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State-Funded Preschool Availability in Illinois Depends Upon Where You Live:

AN EQUITY ANALYSIS OF ISBE PRE-K RESOURCES



Summary

Since 2006 Illinois has gradually progressed toward making preschool available for all three and four-year-olds. Until Illinois achieves that goal, the state has made some children a priority in its preschool funding – those children the state and the local school district regard as “at risk for school failure.” This brief shows that the current funding system is not designed to meet this interim goal.

We apply an equity lens to preschool funding in 753 Illinois school districts outside of Chicago (which by its size and funding process must be analyzed separately). For greater accuracy, we particularly focus on the 482 school districts with at least 30 three- and four-year-olds living in families with low-incomes (below 185 percent of the federal poverty level).

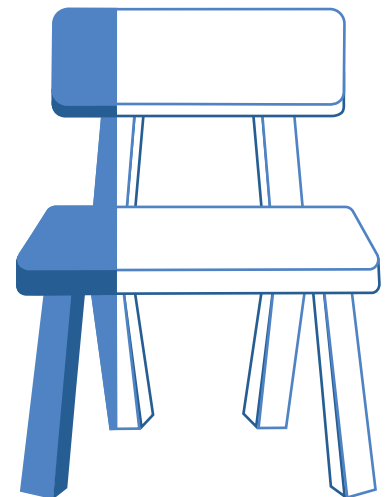
During school years 2017 and 2019, by a number of measures some school districts that might be expected to receive funding and funding increases from Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to provide preschool for prioritized children did not receive it, and school districts that should have lower priority did receive funding.

- ISBE funding for preschool slots in FY19 bears little relationship to the number of low-income children or poor children residing in the district.
- School districts vary greatly in the slots they were funded for in FY19, from no slots per low-income child age three or four living in the district to more than three slots per low-income resident child.
- In one-third of the school districts studied (170 districts), low-income children have less than a 50-50 chance of getting an ISBE preschool seat. This impacts 21,300 low-income children across the state.
- Poorer school districts – ISBE's Tier 1 and Tier 2 districts under evidence based funding – were more likely to receive funding for preschool slots than relatively better off Tier 3 or Tier 4 school districts. Yet disparity in access exists within the tiers.
- In 18 percent of Tier 1 (least well-funded) school districts and 31 percent of Tier 2 school districts, low-income children had less than a 50-50 chance of getting an ISBE preschool or federal Head Start seat.
- Meanwhile 317 other school districts throughout Tiers 1, 2, 3, or 4 had more than one ISBE preschool or Head Start slot for every low-income child.

We believe that these equity failures are unintended consequences of ISBE's particular preschool funding system. Since the funding process falls short on equity tests, Illinois should review and reform the way it funds preschool.

What is equitable distribution in preschool?

Under the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), ISBE's Preschool for All funding is designed to first serve priority children who are most at risk of school failure. Ideally **equitable distribution** means that funding awards equalize opportunities (or “level the playing field”) for all children regardless of their starting place in life. Equitable funding gives every child a fair chance of having positive life outcomes. Since research demonstrates that preschool improves children's outcomes, equity requires providing additional scarce preschool resources first to the children with the most limited opportunities.



The state's preschool funding provides seats for only a quarter of all preschool-aged children in Illinois.

Background

In 2006, Illinois established the Preschool for All program with the goal of providing universal, voluntary access to state-funded preschool for all three- and four-year-olds. Currently, the state's Preschool for All program is funded to provide service to only a quarter of preschool-aged children in the state. Under the Preschool for All program's authorizing legislation, the state prioritized serving children at risk for school failure as it continues to build toward universal access. School districts have the flexibility to define risk factors for children to meet local circumstances, such as living in families with low-incomes, poverty incomes or in deep poverty, having a special need, being a dual-language learner, having a teen parent or experiencing homelessness. We call these children "priority children" rather than "at-risk" in this brief. We also follow the state's determination that some children may have "multiple risk factors" or measurably deeper need, and we call these "highest priority children."

Unlike K-12 education funding, early learning funds are awarded to Illinois school districts, regional offices of education and community-based service providers through a competitive process. Applications for funding are scored and awarded based on a provider's proposed delivery of early learning services and on their demonstration of need of the priority children they're serving. In the past two award cycles, FY2017 and FY2019, ISBE early learning funding has been awarded through three grants, Preschool for All (PFA), Preschool for All Expansion (PFAE) and Prevention Initiative (PI) grants. This analysis considers just PFA and PFAE, grants for preschool-age children.¹ The difference between the two is that PFAE funds require full-day rather than part-day programs and were intended to provide more comprehensive services to children who are especially in need of layers of services that PFA grants alone cannot support.

Whether a priority child in Illinois in fact receives state preschool services depends upon a number of factors specific to where the child lives:

1. Whether the child lives in a community that has a sufficient number of priority children and whose school district (or other service provider) is both interested in providing early learning services and has the resources to write a competitive application.
2. Whether the award that providers receive can provide enough early learning slots to serve all of the priority children in their region.
3. The extent to which the winning applicants actually serve the priority children in their region (as opposed to serving other children).

School districts (or other providers) that do not apply for and win a sufficient number of ISBE early education slots or use awards for optimal expenditures results in a less-than-equitable distribution of ISBE's early learning funds across Illinois.

¹ Prevention Initiative grants to serve 0- to 3-year-olds are being analyzed separately by The Ounce of Prevention Fund.



Methodology

In assessing equity in the distribution of ISBE preschool funding across Illinois this brief analysis cannot look in detail at the specific factors in each region or explore funding per slot, or differences among slots. Instead it provides an aggregate, bird's-eye-view of the distribution of that funding for priority children and treats all slots as similar. In some analyses we include the federal Head Start slots that serve children living in poverty. This analysis is not intended to substitute for a close examination of equity in every school district. It does suggest that the layers of inequity are deep.

To examine how well the state is meeting its goal of providing PFA/PFAE access to all priority children before expanding to serve other children, we use two measures to estimate the number of priority children residing in a community (with community defined as the geographic area served by an elementary or unit school district):

- **Low-income Children:** The number of preschool-age children (ages 3 and 4) who live at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.
- **Children in Poverty:** The number of preschool-age children who live at or below federal poverty level.

While not all priority children are low-income and not all low-income children are priority, for this analysis the numbers of children that are low-income or in poverty serve as proxies for the number of priority children in a school district.

This analysis relies on poverty and population data for Illinois elementary and unit school districts provided by the U.S. Census Bureau in its annual American Community Survey (five-year estimates). Since Census data for very small school districts can be inaccurate, we exclude school districts with fewer than 30 low-income children residing in them. We do not omit these school districts because they are unimportant, but only because we feel they must be studied by other means.²



² Note: We completed similar analyses that included these smaller districts using the number of low-income children enrolled in each school district as reported in the ISBE school report card data in place of census data, and a similar pattern of large variation in access to PFA/PFAE was found.

Illinois School Districts

Illinois has 754 public elementary and unit school districts. This brief covers the 482 districts outside of Chicago that have 30 or more low-income children (living below 185 percent of the federal poverty level). According to the US Census, 114 of these school districts have a majority of rural residents, 104 are mostly in smaller urban areas (under 50,000 residents), 257 are in larger urban areas, and 7 are not classified. In 230 districts, at least 33 percent of three- and four-year-olds live in poverty. Black and / or Latinx students make up the majority of enrolled students in 98 of the districts.

Analysis

To measure the statewide distribution of resources to low-income or poor children we use the ratio of the ISBE-funded slots in FY19 to the number low-income or poor children age 3 or 4 residing in the district. Slots include all PFA- and PFAE-funded slots that are provided in classrooms located inside a school district's boundaries – slots awarded mostly to school districts themselves, but also to Regional Offices of Education, community organizations such as the YWCA, city governments, or charter schools.

We estimate that about 21,300 low-income children ages 3 and 4 in Illinois live in school districts where the total number of ISBE and federal Head Start slots can serve less than half of the low-income children residing in that district.

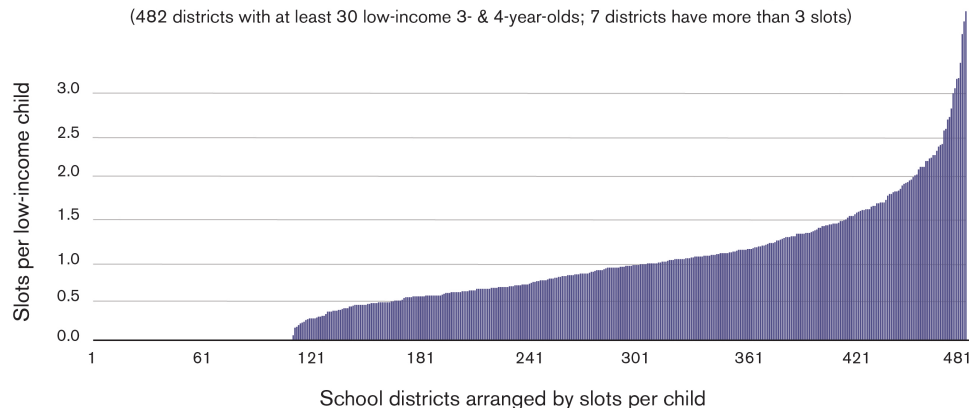
“The number of state preschool seats available to low-income children ranges widely, from no seats to 4.7 seats per child in a district.

The Number of State Preschool Slots per Low-Income Child Varies Dramatically Across Illinois School Districts

Chart 1 arranges school districts by their number of PFA/PFAE slots per low-income child residing in that district.³ In Chart 1, these slots range widely, from no slots in 110 school districts on the left to 4.7 slots for each low-income three- and four-year-old on the far right. The school districts without slots either had no entity within their boundaries that applied for ISBE funding or, if they applied, were not granted funding for slots.

Chart 1: FY19 PFA + PFAE Slots per Low-Income Child Ages 3 & 4

(482 districts with at least 30 low-income 3- & 4-year-olds; 7 districts have more than 3 slots)



From a high-level view, then, there is substantial inequity in the distribution of ISBE-funded slots across school districts. In almost one-fourth of school districts with 30 or more low-income children (110), there are no PFA or PFAE slots available for a child living in a family with low-income. According to the Census, this is 11,274 low-income children. In 36 percent of the school districts (172), there are enough slots to serve fewer than half of the low-income children, meaning a low-income child would have less than a 50-50 chance of having access to a PFA or PFAE slot. In only 29 percent of school districts (141) are there enough slots to serve every low-income child (if preference is given to them).

³ Chart A1 in the Appendix shows the same chart for all 753 school districts outside of Chicago.

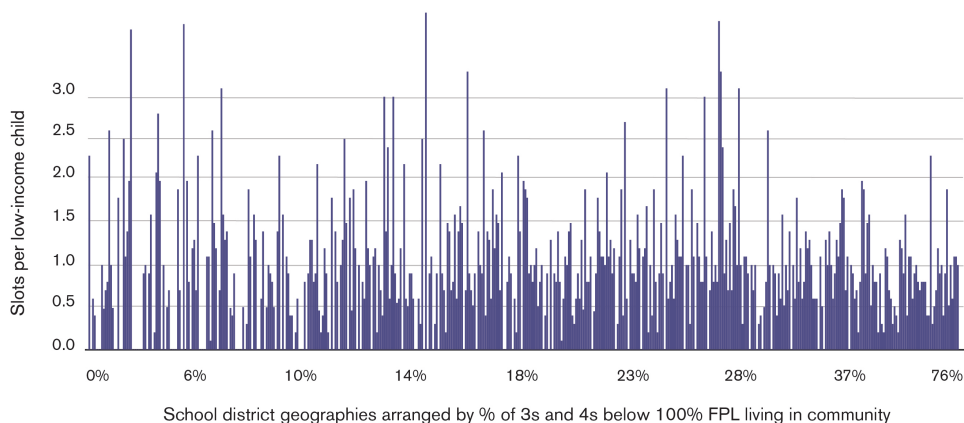
Differences in Slots Are Not Related to Poverty in the Community

There could be good reasons for this unequal distribution. For example, research has shown that a high concentration of poverty in a community is itself a risk factor that makes it difficult for children to be ready for school, so ISBE's grant process might reasonably prioritize high levels of preschool access in these communities rather than all low-income communities.

To explore this, we rearranged the same data in Chart 1 by their school districts' child poverty rates to see if those with higher poverty rates received more slots per child. Chart 2 shows this result. As we move to higher concentrations of poverty in Chart 2, there is no pattern of increasing slots per child. In fact, the quintile of school districts with the highest child poverty rates (31 to 80 percent) has an average of only 0.57 slots per low-income child, slightly lower than the average for all 482 school districts regardless of poverty (0.63 slots per low-income child).⁴

Children experiencing the highest rates of poverty are thus no more likely to have a state-funded preschool seat.⁵

Chart 2: FY19 PFA + PFAE Slots Per Low-Income Child, with Districts Arranged by Poverty Level



Preschool Slots with Comprehensive Services for Highest-Need Children are also Distributed Inequitably

There is another way in which poverty might have driven the patterns of ISBE early learning awards, at least in the FY19 awards which we are studying. PFAE funds were designed to provide enhanced services for highest-priority children in a community. So we ask, is there a pattern in PFAE seats and the number of children living in poverty (rather than low-income children) in each school district area. For this analysis, we add

⁴ See Chart A3 in the Appendix for details.

⁵ On the right side of Chart 2 the school districts with higher poverty levels do have less white space between bars: that indicates that the districts with high poverty are more likely to receive some slots although their slots per child (heights of bars) are rather low. We also rearranged the charts by number (not rate) of children in poverty and the chart pattern is similar.

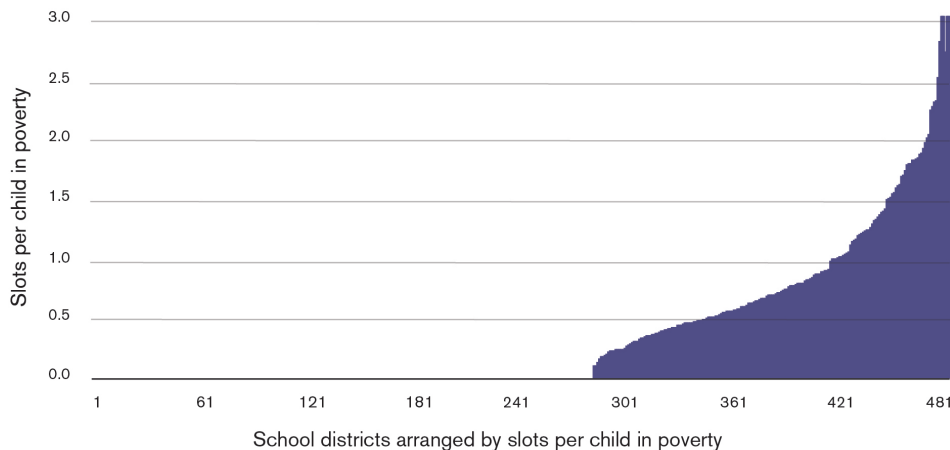


federal Head Start slots in each school district area to state PFAE slots:⁶ Head Start is intended to serve children in poverty, and the FY2019 applicants for ISBE slots were instructed to account for existing Head Start slots in discussing the resources and need for slots in their community.

In 282 school districts (59 percent), children in poverty have no access to a Head Start or PFAE slot. In the 200 communities where there are Head Start or PFAE slots, the slots available per child in poverty vary widely (see chart 3). In 58 school districts (12 percent of all districts), a child in poverty has less than a 50-50 chance of accessing a seat, whereas in 65 districts (13 percent) there are more than enough seats to serve every child in poverty.⁷

Chart 3: FY19 PFAE + FY18 Head Start Slots per Child Living in Poverty

(N = 482 school districts with at least 30 3- & 4-year-olds under 185% FPL)



“In most communities, there is no access to the more intensive and comprehensive PFAE or Head Start program models, but some communities have more than enough slots to serve all 3- and 4-year-olds in poverty.”

Distribution of Slots by Adequacy of School District Funding

We added a second measure of school district need to the analysis of ISBE's FY19 competition awards. ISBE places school districts into four tiers based on the gap between a district's local ability to pay and the amount it needs to fund an adequate education. Tier 1 school districts have the largest gap between their ability to pay and what they need for an adequate education, Tier 2 school districts have less of a gap but a substantial one, while Tiers 3 have a smaller gap of within ten percent of funding adequacy and Tier 4 school districts can fund an adequate education locally.⁸

- 6 The analyses of PFA + PFAE slots per low-income child in charts 1 and 2 were also conducted including Head Start slots. While this raised the ratio of slots to low-income children in most communities, the overall pattern of wide variation and lack of relation between this variation and community concentration of need was the same.
- 7 To explore whether the distribution of PFAE and Head Start slots is related to child poverty across the regions, we also rearranged the bars in Chart 3 by the poverty level in the school districts, as we did in Chart 2. The new chart shows no robust logic or pattern based on child poverty and looks very much like Chart 2, except with fewer communities having any slots at all. (See Appendix, Chart A2.)
- 8 A school district's Percent of Adequacy is defined as its resources divided by its adequacy target spending. In FY19 Tier 1 school districts had 65.6 percent adequacy or less (had resources for 65.6 percent of an adequate education); Tier 2 districts were above that level but below 90 percent; Tier 3 districts had adequacy levels from 90 percent to, but not including, 100 percent; and Tier 4 districts had adequacy levels of 100 percent or more. Adequacy targets included funding needed for a variety of uses, including special needs. See Illinois State Board of Education, "Evidence Based Funding Formula Review & Status Update," Sept 11-12, 2018, retrieved January 2, 2019 at <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Board-Retreat-EBF-Update-09-2018.pdf>.

Charts 4A through 4D show that the number of ISBE- and Head Start-funded preschool slots per low-income three- and four-year-old child varies dramatically across school districts in Illinois regardless of a district's tier or funding capacity. We include federal Head Start slots and as before we restrict analysis to the 482 districts with at least 30 low-income children.

Within tiers there is dramatic variation in the number of ISBE preschool and federal Head Start slots per low-income child, again a measure of inequity. Chart 4A illustrates the Tier 1 school districts – those with the least financial adequacy and the highest rate of receiving an ISBE award. Nine percent have no ISBE or Head Start slots, and in almost 18 percent low-income children have less than a 50 -50 chance of getting a slot. Yet 9 percent have more than two slots per child.

Among the second neediest school districts, Tier 2 (Chart 4B), the variation is similar: almost 20 percent have no slots at all and in 31 percent of the districts, low-income children have less than a 50 – 50 chance of getting a preschool slot. At the same time, 20 percent have more than 2 slots per child.

Charts 4A – 4D: FY19 PFA + PFAE + Head Start Slots per Child Ages 3 & 4 Living Below 185% of FPL (482 school districts by Tier)

“The number of ISBE- and Head Start-funded preschool slots per low-income child varies dramatically across school districts in Illinois regardless of a district's tier.

Chart 4A: Tier 1 School Districts

(N = 200. 17 have no slots; 10 have more than 2.5 slots per low-income child)

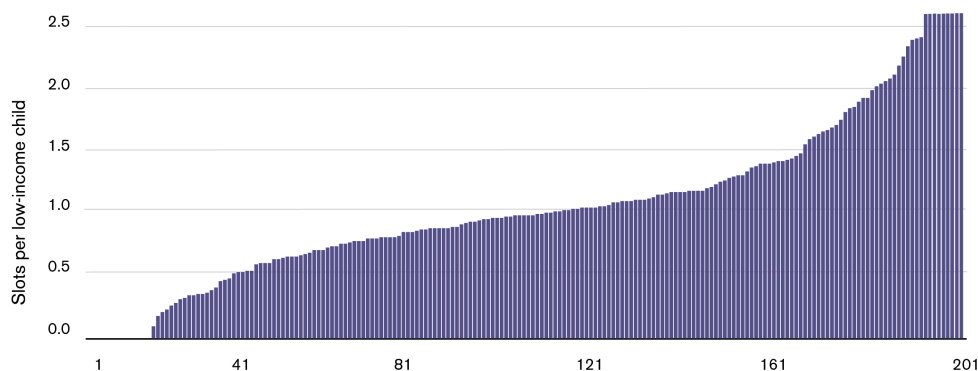


Chart 4B: Tier 2 School Districts

(N = 200. 39 have no slots; 5 have more than 2.5 slots per low-income child)

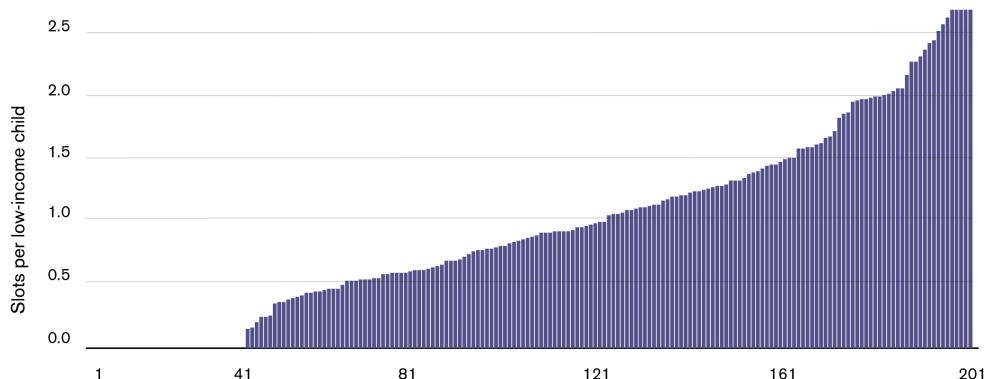


Chart 4C: Tier 3 School Districts

(N = 30. 15 have no slots; 2 have more than 2.5 slots per low-income child)

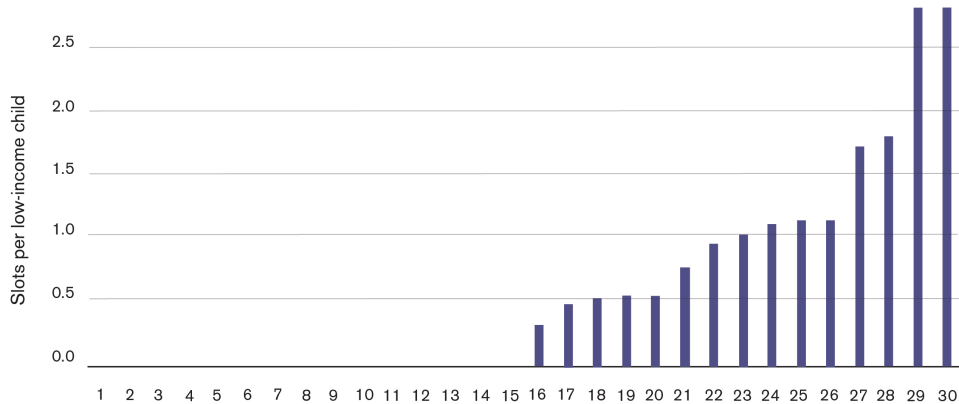
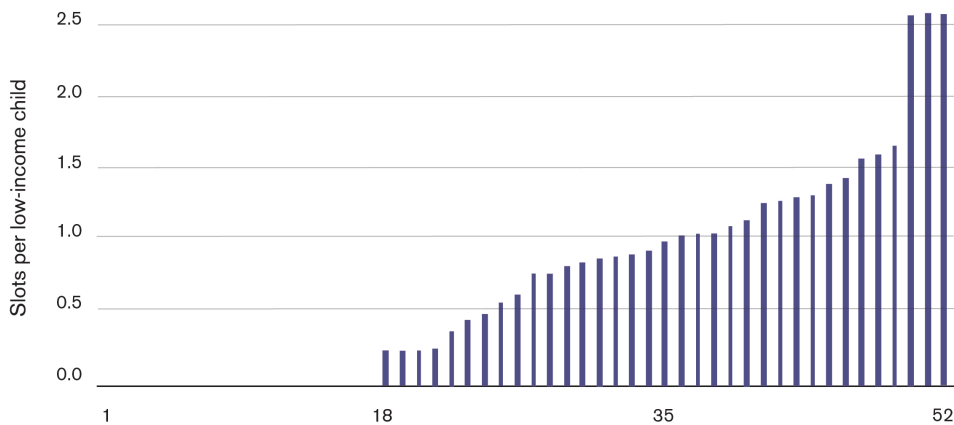


Chart 4D: Tier 4 School Districts

(N = 52. 17 have no slots; 2 have more than 2.5 slots per low-income child)



While fewer of the financially better-situated Tier 3 and Tier 4 districts have ISBE and Head Start slots (Charts 4C and 4D), a sign of some equity, several of them have more than one and even more than two state or federal slots per low-income three- and four-year-old.

FY19 Re-Competition Had Limited Impact on the Equitable Distribution of Slots

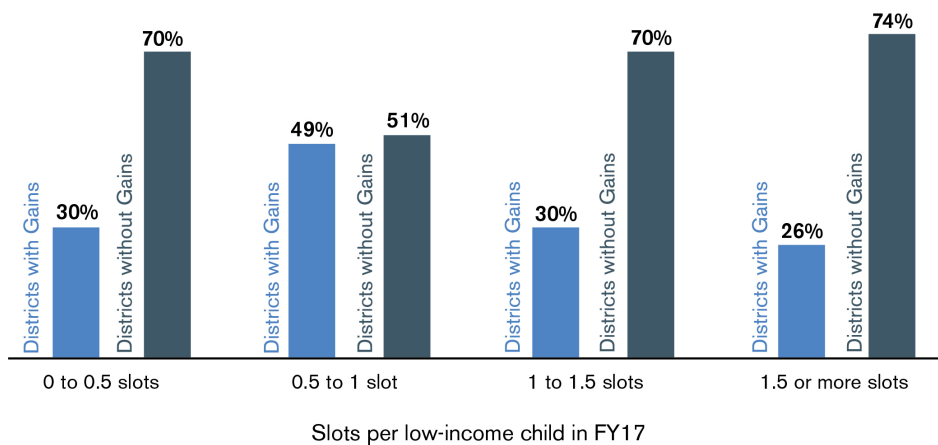
In 2018, ISBE conducted a re-competition of the entire Early Childhood Block Grant, including all PFA and PFAE slots outside of the city of Chicago. A key goal of this re-competition process for ISBE and the Illinois Early Learning Council was to ensure that the state was effectively targeting its resources to ensure that the highest priority children in every community were able to access a high-quality, comprehensive preschool program. One strategy towards this end was to increase the percentage of slots that were using the PFAE model, and this strategy was largely successful. The percentage of all ISBE-funded slots outside of Chicago that were using the PFAE model increased from 3 percent in FY17 to 8 percent in FY19.⁹

⁹ Counting federal funding, the percentage of PFAE slots increased from 6 percent to 11 percent.

To investigate whether the re-competition resulted in any greater consistency of access to publicly-funded preschool, we looked at the net increase and decrease in slots in communities, and related this to the access levels in FY17. Chart 5 groups the school districts by how many publicly-funded preschool slots they had per low-income child living in the district in FY2017.¹⁰ (We analyzed their FY17 slots both including and not including Head Start slots and found similar patterns. Chart 5 includes Head Start slots.)

Chart 5: Percent of School Districts that Gained and Did Not Gain Slots in FY19, Grouped by FY17 Head Start + ISBE Slots per Low-Income Child Ages 3 & 4

(479 school districts with at least 30 low-income resident 3s & 4s; 3 had missing data)



The blue bars show the percentage of school districts in each grouping that gained ISBE slots in FY19 and the gray bars show the percentage that did not gain slots.¹¹ Most school districts overall retained the same number of slots that they had prior to the re-competition.

We consider the group of regions on the left of Chart 5 high-need regions because they had the fewest slots per low-income child (0 to one-half a slot per low-income child). **It is striking that high-need regions were not the most likely to gain slots in the FY19 awards.** Just 30 percent of communities gained slots, about the same percent that gained slots among communities that already had at least one slot per child (the two sets of bars on the right). The group of communities most likely to gain ISBE slots is the second group from the left: 49 percent gained ISBE slots. For reasons we cannot analyze without a closer look at individual school districts, more of these regions had winning competitive applications for increased PFA and PFAE slots than did the slot-poorer or the slot-richer regions.

¹⁰ Three with only Head Start slots and no low-income children in Census data for 2017 could not be classified.

¹¹ The χ^2 statistic indicates that the patterns of slot gains are not independent of the groupings of FY17 slots per poor child: $\chi^2 = 19.1$, $p = .000$.



Chart 6: Percent of School Districts that Gained ISBE Slots in FY19, by Tiers

(N = 481 school districts with at least 30 low-income children ages 3 & 4)

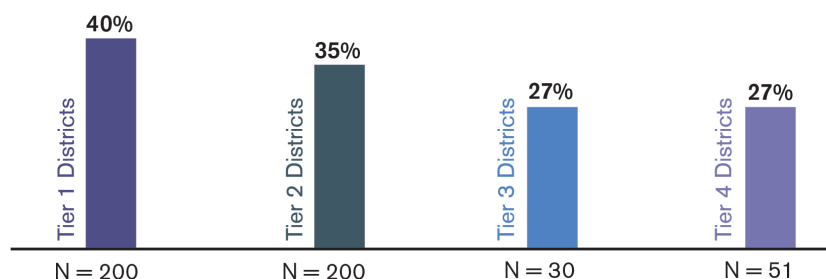


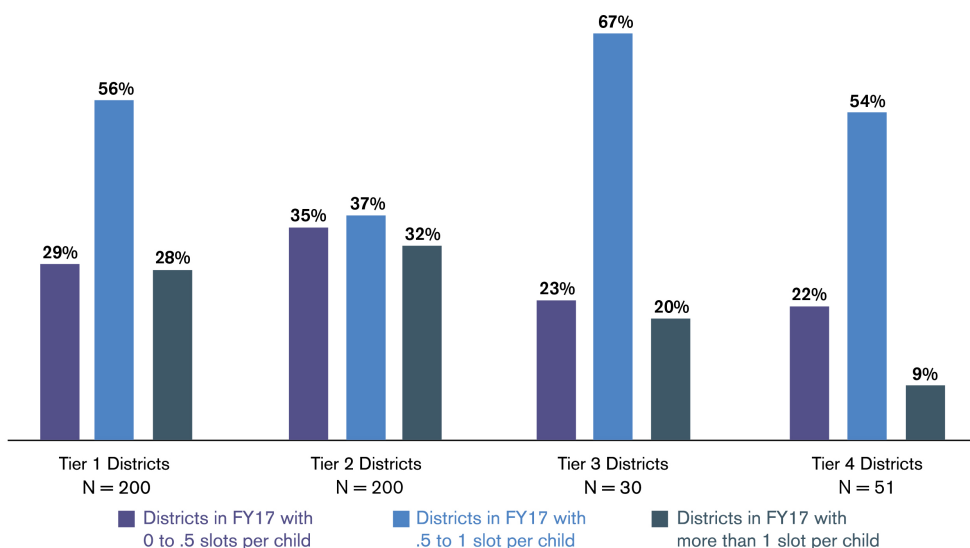
Chart 6 shows the percentage of school districts in each tier that gained PFA and/or PFAE slots in FY19. (Districts with slot decreases and no change are not shown in Chart 6.) Moving from Tier 1 school districts with lowest funding capacity to highest funding-capacity Tier 4 school districts, the bars decrease in height from 40 percent to 27 percent. This indicates a movement toward equity in new funding. We might have expected, however, that the decrease would have been steeper: more of the neediest districts would receive slots and fewer of the less needy districts would receive slots.

Chart 7 breaks down each tier in the previous chart into three groups of school districts: districts that in FY17 had fewest or no seats for their children (zero to one-half of a publically-funded slot per low-income three- and four-year-old residing in the district); districts that had one-half to one slot per low-income child; and districts that had more than one slot per low-income child. Chart 7 shows the percentage of each of these types of districts within each funding tier that gained slots in FY19. Here, as in Chart 5, it is not the slot-poorest districts in each tier (left bars) that most gained slots, but the second neediest group (middle bars) and by wide margins (except in Tier 2 districts).

“We might have expected that more of the neediest districts would receive slots and fewer of the less needy districts would receive slots.”

Chart 7: Percent of School Districts that gained ISBE Slots in FY19, by Tier and by FY17 ISBE + Head Start Slots per Low-Income Child Ages 3 & 4

(N = 481 school districts with at least 30 low-income children ages 3 & 4)



Although the analysis finds a tendency in FY19 for less adequately funded school districts to win ISBE awards for additional slots, the “tilt” in favor of the needier school districts is not steep. Among Tier 1 and 2 school districts, fewer than half of the districts with one or fewer slots per low-income child in FY17 received increases in slots in the FY19 re-competition. Moreover, even in high-need Tiers 1 and 2, about as many of the school districts that were richest in slots per low-income child in FY17 (gray bars) received additional slots as those that had less than one-half of a slot per child (purple bars).

Other Equity Impacts of the FY19 ISBE Preschool Increases

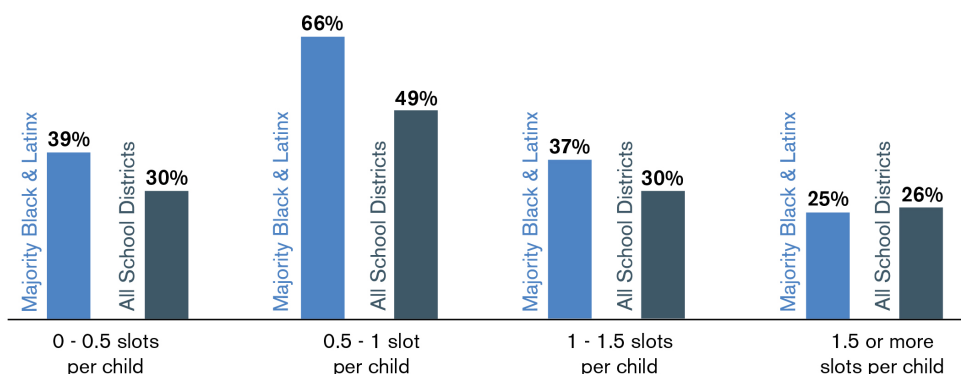
In addition to a school district's ability to finance preschool internally, other categories of school districts can be examined through an equity lens to assess the impact of the ISBE preschool funding increases from FY17 to FY19. Resources sometimes miss districts with majorities of Black and Latinx students and rural school districts, and for equity we focus on them.

Of the 482 Illinois school districts studied, 98 have a majority made up of Black and Hispanic students. We conducted the same analysis of slot increases for these 98 school districts that we conducted earlier for all school districts with at least 30 low-income three- and four-year-olds.

Chart 8 shows that a somewhat larger proportion of school districts with majority Black and Latinx students had increases from FY17 to FY19 than districts with similar slot coverage in Chart 5, and this can be construed as a movement toward racial equity.



Chart 8: Percent of Majority Black and Latinx School Districts Gaining ISBE Slots in FY19 Compared to Percent of All School Districts Gaining Slots: Grouped by FY17 Head Start + ISBE Slots per Low-Income Child



Within majority Black and Latinx districts, inequities persist. Similar to all 482 school districts, majority Black and Latinx districts that had the least slots per low-income child were less likely to get ISBE slots than the districts with somewhat more slots (0.5 to 1.0 slots) for each child. They were also not much more likely to gain new slots than the third group of districts with Black or Latinx majorities that already had at least one slot per low-income child (39 percent to 37 percent).¹²

¹² Statistically, at the .05 level we cannot reject the hypothesis that when it comes to districts with majority Black and Latinx students, the slot-poorest districts had no better outcomes than the two groups of slot richer districts. Only the second slot-poorest group of districts, which did much better, is statistically different from the other districts.

[Note that this is not a complete equity analysis. Within school districts we have not examined which children actually have an ISBE seat. We also have not compared school districts by how many ISBE seats they applied for and actually received.]

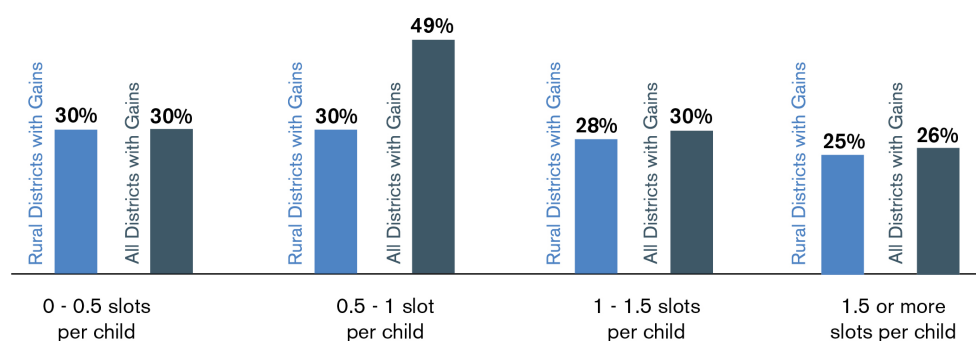
Rural regions may often be overlooked in the distribution of resources as well. We conducted a similar analysis of the gains in slots in the 114 school districts that had a majority of rural residents. Chart 9 shows the results.

The proportions of rural districts with increases in ISBE slots display little variation over the range of need. The same proportions of slot-poor districts and slot-rich districts achieved slot gains from the new awards. In addition, a significantly smaller proportion of rural districts compared to all school districts gained slots among the second-neediest group—districts with 0.5 to 1.0 slots per low-income child. A policy strategy that targets rural districts may be required for supporting equitable preschool expansion in rural communities.

“A policy strategy that targets rural districts may be required.”

Chart 9: Percent of 114 Majority Rural School Districts Gaining ISBE Slots in FY19 Compared to Percent of All School Districts Gaining Slots: Grouped by FY17 Head Start + ISBE Slots per Low-Income Child.

(All districts with 30 or more low-income 3s & 4s.)



Implications

This aggregate analysis of the way ISBE slots are distributed across school districts is no substitute for detailed study of the ISBE process for distributing early learning funds across the state. It is sufficient, however, to raise substantial questions about equity in that process. The funding awards – measured in both the number of slots that are funded and the rates of regions’ winning an award to increase services – show little consistency in relation to need, as measured by the low-income or poverty status of children residing in a school district’s boundaries, by the ratio of slots to low-income children in FY17, or by the school districts’ tiers.

Two primary recommendations for ISBE are suggested by this analysis:

- 1. Move to a need-based formula and away from a competitive grant process.** Given the state’s goal of prioritizing access to publicly-funded preschool for the highest priority children as it expands towards universal,

voluntary access, Illinois should undertake a comprehensive review of the current competitive application process for distributing Early Childhood Block Grant funds. The current approach does not appear to be producing an equitable distribution of opportunity to attend preschool for low-income children. The state should examine other potential funding distribution approaches, ranging from a significantly revised competitive grant process to a formula-driven allocation of resources to communities. Any approach should prioritize ensuring high-quality, effective services, a mixed-delivery approach that is inclusive of both school and community-based settings, and serving the highest-priority children first as the system grows.

- 2. Redesign and expand PFA/PFAE funding.** Given the number of communities with very low levels of access to PFA/PFAE, the state should continue to expand funding through the Early Childhood Block Grant while it studies potential new funding approaches. The grant competition process should be designed to continue to prioritize access to the comprehensive PFAE model in high-poverty communities with very low access to PFAE and Head Start, and to prioritize expansion of PFA only in communities with low ratios of publicly-funded preschool slots per low-income child.



Additional equity concerns remain and deserve further analysis. For the purposes of simplicity in this brief, this analysis of PFA/PFAE funding distribution focused on the distribution of slots. However, there are also significant differences by grantee in the amount of resources provided per child. **The majority of grantees receive less than \$4,000 per child, an amount too low to provide a comprehensive program that includes all of the quality features that research indicates are necessary for optimal effectiveness.** As expansion of funding continues, priority should also be given to ensuring that programs are sufficiently funded to provide the services children need to succeed in school.

Finally, until Illinois achieves universal preschool, many priority children will have no opportunity to attend preschool. During the transition to universal preschool Illinois should increase access to high-quality child care for three- and four-year-olds, particularly for those in poor and low-income families or who otherwise face increased risk of school failure. The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) could take a number of steps to support parents in enrolling their three- and four-year-olds in high-quality child care: waive work requirements and copayments for low-income families with three- and four-year-olds in high-quality child care; use a simpler application process for children ages three and four; increase reimbursements for high-quality (gold- and perhaps silver-rated) child care programs; and for providers, improve pathways to an ExceleRate quality rating and/or credentials and offer other quality supports for child care homes and licensed centers that care for three- and four-year-olds.¹³

¹³ To support school readiness, the Child Care Assistance Program could also extend the policies to younger children. Moreover, since some parents work (or sleep after working) during normal preschool or Head Start drop-off and pick-up times, the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program could support parents interested in enrolling their children in preschool and Head Start by reimbursing for their wrap-around child care.

Appendix

Data

This analysis uses data on FY17 and FY19 preschool grants provided by the Illinois State Board of Education, FFY18 Head Start data provided by the Illinois Head Start Association and 2016 Census data downloaded from the US Census Bureau website with American Fact Finder.

Additional charts:

Chart A1.

Chart 1 in the text showed the ranges of slots per low-income student across the 482 school districts with more than 30 low-income three- and four-year-olds residing in the district. Chart A1 shows this range for all 753 school districts (outside Chicago) regardless of the number of low-income children residing in the district. In its general features, this distribution is about the same as Chart 1.

Chart A1: FY19 PFA + PFAE Slots per Low-Income Three- and Four-Year-Old
(753 districts; 61 districts have more than 3 slots)

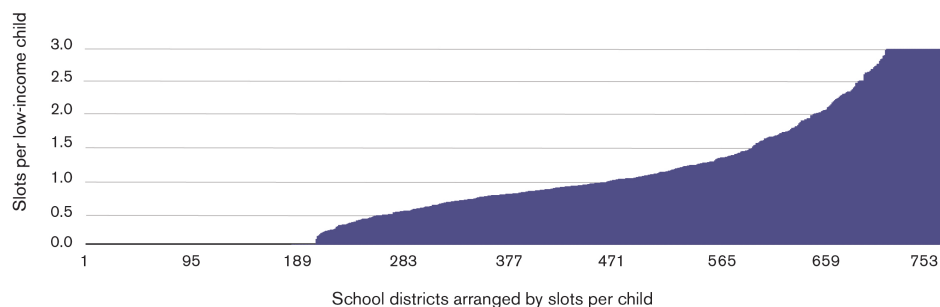


Chart A2.

This is Chart 3 rearranged by the three- and four-year-old poverty rate in the school districts. It shows that ISBE PFAE and Head Start slot distribution among school districts is not related to the districts' poverty rates.

Chart A2: FY19 PFAE + FY18 HS Slots per 3- & 4-Year-Old Living Below 100% FPL
(200 SDs have slots out of 482 SDs with at least 30 3s & 4s under 185% FPL;
5 SDs cut off at 3 slots; sorted by % of 3s & 4s in poverty in SD)

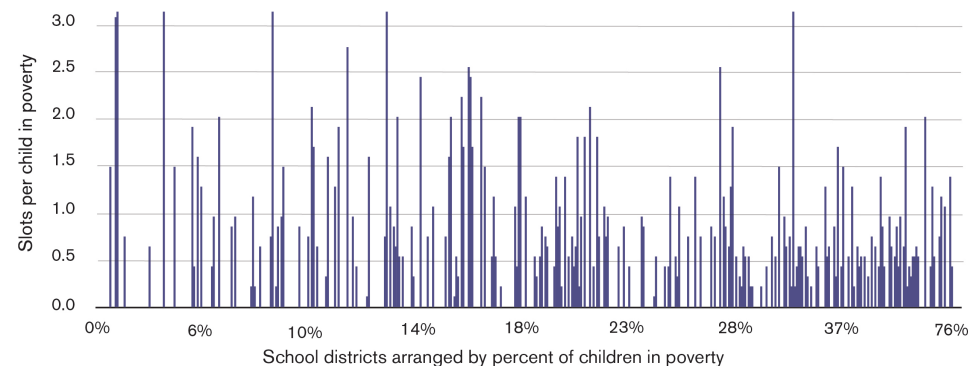
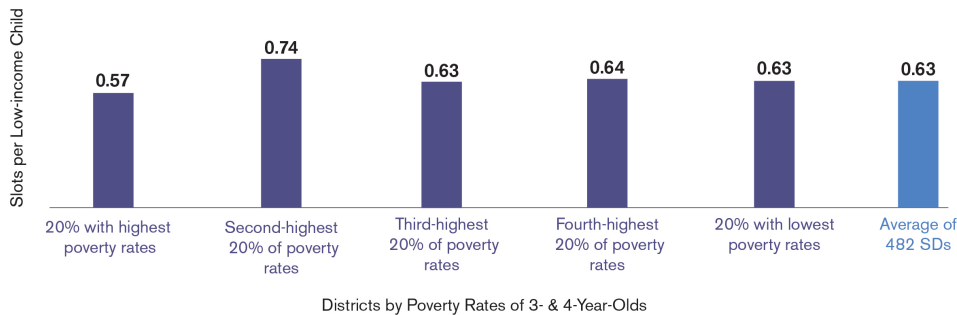


Chart A3.

Looking at just ISBE PFA + PFAE slots (without Head Start slots), this chart shows that there is no strong relationship between school districts' three- and four-year-old poverty rates and their slots per low-income child.

Chart A3: FY19 PFA + PFAE Slots per Low-Income 3- & 4-Year-Old, in School Districts Quintiles Grouped by Poverty Rates of 3- & 4-Year-Olds



Illinois Action for Children is a catalyst for organizing, developing and supporting strong families and powerful communities where children matter most. The Sylvia Cotton Center for Policy Innovation builds on our long history of advocating for public policy through a grassroots organizing lens.

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