Iowa Department of Education

Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs for Four-Year-Olds

Preliminary Report

House File 877

Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319

January 2008
Revised, February 2008

State of Iowa
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

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Introduction

The *Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds* was established in 2007 Iowa House Acts, House File (HF) 877. The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for all young children in Iowa to enter school ready to learn by expanding voluntary access to quality preschool curriculum for all children who are four-years-old. This preliminary report reflects the first six months of implementation of the *Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds*.

Preschool Program Profile

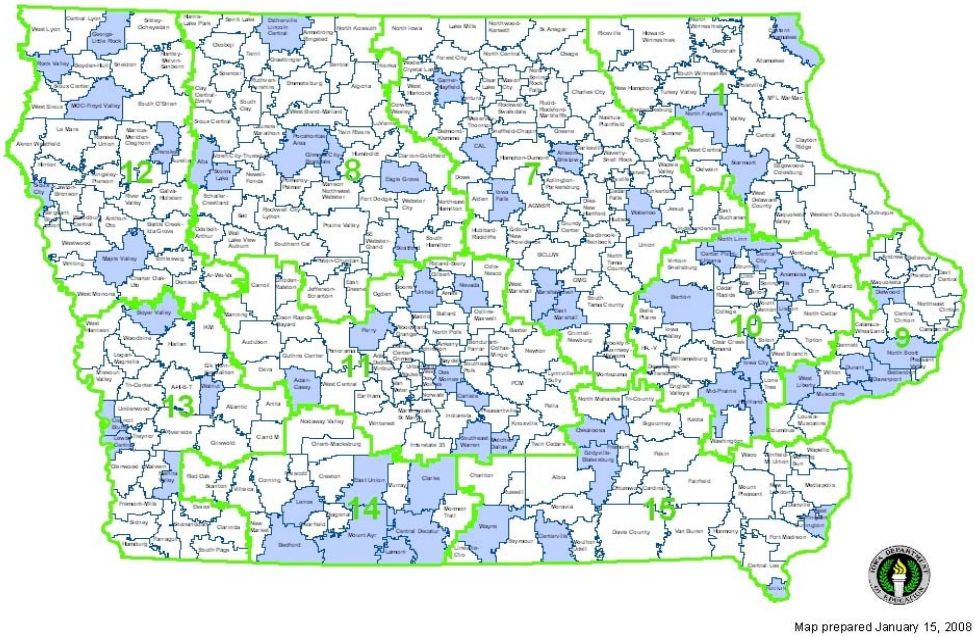
Year One District Application Data. A competitive grant application process was used to award funding to support preschool programs in 64 school districts. Table 1 shows information regarding Year 1 application data. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of awarded districts statewide (see Appendix A for a complete list of awarded districts, number of children enrolled, and funding allocated).

Table 1. Year One Preschool Program Application Data.

Application Data	Total Number
Number of districts that submitted applications	182
Number of applications read	146
Number of applications not read (did not meet submission requirements)	36
Number of districts that received awards	64

Source. Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Report, 2007.

Figure 1. School Districts or District Partnerships Awarded Funding for the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs for Four-Year-Olds.



Source. Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Report, 2007.

Children Enrolled. Preschool enrollment is calculated on different dates for different purposes. The first calculation was made on a preliminary count September 4, 2007. This preliminary count was verified (4,482) and used to allocate funds for the 2007-2008 school year. The second calculation was made on October 1, 2007, using the Preschool Certified Enrollment Count. This number (5,126) provided by the districts will be used to allocate funds to sustain programming for the 2008-2009 school year.

The data analyzed for the demographic representation of the four-year-old children attending the Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs was obtained from The Basic Educational Data Survey (BEDS). This information is submitted to the Iowa Department of Education (DE) by school districts. The number is different from the Preschool Certified Enrollment since it includes additional preschoolers who are funded by other funding sources.

The race/ethnicity representation was analyzed for the same categories that are used for reporting district data for *No Child left Behind* (see Table 2). Overall, the ethnic representation of state enrollment of four-year-olds attending the preschool programs was 25 percent. The gender of four-year-olds was analyzed and 51 percent were male and 49 percent female. The average percent of districts with four-year-old enrollment that qualified for free and reduced lunch was 24 percent.

Table 2. Race/Ethnicity Representation of Preschoolers in Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs for Four-Year-Olds.

Race/Ethnicity	Awarded Districts
Number of Caucasian Students	3,865
Percent of Caucasian Students	74.6%
Number of Asian Students	165
Percent of Asian Students	3.2%
Number of Hispanic Students	595
Percent of Hispanic Students	11.5%
Number of African American Students	533
Percent of African American Students	10.3%
Number of American Indian Students	21
Percent of American Indian of Students	.4%

Source. Preliminary results (99 percent verification data completed), DE Basic Educational Data Survey, 2007-2008.

***Collaborative Partners*.** House File 877 required districts to submit a collaborative proposal that demonstrated involvement of multiple community stakeholders such as, parents, the school district, accredited nonpublic schools and faith-based representatives, the area education agency, the community empowerment area board, representatives of business, Head Start programs, Shared Visions, center-based and home-based providers of child care services, human services, public health, and economic development programs. It should be noted that not all the collaborative partners listed were available in all communities. For example, some communities did not have a Shared Visions Preschool Program.

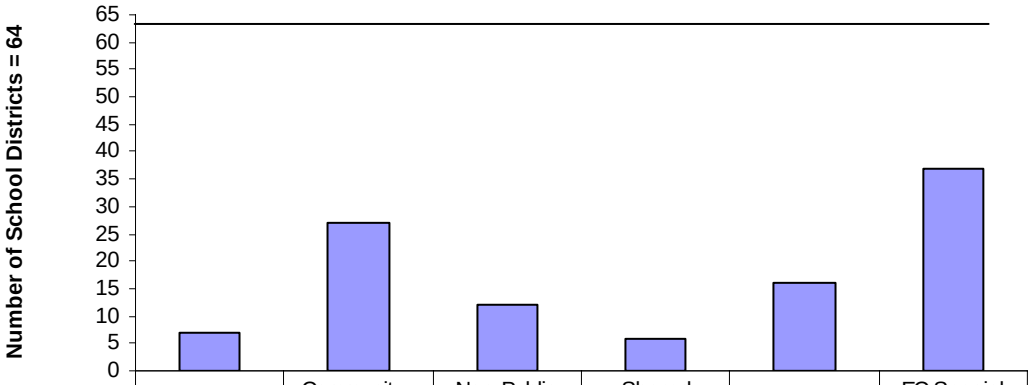
The application process only required school districts to identify their collaborative partners. Information was not required to be submitted regarding how programming was provided to preschoolers. (Districts may have hired teachers to provide programming in community-based settings or may have contracted with their partners to provide programming in these settings.) This information will be collected from districts in the end of year report.

Figure 2 represents the number of collaborative partners across the five categories included in district applications. Categories were tallied for each district; some of the 64 districts collaborated across more than one category. (Although districts were required to partner with other preschool programs, they were not allowed to supplant funding. For example, those preschoolers supported by federal Early Childhood Special Education funds could not be duplicated in the Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds enrollment.)

More collaborative partnerships (37 of the 64 districts) were noted for the Early Childhood Special Education programs. This was expected due to districts meeting the requirements of federal and state laws to provide Early Childhood Special Education programs for preschoolers since the mid 70s. (Iowa is a Birth Mandate State which means the legislature supported providing children birth to 21 special education services as early as 1974.) Also, districts must meet federal requirements for providing the Least Restrictive Environment for children with special learning needs with other typically developing children in community-based settings. Twenty-seven of the 64 districts collaborated with community-based programs; 12 of the 64 districts partnered with nonpublic schools. Districts were not required to submit data to the DE for the preschool enrollment specific to the categories described. This data component will be included in the end of year report.

Although seven districts did not include collaborative partners in the application description, these districts met other priority requirements of HF 877 including or such as poverty, no existing general education preschool, or size of district for equitable statewide distribution; or the overall application plan was of high quality. In addition, some rural districts may have been limited by no available collaborative partners (no currently available Head Start or Shared Visions program in their community). Ongoing technical assistance from the DE will be provided to districts to follow-up with meeting collaboration requirements along with verification site visits in Year 2.

Figure 2. Number of Collaborative Partners Included in District Application.

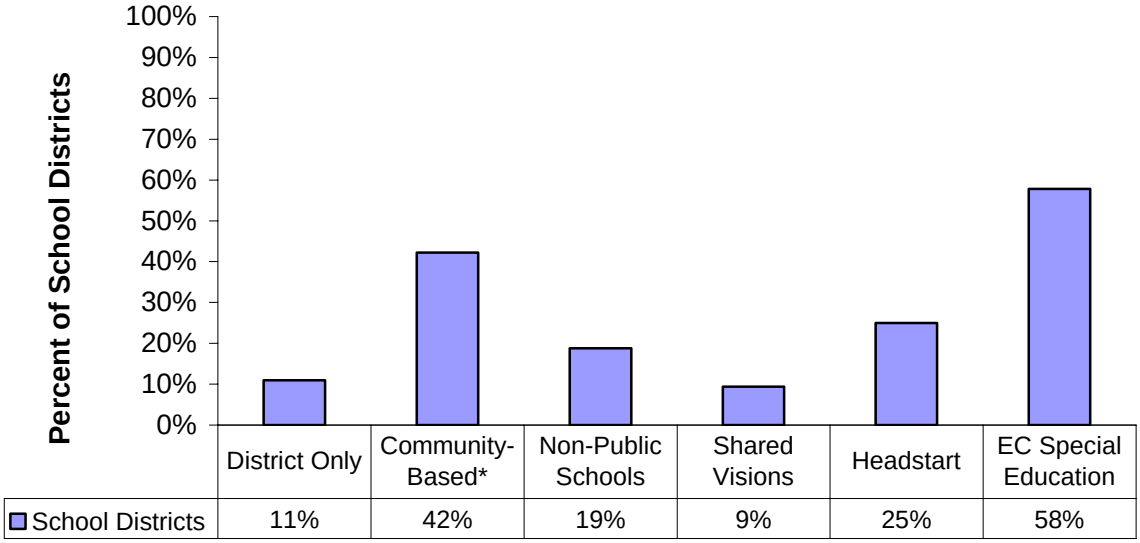


	District Only	Community-Based*	Non-Public Schools	Shared Visions	Headstart	EC Special Education
School Districts	7	27	12	6	16	37

Source. Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Report, 2007.
Note. *Category of Community Based Preschool Programs included those with Community Empowerment funding support.

Figure 3 represents the percent of collaborative partners across the five categories that districts included in their application description. Categories were tallied and percent determined for each district; some of the 64 districts collaborated across more than one category.

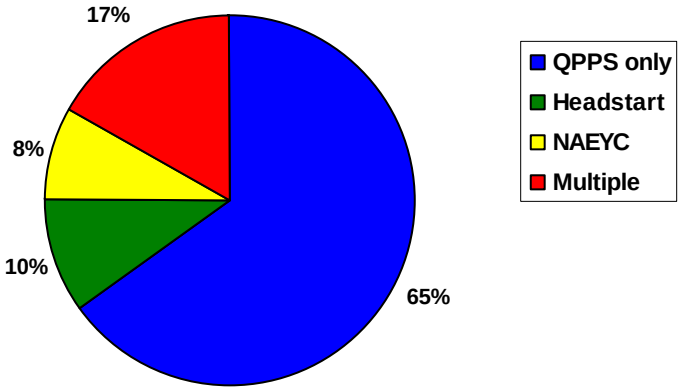
Figure 3. Percent of Collaborative Partners Included in District Application.



Source. Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Report, 2007.
Note. *Category of Community Based Preschool Programs included those with Community Empowerment funding support.

***Program Characteristics*.** Districts are required to implement program standards to ensure the provision of quality preschools**.** District program standard options included: the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards, the National Association of Young Children Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria, or the Head Start Program Performance Standards. Figure 4 represents the percent of districts adopting one or multiple types of program standards.

Figure 4. Percent and Type of Preschool Program Standard Selected by Districts.



Source. Preliminary results (99 percent verification data completed), DE Basic Education Data Survey, 2007-2008.

In addition, districts, as well as their collaborative partners providing preschool classrooms, must meet all the quality preschool program requirements. These requirements include: providing an appropriately licensed teacher, appropriate adult child ratios and group size, appropriate materials and space, and the implementation of appropriate curriculum and assessment that aligns with the Iowa Early Learning Standards. Finally, appropriate staff development must be provided to teachers in order to maintain the skills appropriate to their role.

Districts are required to provide 10 hours of instruction per week. Districts reported providing an average of 12 hours per week of quality preschool services with a range from 10 to 15 hours per week.

Funding. First year allocations to awarded districts were based on a competitive grant process. Criteria and an application scoring rubric were established to reflect HF 877. As designated in HF 877, [281-16.9 (1) – (4)], two criteria of priority and two considerations were established:

Criteria of Priority

- Districts with a high percentage of children in poverty;
- Districts that did not have existing preschool programming within school district boundaries;

Considerations

- Districts with established, high-quality community partnerships seeking to expand access to preschool; and
- Districts of various size for equitable statewide distribution of preschool program services.

Districts were awarded funds based on these priorities as well as these considerations in HF 877. Unsuccessful applications did not meet enough of the criteria or wrote a grant that was not competitive with the applicant pool. Table 3 indicates all district applications submitted to the DE and those with existing preschool programs in their community. This data represents preschool program opportunities for children that may have been established for some time in the district supported by federal and/or state funding to meet needs of preschoolers with special needs (Early Childhood Special Education) and/or at-risk (Shared Visions and Head Start) (see previously described *Collaborative Partner* section). These state and federal funded programs are only available to children with special needs or at-risk, and not to general education preschoolers. If quality preschool programs were available in the community, they were potentially supported by family paid tuition or Empowerment funds to cover preschool program costs.

Table 3. Total Number of District Applications Submitted and Number of Existing Preschool Programs for Children At-Risk, of Special Needs, or Tuition-Based.

	Number of Applicants	Number of Districts with Existing Preschool Programs
Awarded districts	64	59
Districts not awarded	112	108

Source. Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Report, 2007.

Preschool Certified Enrollment. The 64 districts reported the number of children enrolled October 1, 2007, to generate funds that will sustain their preschool program for the next school year (2008-2009). It is expected many of the districts will be working with their community partners to expand their preschool classrooms to encompass more four-year-olds. These 64 districts will not have the opportunity to re-apply for start-up grant funds.

Program Evaluation and Accountability

Awarded districts are required to submit data to the DE for the purpose of accountability and program evaluation. The Kindergarten Literacy Assessment data as well as academic progress in later years will be used to evaluate program results. In Year 2, a web-based grant application process will be developed in order to gather and analyze additional data elements.

Current Department Supports

The DE has provided technical assistance and training for the Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS) and National Association for Educating Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation through a series of nine ICN sessions. Approximately 300 individuals attended each session. A web site was established in an effort to communicate program requirements, answer questions, and provide information about upcoming events. The various topics have included:

Program Standards Training

- Series of five ICN sessions for (QPPS)-available to any awarded district, districts who may be applying in the future, community preschools that are or will be partnering with a funded district, agencies that support preschool programs that are or may be receiving funding
- Series of four ICN sessions for NAEYC Accreditation Standards-available to Shared Visions preschools that are also Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs for Four-Year-Olds (SVPP).

District visits

- Scheduled to visit all 64 awarded districts this school year

Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS) Verification

- Developing and piloting process to verify district meets QPPS (2007-2008)
- Year one districts receive verification visit (2008-2009)

Year 2 Technical Assistance

- Series of sessions to provide support in these topics
    - Collaboration
    - Assessing Community Needs
    - Requirements in Application Writing

Application Revisions

- Analyzed data from surveys sent to grant readers
- Reviewing application and grant reading process

Future Needs

The DE is striving to maintain quality preschool programs through ongoing professional development based on the Iowa Professional Development Model. Professional development funds to support preschool teachers implementing program standards aligned with curriculum and assessment will be critical to increasing quality of preschool programs. Core curriculum will be supported beginning with preschool to align with school age to impact student achievement.

The competitive grant process will be utilized to expand preschool programs to additional districts during the 2008-2009 year with approval of the state budget. A final report of the Year 1 district preschool programs will be developed and posted on the DE website: www.iowa.gov/educate/.

Appendix A
Districts Awarded Funds 2007-2008
Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program for Four-Year-Olds

District Name	Verified Final Count	Amount Funded
Adair-Casey Community School District	19	$60,796.20
Allison-Bristow Community School District	17	$54,396.60
Alta Community School District*	9	$28,798.20
Anamosa Community School District*	64	$204,787.20
Bedford Community School District*	23	$73,595.40
Benton Community School District*	110	$351,978.00
Boyer Valley Community School District*	20	$63,996.00
Burlington Community School District*	36	$115,192.80
CAL Community School District*	16	$51,196.80
Carlisle Community School District*	83	$265,583.40
Center Point-Urbana Community School District	101	$323,179.80
Centerville Community School District*	79	$252,784.20
Central City Community School District*	38	$121,592.40
Central Decatur Community School District*	32	$102,393.60
Cherokee Community School District*	50	$159,990.00
Clarke Community School District*	65	$207,987.00
Council Bluffs Community School District	250	$799,950.00
Davenport Community School District*	515	$1,647,897.00
Delwood Community School District*	13	$41,597.40
Des Moines Independent Community School District*	1065	$3,407,787.00
Durant Community School District*	10	$31,998.00
Eagle Grove Community School District*	32	$102,393.60
East Marshall Community School District*	20	$63,996.00
East Union Community School District*	15	$47,997.00
Eastern Allamakee Community School District*	23	$73,595.40
Eddyville-Blakesburg Community School District*	60	$191,988.00
Estherville Lincoln Central Community School District*	70	$223,986.00
Garner-Hayfield Community School District	34	$108,793.20
George-Little Rock Community School District*	27	$86,394.60
Gilmore City-Bradgate Community School District*	10	$31,998.00
Highland Community School District*	45	$143,991.00
Iowa City Community School District*	44	$140,791.20
Iowa Falls Community School District*	14	$44,797.20
Keokuk Community School District*	42	$134,391.60
Lamoni Community School District*	34	$108,793.20
Lenox Community School District*	15	$47,997.00
Lewis Central Community School District*	46	$147,190.80
Lisbon Community School District*	40	$127,992.00
Maple Valley Community School District*	31	$99,193.80
Marshalltown Community School District*	38	$121,592.40

District Name	Verified Final Count	Amount Funded
Melcher-Dallas Community School District*	25	$79,995.00
Mid-Prairie Community School District*	73	$233,585.40
MOC Floyd Valley	36	$115,192.80
Mount Ayr Community School District*	42	$134,391.60
Muscatine Community School District*	34	$108,793.20
Nevada Community School District*	75	$239,985.00
Nishna Valley Community School District*	19	$60,796.20
North Fayette Community School District*	40	$127,992.00
North Scott Community School District*	60	$191,988.00
North-Linn Community School District*	53	$169,589.40
Oskaloosa Community School District*	45	$143,991.00
Perry Community School District*	98	$313,580.40
Pocahontas Area Community School District*	40	$127,992.00
Rock Valley Community School District*	60	$191,988.00
Sioux City Community School District*	255	$815,949.00
Southeast Warren Community School District*	26	$83,194.80
Starmont Community School District*	29	$92,794.20
Storm Lake Community School District*	36	$115,192.80
Stratford Community School District*	17	$54,396.60
United Community School District*	12	$38,397.60
Walnut Community School District	12	$38,397.60
Waterloo Community School District*	80	$255,984.00
Wayne Community School District*	25	$79,995.00
West Liberty Community School District*	34	$108,793.20
DISTRICT PRESCHOOL PROGRAM TOTALS**	**4482**	$14,338,303.80
Department Appropriation		$330,000.00
GRAND TOTAL		$14,668,303.80

Source. Statewide Voluntary Preschool Program Report, 2007.
Note. *District reported prior established preschool program which may have included those supported by state, federal, family tuition, scholarship, or Empowerment funds.

**Verified final count of 4482 preschoolers was used to appropriate Year 1 grant funds to school districts for the 2007-2008 year.