

The Chicago Program Evaluation Project: C-PEP

Where we started: a snapshot of early childhood programs, teachers and children

Early childhood education: a top priority for Chicago and Illinois

- *The importance of early learning:* Child development is cumulative and learning begins early. Quality programs can have a positive and lasting impact on children’s development and lifelong success in school and beyond.
- *Chicago as pioneer:* Chicago began providing Head Start services in 1965 and now manages one of the nation’s largest Head Start programs, providing services across the city through the Chicago Public Schools and 57 community-based organizations. Also, Chicago is home to several important innovative models of early childhood education and ground-breaking institutions committed to the field of early childhood.
- *Emphasis on providing an array of quality programs:* Chicago’s early childhood community is committed to providing a diverse array of quality programs. Together, the federal Head Start program, state pre-kindergarten program (“Preschool for All”), and the state Child Care Assistance Program studied in C-PEP serve more than 30,000 three- and four-year-old children across Chicago.
- *Illinois as leader:* Illinois is ranked near the top in terms of quality standards for pre-kindergarten as well as in terms of the number of three- and four-year olds served. The state’s program is growing under the “Preschool for All” banner, with a goal of giving program access to all three- and four-year olds by 2011.

Chicago’s early childhood education system: our programs and who they serve

- *A blend of providers:* Services are offered at public schools and community-based organizations; all serve low-income or educationally at-risk children. Funding sources include the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant, Head Start, and the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program.
- *A diverse population:* The Chicago early childhood education system offers a range of programs that serve diverse communities. Classroom composition is affected by such variables as neighborhood demographics and program eligibility requirements related to family income level and parental employment status. As a result, the percentage of parents who are employed, have incomes below the federal poverty line, and speak languages other than English at home varies widely across the three programs.

C-PEP: studying three types of programs with guidelines that define three populations

- *Half-Day Head Start:* Comprehensive education, health, nutrition, and parent involvement services to low-income children and their families delivered in community-based organizations and Chicago Public Schools, 3 1/2 hours/day, four or five days/week, nine month school year. Funding from federal Head Start; 2006 Head Start income guidelines apply (below poverty line, currently \$20,000 for a family of four). Ten percent of enrollment must be children with special needs, from families at any income level.
- *Preschool for All:* High-quality preschool delivered in community-based organizations, schools, and institutions of faith; C-PEP sample included only CPS settings. 2 1/2 hours/day, five days/week, nine month school year. Illinois Early Childhood Block Grant funds. No family income or work requirement. Priority is to serve at-risk four-year-olds and families with incomes below \$60,000.
- *Full-Day Programs:* Care and education services delivered in community-based settings, up to 12 hours/day, five days/week, year round, including both Head Start services and child care. Supported by federal Head Start and state Child Care Assistance Program funds. 2006 Head Start income guidelines apply (below poverty line, currently \$20,000 for a family of four). Child Care Assistance dollars require parents be in school, at work, or in a training program. Families make sliding-scale co-payments for child care services.