAM users will be able to determine the access for children to programs that are accredited by national accrediting organizations or have participated in the state’s Quality Rating System. IECAM is working toward providing accurate and comprehensive data on the extent to which programs blend funds to serve children or coordinate services for children (e.g., colocation of Head Start and child care). IECAM is also working toward providing data on services for children on a predictable annual schedule, so that the data can be of maximum usefulness to local and state agencies that are planning for current and future services.

IECAM data are used by policy makers, legislators, advocates, program administrators, businesses, and the general public. IECAM will also serve as a major resource for the coming longitudinal data system for Illinois.

History

In June 2005, the Illinois Early Learning Council called for a concerted effort to create an interactive, Web-based tool—to be called the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM)—to support “transparent” decision-making frameworks for awarding grants to fund Preschool for All classrooms. The decision-making tool that has been developed since then brings together data on early care and education from state agencies (birth to 5), Head Start, and the private sector. IECAM also includes community demographic information that can be used by federal, state, and local government agencies to inform resource allocation processes in Illinois. The goal is to use resources as efficiently as possible while helping to create a comprehensive early childhood system for the state.

At the Council’s request, Chicago Metropolitan 2020 (now called Metropolis Strategies) and the Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative at the University of Illinois worked together on the IECAM project from its inception, with financial support from several
foundations, including the Joyce Foundation, Irving Harris Foundation, Grand Victoria Foundation, McCormick Foundation, CME Foundation, and Spencer Foundation. Public funds have come from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, and the University of Illinois. Currently, IECAM is funded by ISBE and IDHS.

Decisions concerning the information to be included, its presentation, and potential users are made in consultation with a diverse Technical Advisory Committee representing state agencies, advocacy organizations, and experts. The operations of the Technical Advisory Committee are funded by the McCormick Foundation.

ECAP partners with the University’s National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) to create IECAM’s state-of-the-art system. During the planning phase, the IECAM team produced the IECAM Interim Data Collection, which brought together existing data for use during the fiscal year 2007 grant process. The IECAM Interim Data Collection was made public in June 2006.

The comprehensive IECAM Web site was launched on September 1, 2007. It provides tabular data and mapping data. IECAM uses GIS mapping software that makes it possible for policy makers to know the location of existing programs as they make decisions about funding additional services. Users are able to click on a location on a map to learn how a county, school district, legislative district, or other area is currently served by early childhood programs and to find demographic data that illustrate how population relates to the current distribution of funds. Using these data, policy makers can determine where new or expanded programs are most needed.

The IECAM Web site currently includes data on licensed and license-exempt center-based care; licensed family child care; Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant Head Start; state-funded PFA programs; and infant and toddler programs. Demographic data on population distribution, family income, and language spoken at home are also included on the site. The site continues to expand each year.

To ensure continuing public access to objective, high-quality, regularly updated data, IECAM is housed at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.