

National Pre-Kindergarten Policy Landscape

California's efforts to increase pre-kindergarten opportunity are part of a national movement that gains more momentum each day. Children in three states – Georgia, Oklahoma, and Florida – already benefit from universal pre-kindergarten and four other states – New York, Illinois, West Virginia, and Iowa – have passed legislation to make pre-k available to all children in the near future. Here are some of the states that have shown great leadership to expand access to effective preschool programs for young children



New Jersey: As a result of the 1998 New Jersey Supreme Court decision in *Abbott v. Burke*, the state implemented a full-time, year-round pre-k program serving children in the lowest-income school districts. Under the recent leadership of Gov. Jon Corzine and the state legislature, the Abbott Preschool Program has significantly expanded to offer effective pre-k taught by teachers with BAs in small classes to 43,000 3 and 4 year olds.



Illinois: Gov. Rod Blagojevich made early childhood education a key issue in his gubernatorial campaign in 2002. He and the General Assembly passed a total of \$90 million in Early Childhood Block Grant funding between 2003 and 2005. In his 2006 budget address, the governor announced a multi-year preschool-for-all plan that envisions additional funding in future years.



Oklahoma: Oklahoma offers free, voluntary preschool to all of its 4 year olds. In 1998, Rep. Joe Eddins propelled a bill through the legislature to expand an existing pre-kindergarten program to all 4 year olds. The program has expanded dramatically since then and 98 percent of school districts offer the program today.



North Carolina: The North Carolina More at Four pre-k program was established in 2001 as one of Gov. Mike Easley's key education initiatives later reinforced by a court ruling that the state should provide pre-k for all at-risk 4 year olds. More at Four is one of only two pre-k programs nationwide that meets all 10 quality benchmarks outlined by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER).



Georgia: In 1995 under the leadership of former Gov. Zell Miller, Georgia became the first state in the United States to offer free preschool for all 4 year olds. The legislature established a lottery to fund the program and voters approved it in a ballot referendum in 1992. The program now serves 73,000 children a year in public schools, Head Start sites, and childcare centers.



Tennessee: In February 2005, Gov. Phil Bredesen announced a proposal to more than double the number of state-funded preschool classrooms. Two legislators introduced a bill that passed swiftly amid support from a broad array of business, labor, and education leaders. In 2006, the governor and legislature added an additional \$20 million to provide 250 new preschool classrooms beginning in the fall of 2006.