

# Indiana's Public Schools Offer Prekindergarten Education

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## Overview

This topic is receiving state and national attention. It is now discussed by the Governor of Indiana, Joseph Kernan, Indiana legislators, the Indiana Education Roundtable, policy makers, higher education, the media, and the public. This series of briefs provides information that can support effective decision making.

The series includes:

Briefing Paper 1: Universal Preschool Defined

Briefing Paper 2: Prekindergarten Programs Offered by Indiana School Corporations

Briefing Paper 3: Universal Preschool Models

## How many public school corporations provide education for children of preschool age?

### At least 188 corporations!

This briefing paper presents preliminary data regarding the prekindergarten programs provided by Indiana's public schools. The source of data that indicates 188 corporations provide prekindergarten program is the online statistical data base maintained on the Indiana Department of Education web site. The second source is the data from the "Survey of Prekindergarten Programs Provided by Indiana School Corporations." The survey was distributed to all 295 superintendents of schools by the Early Childhood Center at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community in April of 2004. Of the 130 corporations returning surveys, just 19 indicated that they do not provide any type of prekindergarten programs. Follow-up calls were made to corporations when data needed to be clarified.



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## What types of prekindergarten programs are offered?

As a whole, Indiana schools offer a wide variety of prekindergarten programs for young children. The variety is the result of locally-driven combinations of purposes, places, and funding. A number of the types draw community partners into involvement with school corporations. Most types are targeted to specific groups of children and to reducing the effects of poverty, disability, and other delaying factors. (See Guide to the Programs, p. 4). The primary types include:

- **Early childhood special education programs**— children receive special education and services in many different settings, such as:
  - Elementary schools or early childhood center classrooms that are only intended for children with disabilities;
  - Elementary school or early childhood center classrooms which are primarily intended for children with disabilities, but which also serve children without disabilities;
  - Community programs, including child care centers and homes, Head Start programs, and community preschools.
- **School-sponsored community preschools** housed in elementary schools or early childhood centers for any child age three through five with parents paying tuition;
- **Title I preschools** which promote school-wide improvement;
- **Literacy-focused preschool programs** provided through Even Start, or Community Alliance Promoting Education (CAPE) Project funds;
- **Head Start programs** with school corporations as the Head Start grantees; and
- **Indirect-support of community prekindergarten programs** in which preschool, Head Start, and child care programs receive or lease space in public schools.

## How many corporations implement the types of prekindergarten programs?

It is clear that early childhood special education is the most prevalent type of prekindergarten program and that is no surprise considering that its provision is mandated. Of the 130 respondents to the “Survey of Prekindergarten Programs Provided by Indiana School

Corporations,” 105 indicated that their corporation provides this type (see Table 1). Those who do not offer early childhood special education reported that these services are provided through their special education cooperative at locations outside of their districts.

Perhaps what is most interesting is the number of corporations that are involved in prekindergarten programs commonly considered as the purview of community organizations. This includes 60 different programs— Head Start, community preschool, and indirect support of community programs. These community programs are provided by 47 corporations (see Table 1). Of the community programs, Head Start is the most frequently affiliated with public schools. In 2003-2004, there were 6 corporations which were Head Start grantees. In addition, 25 corporations reported that they housed Head Start classrooms.

**Table 1: Reported Prevalence of Program Types in 2003-2004**

Type	Number of Corporations
<b>Early childhood special education (ECSE) (unduplicated total)</b>	105 of 130 respondents <sup>1</sup>
ECSE (serve only children with disabilities)	90 of 130 respondents <sup>1</sup>
ECSE (include peers with typical development)	47 of 130 respondents <sup>1</sup>
<b>Title I programs</b>	16 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Literacy programs</b>	18 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Community programs (unduplicated total)</b>	47 of 130 respondents <sup>1</sup>
Head Start	6 <sup>5</sup>
Community preschool	25 of 130 respondents <sup>1 2</sup>
Indirect support of community programs	29 of 130 respondents <sup>1</sup>
<b>No prekindergarten program offered</b>	19 of 130 respondents <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: “Survey of Prekindergarten Programs Provided by Indiana School Corporations”

<sup>2</sup> May include some instances in which corporations funded tuition for children in community preschool rather than sponsoring or funding the program itself.

<sup>3</sup>Source: Email communication with Title I Consultant, Department of Education

<sup>4</sup> Source: Indiana Department of Education <http://www.doe.state.in.us/adulted/pdf/geddirectory.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Source: Indiana Family and Social Services Administration <http://www.ai.org/fssa/children/headstart/direct.html>

## How many program types do the individual corporations offer?

Table 2 shows that most corporations continue to provide just one type of prekindergarten program. Of the 111 corporations which provide any type of prekindergarten, 60 provide one type while 51 offer two or more types. The current research does not offer corporation characteristics associated with the number of types offered.

**Table 2: Number of Program Types Offered by Individual Corporations**

Number of Types Offered	Number of Corporations (n=130)
One of any type	60
Two of any type	36
Three of any type	12
Four of any type	3
Five of any type	0
<b>Total any type</b>	<b>111</b>
No prekindergarten program offered	19

**Caveats Regarding Numbers:** This brief is described as providing a preliminary picture of the prekindergarten programs provided by Indiana’s school corporations. There are several reasons this is so.

- Less than a 100% return rate on the surveys
- Differences in understanding terminology about program types among the respondents
- Potential errors by respondents resulting from degree of knowledge of the scope of prekindergarten programs provided by their corporations
- Possible influence resulting from distribution of the survey by an entity with a disability focus

As the Department of Education proceeds with data collection, it will be important to address these possible problems.

## Examples of Indiana Public School Corporations Providing Prekindergarten Programs

### Town: Spencer-Owen Community Schools

- **Children served:** Three-, four-, and five-year-olds, approximately 92 children
- **Programs:** Community preschool and early childhood special education combined in inclusive classrooms
- **Schedule:** One to five mornings or afternoons each week of the academic year
- **Funding:** Parents pay tuition for community preschool; special education funds
- **Location:** Elementary school classrooms

### Town: Marion Community Schools

- **Children served:** Three-, four-, and five-year-olds, approximately 394 children
- **Programs:** Inclusive early childhood special education, Title I preschool, and Head Start
- **Schedule:** Mornings, afternoons, or full days of the academic year
- **Funding:** Parents pay tuition for community preschool; special education funds ; Title I funds, Head Start funds
- **Location:** Elementary school classrooms

### Metropolitan: MSD of Warren Township

- **Children served:** Three-, four-, and five-year-olds, approximately 418 children
- **Programs:** Early childhood special education and community preschool combined in inclusive classrooms
- **Schedule:** Mornings, afternoons, or full days of the academic year
- **Funding:** Parents pay tuition for community preschool; MSD of Warren Township Foundation; special education funds
- **Location:** Early childhood center classrooms

## Conclusion

A variety of programs and funding streams are used by Indiana school corporations to meet the needs of young children. Indiana’s schools are clearly in the business of prekindergarten education.

## References

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## Guide to the Programs

### Early Childhood Special Education

The type of program which is most consistently provided by school corporations is early childhood special education. Every child who qualifies for special education services is entitled to receive a free and appropriate public education. Most corporations provide early childhood special education within their corporation boundaries, although not every child receives it at their home school. Other corporations transport children out of the district to a cooperative site.

Early childhood special education is provided within an array of settings. The traditional model that exclusively serves children with disabilities in a separate classroom continues to be present, although less than in the past. With the move toward inclusion, many of these classrooms include two or more children without disabilities who function as models to encourage the development of their peers. School corporations and special education cooperatives also provide early childhood special education to children enrolled in community settings. These settings include child care centers and homes, Head Start programs, and community preschools. Some children's tuition is provided by the corporation for special education. Other children receive itinerant special education services in settings in which they were already enrolled by their families.

### Community Preschool

Some corporations now sponsor community preschools housed in elementary schools or early childhood centers for any child age three through five. The purpose is to provide children with early learning experiences prior to kindergarten. Tuition for children's enrollment is paid by parents, by community foundations, or other sources.

### Title I Preschools

Title I is a program designed to promote school-wide improvement in schools which have a high rate of poverty and low performance. Some corporations choose to implement preschool as part of their plans (Indiana Department of Education, 2002).

### Literacy-focused Preschool Programs

The Even Start Family Literacy project has a long history. Families are able to participate when the adult qualifies for adult basic education and is a parent of child birth to age eight. The project "integrates early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education" (Indiana Department of Education, 2004).

CAPE projects have also contributed to the delivery of early childhood education (Lilly Endowment, 2004). Funded by Lilly Endowment, CAPE projects (Community Alliances to Promote Education) are used to increase educational attainment in Indiana, particularly to increase graduation rates. School corporations are one member of each CAPE project. A number of projects have focused on establishing or improving early childhood education programs.

### Head Start Programs

Head Start is a federally-funded comprehensive child development program (Head Start Bureau, 2004). Targeted to low-income children who are younger than five, the primary goal is school readiness. Head Start funds flow directly to local grantees. An increasing number of Indiana school corporations are grantees.

### Indirect-support of community prekindergarten programs

A number of corporations house community programs such as preschool, Head Start, or child care programs. These programs are indirectly-supported by schools by provision of such things as free or low cost space, janitorial supplies and services, telephone systems, etc.

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Briefing Paper 2: *Indiana's Public Schools Offer Prekindergarten Education*, was produced with support from Indiana University-Bloomington. The information presented herein does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Trustees of Indiana University, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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