



## Pipelines and pools: Meeting the demand for early childhood teachers in Illinois

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### Executive Summary

In 2004, the Illinois Education Research Council received a grant from the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University to examine whether the supply of qualified early childhood teachers would be adequate to meet a potentially growing demand if the state was able to increase access to preschool. Since that time, with leadership from the Governor's Office, Illinois' plan for *Preschool For All* initiative has crystallized. By 2006, 75,000 at-risk 3- and 4-year olds were being served by a program that has added 19,000 children over the past three years. The FY 2007 budget includes the first \$45 million of a \$135 million three-year plan to add another 32,000 children to the state Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) program under *Preschool For All*. The plan is to then reach all interested 3- and 4-year olds with additional funding in years four and five (FY 2010-2011). Through this expansion, non-school entities as well as schools are able to access new funds to deliver high-quality early childhood programs if they employ early childhood (Type 04) certified teachers (who by definition also hold BA degrees).

Illinois is potentially well-placed to meet an immediate increase in demand for qualified early childhood teachers because it has had a specific state certification (Type 04, formerly Type 02) for instruction of birth to Grade 3 for many years. The usual place to look for a supply of teachers is the new-certificant pipeline, and we begin our analysis there. But because of Illinois' history of certifying early childhood teachers, we also wanted to know whether there was a reserve pool of teachers who would also be available to fill the growing number of teaching jobs. There is a general sense among early childhood professionals that teachers prefer a school

environment rather than a child care center setting, so we decided to ask qualified individuals directly whether they are willing to work in early childhood centers, and what incentives, if any, might be needed to make this sector of the teacher labor market more attractive to them. We surveyed 4,000 individuals who held Illinois Type 04 teacher certification, but were not working in the Illinois public schools in 2002-2003, the year we began to plan the study. With the results from these two supply sources in hand—the pipeline of new teachers and the pool of previously certified teachers—we were able to assess the extent to which Illinois might be able to meet the increased demand for Type 04 teachers as *Preschool For All* is implemented.

### **The New-Teacher Pipeline is Leaky but Robust.**

Using data from the national Integrated Postsecondary Data Analysis System (IPEDS), we found that over the eight-year period from 1998-2005, Illinois colleges awarded an annual average of 467 bachelor's and about 153 master's degrees in early childhood education, for a yearly average of 620 awards. While there are some fluctuations from year to year, the overall trend was quite stable.

Interestingly, we found more than 2,600 students per year are reported to be enrolled in early childhood programs in Illinois' institutions of higher education, with more than half of them (about 1,400) in Chicago institutions. We learned, however, that some higher education institutions include in their program statistics students who are enrolled at their institutions, and have expressed an interest in a particular academic program (in this

case early childhood teacher preparation programs), but may not have actually been admitted to such a program. Admission to teacher preparation programs across the state has become more stringent, and now includes a requirement to pass the state's Basic Skills test. With this knowledge in mind, we concluded that while the pipeline from enrollment to program completion appears to be quite leaky, much of the leakage may actually be occurring between "interest" and program enrollment. We encourage institutions of higher education to look carefully at what barriers may be preventing students from making progress from "interest" status to enrollment to graduation. Some may be appropriate while others need to be removed.

We found that data on early childhood education programs are not congruent with data on the numbers of Type 04 teachers newly certified in Illinois each year. The total number of new Type 04 certificants in Illinois has been higher—about 765 annually, and increased to almost 900 in 2004, and to over 1,000 in 2005. If this trend continues, it bodes well for meeting the increasing need for these teachers. It also suggests that additional research is needed to identify where these new certificants are coming from.

### **There is a Ready and Potentially Willing Reserve Pool of Qualified Teachers.**

We identified a potential reserve pool of 5,400 qualified teachers who were not working in the Illinois public schools in 2002-2003. We randomly selected 4,000 individuals to complete the survey and obtained a representative 46% response rate. After we removed from the analysis individuals who told us they were retired (14%) or already working in an early childhood center (10%), we found that 83% of the remaining Type 04 certified teachers (3,402) would consider working in an early childhood center setting under certain conditions. Overwhelmingly, when asked to identify their top three incentives, salaries trumped everything else. While this does not come as new news, our study provides compelling evidence that it is salaries that make it hard to recruit certified teachers to some early childhood centers, not the setting. About half (45%) would work for less than \$40,000 on a full-time, full-year basis. Another 29% wanted \$40,000-\$49,999. We also found that most of the Reserve Pool not only had prior experience in education

(with almost half having had experience in an early childhood center) but that, contrary to popular belief, they have not left the field of education or even the early education arena.

### **The Supply of Certified Early Childhood Teachers in Illinois Can Meet Increasing Demand if Salaries Become Competitive with Other Teaching Opportunities.**

We used three service-level models—32,000 additional children in years one to three, 23,000 additional children in years four and five to reach additional interested 3- and 4-year olds in Illinois, and the impact of adding Head Start programs to the analysis—to assess the extent to which the pipeline and pool of Type 04 certified teachers can meet projected increases in demand due to program expansion.

We found that through a combination of recruitment from the currently qualified Reserve Pool of individuals, most of whom expressed a willingness to consider working in an early childhood center environment if salaries reflected their professional training, and the current production pipeline of new certificants, Illinois will be able to meet the demand for additional early childhood teachers if *Preschool For All* adds about 10,000 3- and 4-year olds per year.

- Reserve Pool members are willing to work in early childhood centers and provide a ready source of qualified teachers under certain conditions;
- Illinois early childhood programs need to offer certified teachers salaries that recognize their professional training and education;
- The Illinois State Board of Education's certificant database may provide a source of recruitment of Type 04 certificants; and
- Chicago will be more reliant on the pipeline than other regions. Chicago institutions of higher education that offer early childhood teacher preparation programs need to examine who is in the pipeline and why more of their students are not progressing from "interest" to program enrollee to graduate.

The full report is available at  
<http://ierc.siue.edu/iercpublication.asp>