



**Lilian G. Katz**  
Editor

**Jean Mendoza**  
**Susan Fowler**  
Associate Editors

**Kevin Dolan**  
Managing Editor

Established  
February 27, 1999  
**ISSN 1524-5039**

...a peer-reviewed multilingual journal on the development, care, and education of young children

Current Issue:  
Volume 15 Number 2

[Home](#) | [Journal Contents](#) | [Issue Contents](#)

[Mirar esta página en español](#)



Past Issues

**Volume 15 Number 2**

Beyond This Issue

©The Author(s) 2013

Search ECRP

Sign up for the  
Email Newsletter

## Organizations Concerned with Early Care and Education in Illinois: A Sample



About ECRP

### Contents:

Sponsoring ECRP

- [Introduction](#)
- [Illinois State Board of Education \(ISBE\)](#)
- [Illinois Action for Children \(IAFC\)](#)
- [Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies \(INCCRRA\)](#)
- [Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map](#)
- [Illinois Early Learning Project](#)

Information for  
Authors

ECRP Survey

Send comments  
to the ECRP Editor.



### Introduction

The state of Illinois, located in the Midwestern United States, has a population of about 12.8 million, according to 2010 Census. Of those, about 1.2 million are children ages 6–12, and about 1 million are age 5 and under.

Families of young children in Illinois may receive services related to early development, education, and care from a variety of sources. The Prevention Initiative, funded by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), focuses on supporting development of infants and children birth to age 3 through education, training, and other services to expecting parents and families throughout the state with children from birth to age 3 who are considered “at risk” for future academic failure. Early Head Start’s federal funding provides comprehensive child development services to “economically disadvantaged” families of infants and toddlers in some parts of the state. The Illinois Department of Human Services’ Early Intervention program provides resources and support for families of infants and toddlers who have diagnosed disabilities or developmental delays, or who are at risk of significant delays, with the goal of promoting the children’s development and facilitating their participation in family and community activities.

Significant numbers of young children in Illinois spend time in out-of-home care and education situations. Illinois families with children birth through kindergarten entry (about age 5) use a variety of early care and education arrangements. The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) inspects child care facilities (including day care homes) throughout the state and determines their eligibility for licensure. About 7,600 licensed family child care homes provide care for children from birth to kindergarten entry. More than 2,000 state-licensed child care centers have enrollment slots for about 194,500 children. According to 2013 figures from the Department of Human Services, children are cared for in more than 53,000 license-exempt family, friends, or neighbors (FFN) settings and more than 2,500 license-exempt child care programs. State-funded half-day Preschool for All (PFA) programs in most Illinois counties serve about 77,000 3- and 4-year-old children. (Although PFA is intended to eventually serve any preschool-age child in Illinois, at present preference is given those who are considered to be academically “at risk.” Federally funded Head Start programs also enroll about 36,000 children from economically disadvantaged families; a smaller number attend migrant and

seasonal Head Start programs.

Illinois public school districts are required to offer kindergarten, but kindergarten attendance is not compulsory. Beginning in fall 2014, six is the age of mandatory school attendance in Illinois. Many kindergarten and primary-grade children are among the 96,000 6- to 12-year-olds who also receive after-school care in licensed or license-exempt child care centers, licensed child care homes, FFN care settings, or school-based programs.

Several sectors and levels of organizations, agencies, and projects are involved in promoting and providing education, care, and intervention services for young children and their families in Illinois. State government entities involved in matters of early care and education include the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD). Those entities fund a variety of projects, as do several foundations and nonprofit organizations, either in collaboration or separately. The McCormick Foundation, the Pritzker Family Foundation, the Ounce of Prevention, Illinois Action for Children, Voices for Illinois Children, and Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago are among the foundations and nonprofits concerned with the well-being and education of young children. One recent collaborative project involving several governmental, nonprofit, and charitable organizations was the development of the [Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age 3](#), published in 2012. Similarly, cooperation among state agency personnel, higher education faculty, classroom teachers, and staff of nonprofits resulted in a major revision of the state's 2002 Early Learning Standards (for children ages 3 to kindergarten entry). The new Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards were published in 2013. PFA and other early childhood programs are expected to begin using them in mid-2014.

The following "snapshots" describe a sample of the many groups and projects involved in a range of activities related to early care and education in Illinois.

### Illinois State Board of Education

The Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) administered by the [Illinois State Board of Education](#) (ISBE) is one of the major investments in early childhood in Illinois. The ECBG supports two major programs: Preschool for All for children from 3 to 5 year olds and Prevention Initiative for children birth to age 3. The Preschool for All (PFA) program provides at least 2.5 hours of high-quality preschool, including comprehensive developmental screening, bachelors-level early childhood licensed teachers, and standards-aligned research-based curriculum. Prevention Initiative (PI) provides coordinated child development and family support services for at-risk infants and toddlers, including parent education and home visiting. The PFA and PI programs are intended for children who have been determined to be at risk for school failure as indicated by their families' high levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, limited-English proficiency, or other need-related indicators.

The predecessor to the Preschool for All (PFA) program was called the Prekindergarten Program for Children at Risk of Academic Failure (PreK), which began with School Reform legislation in 1985. The Prevention Initiative (PI) program for expecting parents and families with children from birth to age 3 and an Early Childhood Model Parental Training Program began a few years later, in 1988. These three programs were combined into the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) in 1998. The Preschool for All (PFA) program was established in 2006 and was combined with PreK into one program for 3- to 5-year-old children in 2012. Legislation was also passed in 2006 to make parental training services part of PFA and PI instead of a separate Parental Training program. The ECBG initially required that at least 8% of the allocation go to programs for children birth to age 3. In 2003, the percentage was increased to 11%; currently 14% of ECBG funds go to birth-to-3 programming.

In 2010, the transitional bilingual education rules ([23 Illinois Administrative Code Part 228](#)) were amended to include preschool children. Public school districts must uniformly identify children who are English learners (ELs) by administering a home-language survey to all children new to the district and conducting an English-language proficiency screening process for children who come from a language background other than English. Preschool programs must offer a language instruction program consistent with the requirements of Part 228 to all preschool children identified as ELs. By July 1, 2014, preschool teachers who provide native language/ESL instruction to EL students must hold both an early childhood education endorsement and the English as a second language (ESL) or bilingual endorsement or approval that corresponds with the teaching assignment.

In 2012 the first [Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three](#) were published, and in 2013, the ISBE Early Childhood Division, in collaboration with its partners, completed a revision of the [Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards](#) for children ages 3 years to kindergarten enrollment age. These standards and guidelines, as well as the [Illinois Birth to Five Program Standards](#) (2014), will assist the Illinois early childhood community in providing high-quality programs and services for children birth to kindergarten enrollment age and their families.

Currently the ECBG is funded at \$300,192,400. This funding supports the city of Chicago's PFA and PI programs as well as 462 downstate PFA programs and 153 downstate PI programs. The ECBG funds support statewide quality infrastructure, including investments in professional development, instructional supports, program monitoring, and a website that includes demographic data on young children and data on early care and education (ECE) services in Illinois. In addition to the state investment in the ECBG, some school districts

also provide preschool services through local funds, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In addition to administering the Early Childhood Block Grant Programs, ISBE has been collaborating with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, Department of Human Services, Department of Children and Family Services, and the Illinois Early Learning Council to improve service delivery and efficiency in early childhood systems. Most recently, through the Early Learning Challenge Grant, Illinois proposed a state plan that furthers three strategic priorities: (1) Deepening the integration of state supports to create a unified framework for all Early Learning and Development (ELD) programs, including Preschool for All, Head Start, Early Head Start, center- and home-based child care, and child care centers licensed through the Department of Children and Family Services; (2) Connecting the most-at-risk children with the supports and services they need; and (3) Increasing program quality through supports for programs and educators.

The Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Division can be reached by emailing [earlychi@isbe.net](mailto:earlychi@isbe.net) or calling (217) 524-4835.

---

## Illinois Action for Children

### General Information

Since its founding in 1969 by a group of child advocates, [Illinois Action for Children](#) (IAFC) has worked to ensure that all children in Illinois have access to high-quality early care and education and that parents are supported in their goals of economic self-sufficiency and stability. By creating systems of early care and education that help strengthen families and communities, IAFC seeks to be a catalyst for organizing, developing, and supporting strong families and powerful communities where children are given high priority.

The organization's outreach and work with low-income, hard-to-reach families has led to research on and implementation of innovative, highly effective programs and advocacy. Its broad approach to supporting children, families, and communities addresses overarching issues of endemic poverty, which are the root cause of the educational failure of America's poorest children.

IAFC's new division of Family and Neighborhood Partnerships works to connect parents, child care providers, and other neighborhood resources in ways that improve children's educational outcomes.

### Program Highlights

Illinois Action for Children's program areas include public policy and advocacy, child care supports, early childhood education, parent engagement, and community building and organizing. IAFC's public policy and advocacy organizing work focuses on expanding access to child care and early education and other supports. IAFC advocated for Illinois' Preschool for All (PFA) program and for development of ExceleRate Illinois, a statewide quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). Other recent advocacy efforts have focused on enabling thousands more families to be eligible for the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and organizing thousands of citizens to contact legislators about making the needs of children and families a high priority in Illinois.

IAFC's early learning programs make early education available to young children to help them prepare for success in school. IAFC has created a national model for providing preschool in home child care settings to children who would otherwise not have access to early education by training providers to be more intentional in their caretaking. The organization has also connected home child care providers with resources including certified teachers, child development experts, nutrition and literacy training, and more than 60,000 books. It also has collaborated with parents, community groups, and local governments to identify optimal ways to connect children to early learning opportunities.

The IAFC's Resource and Referral Program connects providers, parents, and employers with resources such as child care referrals, health services, professional development, and community supports. This program trains almost 19,000 child care providers each year. It also provides child care referrals for more than 20,000 children per year, including almost 1,000 children of teenage and foster parents. The resource and referral program also connects thousands of underserved children with literacy, mental health, and nutrition resources and administers the Illinois CCAP for Cook County, helping more than 50,000 families pay for child care each month.

Additional IAFC projects and initiatives include involvement in the North Lawndale Learning Community and work related to the federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant. In North Lawndale, an area of Chicago plagued by deep poverty, an IAFC project team seeks to engage isolated families, build social networks, and link community members to needed resources in support of family self-sufficiency. Its areas of work include early childhood education, K-12 education, parent advocacy and leadership, and health and nutrition services.

Illinois' second application for federal money through the Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge grant application was approved in December 2012, and the state received \$34 million in funding. As part of this funding, Illinois is implementing a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), called ExceleRate Illinois, that will be mandatory for all licensed center- and home-based child care programs. IAFC has collaborated with the state to develop, publicize, and implement ExceleRate Illinois for center-based providers. The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development also subgranted a portion of RTT-ELC funds to IAFC to develop the Consortium for Community Systems Development, which will provide strategic support for alignment and integration of early childhood resources at the state and local levels.

## Partnerships

IAFC administers programs supported by the following funding streams:

- State Child Care & Development Fund (Illinois Department of Human Services, or IDHS), for programs such as CCAP, resource & referral services for families, child care provider training and technical assistance, and ExceleRate Illinois.
- Early Childhood Block Grant (Illinois State Board of Education, or ISBE)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (ISBE)
- Strengthening Families Illinois (Department of Children and Family Services, or DCFS)

IAFC staff members also collaborate with groups that coordinate statewide systems, including:

- IDHS Child Care & Development Advisory Council and its subcommittees on system collaboration, quality assurance, and program administration
- The Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)
- DCFS day care advisory council, which IAFC chairs and staffs
- ISBE's Early Childhood Advisory Group (ECAG)
- BUILD initiative (a national effort to strategically build early learning systems within states)
- Illinois Human Service Commission
- Professional Development Advisory Committee (PDAC)

In collaboration with a number of state and national advocacy groups, such as CLASP, Fight Crime: Invest In Kids, and the National Women's Law Center, IAFC also analyzes policies and advocates for a variety of additional programs for children and families, including children's health services, mental health, violence prevention, and services for homeless families.

---

## Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)

### General Information

The [Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#) (INCCRRA) is a statewide nonprofit organization established in 1996 which, in partnership with its 16 local Child Care Resources and Referral (CCR&R) agencies, is a recognized leader, catalyst, and resource for making high-quality, affordable early care and education and school-age care options available for children and families in Illinois. Its vision is that "all children in Illinois have access to healthy, safe, nurturing, enriching and respectful early childhood educational and out-of-school time experiences." INCCRRA's mission is to provide early childhood professionals with access to education, training, and workforce development opportunities and to enhance and promote the Child Care Resource & Referral System throughout Illinois.

INCCRRA is involved in a variety of projects in the state, including ExceleRate Illinois, Gateways to Opportunity, and the collection, analysis, and reporting of data related to early care and education in Illinois.

### ExceleRate Illinois

INCCRRA administers the Illinois Quality Rating and Improvement System, known as [ExceleRate Illinois](#), a comprehensive system intended to support the preparation of children for success in school and in life. ExceleRate Illinois provides early learning and development programs a clear process for making continual quality improvements. It provides a consistent set of standards for quality improvement, details a process for making quality an ongoing priority, keeps providers focused on whole child development, and helps providers access and stay current with emerging research and best practices.

### Gateways to Opportunity

INCCRRA administers [Gateways to Opportunity](#), a comprehensive statewide professional development system launched in March 2005 that provides a network of resources for early care and education professionals in the areas of credentialing, career guidance, training, and professional development. Gateways was designed by the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC) to meet the needs of early care and education professionals in Illinois. INCCRRA convenes and coordinates a wide variety of state committees and councils, including PDAC, with 123 members representing two- and four-year higher education institutions, advocacy organizations, councils, boards, and key stakeholders in the field. INCCRRA and PDAC are jointly dedicated to creating an integrated statewide professional development system and to increasing access to professional development opportunities for early care and education professionals. Resources and services provided as part of Gateways include Gateways to Opportunity Credentials, Gateways Professional Development Advisors, Great START, Gateways to Opportunity Registry, the Illinois Trainers Network, and the Gateways to Opportunity Scholarship Program. More information is available on all these services on the Gateways to Opportunity website. A few highlights are included below:

*Gateways to Opportunity Registry:* With almost 60,000 members (and growing), the Gateways to Opportunity Registry provides a quick and easy way for early care and education professionals to track their training and education and connect to the Statewide Online Training Calendar. The Gateways Registry is a critical component of the professional development system and is a source of aggregate data and information about the early childhood workforce that informs policy and program development. Through the Gateways Registry, INCCRRA has collected educational information such as degrees, coursework, and credential attainment on more than 50,000 members. These data are used to inform ECE public policy. Aggregate data from the Gateways Registry also informs higher education institution faculty and ECE trainers of the field's needs for education and training.

*Gateways to Opportunity Credentials and Teacher Preparation:* The Gateways to Opportunity Credentials are symbols of professional achievement that validate the knowledge, skills, experience, and contributions of early care and education professionals. Credentials are awarded and recognized by the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Child Care and Development. Types of credentials include a director credential, an infant-toddler credential, a school-age and youth development credential, and ECE credentials, levels 1–5. Effective January 2014, Gateways Credentials are required for staff working in early learning and development programs at high levels of quality in ExceleRate Illinois.

Embedding Gateways Credential requirements in teacher preparation programs ultimately ensures benefits to children and families through higher quality early learning and development programs. Through coordination of PDAC, three new Gateways Credentials are in development to support professionals who work in family child care settings, provide technical assistance, and work with families. Over its 18-year history, INCCRRA has focused on the development of a statewide infrastructure for the training and professional development of early childhood practitioners, building and maximizing partnerships with all higher education institutions throughout the state. Approximately 94% of all Illinois higher education institutions partner with INCCRRA through the Gateways to Opportunity Scholarship program. Additionally, 65% of Illinois higher education institutions have voluntarily aligned their ECE coursework with Gateways Credential requirements, and another 15% are in the process of aligning coursework. This cohesive foundation strengthens teacher preparation for those working with children and families throughout Illinois, providing a national model.

INCCRRA has provided early childhood higher education institution faculty with a range of opportunities for faculty development to strengthen pedagogy and instruction in relation to diversity, early math, assessments, and standards. INCCRRA convenes and coordinates professional development opportunities for higher education faculty through forums, regional workshops, and technical assistance to promote consistency in teacher preparation regardless of workforce setting. INCCRRA is partnering with the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Illinois Community College Board to build upon federal Race to the Top (RTT) Early Learning Challenge funding to improve articulation of coursework.

## Data Collection and Research

INCCRRA collects, maintains, and reports statistical information related to the early childhood and school-age workforce, as well as child care supply and demand. Statistical data and information helps identify and address the child care needs of Illinois children, families, and the practitioners who support them. This information is provided to state government officials and agencies, community planners, policy makers, and human service organizations to identify, develop, and promote policies for positive impact on early learning and development programs. Through its Data Tracking Program (DTP), INCCRRA also maintains information on coursework from higher education institutions, course descriptions, ECE program data, certifications, degree types, student populations, and formal and informal articulation agreements.

INCCRRA actively contributes to the research community, including coordination of two reports for the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS): the [Market Rate Survey of Licensed Child Care Programs](#) and the [Salary & Staffing Survey of Licensed Child Care Facilities](#).

## Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map: Supporting Transparent Resource Allocation in Illinois

In 2005, the Illinois Early Learning Council called for a concerted effort to create an interactive, Web-based tool that would support a “transparent” decision-making framework for awarding funds for the state’s prekindergarten program, Preschool for All (PFA). Decision makers would use the tool to allocate resources as efficiently as possible while creating a comprehensive early childhood system for the state. The Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative (ECAP) at the University of Illinois began working with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and other partners in 2005 to develop a website populated with public data on early care and education services in the state. The website, called the [Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map](#), is maintained at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The data for IECAM are provided on an annual or semiannual basis by state agencies (serving children birth through age 5), Head Start, and the private sector. The IECAM site also provides demographic information at the community level that can be used for resource allocation in Illinois.

*Collaboration.* IECAM staff have developed relationships with a variety of data sources in Illinois, including state government agencies such as the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and its the Bureau of Early Intervention and Bureau of Childhood Development, as well as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Head Start<sup>1</sup>, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Association ([INCCRRRA](#)), Chicago Public Schools ([CPS](#)), and organizations that advocate for young children and their families around the state. These collaborations enable IECAM to acquire and analyze the data and provide the project with opportunities to share data and resources with these partners. Additionally, IECAM staff partner with the Illinois Early Learning Council ([IELC](#)), the Professional Development Advisory Committee ([PDAC](#)), and the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development ([OECD](#)).

The IECAM project has been recognized nationally as an example of state collaborative efforts in the area of data collection and analysis and the development of an early childhood data system. As part of its recent study to analyze the current status of early childhood data in the state and make recommendations on the planning of a unified data system for early childhood, John Snow Inc. (2013) reported to the OECD that IECAM represents “a success story that should be reviewed and considered as similar Unified System business capabilities are defined and developed” (p. 17).

*Purpose and Data.* IECAM is intended to (1) assist policy makers in allocating resources for early care and education programs to areas where they are most needed, (2) make public resource allocation transparent by showing the changes in funding of services from year to year, and (3) provide a one-stop source for early care and education data gathered from multiple agencies in Illinois. The website includes data on the following site-based early care and education services: PFA, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant and Seasonal Head Start, licensed and license-exempt child care centers, and licensed family child care homes. At present, IECAM also includes data on the following non-site-based early care and education services: Child Care Assistance Program, ISBE Prevention Initiative, IDHS Parents Too Soon, and IDHS early intervention. IECAM includes demographic data on population, poverty, languages, race/ethnicity, and working-family conditions drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The IECAM database can be searched at multiple geographic levels such as state, county, township, and municipality. It may also be viewed by elementary and unit school districts, Illinois House and Senate districts, federal congressional districts, ISBE regions, and IDHS regions.

IECAM presents data in both tabular and map formats. The maps are derived from GIS (geographic information software) that associates data with location. Besides the data that are available in its online database, IECAM gathers and presents additional data on various risk factors (e.g., poverty, health, parental education) for children and families. IECAM also presents maps of demographic themes that highlight how different areas of the state compare in certain themes such as percent of individuals in various racial, ethnic, or linguistic groups.

*Resources.* The IECAM website features standard reportson five subject areas (e.g., publicly funded preschool and Head Start, Building Blocks Community Assessment Data Sheet), which allows users to obtain specific data for selected geographic areas along with previously prepared background information about the data. For in-depth data analyses, IECAM has developed technical reports and data reports. Technical reports present and interpret data for users and stakeholders. The two reports produced so far are [The Impact of Publicly Funded Preschool in Illinois: An Analysis of Data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map](#) (2011) and [Assessing Risk: Descriptive Data Related to Risk Factors Experienced by Young Children and Their Families in Illinois](#) (2012). Data reports are shorter, provide more detailed material, and describe the advantages and limitations of data, particularly in the context of making informed service and/or policy decisions. The first data report, [Census Bureau Data on Languages Spoken by Children](#), highlights three different ways of viewing language data and using and interpreting the data effectively and accurately. A quick summary of data for a geographic area are provided in *Snapshots of Illinois Counties*. *Quick Helps* are one-page resources that guide users of the website. In 2014, IECAM will introduce a new data resource, *Spotlight on Stats*, highlighting particular demographic data (e.g. languages, risk factors, population characteristics) on the state as a whole.

The goal of IECAM is to ensure that citizens of Illinois have access to information about the current availability of services for young children during the critical years between birth and kindergarten entry. It is a resource for funders, policy makers, advocates, and others who have a vested interest in supporting and enhancing early childhood services.

*This report on IECAM was created by Dawn V. Thomas, Bernard Cesarone, and Susan A. Fowler.*

---

## The Illinois Early Learning Project

The Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign houses the [Illinois Early Learning \(IEL\) Project](#), which is funded by the Illinois State Board of Education and focuses on the care, education, and well-being of children birth through age 5. The IEL Project is viewed as a reliable source of evidence-based information that is readily accessible, understandable, and useful to the broad spectrum of parents, caregivers, and early care and education professionals.

The IEL Project has primary responsibility for hosting, aligning, and integrating several sets of state guidelines and standards for children birth through kindergarten. During 2013, both the new Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for preschool (replacing the 2002 Illinois Early Learning Standards) were added to the website in English and Spanish.

In addition, the Illinois Early Learning Project provides a wide range of Web and print resources, including Tip Sheets, videos, and FAQs in multiple languages for educators, caregivers, and parents of young children. Among the most frequently accessed resources are more than 170 IEL Tip Sheets, easy-reading-level, single-page documents on a variety of topics related to young children in English, Spanish, and Polish. (Selected Tip Sheets are also available in Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Arabic.) IEL's benchmark video shows optimal classroom practices linked to early learning and development benchmarks; parent videos depict family activities that promote children's development and learning. The FAQs are articles about a wide range of child-related topics, from child development and health to curriculum to starting a child care program. Additional information is available in archived "Talks with Experts" on a variety of topics and in two blogs (*Teaching and Parenting Children with Special Needs* and *Teaching and Parenting Dual Language Learners*.) Most resources created by IEL staff members are translated into Spanish and are available on the [Spanish-language companion website](#).

IEL staff members regularly revise and add new resources to the website and update the Resources on Early Learning database to provide links from standards, benchmarks, and guidelines to relevant high-quality online resources. IEL also maintains and continuously adds new Project Approach-related resources to the [Illinois Projects in Practice](#) (ILPIP) website, including Directors' Corner articles, blogs by Project Approach experts, examples of high-quality class projects, and aids for planning lessons during projects. Staff members also maintain the ILPIP calendar and listserv. Most resources on the ILPIP site are also translated into [Spanish](#).

IEL staff disseminates information about IEL resources and early care and education in general via a "news" feature on the home page, RSS feeds, monthly and quarterly online newsletters, a question-answering service, and updates on Facebook and Twitter.

Surveys of IEL users suggest that teachers, caregivers, home visitors, early interventionists, and parents in Illinois and elsewhere are frequent visitors to the site; survey responses also show that early childhood professional development providers and higher education instructors, statewide and nationally, use the IEL website within preservice and in-service training and teacher education programs. The project's Web statistics indicate that the IEL website receives close to 1 million user visits annually. The highest percentage of user visits are from within the state of Illinois, but a number are from the other 49 states, the District of Columbia, and other countries such as Mexico.

Service and outreach activities include exhibiting IEL materials at local, regional, statewide, and national conferences and presenting in-person workshops and webinars. IEL's partnerships with staff of other organizations and agencies in the state have resulted in additional high-quality information and enhanced outreach to the public. For example, IEL staff members collaborated with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Illinois State Water Survey to produce 11 science-based Tip Sheets for educators. University of Illinois faculty members also have advised writers on the content of Tip Sheets and FAQs that were relevant to their fields. Russian translations of selected Tip Sheets were possible through collaboration with the UIUC Center for Translation Studies.

IEL staff members also serve on state and local committees and in leadership roles within professional organizations (e.g., Illinois Early Learning Council, Illinois Professional Development System Advisory Committee, Illinois Division for Early Childhood).

### Note

1. Head Start includes the Region V Office of Head Start, Illinois Head Start Association, the State Collaboration Office, and individual grantees.

---

## References

- Illinois State Board of Education. (2013). *Illinois early learning and development standards for preschool*. Retrieved from <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielts/ielts.pdf>
- Illinois State Board of Education. (2014). *Illinois birth to five program standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi/pdf/0-5-program-stds.pdf>
- John Snow Inc. (2013, January 31). *Illinois unified system planning project*. Report prepared for the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development.
- Positive Parenting DuPage and Ounce of Prevention Fund. (2012). *Illinois early learning guidelines for children birth to age three*. Retrieved from <http://illinoisearlylearning.org/guidelines/guidelines.pdf>
- Thomas, Dawn V.; Fowler, Susan A.; Cesarone, Bernard; & Rothenberg, Diane. (2012). *The impact of publicly funded preschool in Illinois: An analysis of data from the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map* (Technical Report No. 1). Champaign, IL: Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map and Chapin Hall.
- Thomas, Dawn V.; Seshadri, Roopa; Cesarone, Bernard; Fowler, Susan A.; Goerge, Robert; & Danner, Natalie. (2012). *Assessing risk: Descriptive data related to risk factors experienced by young children and their families in Illinois* (Technical Report No. 2). Champaign, IL: Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map and Chapin Hall.



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
College of Education  
Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative

