

Universal Prekindergarten In Georgia
A Case Study of Georgia's Lottery-Funded Pre-K Program



F C D C A S E S T U D Y

Anthony Raden
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FOUNDATIONFORCHILDDEVELOPMENT

295 Madison Avenue, 40th Floor
New York, NY 10017
(212) 867-5777 phone
(212) 867-5844 fax
www.fcd-us.org

Preface

No state Prekindergarten program has received more acclaim and attention from policy makers than Georgia’s. However, there has been no systematic effort to chronicle its evolution or to draw lessons from its experience. This paper, therefore, has two aims: first, to document the processes that translated a set of ideas into concrete public policies affecting large numbers of families; and second, to cull lessons relevant to other state early education initiatives. As the first case study of a large-scale early education program, the paper dwells at some length on the program’s history and evolution, describing not only policies but also the political forces and relationships that shaped them; not only progress toward key goals, but also the resistance met along the way. Readers who are more interested in the policy implications and next steps are invited to move quickly to the executive summary and to Section 10, which summarizes lessons that can inform policy and practice in other states.

While a case study is filtered through the personal perceptions of the author, I have tried to capture and present the viewpoints of individuals from different perspectives and backgrounds. To gain a sense of the history of Georgia’s Pre-K program, I read extensively from the archives of the state’s largest newspaper, *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. I also traveled to Georgia, spending several days touring Pre-K sites and speaking to Pre-K providers, program administrators, educators, reporters, and child advocates. Many of the people to whom I spoke opted for their comments to remain anonymous; thus, several unattributed, but influential voices are interwoven throughout the paper.

Writing about a dynamic, ever-changing policy is like trying to catch a rushing river—it keeps flowing by you. At some point, one has to stop gathering information to present the story. Mindful that a more exhaustive analysis of Georgia’s Pre-K program will have to occur in the future, I will leave to others the task of filling out the program’s political, fiscal, and educational history, chronicling Georgia’s further adventures in early education, and contrasting the experiences of other states. It is my hope that— together with the other analyses that are sure to follow —this paper will contribute to understanding state-based early education policy.

Anthony Raden
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Executive Summary: Lessons for Other States

In 1995, Georgia became the first state to provide universal Prekindergarten to all four-year-olds. While Georgia's innovations in early care and education resulted from many forces and individuals distinct to the state and region, the evolution of Georgia's lottery-funded Pre-K program offers lessons that may inform early education policy in other states. These lessons include:

Offering Pre-K services to all families may be a key to winning ongoing political support and ensuring program survival. But are there tradeoffs?

- Universal programs may be more likely to generate and sustain broad political support than programs targeted towards disadvantaged groups.
- Georgia opted to shift the goals of its Pre-K program away from targeting services to the state's neediest children to the provision of universal services for all children.
- Most informed observers believe that the decision to move toward universal provision assured the future of universal Pre-K in Georgia.
- Instituting a large-scale Prekindergarten program involves immense public relations challenges. Pre-K supporters calculated that a broad spectrum of the population would be more likely to embrace a program perceived to be academically-focused and beneficial for a large number of children.
- Universal programs may erase the stigma typically attached to programs for low-income children.
- From the start, states must determine if the goals of expansion and broad public acceptance require tradeoffs that compromise program quality.
- Program elements designed for low-income populations may be unacceptable to middle- and upper-class families.
- Choice is a strong selling point of universal Pre-K.
- But real choice requires sustained attention to equity.

A state lottery is a viable mechanism for financing universal Pre-K.

- Georgia's Pre-K initiative would probably not exist without the lottery.
- Most states rely on an inconsistent and complex blending of federal, state, and local funding sources to fund early care and education programs.
- With its substantial and consistent lottery-generated revenue base, Georgia's Prekindergarten program has avoided the gaps in funding and blending of funding streams that routinely plague early education initiatives.
- State lotteries cannot strengthen education if they simply supplant existing funding sources. Georgia set an important precedent by stipulating, in an amendment to the state constitution, that lottery funds be spent on specific educational programs.
- Despite the benefits to education, the social consequences of state-sponsored gambling are still not well understood.

Creating and growing a large-scale Pre-K program requires powerful, consistent leadership.

- Georgia’s Prekindergarten program would not have taken root or survived without a skilled and powerful Governor willing to risk political capital on the program.
- Successful program development requires input from policy makers and administrators with a range of backgrounds and skills. The success of Georgia’s Pre-K has been due, in no small part, to the contributions of individuals with knowledge of legislative dynamics, budgetary policy, technology, public relations, and political strategy, as well as high quality early education.
- Where to locate Pre-K within state government is a crucial decision.

Success hinges on understanding and protecting the fragile ecology of early childhood programs.

- States must consider carefully how Pre-K initiatives may affect the disparate, often fragile systems of early childhood programs that already exist for young children.
- The impact of universal Pre-K on the quality of care available for infants and toddlers is especially important.
- Planning efforts should include/not overlook disabilities.

Integrating private providers into a public program is one of the toughest challenges of universal Pre-K.

- Policy makers and administrators must understand how to work with organizations and institutions with diverse cultures, priorities, and goals.
- Including private non-profit and for-profit child care providers into a state-based early education program significantly enhances program capacity and support.
- Program administrators had to face the reality that an increasingly powerful and competitive proprietary child care industry is prepared to fight to protect its customer base.
- Participation by proprietary child care providers depends in large measure on funding rates and projected revenues.
- As program implementation proceeds, many issues—such as reimbursement rates, enrollment requirements, and curriculum standards—need to be negotiated between program administrators and the proprietary child care industry.
- The number of well-run, for-profit Pre-K centers demonstrates that a profit motive and a commitment to developmentally appropriate education are not mutually exclusive.
- However, states should not assume that providing materials, curriculum training, and technical support necessarily results in quality programs that meet high standards.

Georgia Pre-K illustrates the complex dynamics that may ensue among federal, state, and local levels of government in the provision of early education services.

- As states move toward universal Pre-K, they must make a concerted effort to build a partnership with Head Start. From the outset, Georgia’s state-funded Pre-K caused strain between state education authorities and Georgia’s Head Start programs over control of resources and competition for children.
- Georgia’s Pre-K experience may help to inform debate on the future of Head Start. Georgia’s model of state and federal partnership suggests that complementary state and federal initiatives can cooperate to create a more coherent and responsive early care and education system.

Program success hinges on constant attention to quality—especially in the areas of curriculum and teacher preparation.

- Incentive-based funding can help to attract and retain qualified staff.
- Georgia Pre-K has upgraded teaching at hundreds of child care centers by increasing incentives to hire teachers certified in early childhood education.
- Professional development is a key to program quality.
- Inadequate compensation, particularly for teachers in proprietary child care centers, threatens program quality.
- When diverse providers are serving children, regulation and monitoring are especially important to program success.

The challenge of creating a Pre-K infrastructure—especially in the realm of facilities—must not be underestimated.

- Incorporating private child care and preschool providers in a public-private education partnership offers a solution to the scarcity of facilities.
- Pressure to identify appropriate facilities may create inequities, due to a shortage of suitable space in lower-income areas.
- In developing a Pre-K infrastructure, planning efforts should take into account the needs of staff, children, and parents with disabilities.

The Evolution of Georgia’s Lottery-Funded Prekindergarten Program

January 1989	Georgia Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller, a candidate in the 1990 gubernatorial election, proposes the establishment of a state lottery with revenues earmarked for education.
December 1989	Miller’s campaign announces that lottery proceeds will create a voluntary preschool program for four-year-olds.
November 1990	Zell Miller elected Governor of Georgia.
November 1991	Governor Miller specifies that lottery proceeds will be earmarked to: 1) A voluntary preschool program for low-income four-year-olds; 2) College scholarships for Georgia High School Students; 3) Technology and equipment for public schools.
September 1992	At Governor Miller’s direction, Georgia’s Department of Education establishes a pilot Pre-K program. 750 low-income four-year-olds attend pilot program during 1992-93 school year.
November 1992	Voters of Georgia approve constitutional amendment establishing a state lottery.
June 1993	Georgia’s Lottery for Education officially opens.
September 1993	First year of program implementation. 8,700 low-income students attend lottery-funded Georgia Pre-K during 1993-94 school year.
September 1994	Pre-K program serves 15,500 low-income students during 1994-95 school year.
November 1994	Governor Miller re-elected to a second term.
January 1995	Miller announces that Pre-K eligibility requirements will be dropped. All Georgia four-year-olds now eligible to attend a universal and voluntary program.
September 1995	First year as a universal program. 44,000 four-year-olds attend Pre-K during 1995-96 school year.
April 1996	Pre-K program moved from Georgia Department of Education to a newly created Office of School Readiness.
September 1996	Pre-K program serves 57,500 students during 1996-97 school year.
September 1997	Pre-K program serves 60,000 students during 1997-98 school year.
October 1997	Georgia’s Voluntary Universal Pre-K program awarded the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.
September 1998	Pre-K program serves 61,000 students during 1998-99 school year.

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1. Introduction

Despite mounting evidence that high quality early education programs enhance children’s development and chances of succeeding in school,¹ the nation’s early care and education systems remain fragmented, underfunded, and insufficient to meet the needs of America’s families.² Over the last several years, as research affirming the importance of early development, particularly brain development, has begun to affect public policy debates,³ decision makers at all levels of government have been paying more attention to the availability and quality of early education. Several states have launched efforts to strengthen early care and education as part of comprehensive early childhood initiatives. Others are expanding and improving existing early education programs. To date, 13 states have chosen to supplement federal Head Start funds to serve more low-income children. Many more states—41 in all—are moving toward universal Prekindergarten, expanding their public school programs to include preschoolers.⁴ Because it builds on an existing infrastructure, including relatively high standards and compensation for teachers, the Pre-K strategy appears to be gaining support across the nation.

This is an account of one such effort—Georgia’s Prekindergarten Initiative. While a number of other states are establishing large-scale Pre-K programs—notably Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York—Georgia’s initiative is the most far-reaching and mature. In 1993, Georgia became the first state to establish a Pre-K program for four-year-olds funded entirely with lottery revenues. At the outset, the

program served only low-income children. But in 1995, Georgia expanded the initiative, becoming the first state to offer universal, voluntary preschool to all four-year-olds. In 1996, Georgia demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to early education by establishing an independent agency, the Office of School Readiness (OSR), to administer Prekindergarten. Now serving more than 60,000 children, Georgia’s Pre-K program has been lauded as the most comprehensive state early education initiative in the nation. Organizations such as the National Child Care Association, the National Center for Children in Poverty, the Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, and the Children’s Defense Fund point to the program as a leading model for high-quality, state-run universal early education.

The development of universal Prekindergarten in Georgia illustrates the complex and often unpredictable processes through which ideas are translated into policy. An analysis of the program’s history also underscores that the establishment and growth of Georgia Pre-K were not inevitable; policy makers and administrators encountered conflicting interests, confronted crucial decision points, and made distinct choices that shaped the evolution of a prominent education policy. Clearly, in the vanguard in the provision of state-funded early education, Georgia provides an illuminating example of the dilemmas and pressures other states will have to grapple with as legislators and other policy makers seek to improve opportunities for children to experience early care and education systems.

1 W. Barnett, Long-Term Effects on Cognitive Development and School Success. In W.S. Barnett & S.S. Boocock (Eds.), *Early Care And Education For Children In Poverty*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998.

2 Sharon Kagan, & Nancy Cohen; *Not By Chance: Creating an Early Care and Education System For America’s Children*. New Haven: Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy, 1997.

3 Rima Shore, *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights into Early Development*, Families and Work Institute, New York, 1997.

4 Anne Mitchell, *Prekindergarten Programs Funded by the States: Essential Elements for Policy Makers*. Report published on the Families and Work Institute Web Site; 1998.

Georgia Prekindergarten Program For Four-Year-Olds

Population Served	Children who are Georgia residents and four-years-old on September 1. No income requirements.
Hours of Operation	Minimum is 6.5 hours/day; 5 days/week; 180 days/year. (To meet the needs of working parents, many centers provide extended-day care at the parent's expense.)
No. of Children Served	60,000 (FY 1998).
% of Children Reached	State Pre-K and Georgia Head Start together serve approximately 75-80% of eligible four-year-olds in the state.
Eligible Pre-K Providers	Public school districts, which may subcontract to private schools, community agencies, Head Start centers, and child care centers.
Administrative Auspices	Office of School Readiness (OSR) (1996-present). Originally administered from the State Department of Education (1992-1996).
Program Standards	<p><i>Ratios:</i> 1:10, with class size of 20.</p> <p><i>Staff Qualifications:</i> Teachers must have a CDA Credential, or teacher certification in early childhood education, or a college degree with specialization in early childhood education, or teacher certification in elementary education or a Montessori or vocational early childhood education degree. Aides must be at least 20 years old, and high school graduates.</p> <p><i>Educational Program:</i> Must use an OSR approved curriculum and adhere to state child care licensing requirements. Curriculum choices include: Bank Street, Creative Curriculum, High/Scope, High Reach, Montessori, and Scholastic Workshop.</p> <p><i>Parental Involvement:</i> Parent volunteering, participation in meetings, group activities, teacher conferences, voluntary workshops.</p>
Funds	Funding on a formula basis related to enrollment and teacher credentials. Average cost per child: \$3,516. State appropriations: \$211 million (FY 1997).
Assessment of Performance	Consultants conduct 3-4 site visits annually to each program to assess program performance and offer technical assistance as needed.

Source: (Mitchell, 1998), Office of School Readiness.

2. “Something That Matters:” Zell Miller and the Georgia Lottery for Education

People knowledgeable about Georgia’s Prekindergarten program express many viewpoints about how and why the initiative came about. But one point remains unchallenged: Without the establishment of a lottery, the state could not have funded and implemented a large-scale Prekindergarten program. To understand how Georgia arrived at the forefront of early care and education policy, it is, therefore, important to examine the forces that shaped Georgia’s Lottery for Education.

The lottery emerges as an issue in Georgia’s 1990 gubernatorial race

The story of Georgia’s Prekindergarten initiative begins with a political campaign. In 1989, Lieutenant Governor Zell Miller faced three opponents, including Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young, in a race to become the Democratic nominee in Georgia’s 1990 gubernatorial election. Early in the primary campaign, in January 1989, Miller announced his support for a state lottery that would earmark all proceeds for education programs. The battle Miller prepared to wage promised to be grueling. To establish a “Lottery for Education,” as Miller called it, the Georgia legislature would have to vote by a two-thirds majority to amend the state constitution. Voters would then have to ratify the decision through a referendum. Miller estimated that a lottery would raise a minimum of \$175 million annually. Initially, he provided no specifics about how the education funds would be spent, but said boldly, “The lottery is neither a tax nor another big-spending liberal program. We can follow up on our promises on education with performance.”⁵

Miller’s lottery proposal proved to have great popular appeal: according to an *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* poll taken in January 1989, 69 percent of likely voters supported it.⁶ But it would take far more than polls to win the day. Over the previous decade, several lottery bills had failed to gain the support needed to make it through the Georgia legislature. Governor Joe Frank Harris, a Miller supporter, vowed to fight the establishment of a lottery, saying, “I will use the strength of this office to oppose it.”⁷ Numerous politicians and politically powerful religious organizations lined up to oppose Miller’s lottery bill.

A former college professor from rural Georgia, Zell Miller had earned a reputation as a shrewd political insider with populist appeal. He was clearly staking his political future on the lottery and using the issue to define himself in opposition to his political rivals. Miller employed twin strategies to garner support, selling the lottery both as education enhancement and tax relief. “What is beyond calculation,” Miller said, “is the value to our state and our nation and our world of taking the bright young minds of sons and daughters of Georgia and giving them the educational opportunities they deserve.”⁸ Miller argued that thousands of Georgians were already spending millions of dollars on the Florida lottery—money that ought to stay in Georgia to improve the state’s weak education system. Moreover, Miller declared that lottery money could be used to roll back property taxes that had increased to pay for local schools.

A broad group of coalitions opposed the lottery for distinct ideological reasons. Conservative religious

5 David Secrest and A.L. May, “Miller Calls for State Lottery, Ensuring Fight with Harris,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 1/13/89, p. 1.

6 D. Secrest and A. May, *ibid.*, p.1.

7 D. Secrest and A. May, *ibid.*, p.1.

8 David Secrest, “Lottery is Not Always a Cure-All for Education Budget,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 2/12/89, p. B/1.

organizations, led by the Southern Baptists, United Methodists, and the politically astute Christian Coalition, contended that lotteries legalize and condone immoral behavior, destroy vulnerable individuals and families, and deepen existing social problems. Opponents—including many from the education establishment—further argued that lottery funds do not in fact yield promised increases in education revenues. Analytical articles and editorials in Georgia newspapers focused on the experiences of other states, such as California and Florida, where lottery monies promised for education simply supplanted education revenues that were cut from the budget and spent elsewhere.⁹

Many education groups, including the Georgia PTA, argued that the lottery would create the false impression that education problems were being addressed while the schools remained woefully underfunded.

The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* argued in several editorials that Miller’s lottery proposal was a cheap political ploy that was being oversold and offered false education promises. Political writers noted that Miller cynically embraced the idea of a lottery at the urging of his political advisor, James Carville,¹⁰ who would two years later become one of the architects of Bill Clinton’s campaign for the presidency. One columnist, Jim Wooten, claimed that the connection between education and the lottery was a ruse. “Lottery proceeds, inevitably, will displace general fund dollars, so that education is unlikely to enjoy any lasting gain,” Wooten wrote. “Are we willing to create a new bureaucracy to devise games to rip off the poor and entertain the

middle-class? I don’t know yet. But funding education is not even remotely a factor in determining whether we put the state in the lottery business.”¹¹

Zell Miller had a ready response to the criticism that funds would not enhance education. He promised that lottery revenues would not be blended into the State Education Department’s \$3 billion dollar budget, saying, “I’m not talking about just putting it in the general education budget where it would be lost.”¹² In February, he promised to earmark lottery revenues directly into distinct, innovative educational programs. He was vague on the specifics, however,

initially mentioning raising teacher pay and giving bonuses to teachers with higher degrees as possible programs that would be funded.

The lottery bill passed the Senate, but opponents buried it in the House Rules Committee. Miller’s campaign persisted, releasing in December 1989, a draft education platform that for the first time offered specifics on how lottery funds would be earmarked. Carville announced that an estimated \$250 million in generated revenue

would establish a voluntary preschool program for four-year-olds, as well as a wider selection of summer enrichment programs for all students.¹³ The proposal would be refined, the campaign stated, after school superintendents, principals and other educators had time to comment on the proposal.

As the primary campaign waged on, Miller fought bitterly with House Speaker Tom Murphy to get his bill out of committee. When lottery opponents removed the earmarking of funds, Miller announced that he would not support the legislation unless the

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9 D. Secrest, *ibid*, p. B/1.

10 Peter Beinart, “The Carville Trick: The Clinton consultant found a way to win the South for the Democrats—the lottery. But is it fair?” *Time*, 11/16/98, p. 58. James Carville is viewed by some political analysts as the “father” of “Lotteries for Education.”

11 Jim Wooten, “Funding Education and State Lottery Are Unrelated,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 1/18/89, p. 14.

12 D. Secrest, *ibid*, p. B/1. 13 Deborah Scroggins, “Miller Proposes Public Preschool, Easier Certification for Teachers,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, p. D/7.

13 Deborah Scroggins, “Miller Proposes Public Preschool, Easier Certification for Teachers,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, p. D/7.

proceeds would go directly into education, thus eliminating any chance for the bill’s passage. Miller vowed to introduce another lottery bill in the next legislative session and to make it a key issue in the upcoming primary. The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* issued a scathing editorial:

We don’t much care about the lottery one way or another. It’s harmless entertainment for the middle-class, and probably does entice some people to gamble money they can’t afford to lose. It may generate a little money for the state, but in the long run it’s not a particularly promising source of new revenue. In the scheme of things, that is the scheme of problems affecting the state, it’s pure trivia, a public policy Hula-Hoop. We don’t mind talking about it with strangers at cocktail parties, but we wouldn’t want to talk about it with anybody we truly care about. That’s why we are uneasy about Mr. Miller’s pledge to make it a campaign issue.... So shut up, please, and talk about something that matters.¹⁴

The lottery wins popular support

Miller did not shut up. Although his lottery bill failed to gain requisite support in both the 1989 and 1990 legislative sessions, he vowed to make the 1990 election a referendum on the lottery amendment. While the majority of conservative church leaders supported one of Miller’s anti-lottery opponents in the primary, polls continued to indicate high levels of popular support (as high as 72 percent) for the state lottery, with Georgians who identified themselves as churchgoers and born-again Christians only slightly less likely to support it.¹⁵

In July, Miller won the Democratic primary by a comfortable margin. Political analysts attributed his victory, and subsequent lead in the general election, to his championship of the lottery—a stand that took on a populist flavor. After the victory, Carville gloated, calling the overwhelming support for Miller and the lottery “a kind of frustration at the polls toward all of the editorialists, the academicians, the public radio types who have told people, ‘You can’t have this because it’s not good for you.’”¹⁶ Speaker Murphy conceded, “I have to say I underestimated the lottery issue. It may well be time to just go ahead and pass it and let the folks vote on it and decide the issue.”¹⁷

Carville announced that an estimated \$250 million in generated revenue would establish a voluntary preschool program for four-year-olds, as well as a wider selection of summer enrichment programs for all students.

In the general election, less attention was focused on the wisdom of a lottery than on control of the revenues it would generate. Miller’s Republican opponent, Representative Johnny Isakson, favored allowing Georgians the right to vote on the lottery. However, Isakson argued that lottery revenues should be sent directly to local school

districts, not controlled by a separate lottery commission as Miller proposed. The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* agreed with Isakson: “The lottery was a sleek idea that’s becoming a fuzzy notion,” the paper wrote in one editorial. “Dedicating revenues is a gimmick that needlessly binds legislators and results in unnecessary funding games.”¹⁸ In another editorial the paper added, “Lottery and education issues must be kept distinct... The vote will be for state-run gambling and a long-shot wager to get rich quick. It will not be for improving education – that’s something we had best not leave to chance.”¹⁹

14 *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, “The Lottery and Other Trivia,” 2/1/90, p. 14.

15 Deborah Scroggins, “Lottery Helps Voters Define Candidates: On Opposite sides, Miller, Barnes Gain,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 6/17/90, p. 17.

16 Deborah Scroggins, “Georgia’s Case of Lottery Fever: Miller’s Victory Shows Power of Gambling Issue,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 7/22/90, p. D/1.

17 D. Scroggins, *ibid*, p. D/1.

18 *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 10/24/90, p. 14.

Miller stood firm on the need for an independent commission, controlled by the governor, to spend the lottery revenues on specific education programs. “I’m not going to let the General Assembly appropriate that money,” Miller said during a campaign rally. “The point is to make sure that the lottery money is not lost in the education bureaucracy or is not lost on the local level.... I’ve worked too hard for the lottery for someone to take that money away from me. We’re going to spend it on the kids.”²⁰ By insisting that the governor would personally control lottery funds, thus circumventing the legislature’s normal budgetary processes, Miller engendered increased opposition from many legislators and educational organizations. The Georgia State PTA and the Georgia School Board Association, for example, both opposed plans that would tie lottery funds to education. The Georgia Association of Educators refused to endorse Miller, an educator himself. Despite this opposition, Miller routed Isakson in the general election. One political commentator said, “Miller hit the jackpot with the lottery issue” and called his victory “as convincing as any Georgia election in recent times.”²¹

With popular support for the lottery abundantly clear, and the power of the Governor’s Office committed to the issue, Miller’s bill establishing the Georgia Lottery for Education was passed during the 1991 legislative session. The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* wrote, “(I)n the public mind it will be Mr. Miller’s lottery. Few politicians have ever been so totally identified with a single issue.”²²

Enacting the lottery would require more than a legislative bill, however. A proposed constitutional amendment to establish a state-run lottery would have to be approved by a majority of voters and two-thirds of the General Assembly. The amendment,

which would go before the voters in November 1992, stipulated that lottery revenues would be transferred by the Georgia Lottery Commission to an education account and distributed to three education priority areas. Governor Miller announced these areas in November 1991: 1) a voluntary preschool program for low-income children;²³ 2) scholarships for accomplished Georgia high school graduates to attend Georgia colleges (later called the HOPE scholarship program); and 3) the purchase and distribution of equipment and technology for public schools. Miller also proposed holding ten percent of the lottery revenues in reserve. The earmarked funds could be redirected for other purposes only by amending the constitution.

In the following year, anti-lottery coalitions formed to fight against the amendment. Georgia Lottery Truth, which was backed by many church leaders, funded billboards and ads claiming that the lottery would increase social problems while not significantly helping schools. The Christian Coalition advised its members to vote “no” on the referendum. The state PTA passed a resolution at its 1991 convention opposing the state lottery and promising to “inform our members of the potential impact of a Georgia education lottery on real educational funding.”²⁴ The PTA’s state vice president stated to reporters, “We didn’t take a stand because it’s gambling. We are afraid that it will hurt education.”²⁵

To counter the anti-lottery claims, Miller formed his own pro-lottery coalition, Georgians for Better Education, which was supported by powerful business interests. The group stressed that the proposed law directly prohibited funds from being used to replace monies already spent on educational programs. The president of Georgians for Better Education, the CEO of an industrial contracting firm, wrote in an

19 *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 10/11/90, p. 16.

21 Tom Baxter, “Politics: Miller Hit Jackpot with Lottery Issue,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 11/12/90, p. F/2.

22 Durwood McAlister, “Lottery is Governor Miller’s Baby; He Needs to Watch it,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 1/29/91, p. A/10.

23 Although Georgia would later earn acclaim for developing the nation’s first universal Prekindergarten program, Miller initially envisioned a Pre-K program for low-income children.

24 Linda Jacobson, “State PTA Position on Lottery Questioned,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 10/02/92, p. E/2.

25 L. Jacobson, *ibid.*, p. E/2.

editorial that the lottery would improve educational opportunities for Georgia’s children and would “prepare them to better compete in a technologically advanced global economy.”²⁶ In addition, to address concerns about the negative effects of increased gambling, Miller proposed that the State Department of Human Resources develop a \$200,000 per year program to provide supportive services to compulsive gamblers.

In November 1992, the constitutional amendment to establish a state lottery passed narrowly with 52 percent of the vote. But the battle was not yet over. Miller soon found himself immersed in intense political infighting for his educational components. In January 1993, before a large gathering of business and political leaders, Miller’s longtime nemesis, Speaker Tom Murphy, questioned the stability of future lottery revenues and criticized the governor’s proposal to fund distinct education programs instead of using the lottery proceeds for one-time capital improvements. Miller responded sternly, vowing that the lottery proceeds would go to the programs he had promised to the voters. “I don’t want to fight with Tom Murphy,” Miller said. “But I’m going to fight for these people that I promised were going to receive the benefit of those lottery proceeds. And I’m going to fight as hard as I ever had in my life.”²⁷ The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* agreed with Murphy’s fiscal argument, but conceded that Miller had earned the opportunity to proceed with his plan: “We lost in the fight against the lottery and Zell Miller won. The voters approved the idea of a ‘lottery for education’ as he presented it. It was a fair fight, and now the Governor’s program deserves a

fair chance to work. If it does work, he will get the credit; if it doesn’t, he will also get the blame.”²⁸

The Georgia legislature would ultimately approve Miller’s lottery plan to create the Hope Scholarship Program, a program to improve technology in public schools, and a state funded Prekindergarten program for low-income four-year-olds. In June 1993, Georgia’s Lottery for Education officially opened. Governor Miller traveled across the state buying lottery tickets and stressing the improvements that would ensue for Georgia’s school children. “This will go on for years and affect all of Georgia,” he promised.²⁹

Why Prekindergarten?

According to numerous political aides and education observers, Zell Miller’s commitment to educational improvement was genuine and profound. In later years, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* would refer to Miller’s “missionary zeal for education.”³⁰ Miller’s vigorous defense of the lottery reflects the urgency of education reform in Georgia, whose education system perpetually ranks near the bottom in the nation on measures of academic expenditures and achievement. Georgia historically has been among the least educated states. In 1990, over 30% of Georgia’s adults did not graduate from high school—the 10th highest percentage among the 50 states.³¹ Moreover, with an average per pupil expenditure of \$4,416 during the 1990-1991 academic year, Georgia ranked 37th on state spending on elementary and secondary schools.³² An inadequate and underfunded education system in a relatively impoverished state translated into poor educational outcomes: In 1990,

26 David Garrett III, “Should the State Operate A Lottery: Yes – It Will Yield Vital Funds to Improve Our Children’s Education,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 11/1/92, p. G/2.

27 Mark Sherman, “State Budget: Lottery Plan Gives Old Feud New Workout: Murphy Knocks Miller Proposal to Use Funds for Certain Education Programs,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 1/27/93, p. D/1.

28 *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, “Let Lottery for Education Proceed According to Plan,” 1/28/93, p. A/12.

29 Gary Pomerantz, “Georgia Lottery: The Games Begin,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 6/30/93, p. B/1.

30 *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, “Editorials: Lottery Numbers Add to Education,” 1/7/97, p. 6.

31 U.S. Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics: 1997*. Table 12 – Educational Attainment of Persons 25 Years Old and Over: April 1990. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997.

32 U.S. Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics: 1997*. Table 168 – Current Expenditure Per Pupil in Average Daily Attendance – in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools by State: 1959-60 to 1994-95. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997. =

the SAT scores of Georgia high school students were the second lowest in the nation.³³

Many teachers and child care experts in the state credit Miller for choosing to focus lottery revenues on Prekindergarten. Miller’s aides further suggest that as an educator himself, Miller was familiar with national education trends and research. He was aware of brain research showing the importance of learning in the early years,³⁴ and impressed by a substantial body of research documenting the social and educational benefits of high-quality early education programs.

Miller’s Prekindergarten proposal did not take shape in a vacuum. In 1990, approximately 56% of American four-year-olds were enrolled in a pre-primary education program – a 100% increase from 1970.³⁵ During the 1980s and early 1990s, the number of states supporting some form of Prekindergarten initiative tripled.³⁶ In the 1991-1992 academic year, 32 states funded Pre-K programs: 14 states supplemented federal programs, and 23 developed new state-run initiatives.³⁷ None of the state programs reached all eligible children. None was funded predominantly with lottery revenue.

Political considerations may have been as compelling as educational factors. Gary Henry, a professor from Georgia State University’s Applied Research Center, speculates that Miller may have been convinced that the relatively small amount of projected lottery funds

would never produce meaningful change in the K-12 system.

Henry suggests that in the final analysis, Miller and his advisors may have been equally influenced by the potential political benefits of focusing state revenues on early education. Henry said:

In the campaign in ’90, when trying to think about the lottery, [Miller] knew that he had to have a funding source. He knew that he had to have some campaign issues. And it was clear that the pairing of the lottery with education was a clear winner. Our polls at the time were showing that the support went up for the lottery if it was paired with education. And so he had to create programs that would be distinctive, yet educational in focus. He knew that putting the money just right back into the funding stream

for K-12 was not going to capture the public or do much for public education. So he came up with these programmatic ideas.

In the campaign in ’90, when trying to think about the lottery, [Miller] knew that he had to have a funding source. He knew that he had to have some campaign issues. And it was clear that the pairing of the lottery with education was a clear winner. Our polls at the time were showing that the support went up for the lottery if it was paired with education. And so he had to create programs that would be distinctive, yet educational in focus.

33 U.S. Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics: 1997*. Table 133 – Scholastic Assessment Test Score Averages, by State: 1974-75 to 1994-95. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1997. While SAT scores are an indication of academic achievement and preparation, rankings of states based on SAT scores alone are not considered valid because of the varying proportion of students in each state taking the test.

34 Miller would eventually sponsor a conference in Georgia on the educational implications of research in the developmental neurosciences.

35 U.S. Department of Education, 1997.

36 Gina Adams & Jodi Sandfort, *First Steps, Promising Futures: State Prekindergarten Initiatives in the Early 1990s*, Children’s Defense Fund; Washington, 1994. Anne Mitchell et al., *Early Childhood Programs and the Public Schools*, Auburn House Publishing Company; Dover, Massachusetts, 1989.

37 G. Adams & J. Sandfort, *ibid.*

3. “Fitting Within the Big Picture:” Designing and Implementing the Pre-K Initiative

Governor Miller assigned the task of developing and implementing the Prekindergarten program to the Georgia State Department of Education (DOE). Joy Blount, Director of the Early Childhood Division, and Sharon Day, Director of Early Childhood Programs, took the lead in shaping the Governor’s program. To assist in creating a pilot program, DOE established an advisory committee composed of educators and leaders from Georgia’s early education and child care fields.

Integrating Pre-K into a comprehensive system of services for children and families

A DOE official involved in the early stages of the planning process who chose to remain anonymous recalled that two policy initiatives shaped the Prekindergarten program’s guiding vision. First, the advisory committee was influenced by Goals 2000, a set of national education goals that had placed school readiness at the top of the list. Second, it was affected by Family Connections, a statewide policy initiative launched in the early 1990s and supported by the Pew Charitable Trusts. Family Connections sought to restructure and integrate state and federal programs to deliver services more efficiently and effectively to families in need. It encouraged department heads from the areas of education, child welfare, juvenile justice, medicine and human resources to share data, information and expertise, and to develop collaborative approaches to working with children and families.

Nancy Hall, a DOE special assistant who was involved in Pre-K planning efforts, recalls that the comprehensive, integrated-services approach strongly influenced the process. The advisory committee envisioned Pre-K as a program through which the state could “focus attention on families and children, helping problems that way, rather than picking out one little thing and trying to fix it—

trying to see the comprehensive family unit and deal with the whole issue.” Another informed observer, who asked not to be identified, also spoke of the advisory committee’s efforts to create “something that fit within the big picture” envisioned by Family Connections.

Although no longer involved with Georgia’s Pre-K program, Blount and Day offer insights into the comprehensive, family-oriented goals of the program they helped to establish. Blount said, “When developing a statewide preschool program, the fundamental question that one must ask and answer before proceeding is: Will this program be designed as a comprehensive education/child development program or will it be more aligned with traditional (i.e. custodial) child care?” Day elaborated:

Education does not exist in a vacuum. Services to four-year-olds must be comprehensive and take into consideration the needs of the child within the family. Ignoring the needs of the family almost certainly perpetuates the myth that education can solve all problems and remove all ills... The Georgia Prekindergarten program represented one of the first steps toward the coordinated provision of early intervention services for preschool-age children and their families.

Creating a blueprint for the program

The Early Childhood Division of the Georgia Department of Education, working with advisory panels, developed guidelines that would serve as the blueprint for the program. The guidelines briefly described the program’s “philosophy, mission, and goals” as “based on developmentally appropriate practices for four-year-old children and coordination of services to the family. The focus shall be on the child in the family.” To further stress the family-centered approach, the guidelines stated that all

programs shall include direct services “to meet the needs of children and their families.” The program guidelines included the following components:

Eligible children. As initially envisioned, the program would serve low-income four-year-olds.

The program categorized “at-risk” children as those eligible for Medicaid, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program (WIC), other child nutrition programs, or subsidized federal housing, or those referred by an agency serving children and families.

Coordinating Councils. The DOE Early Childhood Division required the formation of local councils composed of the agencies involved in providing or coordinating services to participating children and families.

The Pre-K Advisory Committee placed a premium on establishing community collaborations. Each council had to include at least one parent of a child enrolled in the program and representatives from the local Department of Family and Children Services, health department, and board of education. Pre-K sites were also encouraged to include representatives from other public and private agencies on their coordinating councils. The councils were responsible for: 1) developing the program application; 2) establishing collaborations to provide available service to the children and families; and 3) developing and evaluating the program on an ongoing basis.

The guidelines stated that the curriculum must be “organized around a developmentally appropriate curriculum” and should not be “a junior version of a grade school program.”

Competitive Open Funding. Through a competitive process, all grants or contracts would be awarded to sites located in communities with an identified population of low-income children.

Applications were required to demonstrate community need, such as the percentage of families in the community below the poverty level and the number not served by existing preschool programs. Entities eligible to apply for funding included school systems, public and private non-profit agencies, and private, for-profit child care providers. Coordinating councils were granted the authority to decide the

most appropriate way to deliver services to the children and families, either in homes, community settings or centers. The total number of children served could not exceed 12 in home settings.

Classrooms and centers were required to have at least one adult for every ten children and could not exceed 20 children. DOE also required that each program provide a “local contribution” to

the funding of services. For the pilot program year (1992-1993), the state provided 70 percent of the funds, with an approximate cost per child of \$4,000. Providers could meet their contribution through cash or, more commonly, through in-kind services. The next year, when lottery revenues became available, the state raised its share to 80 percent, with an average expenditure of \$4,253 per child.³⁸

Curriculum. All curricula were to be submitted to and approved by the Department of Education.

The guidelines stated that the curriculum must be “organized around a developmentally appropriate curriculum” and should not be “a junior version of

³⁸ This requirement for a local contribution to funding was eliminated the following year.

a grade school program.” All programs were to be based on principles established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

- 1 Children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure.
- 2 Children learn through active involvement with people and materials.
- 3 Children learn through social interaction with adults and other children.
- 4 Children’s learning reflects a recurring cycle that begins in awareness, moves to exploration, to inquiry, and finally, to utilization.
- 5 Children learn through play.
- 6 Children’s interests and “need to know” motivate learning.
- 7 Human development and learning are characterized by individual variation.

Staffing. Personnel had to have a high school diploma and experience working with children younger than five years of age.

The guidelines did not require providers to staff sites with certified teachers. Providers were encouraged, but not required, to seek individuals with knowledge of child development, developmentally appropriate instructional practices, family dynamics and family needs, human diversity, and agencies and resources.

Programs had the option to hire a:

- 1 Child and family development specialist.
- 2 Parent educator.
- 3 Paraprofessional—Someone with a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential.
- 4 Certified teacher—Special training in instruction of children younger than five.
- 5 An individual from other related fields with appropriate training or experience.

Support Services. Providers were required to offer basic health and developmental screenings, Early and Periodic Screening and Diagnosis Testing (EPSDT), for all participating children; parent-focused services, such as literacy, job training, and parent-education; and coordinated access to mental health, drug treatment or crisis intervention programs if needed.

Beginning in the 1993-1994 year, DOE required programs to employ Family Service Coordinators to provide targeted case management for the participating families and to facilitate the integration of needed services. To staff the Family Service Coordinator position, programs could hire a social worker/case manager, counselor, community leader, mental health worker, or health care worker. According to the program guidelines, the Family Service Coordinator would serve “as a multiple-service broker for the children and their families,” integrating opportunities for parents to participate in educational or job-related programs. Each coordinator would conduct home visits and assessments, carrying a maximum caseload of 40 families.

Program Length. Guidelines and funding formulas granted programs the flexibility to provide services of varying length and intensity.

The guidelines called for “consideration [to be] given to the coordination of services which address the child care needs of working parents.” While some sites offered half-day (e.g., 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.) and traditional school-day services (e.g., 8 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.), many sites were funded to provide extended-day (e.g., 7 a.m. – 6:30 p.m.), and full-year programming. Programs were also required to provide transportation to families that needed such services.

Moving from pilot program to full implementation

DOE’s Early Childhood Division developed the Prekindergarten Pilot Program for the 1992-1993 school year. The staff interviewed potential Pre-K providers from around the state to assess their capacity to offer developmentally appropriate

services. According to a DOE staff member, during the pilot year the program tested different service delivery models, ranging from programs based in family day care to those emulating Head Start, to determine which model might ultimately prove most effective for a state-run program. DOE awarded grants to 20 providers serving 750 children. With lottery revenues not yet available, the \$3 million pilot program was funded through the state’s education budget. Due to administrative delays, the state did not award contracts to Pre-K providers until the school year had already begun. Consequently, most Pre-K sites in the pilot program began operating between November and February.

Full program implementation began at the outset of the 1993-1994 school year. In August 1993, the Governor’s Office announced the first 127 Pre-K sites to receive the lottery funds; 40 additional sites were selected during the year. During the first year, 8,700 children attended Georgia’s Pre-K, at a cost of \$4,258 per child. During the second year, 1994-1995, the program served 15,500 children at an average cost of \$5,018 per child.³⁹

DOE attempted to imbue all Pre-K classrooms with a commitment to developmentally appropriate instruction. According to an informed observer, “We didn’t have trouble finding certified teachers. We did have trouble finding teachers who had any training whatsoever with children younger than kindergarten.” The Early Childhood Division was especially troubled to find that some teachers were trying to teach children to read in an overly-structured manner. Given concerns about instruction in both the public schools and private settings, DOE required every teacher, regardless of credentials and experience, to attend curriculum training sessions.

According to an informed observer, “We didn’t have trouble finding certified teachers. We did have trouble finding teachers who had any training whatsoever with children younger than kindergarten.”

During the first three years (1992-1995), the Pre-K program approved four curriculum choices: Montessori, Bank Street, Creative Curriculum, and High/Scope. Because High/Scope had a formal training system already in place, the state contracted with High/Scope to conduct the first curriculum training sessions for Pre-K providers. In the following years, the other early education organizations also provided training. DOE held at least two conferences per year for teachers, center directors, and public school administrators. They were well attended: some conferences had close to 1,000 participants.

Measuring early results

From the outset, Georgia’s Pre-K program established a commitment to program evaluation. The Department of Education contracted with Georgia State University (GSU) to evaluate the program’s social and academic effects. Lorene (Quay) Pilcher and Marsha Kaufman-McMurrain from the GSU Department of Early Childhood Education

conducted a series of evaluations covering the early years of implementation. They evaluated the pilot program (1992-1993). However, because Pre-K classes during the pilot year did not start at the beginning of the school year, the researchers do not consider this evaluation a rigorous assessment of the program’s efficacy.

During the first year of statewide implementation (1993-1994), researchers recruited a random sample of 317 Pre-K participants from 18 program sites geographically distributed throughout the state. A year later, when these children were finishing kindergarten, 267 of them (84 percent) were located and compared to a randomly selected matched group of 267 Pre-K-eligible students who had not participated in the Pre-K program.⁴⁰ The results

³⁹ Office of School Readiness.

⁴⁰ L. Pilcher & M. Kaufman-McMurrain, *Georgia Prekindergarten Evaluation*. (Georgia Department of Education, Contract No. 940996); Georgia State University: Atlanta, 1995.

indicated that near the end of kindergarten, Pre-K participants scored significantly higher than the comparison children on measures of academic development ($p < .01$), communication ($p < .001$), physical development ($p < .001$), self-help ($p < .001$) and social development ($p < .001$). The Pre-K participants also had significantly fewer absences ($p < .05$) and were retained in grade less frequently ($p < .02$) than were the comparison children. There were no significant differences on the number of student referrals for special services or on measures of parents’ participation in the children’s schooling. Overall, these findings suggest that Prekindergarten significantly enhanced the children’s development and improved their chances for benefiting from kindergarten.

The same cohort of students was evaluated the next year near the end of first grade.⁴¹ Researchers located and assessed 97 percent of the previous sample: 262 Pre-K participants and 255 comparison children. They found that nearly two years after completion of the Pre-K program, fewer differences were evident. First graders who had participated in the Pre-K program did have significantly fewer absences during the school year ($p < .05$), but did not differ on referrals for special services or rates of grade

promotion. On another measure of developmental age, Pre-K children continued to score significantly higher (3.23 months) than the comparison children on academic development, but not on social development. Researchers obtained achievement scores from the Iowa Test of Basic Skills for a subsample of students (98 Pre-K and 91 comparison). The Pre-K students tended to score higher than the comparison children on math problem solving ($p < .10$), total math ($p < .10$) and total reading ($p < .10$). There were no meaningful differences on reading comprehension. Results also indicated that parents of participants and comparison children did not differ on school participation, employment status, or reliance on public assistance programs.

The achievement results suggest that Pre-K participation had helped children academically. However, consistent with evaluations of many early intervention programs, the evaluation showed that in the absence of consistent follow-through in the primary grades, many significant developmental gains tend to diminish over time. The fading of program effects raised some concerns among Georgia educators and policy makers about the program efficacy during these early years of implementation.

41 L. Pilcher & M. Kaufman-McMurrain, *The Longitudinal Study of Georgia’s Prekindergarten Children and Families: 1994-1995*. (Georgia Department of Education) Georgia State University: Atlanta, 1996.

4. Meeting Two Key Challenges

Creating a new system of early care and education out of whole cloth would prove to be a difficult and complex task. However, some of the toughest challenges involved trying to stitch new policies and services together with existing programs, including Head Start, diverse private (non-profit and proprietary) child care programs, and a wide range of family and child services. Two challenges proved to be crucial during the first three years.

Resolving tensions with Head Start

Across the nation, states have taken different approaches to expanding access to early education. While most states have developed independent, state-run initiatives, 13 have used state revenues to increase enrollment or improve quality in the federal Head Start program.⁴² For example, New Hampshire and Massachusetts appropriate state funds to maintain Head Start staff salaries at competitive levels, and Alaska funds Head Start Programs to include children from birth to five. Several states, such as New Jersey, supplement federal Head Start funds so that programs can offer extended day services to participating families.

Georgia took a different tack. Governor Zell Miller’s decision to create an independent state-run Prekindergarten program—not to supplement Head Start as some states opted—had immediate consequences for Head Start in Georgia. According to Celeste Osborn, the Director of Georgia’s Office of School Readiness, relations between DOE and Head Start were somewhat strained even before the Pre-K program was introduced. Georgia’s establishment of universal kindergarten in the 1980s had created lingering resentment among Head Start providers who believed that their five-year-old participants were being unfairly taken away by the

state. “Immediately, when the four-year-old program started,” Osborn said, “[Head Start] thought Georgia was going to do the exact same thing. So you had this immediate confrontation problem built into the process before anything ever happened.”

Robert Lawrence, the DOE administrator in charge of Georgia’s Head Start - State Collaboration Project, agrees that fear of competition for children and mistrust of the state “caused tremendous problems with the Head Start community. They thought the state was coming in to take over the program.” Lawrence believes that Head Start’s unique historical legacy in the South, where the program is viewed as a triumph of the Civil Rights movement and largely a program for African-American children, contributed to the tense political climate.

A program administrator familiar with Head Start and the Pre-K program faults poor planning and a lack of collaboration for fostering tension between Head Start and the state. “There was a small group of people who advised [Governor Miller], not a broad-based coalition,” he says. “Head Start was not at the table. He created a program that competed with Head Start. He basically created it in isolation. We have had to go back and embrace everyone else working in this field.”

In an effort to build bridges to Head Start, the school systems, and private providers, the state held collaborative conferences. DOE’s Early Childhood Division also attempted to address community tension through the local coordinating councils. During 1993-1994 academic year, administrators amended the Pre-K program guidelines to recommend that representatives from Head Start serve on the

42 Anne Mitchell, *Prekindergarten Programs Funded by the States: Essential Elements for Policy Makers*. Report published on the Families and Work Institute Web Site; 1998.

councils. The guidelines also stated specifically, “It is not the intent of this program to be in competition with Head Start or any other preschool or child care provider.”

By most accounts, the programs now complement each other well. Together Head Start and Georgia Pre-K provide early education to approximately 80 percent of the four-year-olds in the state. While it is too early in implementation to determine which program better meets the shared goal of school readiness, leaders of Georgia Pre-K and Head Start readily acknowledge that both programs have comparative strengths and weaknesses. Pre-K reaches significantly more children,⁴³ offers longer program hours (6.5 hours per day to Head Start’s typical half-day), and has a higher proportion of teachers certified in early education. Head Start’s comparative strength lies in a more profound commitment to comprehensive services, particularly the provision of family support and health care.

Over time, the state developed a substantial Head Start-Pre-K collaboration project to build on these strengths. According to one DOE staffer, Head Start administrators began to view the state as a partner when they realized “there were plenty of at-risk four-year-olds and three-year-olds to go around.”

Integrating for-profit child care providers into the system

Should for-profit providers be included in the new state-run Pre-K program? This proved to be a key decision point. Over time, Georgia’s Prekindergarten program has become one of the nation’s most

extensive public-private education ventures. By the 1997-1998 school year, more than half (57 percent) of the children in Pre-K were located in non-public-school program. As Pre-K developed, the concerns of the proprietary child care industry played a crucial role in shaping the program.

Proprietary providers brought an important ingredient to the program—facilities. In many states across the nation, a lack of appropriate facilities stands as one of the major obstacles in developing universal Prekindergarten programs.⁴⁴ For example,

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identifying appropriate space has emerged as an impediment to expansion in New York, which began phasing in universal Pre-K for four-year-olds in 1998. The facilities problem in New York has been further complicated by vast variations in community resources and regulations that call for compliance with the specifications in the Americans with Disabilities Act. To provide preschool for all three- and four-year olds in California, the State Department of Education Universal Preschool

Task Force estimated that 940,000 additional spaces would have to be located.⁴⁵ The task force has recommended several strategies for generating revenues to fund the acquisition of new facilities and to renovate existing facilities, including issuing bonds and tax credits for businesses that provide or support preschool facilities. The task force also recommended establishing joint use agreements among local governing authorities for the use of new or existing community facilities, and the retrofitting of non-traditional facilities, such as military buildings.⁴⁶

In Georgia, a shortage of facilities was a steep obstacle to program expansion. In the early 1990s, a

43 In fiscal year 1998, approximately 60,000 four-year-olds attended state Pre-K classes and 15,000 attended Head Start.

44 Sharon Kagan, & Nancy Cohen; *Not by Chance: Creating an early care and education system for America’s children*. New Haven: Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy, 1997.

45 Superintendent’s Universal Preschool Task Force; *Ready to Learn: Quality Preschools for California in the 21st Century*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education; 1998.

46 Superintendent’s Universal Preschool Task Force, *ibid.*, 1998.

DOE staff member recalls, Georgia’s public school population was already “bursting out of the buildings.” Making room for preschoolers as well would have required large-scale investments for facilities expansion. Moreover, Miller was pushing to have the program serve substantial numbers of children as soon as possible. This was a powerful argument for opening up the program to for-profit providers, using their buildings instead of allocating funds towards public school expansion. One DOE staff member comments, “[B]y forcing the expansion in the time line as it was laid out for us, we had to rely on [the private child care providers].” Providing a similar rationale, Celeste Osborn says:

“On the facilities issue, we decided to bypass it. Instead of spending money on bricks and mortar, we decided to put the funding with the children. That’s a major reason we started a major public-private partnership here in the state of Georgia with the private child care associations. Because they had the available classroom space that also allowed us a very quick implementation schedule, we didn’t have to go through a long building process.”

An education reporter in Atlanta concurs, suggesting that without private for-profit child care providers “in Georgia [Universal Pre-K] simply couldn’t have happened.” She adds, “We didn’t have the space in schools. It’s a whole lot cheaper to take somebody who’s already got a building and give them a trained teacher or give them the money to hire a trained teacher. Give them the money to... stock the room with toys and games and everything than it is to build a building from scratch and do all that and have to pay for the building.”

Thus, from the start, Georgia invited for-profit child care centers to participate. However, according to a DOE employee, when DOE instituted its pilot program for low-income children in 1992, not a single for-profit child care provider—small center or large corporate chain—applied. As long as the program focused on low-income children, proprietary providers showed little interest. At the same time,

associations representing the child care industry lobbied to keep the Pre-K program focused on low-income children. The DOE staff member speculates that for-profit providers initially calculated that placing low-income children in public settings would not tap into their customer base—families who paid for private child care.

Few for-profits became involved in Pre-K from 1992 to 1995. Then, in 1995-1996, the program expanded to provide free Pre-K to all four-year-olds, regardless of household income. For-profit providers could no longer stand on the sidelines. According to Rachael Kronchite, President of the Georgia Child Care Association, an organization representing the interests of the state’s proprietary child care industry, for-profit providers began to fear that the state would jeopardize their business by not giving them equal access to Pre-K grants:

“...[I]f you have invested your money and your heart and your life in providing a service that the public has not been interested or able to provide in the past, and then when they decide that they can and should, it’s not very pleasant to think that you...might be brushed aside, and that they may even come in and compete with you and take what you have established. You know, I think that that’s a legitimate fear. And people who go into child care as a business generally take it very personally and get very personally involved, and so you can see how that would be a real threat.”

Susan Maxwell, President of the Georgia Child Care Council, an advisory board created by the state legislature to provide information about the availability, affordability and quality of child care in Georgia, recalls the child care industry’s anxiety. “Private providers knew they had to get in the game, but [were] not sure how the game would be played.” She recalls that DOE enraged private providers when, in some crowded school districts, it awarded Pre-K grants to place four-year-olds in mobile trailers, while private day care centers with empty classrooms were turned down. Maxwell believes that the private

child care industry, a powerful lobby in Georgia, “would have tried to kill the [state’s Pre-K] program if they had not been allowed to participate.”

Another child advocate recalls the political pressure applied by the industry. “The private child care providers started saying, ‘You are stealing our business!’” he says. “They told the governor that his policies were hurting small business development... It was a brilliant argument on their part.” In 1995, Miller mandated that private child care centers would have equal access to Pre-K grants. By the 1995-1996 school year, hundreds of private providers were accepted into the program.⁴⁷

Integrating into a public program proprietary child care providers, who have historically operated outside the influence of public school policy, proved to be a daunting challenge. A DOE staff member recalls tense, complex interactions with associations representing the for-profit child care industry regarding program guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices:

“The private for-profit providers really... just wanted the money to be sent to them and [had a] ‘leave me alone and let me do my job’ kind of attitude... They didn’t want oversight, no curriculums. They wanted to be able to use what they considered to be their curriculum, which in many cases was a worksheet kind of mentality. They wanted to be able to make a profit.”

The DOE Early Childhood Division found itself wrangling over various aspects of program implementation. Many for-profit providers were reluctant to comply with the program’s first-come, first-serve open enrollment procedure. According to an informed education analyst, the proprietary child care industry was concerned that open enrollment requirements might limit available slots to four-year-olds, thus hindering business interests by preventing private centers from providing Pre-K to some three-year-olds who had been previously enrolled at the center. The analyst also speculates

that many private centers wanted the flexibility not to admit some lower-income children. The Pre-K administration attempted vigorous enforcement of their enrollment policies.

The DOE also encountered resistance to allowing the state to audit private centers’ financial records, as was required for public schools and non-profit providers. The child care industry argued that the cost of the audits, approximately \$7,000, was prohibitive. The industry succeeded in keeping the auditing requirement out of the law. Additional disagreements concerned mandatory training sessions for staff and credential-based funding formulas.

The involvement of private providers in the community collaborative councils also became a point of contention. “The private for-profits did not want to be involved in the community, and community collaboration was required at the beginning,” comments a Pre-K employee. “They really resented having to become a part of a community collaboration.” To complicate matters, the private non-profit agencies and the public school systems questioned the motives of the for-profit child care centers. Wayne Sikes, who runs a chain of for-profit child care centers involved in Pre-K, agreed. “My experience is that elementary school teachers thumb down their noses to the for-profits, like we can’t be for kids,” said Sikes. In some communities, a DOE staff member recalls, “We had Head Start, the non-profits and the public schools against the private for-profits.”

Some coordinating councils worked efficiently and are still in operation; others became embroiled in conflict. In many cases, for-profit child care providers were not integrated into the decision making. A Pre-K staff member says:

“There was definitely a line drawn in the sand [between] those [private providers] that were more community-based, and—even though they were for-profit—wanted to do things like be a part of a

⁴⁷ According to Roger Neugabauer of the Child Care Information Exchange, in several southern states—where many of the large corporate child care chains had their early growth—the proprietary child care industry tends to be better organized and exert more political influence. Partly as a result of this influence, southern states typically have less rigorous child care regulations.

collaborative, wanted to provide family services... And then there was the group that never had done that. And it was so foreign to them that it was too hard to make that leap.”

“DOE’s Early Childhood Division instituted training sessions and conferences to try to overcome barriers to effective collaboration. Six DOE consultants traveled around the state helping coordinating councils facilitate meetings, build agendas, set goals, complete the application process, and train staff. “It’s very time- and labor-intensive when you’re helping people change,” a Pre-K staff member said. “And it was very much a hand-holding mentality.”

Wayne Sikes thinks that in his region, the coordinating councils had another effect: uniting private child care providers who are often isolated and fiercely competitive. Sikes says, “What the [coordinating councils] did for the day care community—we are competitors like Burger King and McDonalds—it brought us all to the same room, allowed us to address problems together. The result was that we are [now] friendly competitors who share a lot.”

Although DOE Pre-K administrators spent a great deal of their time working with representatives from the child care industry, it seems that the initial mistrust was never completely resolved. As the program operated from 1993-1995, much of the tension involving the proprietary providers revolved around the state’s efforts to monitor sites and enforce standards. Gary Henry of GSU praises the original DOE Pre-K administration for establishing the program’s consistent commitment to developmentally appropriate curricula. Henry believes, however, that

“If you had to make choices between kids, you target it first to the poorest kids. And we knew politically that it would probably help us... That was one of the happy times when the politics and the policy came together.”

DOE tended to approach Pre-K sites in a “more rigid, less consultative ...regulatory mode” that private providers perceived as overly bureaucratic and burdensome. According to Rachael Kronchite of the Georgia Child Care Association,

“[DOE] had the expertise, ...but they had so much paper. It’s the idea of bureaucracies, I think, and how they work and how much paper they think is necessary. And there wasn’t the initial trust of private centers and so there was a lot more, “Show me this and show me this and show me this and show me this. Give me all this paperwork and we’re going to go over it, you know, with a fine tooth comb.”

A DOE Pre-K staff member acknowledges that while some for-profit providers perceived the program consultants positively and sought them out for help, others remained wary and defensive. She says that the monitoring process was seen as punitive rather than supportive: “Just by the sheer nature of the fact that you have someone in your center who

can take away your license, that puts people in an aggressive posture, as opposed to a supportive, let’s grow together, mentoring posture.”

Rachel Kronchite believes that by the 1995-1996 school year, DOE Pre-K staff were beginning to understand the concerns of for-profit providers, but never fully overcame an initial bias. “There is the perception that people are in the business for the money and only for the money,” Kronchite says of DOE. “There is a perception that if we give you money, you’re not going to use it the way we said to use it, and so we have to look at this so carefully.”

5. “A Program That Would Touch All Georgians”: Going to Scale

The Georgia Lottery proved to be more profitable than even Zell Miller had predicted. For Fiscal Year 1994, the state appropriated \$242 million in lottery funds for the specified education programs. By 1995, the figure increased to \$475 million, surpassing the projected budget appropriation by \$250 million.⁴⁸

As the lottery proceeds grew and lottery-funded education programs received more attention, an increasing number of Georgians began to seek access to the services. Pressures mounted to expand Pre-K beyond low-income families. According to a DOE official, middle-class families began asking their state representatives why they should have to pay for preschool or child care when the Governor had promised a lottery-funded program for Georgia’s four-year-olds.⁴⁹

A Democrat in an increasingly Republican state, Governor Miller had been re-elected in 1994 by a narrow margin.⁵⁰ Convinced that his education programs would remain tenuous if they focused exclusively on low-income children, Miller stepped back to consider how larger-than-expected lottery revenues might be used to address the problem that had inspired the lottery in the first place: improving Georgia’s education system. Some advisors in DOE recommended using the funds to expand Pre-K downward to serve low-income three-year-olds. But Miller made a different choice: offering free Pre-K to all four-year-olds whose parents wanted to enroll them, regardless of income. Miller clearly saw the political advantages of extending benefits to middle-class parents and thereby strengthening his political

base; he also saw educational advantages, believing that his education programs would be strengthened through middle-class involvement and support. Gary Henry suggests that Miller calculated, “If he could get a strong commitment from the middle-class and a perception of a real benefit for having their kids in this program, he might be able to keep the program politically during bad times or the program might outlive his administration if he had strong public support for it.” Mike Volmer, an advisor to Miller who would later administer the Pre-K program, recalls the logic behind the decision to open the program’s enrollment:

“I guess I always come from the practical school. And the practical school said to me that with the political conservative environment that we are living in, if we come out and try to push a program for poor kids, we’re not going to get a whole lot of support. And so, what we made the decision to do is push a program that would touch all Georgians. So I don’t know whether middle-class or upper-class people really need the program. But we needed their support.”

In January 1995, Governor Miller officially announced that the state’s Prekindergarten program for four-year-olds would drop income eligibility requirements; all four-year-olds in Georgia would now be eligible to attend a universal and voluntary program.⁵¹ Miller said that during the 1995-1996 school year, enrollment would expand from 15,500 to an estimated 48,000 children. Total expenditures, he announced, would more than double from \$78 million to \$157 million.⁵²

48 Council for School Performance, *Report on the expenditure of lottery funds fiscal year 1997*. Georgia State University Council for School Performance. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, 1997.

49 The Governor had never, in fact, promised Prekindergarten for all four-year-olds. But constituents’ expectations seemingly changed how they viewed previous pronouncements.

50 By 1998, the Republican transformation of the South had rendered Georgia the only state in the region not to have elected a Republican governor in recent years.

51 The Prekindergarten program now classifies low-income children as “Category 1.” All other children are labeled “Category 2.”

52 These estimates were somewhat inaccurate. Final calculations indicated that 44,000 children attended Georgia’s Pre-K in 1995-1996 at a total cost of \$182 million.

In spring 1995, education writers began to report that school systems around the state lacked the space to provide Pre-K to the additional 30,000 children who would be promised slots in the fall. To meet the targeted goals, DOE and selected school districts around the state intensified efforts to encourage private child care providers to apply for grants. DOE held workshops to help child care directors complete applications. Despite these measures, some child advocates continued to fear that the number of available Pre-K slots would fall far short of demand.

In June 1995, Miller reacted angrily at a press conference when confronted with reports that school officials and child care operators appeared to be in agreement that funding projections and space limitations would not cover all children who were eligible to enroll in the fall. Miller confronted a reporter. “I’ll tell you what,” he said. “In September, if there’s any four-year-old not enrolled in Pre-K that wants to get in, I’ll buy you a steak dinner.”⁵³ Miller also challenged the notion that quality Pre-K would have to be located in public school settings. “The argument that they don’t have room for them in the schools is baloney... They don’t have to go to school. They can go to a church or a private center,” Miller said.⁵⁴

Despite Miller’s promises, some educators and advocates warned that low-income children might be denied program slots. Newspapers in Georgia also reported the concerns of some educators that expansion may erode program quality – that Prekindergarten may be “watered down” to custodial child care. Martha Ezzard, a columnist for the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, criticized Miller and the State Superintendent of Education for “glitches in

implementation” and warned parents about variations in Pre-K quality. “Parents may think they are getting Pre-K, when they’re really getting day care,” Ezzard wrote. “That raises the question of whether state lottery dollars for education should go to fund day care, helpful though it is, for middle-class families.”⁵⁵

At a press conference in July, Governor Miller, surrounded by children, announced that the state had awarded grants to 357 private child care centers and 145 local school systems to expand Pre-K, with over 4,000 more spaces to be awarded later. Miller said to the press:

At a press conference in July, Governor Miller, surrounded by children, announced that the state had awarded grants to 357 private child care centers and 145 local school systems to expand Pre-K, with over 4,000 more spaces to be awarded later.

“Today we take the next step in expanding the Pre-K program, a step that I believe will be one of the most important initiatives, as far as education is concerned, in the history of the state. Today we become the first state in the country, in fact the first state in the nation’s history, to offer Pre-K for every four-year-old who wants it. No longer will the program just serve at-risk students. The benefits of Pre-K now belong

to every Georgia four-year-old, the benefits of Pre-K now belong to every Georgia parent who has a four-year-old.”⁵⁶

By most accounts, the DOE Pre-K administration was understaffed and unprepared to handle adequately the pace and scope of Miller’s promised Pre-K expansion. During the 1995–1996 expansion year, the administration had a difficult time securing adequate classroom space for all 44,000 enrollees. Some school districts were forced to locate their Pre-K classes in mobile trailers; more than 12,000 Pre-K applicants remained on waiting lists. Rapid expansion led to logistical nightmares, and at public hearings many providers complained bitterly about

53 Diane Loupe, “Miller Betting All Four-Year-Olds Seeking a Class Will Have One,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 6/1/95, p. 1.

54 D. Loupe, *ibid*, p. 1.

55 Martha Ezzard, “A Warning to Parents: Pre-K programs Vary,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 7/28/95, p. 12.

56 Diane Loupe, Prekindergarten Program Expanded: Income Limits Removed From Education Initiative,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 7/6/95, p. 1.

program administration. According to Elaine Draeger, a non-profit program director and a member of the Pre-K advisory panel, expansion was pretty nutty... [Program administrators] were not prepared to handle that kind of volume... They didn’t have the staff, couldn’t rev up in time.” Another DOE staff member says Pre-K administrators did a good job with limited staff, but faults policy makers for their “inability to thoughtfully plan ahead.” He adds, “From the outside, it was clear there was a lot of chaos.”

The program suffered from basic problems with setting up systems to deal with enrollment, registration, and reimbursement. Rachael Kronchite said that some centers operated for months without receiving start-up fees and reimbursement payments; the state

did not award some Pre-K grants until September. Another observer said that the Pre-K administration, overwhelmed by the volume of applications and lacking time to set up adequate review processes and monitoring systems, approved some low-quality sites that should not have been funded. “It was too soon, too fast,” she concludes. Moreover, during the expansion year, the state detected some cases of fraud. According to a DOE staff member, Pre-K monitors uncovered some cases of centers staffed by personnel who lacked the teaching credentials specified in their contracts; but political pressures to show the public a successful implementation process and reach targeted goals kept DOE from revoking grants from questionable Pre-K providers.



6. “Who’s In Charge?”: Controversy & Change

In November 1994, political winds further shifted the course of Georgia’s Prekindergarten program. Georgia is one of a few states in which the State Superintendent of Schools is an elected position. In the 1994 campaign for State Superintendent, Linda Schrenko, a conservative Republican, upset the incumbent Democrat, Werner Rogers, who had been supported enthusiastically by the Georgia Association of Educators. Closely aligned with religious organizations, Schrenko received a 100 percent approval rating on a Christian Coalition voter guide. Schrenko stated publicly that she would never belong to a P.T.A., because she believes that on the national level it supports liberal causes, including gay rights. She named as one of her top priorities reducing the Department’s budget. Within 10 months in office, she cut 190 positions, including many staff in the Early Childhood Division.

Schrenko found herself nominally in charge of a Prekindergarten program that was under the control of the Democratic Governor and that would bring her no credit, even if it succeeded. Moreover, the idea of a state-funded Pre-K program may have stood in stark contrast to her own conservative principles. According to one DOE official, Schrenko and the department she headed “really didn’t want the Prekindergarten program, because it does go in opposition to what a lot of the extreme conservative population believe about where children belong, and that’s at home with their mommies.” Another DOE staff member spoke about Schrenko and her handling of Pre-K:

“Schrenko spent two years wondering how she got elected. She was ill prepared, governed by her conservative constituency, was way over her head and built a lot of ill will. She is still building ill will all over the state among everyone who works

with children....Schrenko didn’t want the [Prekindergarten program]. She has no real understanding of early education. She knew that the governor was going to run it. It was his legacy; she didn’t want that interference and confusion.”

Gary Henry of Georgia State University suggests that Governor Miller, in turn, mistrusted Schrenko’s motives. “If you’re a governor and this is your baby, you’re not quite confident that somebody who’s calling it ‘glorified baby sitting’ is going to be somebody who’s going to really try to make the program work,” Henry said. Consequently, as a DOE staff member recalled, “the program was held hostage” as Miller and Schrenko “were playing politics and trying to figure out how to maneuver around each other and to get what each party wanted.” As a result of the political infighting, program guidelines that the Pre-K staff prepared to send out in November were not released by DOE until March. The Superintendent’s Office also prevented Pre-K administrators from filling basic staffing requests, adding to the program’s administrative problems.

The behind-the-scenes feud eventually reached the public stage, as education reporters began writing about tension between Miller and Schrenko over control of the program. Schrenko derided the program publicly, complaining to the press about her limited input into the Pre-K standards and the expectation that she would merely “implement” the Governor’s program.⁵⁷ On the day Miller announced the expansion to universal enrollment, Schrenko publicly pledged her “complete support,” but later told the press that the expansion was “solely the Governor’s idea” and that she preferred to keep the program focused on low-income children.⁵⁸ She also predicted there would be “major glitches the first year out.” At other times, she contradicted the

⁵⁷ *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, “Governor, Schrenko pass Buck on Pre-K Questions,” 7/27/95, p. 16.

Governor and her own Early Education Division by suggesting that school administrators should give up on hiring certified Pre-K teachers, and concentrate instead on less qualified and less costly staff. According to a DOE employee, Schrenko also lobbied at times to reduce Pre-K to a half-day program.

The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, now an enthusiastic supporter of Pre-K, pointed out that key decisions were looming, such as requirements for teacher training and support services, and argued that Schrenko and Miller were “passing the buck” on these issues. “Who’s in charge,” the paper wondered, “the Governor or the Superintendent? Indeed this is the most troubling issue of all.”⁵⁹ Journalist Martha Ezzard upbraided both Schrenko and Miller for “playing games with Pre-K” and said, “It would be comforting to know that someone in charge has a vision of it.”⁶⁰

In 1995, the political atmosphere surrounding Pre-K became even more charged. Aware of the program’s endorsement of standards promulgated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), conservative organizations accused Pre-K of using and promoting an anti-bias curriculum distributed by NAEYC.⁶¹ Although the curriculum was never, in fact, part of Georgia’s Pre-K curriculum, conservative politicians and activists, including the state’s Christian Coalition, claimed that the program was implementing a curriculum that undermined families and traditional values and promoted a pro-homosexual agenda. Family Concerns, a conservative, religious organization, issued an action alert to its membership, claiming in bold letters: “If Your Child Is Being Taught Anti-Bias

Curriculum, Think Again Before Placing Him/Her In The Free State Four-Year-Old Prekindergarten Program.

Proposed Curriculum To Destroy Traditional Social Norms And Education.” Family Concerns leveled many charges, including claims that Pre-K would “not tolerate religion,” “encourage all behavior, particularly all sexual behavior,” and “discourage teaching methods such as learning ABCs and counting.” Gender roles were an explicit concern, and Family Concerns warned that the program

would “emphasize gender blurring,” “alter gender behavior,” and “allow explicit gender anatomy and gender identity to be taught.”

Conservative advocates and politicians wore red anti-NAEYC buttons to the capital. While speaking on the House floor, one Republican legislator held the NAEYC guidelines in the air, offering them as proof of Pre-K’s homosexual agenda. Schrenko inflamed the situation by erroneously informing Miller

that the anti-bias curriculum had in fact been implemented in Pre-K. Unaware of the distortion, Miller ordered the curriculum to be removed. The attacks took on a particularly bitter tone as some DOE Pre-K staff members were personally accused of supporting homosexual values.

Eventually, reporters established that the NAEYC anti-bias curriculum had never been adopted by the Pre-K program. The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* accused Schrenko of lending “credence to alarmist claims” about the program’s promotion of homosexuality. Schrenko admitted the error,

According to Robert Lawrence, Director of Georgia’s Head Start - State Collaboration Project, there is a consensus among Pre-K staff and child advocates that the NAEYC controversy was “an attack on diversity.”

58 Diane Loupe, “Prekindergarten Program Expanded: Income Limits Removed from Education Initiative,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 7/16/95, p. 1.

59 *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, “Governor, Schrenko pass Buck on Pre-K Questions,” 7/27/95, p. 16.

60 Martha Ezzard, “One Passes Buck to Other: Miller, Schrenko Playing Games with Pre-K?,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 7/31/95, p. 6.

61 Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force, *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*. National Association for the Education of Young Children: Washington, DC, 1989.

but defended herself by claiming that the anti-bias curriculum was “definitely inherent” in the training of Pre-K instructors.⁶²

According to Robert Lawrence, Director of Georgia’s Head Start - State Collaboration Project, there is a consensus among Pre-K staff and child advocates that the NAEYC controversy was “an attack on diversity. It was a reaction against anything seen as moderately liberal. It was a knee-jerk reaction, nonsense.” Several Pre-K staff members speak of the episode as troubling. Kathleen Gooding, who now serves as Assistant Director of Instructional Services, remarks, “How do you defend yourself against something that was false?” A professor associated with NAEYC who wishes to remain anonymous believes that the political and religious culture of Georgia creates an environment that allows this kind of critique to influence policy. She faults Georgia AIEYC for being too “reactive” in a conservative state where many parents want their children to be taught religion and may be wary of a multicultural perspective. “We didn’t state our position as well as we needed to,” she said.

By late 1995, Zell Miller had had enough. Concerns over program administration and the hostile political environment – both within and outside the Department of Education – convinced the Governor that he would have to act boldly to save Pre-K.

Creating an Office of School Readiness

With one of his pet programs – an important part of his legacy – under siege, Governor Miller devised a strategy to save the Georgia Prekindergarten program.⁶³ To administer universal Pre-K he would establish a separate office outside of the State Department of Education, staffed with appointees directly responsible to the Governor. According to Mike Volmer, an advisor and confidante of the Governor, Miller took the controversial step of establishing another bureaucratic department to prevent the program’s demise:

“It was a very weak program without any real proponents. And when I say real proponents, yes, you had educators, but the general public, the media, members of the general assembly, they were really against it... But there was [enough] conflict in the state that the Governor felt he had to pull out of [the Department of Education], and there was just enough support that he went ahead and created that new department.”

Volmer does not fault DOE administrators for the program’s precarious state, noting that they were in a politically untenable position:

“[W]hat you had was a very well-meaning, a very qualified staff at DOE, that was trying to operate a program that had two bosses. And those bosses were, number one, Mrs. Schrenko—who really ran the department, and then Governor Miller, who wants to run the entire state government... Because the top administration of that Department is not supportive of you, you can’t get the ear of anyone in the Department, you can’t make decisions... And, so, I think you had some quality people, but I think what needed to happen was not so much bringing in educational expertise, but bringing in some political expertise.”

Volmer recalls that Superintendent Schrenko was all too willing to let go of Pre-K: “[T]he Governor spoke to Mrs. Schrenko, I know, on several occasions in November and December of ’95. And I think the general thrust of that was that they both agreed [that her Department] was going to unload something that was not a very popular program. And she wouldn’t have any baggage.”

In December 1995, Schrenko publicly endorsed Miller’s plan to create a new agency, the Office of School Readiness (OSR), to run the Pre-K program. She claimed that the move would aid her efforts to shrink the DOE bureaucracy. When asked about relinquishing control of Pre-K, she said, “The program was expanding so very fast, there was no way to keep up with it. I didn’t want it to be a part of the K-12 system.”

⁶² White, “School Chief Admits Anti-Bias Material Never Part of the Pre-K program,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 2/8/96.

⁶³ The HOPE Scholarship Program, which enjoyed widespread acclaim and popularity, was never in jeopardy.

The creation of a new government agency required approval by the legislature and was sure to stir controversy. Miller believed that he would need more than a Prekindergarten program to justify the decision. He therefore proposed granting OSR the authority to monitor child care licensing for all sites that receive Pre-K funding, a function that had previously been performed by the Department of Human Resources (DHR). OSR now employs 18 consultants to monitor and license all centers that receive Pre-K grants.

To this day, many child advocates, including several representatives from Georgia AEYC, criticize Miller’s decision to separate into two departments the licensing of child care facilities. Volmer, however, saw the move as part of the Governor’s strategy to get OSR through the legislature. He says:

“[A]n argument could be made that, ‘Why in the hell create another state agency? We’ve got enough bureaucracy out there already.’ So the argument the Governor made was that [OSR would] not only administer the Prekindergarten program, but also consolidate services in that we would also inspect the day care centers.... And we would administer a food program, nutrition program. So his argument was that we were kind of a one-stop-shop.”

The *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* enthusiastically endorsed the creation of OSR, lauding Miller for his progressive vision and commitment to children:

“In this era of cutting, pruning and privatizing, it seems out of step for Governor Zell Miller to suddenly propose creation of a new department to oversee his popular Prekindergarten program. Still it’s the right way to go. Myriad programs that serve young children are spread among various agencies and are getting short shrift. The lack of coordination through a single agency had led to competition among agencies not to serve children in their formative years. Putting the programs under one new Department of School Readiness would elevate their importance and increase political support for an age

group too often ignored... It is particularly important that the Pre-K program get the attention it deserves... Miller’s new department would be an investment in all of Georgia’s youngest citizens. There is no better use of public money than that.”⁶⁴

The Christian Coalition opposed the move and announced in a press release, “Parents, not the state, should be the Department of School Readiness... Will parents lose more of their rights to direct the upbringing, morals, and values of their children if they send their children to daycare?” Some Republican legislators grumbled about Miller’s increasing bureaucracy and removing the program from the control of Schrenko, a Republican. One representative argued, “Pre-K is a new entitlement funded by the lottery to provide babysitting service for the middle-class.”

Despite these objections, the Governor prevailed and the Georgia legislature authorized creation of the new Office of School Readiness. To set up and run OSR, Miller turned to Mike Volmer, the Director of the HOPE Scholarship Program. A law school graduate, Volmer had spent the majority of his eclectic career working in state government. Initially employed at the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget, he later worked on the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and served as the Commissioner for Georgia’s Drug Prevention and Awareness Program in 1989. In 1992, Miller appointed Volmer to his staff as Executive Secretary for Health and Education.

Volmer had Miller’s confidence and a well-earned reputation as a loyal and politically astute fix-it man. What he lacked was training in education in general or early education in particular. Governor Miller granted Volmer the freedom to staff OSR with employees who would be loyal to him. Volmer did not seek individuals with strong education backgrounds. Instead, he appointed individuals with administrative, budgetary and technological skills. His Deputy Directors included Celeste Osborn, a finance specialist with far-ranging experience in

⁶⁴ *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, “An Agency for Georgia’s Youngest,” 12/25/95, p. 16.

both the public and private sectors, and Pamela Shapiro, who had served as Policy Coordinator for Education in the Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget. Gary Henry from Georgia State University comments that the staffing of OSR was consistent with Governor Miller’s priority of appointing individuals with political savvy. Henry added,

“Rather than getting the state’s five leading experts in early childhood running this program, they brought in expertise... somebody who’s a very skillful communicator with the legislature, and (others) who know budget and interagency relationships... The Governor has always been really interested in getting the biggest bang for the buck—getting the maximum number of kids served... These folks were good on the policy side and the budget side.”

In March 1996, Miller and his Democratic allies successfully defeated Republican proposals to cut Pre-K funds and scale back enrollment by reinstating income-eligibility requirements. Volmer believed that he and his staff would have to act quickly to save Pre-K. However, he knew virtually nothing about early education, child care, or developmentally appropriate practices. Before assuming his new post in April 1996, Volmer spent four weeks traveling around the state talking to Pre-K providers. He met with some experts from universities and the early childhood field, but spent most of his time speaking with teachers and administrators from both private and public Pre-K sites. “At that point, I didn’t need any theory,” Volmer explains. “I needed to know what was wrong with the program.” Volmer adds:

“I just got in the car, and I drove around. And I didn’t want to read any books—oh, I read books—but I wanted to talk to people... If you go out there and talk to people that are actually trying to carry the

program out, and ask for their insights and help, and how to make this better, I’ve always been surprised how easy it is. So, that’s really how I tried to educate myself early on, so that when April 15th came, we hit the ground pretty much running.”

Changing public perceptions of Pre-K

Volmer’s fact-finding tour and political instincts convinced him that altering negative perceptions of Pre-K was the new agency’s top priority. He calculated that he had 60 days

Volmer’s fact-finding tour and political instincts convinced him that altering negative perceptions of Pre-K was the new agency’s top priority. He calculated that he had 60 days to accomplish this goal, or the legislature would not authorize funding.

to accomplish this goal, or the legislature would not authorize funding. In retrospect, he believes that his background proved helpful because in the final analysis, the program’s survival would hinge on political factors, not educational ones. According to Volmer, the key was to stress academics: “Now, educators will argue that we don’t need to stress academics for four-year-olds. But what I was trying to say in a general way is: ‘We ain’t no babysitting service.’

We are going to focus on math

concepts, science concepts, English concepts, and all that. Because that’s what the general public wants.”

To improve public perception of the program, Volmer brought a marketing perspective to OSR that had been lacking at DOE. According to a DOE staffer, Pre-K administrators were understaffed and overwhelmed by the program’s day-to-day administration, and had devoted little time to public relations. In contrast, Volmer and his staff quickly developed six “learning goals” that focused entirely on children’s learning and development, issued a glossy brochure describing them, and spoke to groups and journalists around the state about the program’s academic benefits. The brochure, which de-emphasized social services and family-centered objectives, stated: “The school readiness goals of the Georgia Prekindergarten program are to provide

appropriate preschool experiences emphasizing growth in language and literacy, math concepts, science, arts, physical development, and personal and social competence.”⁶⁵

Volmer also developed a strategy for addressing conservative groups’ criticism of the program. He presented Pre-K as an innovative, ambitious experiment in school choice – a cherished tenet of conservatives. Volmer believes this strategy was effective. He says that soon after OSR took this tack, a number of legislators who supported Pre-K emphasized to their constituents, in speeches and newsletters, the program’s commitment to giving parents’ choice in the realm of education.⁶⁶

Volmer believes that these public relations steps helped to turn the tide within three to four months. “I do not want to diminish the role of qualified, good educators, and what needed to be done in the substance area,” Volmer says. “But to me, the... most important thing, initially, was to change the perception in people’s minds.” Volmer adds, “I will market the hell out of anything. They say I could market soap real well. But my feeling is that if you have a successful program and no one knows about it, you’re not going to last. I always believe in marketing. And I don’t mean to be crass about that at all, but if you’ve got something good, market it.”



⁶⁶ This political tactic might not be as successful in many states outside of the South where teachers’ unions tend to be vehemently opposed to “school choice.”

7. Mid-Course Corrections

By the time the Office of School Readiness was up and running, the Prekindergarten program had been in existence for three years. OSR staff scrutinized its operation and found that substantive changes were needed in many aspects of program implementation. They embarked on an ambitious set of mid-course corrections.

Streamlining program administration

The most pressing need was to bring efficiency to program administration. Volmer says that when he talked to people about the program, he heard “horror stories” of providers who had not been informed until September that they were selected and approved as Pre-K sites for the current school year. Shapiro and Osborn say that they inherited a large and complex program without basic management tools, such as adequate databases. No descriptive materials were available for public distribution.

During its first year in operation, OSR made a commitment to inform providers whether they had been accepted for the following school year by June 1. At the same time, OSR staff revamped the application review process that it had inherited from DOE. DOE had hired outside expert readers to evaluate applications, a practice which Volmer endorsed. Volmer, however, wondered why no application had ever been denied. He therefore decided to have his staff review all the applications internally, approving only grantees who met all of the rules and regulations. During the first 60 days, every OSR employee, including clerks, evaluated applications.

The second year, OSR further streamlined the application process and paperwork. DOE had required Pre-K providers to apply for reinstatement each year. Volmer asks, “If you’re running a good program and we need you..., why would we ask you

to fill out 34 pages of application every year?” OSR changed the regulations to allow previously approved programs to simply submit a letter of intent to be retained for the next year. OSR now completes in six weeks the application review process that took up to five months at DOE.

Generally speaking, these administrative changes have been well received. Wayne Sikes, who runs a chain of proprietary child care centers, appreciates OSR’s simplification of the application contract. “OSR is much more highly efficient and customer-friendly,” says Sikes. Rachel Kronchite of the Georgia Child Care Association points to OSR’s establishment of electronic funding transfers as an important administrative improvement that corrected persistent reimbursement problems that affected many private centers. OSR’s efficiency has also earned praise from public school and non-profit Pre-K directors. Carol Quigley, Director of Preschool, Early Childhood Education and Special Services for the Fulton County Schools, says, “It took a while for the state to get up and going. They are doing a great job... I see a tremendous improvement in program quality. The entire program is much improved.” Elaine Draeger, Executive Director of Sheltering Arms, a non-profit social service agency that runs 13 Pre-K centers in Atlanta, also sees positive administrative changes under OSR. She says of the DOE-run program, “We had child care experts and the administrative piece suffered... [OSR] built on the expertise we started with ... They added their own level of expertise—budgetary, streamlining the application process, adding technology, making it simpler for reporting...”

Introducing a customer service orientation

Volmer and his staff made a concerted effort to bring a business perspective to the administration of

Pre-K. Osborn speaks of instituting a customer service orientation in relations with parents, providers, and school system representatives. OSR has established a website and database to give parents information on available Pre-K openings. According to Osborn, “We very consciously try to act more like a private business...” Volmer concurs: “People would always say, ‘You guys don’t feel like a state agency.’ And that was a compliment to us. And that’s how we try to work. And so we were blessed that first year with some exceptional talent. From technology, to budget, to administration... We tried to change from a state agency mode where there are the rules and regulations, to ‘how can we help you?’”

The business orientation was most evident in a new attitude toward the private Pre-K providers that constitute the majority of Pre-K sites.⁶⁷ Shapiro points out that the DOE Pre-K administrators had no experience working in the private sector. “They really had a difficult time seeing outside the box and understanding that child care is a business and pre-school is a business,” she comments. Volmer also stresses that DOE administrators failed to appreciate the legitimate business concerns of the private providers who, he states, “got the crap beat out of them by the Department of Education.” Volmer tried to change the program’s perception of the child care industry from one of mistrust to “treating them as business partners that we needed.” Without loosening any regulations, Volmer sought to change attitudes, especially in the monitoring of sites: “What we tried to do was, rather than go in and immediately beat someone over the head because they didn’t have enough pine chips out there under a swing, we tried to go in and say, ‘Look, here are the things you need to do, you need to improve.’”

According to Osborn, “We very consciously try to act more like a private business...” Volmer concurs: People would always say, ‘You guys don’t feel like a state agency.’ And that was a compliment to us. And that’s how we try to work. And so we were blessed that first year with some exceptional talent.

Gary Henry has observed from a distance the change in attitude toward for-profit providers. “(OSR) basically said, ‘This is not an adversarial situation for 95 percent, 99 percent of the sites,’” Henry says. “And I think that changing from a regulatory [mode] where ‘You got five demerits, fix it,’ to ‘Let’s sit down and figure out what we can do to best serve these kids’ has been a big change.”

Shapiro and Osborn stress treating public school and private providers alike—offering the same technical assistance and monitoring. OSR established public/private partnerships in which public schools provide resource coordinators for private centers. Shapiro

says, “You set yourself up for failure if you walk in the door with the attitude of ‘I don’t think you can do this job, but my legislation forces me to do business with you.’” OSR has on staff 18 field consultants who visit each Pre-K site in the state three to four times per year. “[W]e don’t even call them ‘surveyor’ or ‘regulators,’” Osborn adds. “We call them ‘consultants.’ Their responsibility is to make that center successful. Their responsibility isn’t to go in and see how many checks they can get against that center.” According to Shapiro,

OSR’s less regulatory, more consultative orientation has defused conflict with for-profit providers. She encourages other states “to understand that services to four-year-olds are the purview of the child care community. And they are going to view you as competition if you don’t work with them, and they will set out to destroy your program, which is what happened here.”

However, working with the proprietary child care community does not mean relaxing standards. In 1998, for the first time since the program’s inception, OSR rescinded the Pre-K funds of grantees who

67 During the 1996-1997 school year, the program provided grants to 825 non-public-school centers and 663 public centers. Fifty-six percent of the enrolled students attended private centers that year.

failed to meet program standards. After being placed on probation and given opportunities to correct persistent problems, 20 sites – all private for-profit centers – had Pre-K sponsorship discontinued.⁶⁸ Rachael Kronchite of the Georgia Child Care Association says that OSR has improved its relationship with for-profit providers without relinquishing its regulatory function:

“They are a regulatory body and they haven’t given up on that role. And we have not expected them to give up on that role. But they certainly have been able to do it in a way that was not so threatening and not so confrontational. They really have been good. They’ve listened to us and then they’ve come back and said what [they think] about this. And we’ve had wonderful dialogue with them.”

Despite OSR’s more business-friendly approach, some for-profit providers continue to express concerns about the program. Some claim that Pre-K funding formulas do not allow for reasonable profits. Funds are distributed directly to individual programs through competitive grants. OSR presently provides each Pre-K site with \$8,000 for classroom start-up. To encourage Pre-K providers to employ qualified early education teachers, funding is based on the qualifications of the lead classroom teacher, which ranges from \$2,124 per child/per year for a public school teacher with a CDA, to \$2,988 per child/per year for a teacher certified in early education at a private site.⁶⁹ A maximum of six percent of the total operating grant may be spent on administration, and a minimum of \$1,200 per class must be spent on classroom equipment, supplies, and materials. Kronchite argues that with the state essentially offering free child care, many for-profit centers—even those that are breaking even or losing money on Pre-K—have little choice but to participate in the program. She says that if for-profit centers don’t apply, “there’s a good chance that they won’t have any four-year-olds, they’ll have empty classrooms.

It is much better to have a break-even classroom than to have an empty classroom that’s costing you money.” Moreover, Kronchite adds, many proprietary centers find that if they do not provide state-run Pre-K, they will lose infants and toddlers because parents will opt to have all of their young children at the same location.

Kathleen Gooding, Assistant Director for Instructional Services, rejects the idea that participating providers cannot turn a profit. “I’m sorry, I’m really sorry,” she says. “If that were true, why do they keep applying?” Wayne Sikes, the owner of Sikes Schools, runs eight child care centers and a total of 19 Pre-K classrooms. Sikes said that he finds OSR’s funding formula generous, and does not believe Pre-K providers who claim they are losing money—unless they only served upper-income families in the past. Sikes recalls 1995-1996, the year that the program expanded beyond low-income children: “We were offered an opportunity to apply. I made a decision based on my customers’ angle... I was apprehensive at first, but when I looked at it, I said, “This is a good deal for me. I get all my money in one lump sum.”

Sikes adds, “It’s a good investment for the state. They don’t have to invest money in bricks and mortar. It’s like they are leasing my centers... It’s a win for the customer, a win for the state, a win for me, and a win for the taxpayer.” According to Sikes, private proprietary providers make significant profits from fees for before-school and after-school care. He charges parents between \$50-\$55 per week. “Once the state comes in,” he said, “it pays at a rate equal to what I was charging and they throw in equipment on top of that. It’s fair.” Sikes plans to add two more centers in the coming year.

Eliminating community coordinating councils

As they streamlined program administration, OSR eliminated the requirement for community coordinating councils, which had been a hallmark of

⁶⁸ To date, no public school or non-profit Pre-K providers have had Pre-K sponsorship discontinued.

⁶⁹ See Appendix B. Reimbursement rates differ slightly for public school and non-school Pre-K sites. Because of differences in salary, benefits, and operating expenses for the core program, OSR reimburses private providers at a slightly higher rate per child. However, local school systems receive additional funds for the training and experience of teachers based on the state teacher salary scale which are not reflected in the published weekly rates.

the DOE-run program. Kathleen Gooding believes that for the most part, the councils served their purposes well in the early years of the program, but later became bogged down in conflict in some communities. According to Gooding, school system representatives tended to complain that child care workers were not qualified to provide educational services. In response, private for-profit providers argued that school systems were removing four-year-old children from their classrooms. Moreover, proprietary providers complained bitterly that school systems, which could provide higher salaries and better benefits, raided teachers from private settings to staff the new Pre-K classrooms. Volmer agrees that collaboration “looked great on paper,” but found the collaborative system to be burdensome and particularly unfair to private providers:

“If I’m a qualified provider, why do I have to go through another level of bureaucracy to get a program approved and then give it all to the state for the state to approve? And here’s the crux of the problem: You had...these collaborative [coordinating councils] that were dominated by public agencies, all these bureaucrats. They were telling private [for-profit] providers, ‘We don’t need you, we don’t want you.’...From just a sense of fairness and equity, no. I didn’t want that. So we said, you should be a member, you needed to be a member of this local collaborative, but you don’t have to send your application through them. And what we were getting was local collaboratives trying, some of them, to become a local governing agency and running all the programs.”

Despite the change in administrative requirements, as of the 1998-1999 school year, local coordinating councils are still functioning in some communities. If requested, OSR consultants maintain involvement with individual councils.

Enhancing teacher qualification requirements and professional development

Research suggests that the most important predictor of high quality early education programs is the training and education of staff members.⁷⁰ Task forces in California and New York have identified the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers as one of the major impediments to implementation of universal preschool.⁷¹ As states seek to develop universal Prekindergarten, education policy makers will face crucial decisions regarding requirements for teacher preparation and credentials. New York’s Pre-K program, for example, which has the highest state teaching credentials in the country, requires all Pre-K teachers in public schools to have certification in early education. Teachers in other non-school agencies or centers have until 2001-2002 to meet the same public school requirements.

Carrying out a key recommendation of the Quality 2000 Initiative, Georgia’s Pre-K guidelines provide for flexibility in the range of degrees or achievement that can satisfy teacher preparation requirements.⁷² For certification, lead teachers must have one of the following credentials: 1) Full Certification in Early Childhood Education; 2) Four-Year College Degree, with a major in education, child development, early education, psychology or social work; 3) Two-Year/Vocational/Montessori Degree, with a focus in child development; or 4) Child Development Associate (CDA) or Child Care Professional (CCP) credential. In addition, while not requiring Pre-K teachers to have full certification in Early Childhood Education, the program’s funding formulas create incentives for all Pre-K grantees to hire well-qualified teachers and for teachers to obtain advance certification.⁷³

70 Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, *Cost, quality and child outcomes in child care centers*. Denver, Co: Department of Economics, University of Colorado at Denver, 1995. Whitebook et al., *Who cares? Child care teachers and the quality of care in America: Final report of the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project, 1989.

71 Superintendent’s Universal Preschool Task Force; *Ready to Learn: Quality Preschools for California in the 21st Century*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education; 1998.

72 Sharon Kagan, & Nancy Cohen; *Not by Chance: Creating an early care and education system for America’s children*. New Haven: Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy, 1997.

73 See Appendix B.

To improve the training and credentials of lead teachers—particularly those in non-public school Pre-K sites—OSR will be instituting new standards in the upcoming years. By the 2001-2002 school year lead teachers in the Pre-K program will be required to have a minimum of an associate degree in early childhood or a two-year vocational-technical diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education. Child Development Associate (CDA) and Child Care Professional (CCP) credentials will no longer be acceptable as minimum lead teacher credentials.

OSR requires all administrators, teachers, and support staff to attend a minimum of ten hours of approved training sessions per year. The program also funds specialized classes for project directors, resource coordinators, and advanced teachers. According to program guidelines, these training sessions seek to maintain high teaching standards, and increase staff members’ knowledge, but by themselves do not prepare personnel to become Pre-K teachers. Providers are responsible for ensuring that all teachers are qualified to provide quality instruction. The guidelines also warn that a failure by directors and staff to participate in mandatory training can jeopardize future funding.

Scaling back support services

When the Prekindergarten initiative served primarily low-risk children, it placed great emphasis on the provision of comprehensive, family-focused social services. As the program moved toward universal coverage, this aspect was criticized as overly intrusive. On the basis of early program evaluations, Volmer

concluded that the social service elements “were positive components.” He also supported the Family Connections Initiative’s efforts to integrate comprehensive services for families. Volmer, however, decided that for budgetary and political reasons—to sustain the program and maintain broad middle-class support—Pre-K would have to scale back some of these services and be presented to the public as first and foremost an academic program. “I remember talking to the governor several times about this,”

Volmer recalled. “I said, ‘We’re not going to win the sale of the program by pushing the at-risk population.’” Therefore, OSR presented Prekindergarten as an educational, not a social service, program that would help all children. Volmer adds:

“As important as social services are, as important as other human services may be, this program (was) in deep trouble.... It needed to be viewed as a strong educational program. I guess I would equate that to the private business world, where you would like to do 100 things well, but focus on what is most profitable for you... I just felt like we couldn’t be

all things to everyone.”

Governor Miller has also spoken about re-orienting Pre-K away from family-focused support services. When Georgia State University released the 1996 evaluation⁷⁴ suggesting that Pre-K students’ academic and social gains were no longer evident at the end of first grade, Miller defended Pre-K by stressing that significant changes had taken place in the interim. “I was unhappy with the Pre-K program in its infancy,” Miller said. “It was too much of a social program, too much of a babysitting program.” He says that “the whole purpose of setting up a separate office [OSR]” was to shift emphasis toward school readiness skills.

“I was unhappy with the Pre-K program in its infancy,” Miller said. “It was too much of a social program, too much of a babysitting program.” He says that “the whole purpose of setting up a separate office [OSR]” was to shift emphasis toward school readiness skills.

74 L. Pilcher & M. Kaufman-McMurrain, *The Longitudinal Study of Georgia’s Prekindergarten Children and Families: 1994-1995*. (Georgia Department of Education) Georgia State University: Atlanta, GA, 1996.

The most significant change involved scaling back the role of Family Service Coordinators. OSR recast the position, creating Resource Coordinators (RC’s). The guidelines now state that Resource Coordinator services for low-income children are voluntary. Pre-K providers who serve more than six low-income students may apply for funds to offer RC services.

The guidelines stress that while “support services are a vital component of the success of the Prekindergarten program,” they are completely voluntary. OSR re-defined the objectives of resource coordination as identifying child health problems; offering parents seminars, volunteer opportunities, and conferences to enhance knowledge of child development; information that will increase knowledge of community resources; Kindergarten Readiness Initiative, providing help in obtaining necessary documentation required for Kindergarten.⁷⁵ The OSR guidelines specifically clarify the change in roles from the extant Family Service Coordinators.

Resource coordinators, the guidelines state, offer a broader focus on health issues, will not conduct any family assessments or counseling, have more clearly defined parent education and volunteer components, and provide more focused transition services to Kindergarten. OSR’s Kathleen Gooding says that in shifting the focus away from mandatory social services for low-income families towards a voluntary “brokerage of services,” the program has become more respectful of individual family needs. “I like our concept of it’s a parent choice sort of thing because I think every parent should be treated with dignity,”

shifting the focus away from mandatory social services for low-income families towards a voluntary “brokerage of services,” the program has become more respectful of individual family needs. “I like our concept of it’s a parent choice sort of thing because I think every parent should be treated with dignity,” Gooding said.

Gooding said. “I think that if a parent asks for assistance or where to go get something it should be given to them, but I don’t think we have a right to say I know what’s best for you because [we] don’t.” Gooding also notes that with program growth, recruiting, training, and paying for professional social workers capable of providing quality counseling would be prohibitive.

OSR has also changed the program’s health requirements. In the initial years of the program (1992-1995), all children received full EPSDT screenings through the Pre-K providers, which are no longer required. OSR amended the guidelines to state that Pre-K providers should work with health departments and health professionals to ensure that the children receive the screenings within 90 days.⁷⁶ Transportation services were also made optional and are now provided for Pre-K children at the discretion of the Pre-K provider. OSR does provide transportation reimbursements for any Category One (low-income) child who is transported to and from the program on a daily basis.

Making tradeoffs between program expansion and comprehensive services

Scaling back Pre-K’s family support component has sparked criticism among some providers and child advocates in the state who believe that the program no longer meets the substantial needs of low-income children and their families.⁷⁷ Before the 1995 expansion to universal services, Barbara Reed, Director of the non-profit North Fulton Child

75 Office of School Readiness, *Georgia Prekindergarten program: 1997-1998 School Year Pre-K Providers’ Operating Guidelines*.

76 Office of School Readiness, *ibid*.

77 See Appendix A. The scaling back of support services is reflected in program expenditures. In the 1994-1995 school year the approximate cost was \$5,018 per child; during the 1997-1998 school year the program spent about \$3,516 per child.

Development Center, told an education reporter, “I would hate to see low- and moderate-income families get left out. I want to make sure there are enough services out there for families who need the service.”⁷⁸ Reed now argues that since the expansion, Georgia Pre-K is no longer as responsive to the needs of low-income families. She points to the discontinuation of extended day and summer services as a real loss for working poor families. Reed also believes that family support services have been “diluted considerably.” “Before there was a real focus on comprehensive services,” she says. “It has lost a lot of the comprehensive focus that could have been retained. Now it’s just a program for four-year-olds.” Despite these concerns, Reed supports Pre-K. “This is not to say the program isn’t good—it is,” she says. “It is an interesting blend of private, non-profit and public services running one program.” While she praises OSR for bringing “a more targeted focus,” she laments what she believes has been lost in the name of pragmatism: “You don’t have the dreamers they had when the program was started [for at-risk children].”

A professor of early education who chose not to be identified, agrees that the move to OSR compromised the provision of comprehensive services and developmentally appropriate practices. “When the program was initially developed,” she says, “it included a family support program....As the family support position was eliminated, [there was a decline] in the quality of services for the individual. They cut out the piece that tied the services of the program to the child and family. It was detrimental.” An education reporter expresses concern that the state now provides funds for middle-class children whose parents would have paid for child care, while not reaching all eligible low-income children. “[I]f you’re going to have the scarce resources in a public program, you ought to spend them on who’s going to benefit the most,” she argues.

Another local administrator familiar with Pre-K administration contends that Miller and OSR have oversold the benefits of the program. He calls Pre-K a “public relations masterpiece” and adds, “[I]t can stand a lot of improvement. I don’t think it is the premium program in the country... The whole story is not numbers served, it is the quality of the services.” The administrator especially faults the program for eliminating the family support services. “As the program expanded to serve every child,” he says, “the icing on the cake started to fall off. Family support was watered down to almost nothing... The health component was watered down as well... In some way it has been watered down over the desire to serve more children.” He believes that Miller could have used the program’s popularity to retain and enhance quality comprehensive services.

Not all advocates believe that Georgia’s Pre-K program has suffered from its narrower focus on educational goals. Elaine Draeger contends that her non-profit Sheltering Arms Pre-K sites remain as committed as ever to providing comprehensive, family-centered services to low-income families. She says that the people who filled family resource coordinator positions during the years when DOE ran Pre-K often had inadequate training and varied greatly in quality. She also says she heard reports from around the state that many families found the coordinators “intrusive into people’s lives.” Draeger therefore supports OSR’s decision to eliminate the family resource coordinator position and to fund only those programs that can provide adequate family support services. Sheltering Arms, she notes, continues to receive support from OSR to provide supportive services to families.

Revising the educational program

OSR also made instructional changes in Pre-K, standardizing and in some cases abbreviating

78 Diane Loupe, “Miller Optimistic About Future of Pre-K program: Low-Income Kids Won’t Be Left Out, Governor Says,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 7/9/95, p. 2.

educational programming. Children now receive 6.5 hours of instructional services five days per week for 36 weeks—the length of a typical academic year. OSR no longer funds sites to provide extended-day or year-round services. Pre-K centers have the option of providing these services at the parent’s expense. OSR recommends, but does not require, that fees for extended day services not exceed \$35-\$70 per week. Some low-income families can receive subsidies for these “wrap-around” services through the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS).

OSR has given Pre-K providers greater flexibility in selecting curriculum models. “As the program grew,” Osborn says, “more options needed to be available and we made them available. And we provide training around those different curricula, but it’s not a cookie cutter.” Six curricular models have now been approved: Bank Street, Creative Curriculum, High Reach, High/Scope, Montessori, and Scholastic Workshop.⁷⁹ OSR also evaluates and approves a variety of locally-developed curricula. Because some state legislators criticized the program for initially contracting with outside experts from High/Scope, OSR has contracted with the Georgia University System to provide most of the staff development.

However, Pre-K providers have not selected all models equally and not all preschool organizations have sought extensive access to Pre-K grants. High/Scope remains the most utilized curriculum across the state. Although the Montessori Curriculum model has been approved since the beginning of Pre-K, few private Montessori sites have chosen to participate in the state program. Most Montessori directors decided that contingencies attached to Pre-K sponsorship and funding—such as open registration requirements—would force adaptations that violate Montessori standards and policies. Lillian Bryan, Director of Training for Montessori of Georgia, says that despite “the very generous funds,” Montessori-run centers have had difficulty maintaining involvement with the Pre-K program. The open registration process, Bryan explains, led to a “problem with our philosophy and methodology.”

Children in Montessori programs “complete a three-year cycle with a gradual building up of skills.” Bryan also believes that Pre-K parents differ from typical Montessori parents: “When it is a free handout, they don’t have the same commitment. We have to promote the highest possible standards. It is likely one has to sacrifice Montessori quality to get the funding.” Because Montessoris are independent, each school determines its own policies. Out of approximately 40 Montessori schools in Metro Atlanta, Bryan estimates that only three or four participate in the program.

Instituting voluntary standards of care

When Governor Miller established the Office of School Readiness, OSR became responsible for monitoring and licensing all participating centers. While the Pre-K program never required NAEYC accreditation, early program guidelines referred specifically to NAEYC standards and principles. After the NAEYC curriculum controversy of 1995, Pre-K administrators dropped all references to NAEYC principles. A Georgia AEYC executive who chose to remain anonymous expressed regret that the organization has no formal role with Georgia Pre-K, but she agreed that from a political perspective, “the people running the program didn’t have a choice.” Although the organization has lobbied to have NAEYC guidelines reinstated, she credits OSR with maintaining a commitment to developmentally appropriate practices.

OSR does not require that child care centers be accredited, but it has instituted a voluntary “Standards of Care” initiative. OSR spells out activities, materials, teaching strategies, and approaches geared to the cognitive, emotional, and physical needs of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers at specific points of development. The Standards of Care initiative offers center directors examples of child care environments that are responsive to a child’s developmental needs, with particular emphasis on early brain development. When OSR consultants determine that a center

⁷⁹ See Appendix C.

meets the voluntary standards of care, OSR awards the center a certificate of accomplishment and recognition.⁸⁰ Although the Georgia AEYC representative does not believe OSR’s Standards of Care are as thorough as NAEYC accreditation standards, she praises OSR for creating “their own internal improvement process [that is similar] to a stepping stone to accreditation.”

Partnering with Head Start

The Office of School Readiness sought to reduce any lingering tension with Georgia’s Head Start administration and providers. Osborn personally

requested that Governor Miller relocate Georgia’s Head Start—State Collaboration Project from DOE to OSR. Robert Lawrence, who runs the collaborative effort now located within OSR, believes that much of the tension that existed early in the Pre-K program’s history has subsided in recent years. He credits OSR with reaching out to him and local Head Start providers. “[Osborn and Shapiro] wanted me to come over here,”

Lawrence stated. “They said, ‘We are committed to a collaborative model. We want both to succeed, not to compete.’ They said, ‘Go do it.’ They have shown enormous support... They put their money where their mouth is. There is a growing sense that we are in this together.”

Through the Head Start/Pre-K Collaboration, six Head Start grantees have received state Pre-K funds. The blended funding allows eligible Pre-K children to benefit from Head Start social service and health components. In addition, Head Start children are able to receive full-day programming and Head Start personnel will soon be able to attend Pre-K training sessions. The collaboration is also establishing joint initiatives to increase the number of credentialed

Pre-K and Head Start teachers. According to Lawrence, OSR’s collaborative programs and funds have “created enormous good will” among Georgia’s Head Start providers.

Together, Head Start and the Georgia Prekindergarten reach approximately 80 percent of eligible four-year-olds in the state. The saturation rate varies from 30-45 percent in a few [typically rural] counties to 90-100 percent in other counties. Steven Golightly, Regional Hub Director for the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the federal officer

overseeing Head Start in Georgia and seven other states in the region. Golightly credits OSR’s collaborative efforts with reducing Head Start’s fear of competition to “a non-issue.” Osborn and Lawrence brief him every six to eight weeks on the collaboration with Pre-K. Osborn spoke of her efforts to build a trustful working relationship with the federally funded program. “We have made a commitment to [Golightly] that we will not try to usurp any of his clients,” she said. “First of

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all,...we cannot afford to absorb the 17,000 Head Start four-year-olds in this state.... The key word here is trust. You’ve got to build that trust relationship.” Golightly, in turn, praises OSR for establishing a collaborative partnership with Head Start:

“They know what collaboration means. Of all the agencies that we deal with in these eight states, they’re one of a handful who actually take a proactive stance in coming in and making sure that we’re briefed actively on their numbers, their initiatives, changes they’re making. They invite us to their meetings; we invite them to our meetings, conferences and so forth. To me it’s quintessential cooperation and partnering between the federal and state level.”

⁸⁰ Funding rates are not enhanced by Standards of Care recognition.

Golightly expresses confidence in the quality of the state-run Pre-K programs. “The standards are high, the quality is high,” he says. “We don’t think it’s as high as Head Start, but that probably is a moot point. We have...our Head Start children in wraparound services that are funded by Pre-K after the Head Start class ends. If we felt they were doing a shoddy job, we wouldn’t condone the collaboration of the

wraparound.” Golightly adds, “We were delighted a couple of years ago to see this new partner come to the table, bringing some resources and saying ‘We can extend your day and expand the number of children that you serve by adding these dollars on.’ And the level of cooperation and communication that we have with that office is superb.”



8. Gauging the Impact of Universal Pre-K

In 1996-1997, OSR in collaboration with the Applied Research Center at Georgia State University, initiated a 12-year longitudinal study of the effectiveness of the Georgia Prekindergarten program.⁸¹ Utilizing a combination of interviews and assessments with teachers, parents, and students, the longitudinal study will provide some of the most comprehensive results to date on the long-term effects of state early education initiatives.

Evaluating Pre-K

In January 1998, the Applied Research Center released a process evaluation on aspects of Pre-K service delivery during the 1996-1997 academic year. The results indicate that most Pre-K teachers are well trained and satisfied with their jobs. Of the sample studied, 83 percent of Pre-K teachers were fully trained in their respective curricula, 85 percent had a four-year degree or better, and 79 percent were certified in early childhood education. Overall, 93 percent of Pre-K teachers said they were working in a supportive environment. Moreover, based on teacher responses to a series of questions examining teaching practices and attitudes, the researchers concluded that most teachers use developmentally appropriate practices in their Pre-K classes.

However, the process evaluation revealed some discrepancies in the training of teachers at public school Pre-K settings and private sites (including both non-profit and for-profit sites). It raised questions about the consistency of program quality across different types of sites. Lead teachers in public schools, in comparison to those at private sites, were significantly more likely to hold state certification in an early childhood field of study (97 percent to

65 percent). Pre-K teachers in non-profit and for-profit private settings were also more likely than those in public schools to have concerns about the fairness of salaries and to report a less favorable work environment.⁸²

Parent interviews demonstrated high levels (90 percent) of satisfaction with the program. More than two-thirds (68 percent) of parents reported that Pre-K staff members shared education strategies with them and 84 percent used the strategies with their children. More than half the parents (56 percent) had weekly unscheduled discussions with teachers, and 59 percent attended monthly conferences. Parent satisfaction and experience with staff varied by organization type. Parents of children enrolled in public schools reported higher levels of satisfaction with the program. Parents involved with public sites were also significantly more likely to attend special programming, to say that they learned from Pre-K staff, or to believe that their interactions with their child changed as a result of the program.

In spring 1999, Georgia State University released the findings from the second year of the longitudinal study of the Pre-K program.⁸³ For the evaluation, 3,201 randomly selected Pre-K children from 1,672 classrooms were followed through their kindergarten year. Results indicated that a majority of kindergarten teachers believed that students who attended Pre-K were better prepared for kindergarten in specific skill areas, such as pre-reading, pre-math, motor skills development, and interactions with adults and children. Furthermore, kindergarten teachers rated approximately two-thirds (64%) of the former Pre-K students as well prepared (i.e., ready for schooling) at the start of kindergarten. Interviews with parents

81 Basile, K., Henderson, L. & Henry, G., *Prekindergarten Longitudinal Study 1996-1997 School Year Report 1: Program Implementation Characteristics*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University Applied Research Center, 1998.

82 To address discrepancies in salaries, in the 2000-2001 school year OSR will require all Pre-K providers to pay each lead teacher, teacher assistant, and full-time resource coordinator minimum salaries.

of Pre-K students also demonstrated satisfaction with the program; ⁸³ percent of parents believed that their child progressed in kindergarten faster as a result of being enrolled in Pre-K the previous year. These findings are promising, and suggest that Georgia’s Pre-K program may be accomplishing its school readiness goals. However, because the evaluation design does not include a comparable comparison group of children who did not attend the Pre-K program, researchers are unable to make reliable causal interpretations of the data.⁸⁴

The evaluation also assessed the impact of differences in Pre-K programs on student outcomes in kindergarten. Based on classroom observations and teacher interviews, findings indicate that Pre-K teachers report more “child-centered”⁸⁵ beliefs and practices than kindergarten teachers. Moreover, kindergarten teachers rated students who attended Pre-K classes with lead teachers who utilized a “child-centered” teaching approach to be more ready for kindergarten academically and socially than children exposed to an “academically-directed” Pre-K teacher. Similarly, children from child-centered classes were also rated by teachers as progressing more academically during the kindergarten year, especially when the kindergarten teacher also used a consistent child-centered teaching style. These data are important in focusing attention to within-classroom dynamics, reminding educators and policy makers that children’s academic and social

gains from a preschool experience will be determined, to a large extent, by the training and teaching approach of individual teachers.⁸⁶

Winning popularity and acclaim

Georgia’s Prekindergarten program has garnered enormous popularity and acclaim, with many early childhood experts around the country looking to the program as a leading model for state-run universal early education. Celeste Osborn, who became the Director of the Office of School Readiness when Mike Volmer resigned in 1997, speculates that Georgia’s Prekindergarten program will replace the Perry Pre-School Project as the most influential program in the country.

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution referred to Georgia’s investment in early education as

a “source of deserved pride for the state.” Columnist Jeff Dickerson wrote, “For generations, the South has followed the lead of Massachusetts and other states in innovative, forward-looking programs. With Pre-K, we’re on top.”⁸⁷ In 1997, Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, with support from the Ford Foundation, awarded Georgia’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. The award proclaimed:

“By some estimates, every dollar invested in early childhood education saves \$7 in later costs to society.

Together, Head Start and the Georgia Prekindergarten reach approximately 80 percent of eligible four-year-olds in the state. The saturation rate varies from 30-45 percent in a few [typically rural] counties to 90-100 percent in other counties.

83 Henderson, L., Basile, K. & Henry, G. *Prekindergarten Longitudinal Study: 1997-1998 School Year Annual Report*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University Applied Research Center, 1999.

84 Incorporating random assignment to treatment and control group, the most rigorous evaluation design, is virtually impossible when evaluating a universal program, thus limiting the interpretation of the results.

85 Teacher’s beliefs and practices were rendered from an adapted version of the Pre-K Survey of Beliefs and Practices, a survey that assesses beliefs on a continuum of ideas ranging from academically-directed to child-centered.

86 For similar findings, see Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team. *Cost, quality and child outcomes in child care centers*. Denver, CO: Department of Economics, University of Colorado at Denver, 1995.

87 Jeff Dickerson, “Georgia’s First: State Pre-K program an Investment in the Future,” *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, 3/13/96, p. 18.

It is often difficult, however, to find the resources to make that investment, which is why Georgia’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program is so remarkable. The state is spending more than \$200 million a year on a program to make Prekindergarten available to every four-year-old in the state, regardless of family income.”

Georgia’s Prekindergarten program also represents a rare example of a state-run initiative that has achieved overwhelming popular support. A survey conducted in winter 1997, by Georgia State University’s Council for School Performance indicated that 85 percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “I support the use of lottery funds for Pre-K.”⁸⁸ Governor Miller’s assurance that lottery revenues would not diminish education spending has enhanced the popularity of Pre-K. Georgia State University’s Applied Research Center issued a report in 1997 indicating that, as Miller promised to the voters, lottery revenues in Georgia have not supplanted educational spending. From fiscal years 1990 to 1998, the percentage of the state’s budget for education (excluding lottery revenues) increased in real dollars in the years after the lottery was established. The researchers conclude:

“While evidence from other states shows that lottery dollars have replaced previously allocated funding for education, Georgia’s lottery remains dedicated to funding supplemental educational programs. Evidence suggests that Georgia Lottery for Education funds have supplemented rather than supplanted money for education.”⁸⁹

Governor Miller’s personal approval ratings rose in conjunction with support for his education policies. With popular support surpassing 80 percent as he

prepared to leave office in January 1999, Miller has been firmly established as one of the most popular politicians in Georgia history; *The New York Times* reported that no governor in the country enjoys comparable popularity. In November 1998, *Governing* magazine named Miller “Public Official of the Year.”⁹⁰ Citing his innovative education programs as well as fiscally responsible budgetary policies, the magazine praised Miller—“Man with a Million Ideas”—for his persistence, creativity, and imaginative approach to governing.

Many educators and child advocates in Georgia also praise Miller’s vision in focusing lottery revenues on Pre-K. Maryanne Pace-Nichols, a professor of child development and President of Georgia AEYC, has served on several committees dealing with Pre-K issues. She says of the program, “Pre-K has made a positive change in Georgia. It has sparked an interest in education in Georgia that would not have been there if we did not have someone in a powerful position that made the decisions that Zell Miller has made.” Susan Maxwell, President of the Georgia Child Care Council, also lauds the program. “It’s great,” she says. “I feel blessed to be in a state that has Pre-K at this level.” She credits the “forward-thinkingness of our governor and his desire to make sure that lottery money is spent in a positive way.” Maxwell adds, “The Governor’s focus on Pre-K brings people’s attention to kids, the importance of working with kids early... It is a wonderful use of lottery money.”

Addressing criticism

While Pre-K has won wide support across the state, some Georgians remain critical of OSR and the program. Most critics chose to speak anonymously—

88 Council for School Performance, *Report on the expenditure of lottery funds fiscal year 1997*. Georgia State University Council for School Performance. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, 1997. A similar survey conducted a year earlier found 93 percent support for the use of lottery funds for the HOPE Scholarship Program.

89 Council for School Performance, *ibid.*

90 C. Swope, “Man with a Million Ideas.” *Governing*, November, 1998.

a reflection of the popularity of the program and the Governor who promoted it. Critics tend to fall into two groups: child advocates working in the field of early care and education and religious conservatives.

Criticism by child advocates cluster around two key concerns:

First, they express deep frustration over what they perceive to be OSR’s reluctance to collaborate on Pre-K issues. One education professor spoke candidly of her and her colleagues’ resentment of OSR:

“Most of the work is done outside of anyone with Pre-K program experience... Our wish is that it would be more collaborative, less exclusive... They speak flexibly but they demonstrate one line. It has been confusing for people around the state... With all the people who have been working in this field for years and years, they are not taking advantage of resources that would save time and energy.”

The professor points to training and curriculum as areas where outside perspectives could have helped OSR avoid pitfalls. Another child care advocate complains, “[The staff at OSR] are terrible at collaboration. They march ahead without asking how it will affect anything outside their system.” She adds, “They are kind of elitist... [They] make everyone understand they do education, not child care... One day a [child care] center is doing day care, the next day it is approved for Pre-K, and all of a sudden it is education. It’s kind of wacky.”

It appears, however, that most of Georgia’s child advocates and educators do not share such criticism. For example, Elaine Draeger says that OSR “has not made any major steps without the input of people doing this a long time.” She has found that OSR values the advice of the advisory committee, which includes school superintendents and representatives from Head Start, non-profit agencies, and the private child care industry. Draeger has no problems with the Pre-K administration having little experience in education. “Where they have needed additional expertise,” she says, “they have not hesitated to go

out to get it.” Draeger is especially impressed with OSR’s efforts to improve quality systemically through the voluntary Standards of Care Initiative.

Second, some child care advocates criticize Miller’s decision to grant OSR authority over child care licensing at Pre-K sites. Presently, OSR, the Department of Human Resources, and Head Start each monitor sites.⁹¹ Some advocates would also like to see OSR urge Pre-K sites to become NAEYC-accredited. One program administrator said, “A smart governor would have said, ‘Why not have a single set of standards? ... Behind the scenes, there are a lot of details that won’t be worked out until Miller leaves.’” Another advocate says, “I’ll never understand why they felt they needed their own monitoring system when they had one in place... Instead of adopting what we had done, they set up their own practices. It may have worked better for them, but from the outside it creates an image of ‘I don’t want to play with you.’ That’s political.” A third child care advocate also questions OSR’s role in licensing programs that they fund and support.

Conservative organizations tend to frame their objections to Pre-K in terms of their opposition to government involvement in early childhood education. Sadie Fields, Chairman of the Christian Coalition of Georgia, praises Osborn for listening to the concerns of her organization, but cites two ongoing concerns about Pre-K.

First, some members of the Christian Coalition object to the program’s curriculum. Fields acknowledges that she cannot point to specific aspects of the curriculum that support her organization’s objections, but says that in general the curriculum promotes self-esteem at the expense of academics, and teaches moral-relativism – that “all life styles are equal.” And second, the Christian Coalition is concerned that “government-sponsored schools are getting children” and separating them from their parents at an even earlier age. She favors giving working mothers tax breaks so they can stay home with their children. “Money is going to go somewhere,”

91 According to representatives from OSR and the Department of Human Resources, the two departments’ licensing standards are virtually identical.

she says. “Why not give it back to families instead of giving it to extended day care?”

Nancy Schaefer, Executive Director of Family Concerns, also opposes Pre-K as an intrusion into family life. “I was not real thrilled to see the state get into the babysitting business,” she says. Schaefer adds:

“(W)e have many people around the state who have wonderful day care centers for four-year-olds or

preschool programs or church programs. And every four-year-old was pulled from those private day care centers or preschool centers and were all put into state free four-year-old programs. So I felt that the state was competing with free enterprise... I don’t see that the state has to become the nanny; I just oppose that concept—the state becoming so involved in the family. To me that is not what the state is called on to do.”



9. Looking Ahead

Prevented by Georgia’s Constitution from seeking a third term for governor, Zell Miller retired in January 1999, as one of the most popular public officials in Georgia’s history. Because OSR’s top administrators are appointed by the Governor, the leadership of the Pre-K program may change. The question remains: Will the Pre-K program—a policy powerfully identified with Governor Miller—endure beyond his tenure?

The program’s future depends on the ability of the lottery to raise substantial revenues

In part, the program’s future hinges on the lottery’s ability to continue to raise revenues that can be earmarked for educational programs. To date, the evidence is convincing that Georgia’s Lottery Commission has raised sufficient revenues, spent the funds as promised on specified programs, and maintained a program untarnished by scandal. As a testament to the financial, political, and popular success of Georgia’s Lottery for Education, other states have explored lotteries as mechanisms for financing education initiatives. In 1998, gubernatorial races in South Carolina and Alabama, Democratic candidates defeated Republican incumbents largely on the popularity of pledges to establish Georgia-style lotteries. Several other states, particularly in the South, are considering similar plans.⁹²

Revenues exceed expectations

From a financial perspective, Georgia’s Lottery has exceeded all expectations and projections. Independent reports released by the Georgia State

Auditor and Georgia State University’s Council for School Performance confirm that lottery proceeds have supplemented traditional educational expenditures, resulting in substantial increases in appropriations for education.⁹³ Despite predictions that lottery revenues would taper off after a few years, ticket sales have increased each year the lottery has been in operation.⁹⁴ At the end of fiscal year 1997, Georgia’s Shortfall Reserve Account and Scholarship Reserve Account totaled \$132 million. By 1998, the lottery had generated over \$2.7 billion in lottery revenues, with over \$713 million appropriated for Georgia’s Prekindergarten program. Lottery funds cover virtually the entire \$212 million operating budget for Pre-K in 1998, including all grants to providers and administrative costs.⁹⁵

Continued success depends on continued popular support

A consensus seems to have formed among most policy makers, child advocates, and program administrators that OSR and Zell Miller were so skillful in building political support that leaders from both parties will remain committed to Pre-K in the foreseeable future. Zell Miller’s successor, Governor Roy Barnes, has pledged full support for Pre-K.

Mike Volmer, who now serves as Vice President for Fiscal Affairs at Clayton State College, believes that expanding Pre-K to include middle-class parents ensured the program’s sustainability. “Legislators were shooting holes in this program [in 1996],” Volmer recalls. “Now if you talk to them, I don’t

92 Kevin Sack, “Dixie Sees a Jackpot in the Lottery: More Southern States, Among Last Holdouts, Are Set to Join In.” *New York Times*, 1/14/99, A9.

93 Council for School Performance, *Report on the expenditure of lottery funds fiscal year 1997*. Georgia State University Council for School Performance. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, 1997.

94 Council for School Performance, *ibid.*

95 There are two exceptions to lottery-funded Pre-K expenditures: Many Category One (low-income) children in Pre-K receive Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) funds for the provision of extended day services and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funds for free and reduced meals.

think they’d say anything negative—in a public manner anyway. Because they’ve got too many [middle-class] families...that are utilizing the program. And that’s what we were aiming to do—make sure this was perceived as a middle-class program. It just so happened [to be] helping 30,000 at-risk children.” Volmer also believes that emphasizing educational benefits to middle-class parents was critical in building political support. He says:

“The other thing, too, is that to me it’s remarkable the level of support we did get from the middle-class folks. And their level of support really came from—not that it was a baby-sitting program, but their children were actually learning something. And so, I think in the end, it will show that the program benefited children from all economic [groups].”

Celeste Osborn, the present Director of OSR, also contends that the Pre-K program’s future is ensured by the program’s broad base of support. “I think there is such academic support. There is support from the business community, from the parent community. It would be very difficult to come in and significantly change the program,” Osborn says. “The private child care community is very vocal, as is the public school community. And there is no reason to change it. It’s working quite well.”

Kathleen Gooding believes that Miller’s political calculations have proven accurate. She credits him with the foresight to understand that programs that exclude middle-class populations are vulnerable to shifting political forces. “Whenever there is a change in government, there is a chance that programs that work with at-risk populations will be cut,” Gooding says. “They’re the easiest to cut. The population base that it comes from, they do not fight. They

don’t know how to fight the system. They’re pretty much a silent majority.” Because of program expansion, she hears from “very verbal, very educated” middle-class parents who are committed to universal Pre-K and understand the kinds of strategies (such as calls and letters to representatives or organized rallies) that will help to ensure the program’s success. Robert Lawrence agrees. He says that other states should take note: even though research demonstrates that low-income children are the primary beneficiaries of early education programs, “you can’t mount a sustainable program without support from the middle-class that votes.”

In fact, each gubernatorial candidate in the 1998 election enthusiastically endorsed the Pre-K program and the other elements of Zell Miller’s education policies. Henry argues that states must ultimately determine mechanisms to assure that middle-class families, who may be more skilled at obtaining services, do not benefit at the expense of lower-income families.

Advocates and educators also stress the importance of Pre-K’s broad constituency. Susan Maxwell argues that expansion to universal services will protect Pre-K. “If it stayed at-risk, with that funding level, it could be the first to go in a heart-beat,” she says. Gary Henry speculates that few politicians would ever risk significantly eroding services, such as scaling back the program’s hours to a half-day or diluting the developmentally appropriate orientation. In fact, each gubernatorial candidate in the 1998 election enthusiastically endorsed the Pre-K program and

the other elements of Zell Miller’s education policies. Henry argues that states must ultimately determine mechanisms to assure that middle-class families, who may be more skilled at obtaining services, do not benefit at the expense of lower-income families. Nonetheless, Henry concludes, “I think the big lesson is that making services available to a broad array of children, and not just economically disadvantaged children, probably will increase geometrically the support for the program over time.”

10. Lessons for Other States

1. Offering Pre-K services to all families may be a key to winning ongoing political support and ensuring program survival. But are there tradeoffs?

- **Universal programs may be more likely to generate and sustain broad political support than programs targeted towards disadvantaged groups.** Georgia opted to shift the goals of its Pre-K program away from targeting services to the state’s neediest children to the provision of universal services for all children. While establishing equal access to state services, an important rationale for the expansion was the calculation that incorporating the middle-class into the program would build a powerful base of support that would secure the program’s future. Georgia’s state-run Pre-K, now the most far-reaching in the nation, has developed overwhelming popular approval (over 85 percent) and survived political opposition that might have terminated a weaker program. Most informed observers believe that the decision to move toward universal provision assured the future of Pre-K in Georgia. Although some educators and advocates oppose a policy of a state providing resources to families capable of paying for their own child care or preschool, the irrefutable fact remains: programs geared towards economically disadvantaged, politically weak populations tend to remain inherently vulnerable and limited.⁹⁶
- **Instituting a large-scale Prekindergarten program involves immense public relations challenges.** Public perception and support—not

positive program evaluations—ultimately determine whether state-funded education initiatives will live or die. By universalizing access to Prekindergarten, policy makers sought to change public expectations about when children should enter formal schooling. Pre-K supporters also calculated that a broad spectrum of the population would be more likely to embrace a program perceived to be academically-focused and beneficial for a large number of children.

- **Universal initiatives may erase the stigma attached to programs for low-income children.** The nation’s largest early care and education program, Head Start, has never shaken the stigma of being a program for children in poverty. Some advocates in Georgia suggest that one of the lasting contributions of Georgia’s Pre-K may be in launching an early education program in which children, and the program itself, are not stigmatized by class.⁹⁷
- **States must determine if the goals of expansion and broad public acceptance require tradeoffs that compromise the scope of program services.** From the start, policy makers need to address the issue of support services. How will Pre-K fit into the spectrum of existing services available for children and families? Should voluntary services be of sufficient intensity to accomplish the comprehensive, two-generational goals of traditional early intervention programs targeted to low-income families?⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Around the country, there are numerous examples of popular initiatives for low-income children championed by leaders who successfully communicated the need and/or strong research base for the program (e.g., state Head Start investments). However, many policy analysts contend that in a conservative region such as the South, significantly increasing the number of families and communities reached by an initiative is a key to institutionalizing a program. Governor Miller used a similar approach to garner support for his popular HOPE Scholarship Program.

⁹⁷ Although the program may be integrated by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic background, OSR has not released statistics indicating that children are attending integrated classrooms.

⁹⁸ H. Yoshikawa, “Prevention as cumulative protection: Effects of early family support and education on chronic delinquency and its risks.” *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 1994, pp. 28-54. E. Zigler, & S. Styfco. “Using research and theory to justify and inform Head Start expansion.” *Society for Research in Child Development Social Policy Report*, 7, 2, 1993.

- **Program elements designed for low-income populations may be unacceptable to middle- and upper-class families.** The Georgia Pre-K experience suggests that middle-class families may seek benefits developed for disadvantaged populations. However, these families—and early education administrators—may consider program elements routinely provided to lower-income families, such as counseling and child assessments, to be unnecessary or unacceptable. Georgia’s solution was to scale back compulsory support services as it expanded the program. However, some observers believe that universal Pre-K, stripped of these services, fails to meet the significant, multidimensional needs of many low-income families. OSR administrators contend that support services for low-income children have been more efficiently targeted, not weakened.
- **“Choice” is a strong selling point of universal Pre-K.** Pre-K proponents argue that low-income families deserve the respect of choosing the services they need. They point to “choice” as a strength of the present program, as parents have the freedom to choose the type of center, location, and intensity of services they deem appropriate.⁹⁹
- **But real choice requires sustained attention to equity.** Equal access to high-quality programs is a difficult challenge. When Georgia Pre-K expanded, some child advocates worried that middle- and upper-class parents, who are more savvy at gaining access to the highest quality Pre-K sites, may reap benefits at the expense of lower-income families. Some analyses suggest that when education services

are offered on a universal basis, families benefit from the increased options only when they have access to good information about program elements and alternatives.¹⁰⁰

2. A state lottery is a viable mechanism for financing universal Pre-K.

- **Georgia’s Pre-K initiative would probably not exist without the lottery.** It is highly unlikely that a state as conservative as Georgia would have appropriated large sums of tax revenues to fund a comprehensive early education program. Increasingly embraced by political consultants, lotteries allow politicians to provide constituents with the gambling games they seek while generating seemingly tax-neutral revenue sources to shape popular policies.¹⁰¹ But despite the popularity and appeal of lotteries, in some states lotteries are politically unfeasible and important questions remain about their capacity to generate sufficient revenues to sustain educational policies.
- **Most states rely on an inconsistent and complex blending of federal, state, and local funding sources to fund early care and education programs.**¹⁰² With its substantial and consistent lottery-generated revenue base, Georgia’s Prekindergarten program has avoided the gaps in funding and blending of funding streams that routinely plague early education initiatives. Across the nation, as states seek solutions to inequities in school funding¹⁰³ and revenue sources to establish comprehensive early education programs,¹⁰⁴ lotteries will remain attractive funding options.

99 However, as Magenheim (1999) notes, discussions of quality and parental choice are complicated by evidence indicating that parents do not always share early childhood experts’ definition of quality or prioritize the same program elements.

100 See E. Magenheim, “Information, prices, and competition in the child care market: What role should government play?” In Pogodzinski, M., *Readings in Public Policy*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995. E. Magenheim, E. *Preschools and Privatization*. Paper presented at Teachers College, Columbia University, April 9 – 10.

101 See Peter Beinart, “The Carville Trick: The Clinton consultant found a way to win the South for the Democrats—the lottery. But is it fair?” *Time*, 11/16/98, p. 58.

102 Sharon Kagan, & Nancy Cohen; *Not by Chance: Creating an early care and education system for America’s children*. New Haven: Bush Center for Child Development and Social Policy, 1997.

103 F. Crampton, & T. Whitney, *The search for equity in school funding*. Education Partners Working Papers. Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures. ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED412601, 1996. T. Jones, *America’s gamble: Lotteries and the finance of education*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Studies Association (Chapel Hill, NC, November 10-13, 1994). ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED380903, 1994.

104 A. Mitchell, L. Stoney, & H. Dichter, *Financing child care in the United States: An illustrative catalog of current strategies*. Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Kansas City, MO: Pew Charitable Trusts, Philadelphia, PA. ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED413988, 1997.

However, in most other states—which have significantly higher cost-per-pupil funding rates for early care and education¹⁰⁵—even Georgia’s substantial lottery resources (approximately \$212 million for Pre-K in 1998) would not cover the entire costs of a universal preschool program.

- **State lotteries cannot strengthen education if they simply supplant existing funding sources.**

Georgia set an important precedent by stipulating, in an amendment to the state constitution, that lottery funds be spent on specific and distinct educational programs—college scholarships for qualified high school students, technology in public schools, and Pre-K. However, although most other states market their lotteries to voters as educational enhancements, the generated revenues simply supplant previous funding sources, resulting in no net increase in actual education spending.¹⁰⁶ For example, a recent budgetary analysis by the State Comptroller of New York indicated that lottery revenues do not increase the total aid received by New York schools.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, a study by Georgia State University has demonstrated that Georgia’s lottery has supplemented state spending on education.¹⁰⁸

- **Despite the benefits to education, the social consequences of state-sponsored gambling are still not well understood.** Recent research suggests that lotteries may increase levels of

pathological gambling, particularly among low-income residents,¹⁰⁹ and place some adolescents at greater risk of developing addictive gambling problems.¹¹⁰ In 1994, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* conducted a study showing that Georgians living in lower-income areas spend more than twice as much on lottery tickets than residents in higher-income areas. This raises a question posed by lottery opponents: Are lotteries a form of regressive, albeit voluntary, taxation geared towards the poor? Educators and policy makers must determine whether the benefits outweigh the possible negative consequences of state lotteries.

3. Creating and growing a large-scale Pre-K program requires powerful, consistent leadership.

- **Georgia’s Prekindergarten program would not have taken root or survived without a skilled and powerful Governor willing to risk political capital on the program.** Unfortunately, few states have governors with Zell Miller’s strong interest in education and formidable political skills necessary to implement meaningful educational change. Moreover, as a “strong governor state” with concentrated gubernatorial power, Georgia provides its chief executive with more resources, authority, and opportunities to exert leadership and implement policy than do many other states where gubernatorial power tends to be diluted.¹¹¹

105 Early childhood experts suggest that Georgia Pre-K’s relatively low cost-per-pupil funding rates may result from several interacting factors, including the state’s extensive access to facilities, low cost-of-living, and generally less-rigorous child care regulations. Moreover, OSR’s administrative efficiency may also decrease expenditures. In addition, teacher salaries in Georgia tend to be lower than in many other regions, which also contributes to the program’s funding rates. (For example, during the 1994-1995 school year, Georgia ranked 28th in the nation in average teacher salaries. See U.S. Department of Education. *Digest of Education Statistics: 1996*. Table 78 – Minimum and average teacher salaries, by state: 1990-1991, 1993-1994, and 1994-1995. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1996.

106 Jones, T. (1994). *America’s gamble: Lotteries and the finance of education*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Studies Association (Chapel Hill, NC, November 10-13, 1994). ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED380903. Perlman, E. (1998). The game of mystery bucks. *Governing*, January, 28-29.

107 McCall, H. C. (1998). *The New York Lottery: Role in financing education*. Albany, NY: Office of the State Comptroller.

108 Council for School Performance, *Report on the expenditure of lottery funds fiscal year 1997*. Georgia State University Council for School Performance. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, 1997.

109 Shepherd, R., Ghodse, H., & London, M. (1998). A pilot study examining gambling behavior before and after the launch of the national lottery and scratchcard in the UK. *Addiction Research*, 6(1), 5-12.

110 Stinchfield, R., & Winters, K. (1998). Gambling and problem gambling among youths. *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science*, 556, 172-185. Wood, R., & Griffith, M. (1998). The acquisition, development and maintenance of lottery and scratchcard gambling in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 21(3), 265-273.

111 See Alan Rosenthal, *Governors and Legislators: Contending Powers*, Congressional Quarterly Inc.: Washington, DC and Thad Beyle, *Governors in Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*. In Virginia Gray, Herbert Jacobs, and Kenneth Vines, *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, Inc. 1983.

- **Georgia’s establishment of Pre-K provides a potent example of making education policy a priority at the highest levels of state government.** More often, education reform is a “bottom-up” process of policy formation, with advocates, educators, and sympathetic legislators crafting proposals, and seeking support from leaders. Georgia’s innovations in early education resulted, in part, from: 1) State leaders’ authoritative policy decisions, and 2) Pre-K administrators’ flexibility and capacity to adapt implementation to the program’s changing needs.¹¹²
- **Successful program development requires input from policy makers and administrators with a range of backgrounds and skills.** While most state-run Prekindergarten programs across the nation are administered within state Departments of Education,¹¹³ it may not be reasonable to expect education policy analysts to possess the expertise and experience needed to administer and grow a complex initiative. Initially administered within the State Department of Education, Georgia’s Prekindergarten program benefited from the early contributions of informed education experts familiar with essential components and principles of quality early education. But these experts were not always well equipped to address the political and administrative problems that threatened to destroy the program. Thus, the success of Georgia’s Pre-K has been due, in no small part, to the contributions of individuals with knowledge of legislative dynamics, budgetary policy, technology, public relations, and political strategy.
- **Where to locate Pre-K within state government is a crucial decision.** To protect Pre-K from intense political opposition, Governor Miller removed the program from the auspices of DOE. He established a separate Office of School Readiness staffed with administrators who reported directly

to him. Intentionally seeking politically-savvy appointees skilled at building a broad base of support, Miller grasped a reality that leaders in other states must also confront: early education policy can not be created in a political vacuum. Ultimately, states must analyze carefully under what auspices programs will be placed, and what skills key personnel will bring to initiatives.

4. Success hinges on understanding and protecting the fragile ecology of early childhood programs.

- **States must consider carefully how Universal Pre-K initiatives affect the fragmented, often fragile systems of care that already exist for young children.** An infusion of resources—including money and technical support—can improve the overall quality of the state’s programs for preschoolers. But implementing a state-wide early education program affects existing programs in predictable and unpredictable ways. States, therefore, must monitor whether Universal Pre-K positively and/or negatively affects the quality and availability of early care and education services.
- **The impact of Universal Pre-K on the quality of care available for infants and toddlers is especially important.** Some child care analysts fear that as Pre-K classes become increasingly profitable to operate, many proprietary centers may eliminate the more costly child care slots and resources for younger children. While there has been no systematic data collection addressing the systemic ramifications of Georgia’s Universal Pre-K, a pressing concern is that infants and toddlers—especially those from low-income families—may end up concentrated in unmonitored settings or low-quality centers that are unable to qualify for state Pre-K funds.

¹¹² For an analysis of contrasting theories of policy innovation, see Olivia Golden, “Innovation in Public Sector Human Services Programs: The Implications of Innovation by ‘Groping Along.’” In A. Altshuler & R. Behn eds., *Innovation in American Government*, Brookings: Washington, DC, 1997.

¹¹³ Anne Mitchell, *Prekindergarten Programs Funded by the States: Essential Elements for Policy Makers*. Report published on the Families and Work Institute Web Site; 1998.

5. Integrating private providers into a public program is one of the toughest challenges of Universal Pre-K.

- **Policy makers and administrators must understand how to work with organizations and institutions with diverse cultures, priorities, and goals.** Program planners and administrators faced the dual reality that: 1) Including both non-profit and for-profit child care providers into a state-based program significantly enhances program capacity and support; and 2) An increasingly powerful and competitive proprietary child care industry is prepared to fight to protect its customer base.¹¹⁴ They also had to come to respond to the distinct needs of for-profit child care providers and recognize the expertise that private providers brought to the enterprise. Georgia’s efforts to create a public-private education partnership suggest the states must understand the legitimate business concerns of proprietary industry.
- **Participation by private sector child care providers depends in large measure on funding rates and projected revenues.** Although the for-profit child care industry demonstrated minimal interest in participating in the program while it served only low-income children, many private providers feared that the expansion to universal coverage would jeopardize their business interests. The proprietary child care industry sought extensive involvement with Pre-K after calculating that state reimbursement rates would provide acceptable profits. Relatively generous funding resulted in high participation by private providers.¹¹⁵ In addition to enrollment-based reimbursements, each new Pre-K grantee receives an \$8,000 per-class start-up payment to provide equipment, materials, and supplies.
- **Program goals, and the role of diverse providers, must be clearly understood and explained to the public.** With finite resources and limited facilities, leaders in Georgia determined that large-scale, state-based early education would be too costly without incorporating for-profit providers into a broad partnership. By including the proprietary child care industry in its state-run education initiative, Georgia Pre-K challenged many basic tenets about what constitutes—and who is qualified to provide—early education.
- **As program implementation proceeds, many issues need to be negotiated.** In Georgia, Pre-K program administrators have clashed with representatives of the proprietary child care industry over such issues as reimbursement rates, curriculum, enrollment requirements, and community collaboration.
- **The number of well-run for-profit Pre-K centers demonstrates that a profit motive and a commitment to developmentally appropriate education are not mutually exclusive.** Case in point: Bright Horizons, one of the nation’s largest for-profit child care companies, has stated its commitment to 100 percent NAEYC accreditation and has been lauded by child advocates for providing consistently high quality care. Informed education observers in Georgia stress that some private proprietary centers are among the highest quality and most popular Pre-K sites in the state.
- **However, states should not assume that providing materials, curriculum training, and technical support necessarily results in quality programs that meet high standards.** To date, only for-profit programs have had Pre-K sponsorship revoked based on failure to meet standards. Moreover, program evaluations point to significant

114 Because many of the large corporate child care chains had their early growth in the South, proportionately more children attend proprietary child care centers in southern states than in other regions. Consequently, the for-profit child care industry tends to exert more political influence in the South. For an analysis of the competing interests of for-profit, non-profit, and public providers of early care and education, see Magenheim (1999).

115 See Appendix B.

discrepancies between public and private sites in terms of staff credentials and possibly the quality of instruction.¹¹⁶ More information is needed about variations in services among the wide variety of non-public-school Pre-K sites, including large corporate child care chains, small “mom and pop” businesses, religious institutions, and non-profit community-based organizations. If Georgia’s longitudinal evaluation critically examines differences in services and outcomes associated with different provider types, it will provide constructive information to other states planning Pre-K initiatives.

6. Georgia Pre-K illustrates the complex dynamics that may ensue among federal, state, and local levels of government in the provision of early education services.

- **As states move toward universal Pre-K, they must make a concerted effort to build a partnership with Head Start.** An enhanced state role in providing early education has considerable implications for the future of Head Start. From the outset, Georgia Pre-K caused strain between state education authorities and Georgia’s Head Start programs over control of resources and competition for participants. Because Head Start tends to be viewed in Southern states as an outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement and largely a program for African-American children, the conflict had implicit racial overtones.¹¹⁷ Pre-K administrators have deliberately worked to establish a collaborative partnership with Head Start.
- **Georgia’s experience may help to inform debate on the future of Head Start.** Some policy analysts assert that the role of the federal government in the provision of early education ought to be reduced and fundamentally re-constituted.¹¹⁸ Instead of Head Start being funded and administered from Washington, some critics contend that federal early education funds should be devolved to the states in block grants.¹¹⁹ Advocates of devolution suggest that states can more efficiently meet the unique needs of their residents. In contrast, Head Start supporters may fear that the elimination of a federal early education program will result in state programs of inferior quality, possibly less equipped to meet the needs of low-income children and their families.¹²⁰ Georgia’s model of state and federal partnership suggests that complementary state and federal initiatives can co-exist to create a more coherent and responsive early care and education system.
- **Local Coordinating Councils may become repositories of conflict among different providers of early care and education.** As states increasingly recognize the importance of ensuring that diverse community interests are represented within large-scale policy initiatives, many states (such as New York, Connecticut, Ohio, and Massachusetts) are incorporating local input through varying models of decentralized decision making. According to most informed observers, the effectiveness of local coordinating councils in Georgia varied greatly; in numerous communities across the state, the councils became bogged down as the competing priorities and interests of

116 These results are consistent with other analyses indicating that on average for-profits offer lower quality services than do private non-profit and public providers. See Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team (1995) and Phillips et al., (1992). To address this problem, OSR will be establishing new standards in 2000-2001 to increase Pre-K teacher salaries and credentials at all Pre-K sites.

117 Some early education analysts have questioned whether the popularity of Universal Pre-K may be bolstered, in part, by constituents’ perceptions that it is not a program focused on African-American children. Georgia’s Office of School Readiness does not maintain data indicating the ethnic or racial distribution of participants, which limits comparative analyses of participant demographics.

118 For an analysis of the policy debate over devolution of early education funds, see Ripple et al. (1999). Will fifty cooks spoil the broth? The debate over entrusting Head Start to the States. *American Psychologist*, 54, 327-343.

119 D. Besharov, and N. Samari (1998).

120 Ripple et al., *Ibid.*

different providers, educators, and advocates embroiled the councils in conflict. Georgia’s incorporation (and eventual removal) of community planning structures underscores that local councils must have clear, reasonable roles, and be carefully constituted to represent appropriate constituencies.¹²¹

7. Program success hinges on constant attention to quality—especially in the areas of curriculum and teacher preparation.

- **Incentive-based funding can help to attract and retain qualified staff.**¹²² A shortage of teachers with early childhood training threatens the successful implementation of Universal Pre-K in many states. Georgia Pre-K has upgraded teaching at hundreds of child care centers by increasing incentives to hire teachers certified in early childhood education. In the 1997-1998 school year, 85 percent of Georgia Prekindergarten teachers held certification in Early Education.¹²³ Of those lead teachers not fully certified, seven percent had CDA credentials and six percent a Montessori degree.¹²⁴ To upgrade further teacher preparation, OSR is phasing in more rigorous credential requirements. By the 2001-2002 school year, all lead Pre-K teachers will be required to have a minimum of an associate degree in early childhood education or a two-year vocational-technical diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education.

- **Professional development is a key to program quality.** To maintain and enhance the quality of teaching, Georgia’s Prekindergarten program requires all administrators, teachers, and support staff to attend yearly training sessions. Teachers receive specialized curriculum training, and training in best practices in early education. As an indication of the strength of Georgia’s systems of training and incentives, an evaluation by Georgia State University found that the vast majority of Pre-K teachers consistently utilize developmentally appropriate teaching practices in their Pre-K classrooms.¹²⁵
- **Inadequate compensation, particularly for Pre-K teachers at non-school settings, threatens program quality.** Process evaluations indicate significant discrepancies in the education, credentials, and compensation of teachers at public and private Pre-K sites.¹²⁶ Public schools, which provide higher wages and full benefits, are better equipped than private child care centers to recruit and retain certified teachers. Given that inadequate compensation threatens program quality and leads to high turnover rates,¹²⁷ states must determine additional strategies to professionalize all Pre-K staff and establish parity between counterparts in the public and private early education and care systems. Responding to this problem, in the 2000-2001 school year, OSR will require all Pre-K teachers to receive a minimum salary based on teacher credentials.

121 Although no longer required in the administration of the Pre-K program, local coordinating councils still operate in some Georgia communities.

122 See Appendix B.

123 Basile, K., Henderson, L. & Henry, G., *Prekindergarten Longitudinal Study 1996-1997 School Year Report 1: Program Implementation Characteristics*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University Applied Research Center, 1998.

124 Basile, et al., *ibid.*

125 Basile, et al., *ibid.*

126 Basile, et al., *ibid.*

127 Whitebook, M., Howes, C., & Phillips, D., *Who cares? Child care teachers and the quality of care in America: Final report of the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project, 1990.

- **Consistent application of an approved curricular model may be more important than which model is chosen.** The Office of School Readiness intentionally provides Pre-K operators flexibility in selecting among an array of well-established and approved curricular models.¹²⁸ Preliminary assessments suggest that there are minimal substantive differences among the curriculum models, and that most teachers in the program consistently adhere to the practices of their chosen model.¹²⁹ Future evaluations will need to examine more closely the academic and social outcomes associated with distinct curricular models.

8. The challenge of creating a Pre-K infrastructure—especially in the realm of facilities—cannot be underestimated.

- **Incorporating private child care and preschool providers in a Pre-K initiative offers a solution to the scarcity of facilities.** States seeking to provide early education to a significant proportion of eligible children will face similar options as those in Georgia: 1) A large-scale investment in building or expanding public school facilities; or 2) Utilizing existing space beyond school settings, typically in private non-profit or for-profit child care centers. Georgia’s solution was to engage for-profit and non-profit child care providers in a public-private education partnership.
- **Pressure to identify appropriate facilities may create inequities, due to a shortage of suitable space in lower-income areas.** Although the program encountered some difficulty finding space for all new enrollees during the first year of

large-scale expansion, adequate facilities have been identified in most communities. However, research suggests that suitable facilities may be scarce in low-income neighborhoods, especially those in urban areas.¹³⁰ Without sufficient strategies to address the problem, such as renovating vacant or underutilized buildings, families in these neighborhoods may be shortchanged when it comes to program funding, access, and quality.

- **When diverse providers are serving children, regulation and monitoring are especially important to program success.** Unlike many other states that have inadequate licensing systems,¹³¹ Georgia does not exempt any Pre-K grantees from regulation and provides OSR with sufficient funds and power to enforce licensing rules to ensure that all sites meet health and safety standards.
- **Planning efforts should take into account the needs of staff, children, and parents with disabilities.** States differ significantly in their compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In contrast to some other states, Georgia’s licensing regulations do not require Pre-K facilities to meet the specifications of the ADA. This increases the number of Pre-K-eligible sites, but raises issues about access to program sites by people with disabilities.

128 See Appendix C.

129 Researchers did find that Montessori teachers are more likely to organize their lessons around specific skill areas, while High/Scope and Creative Curriculum teachers are more likely to organize lessons around children’s interests. Basile, K., Henderson, L. & Henry, G., *Prekindergarten Longitudinal Study 1996-1997 School Year Report 1: Program Implementation Characteristics*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University Applied Research Center, 1998.

130 J. Handy, *The allocation of Georgia lottery education funds*. Atlanta, GA: Research Atlanta, Inc., 1996. This study by Research Atlanta, a non-profit urban research organization, found that Atlanta’s share of Pre-K dollars has been disproportionately lower than allocations to other regions. The economist who analyzed Pre-K appropriations concluded that a shortage of suitable space in lower-income areas contributes significantly to the discrepancies in funding.

131 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), *Licensing and Public Regulation of Early Childhood Programs*, NAEYC Position Statement. Washington, DC: NAEYC., 1997.

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Georgia Prekindergarten Program

January 14, 1998

School Year	Funded	Children Served	Approximate Cost/Child
1992-93	\$3 M (State)	750	\$4,000
1993-94	\$37 M (Lottery)	8,700	\$4,258
1994-95	\$78 M (Lottery)	15,500	\$5,018
1995-96	\$182 M (Lottery)	44,000	\$4,136
1996-97	\$205 M (Lottery)	57,000	\$3,599
1997-98	\$211 M (Lottery)	60,000	\$3,516
Total	\$713 M (Lottery)	185,200	

Source: Council for School Performance. Report on the Expenditure of Lottery Funds FY 1997

Georgia Pre-K Funding Formulas

Based on the Fiscal Year 1999 budget approved by the General Assembly, the following rates were in effect for the 1998-99 school year:

Private Sector Rates Per Child

	Metro Atlanta Weekly Rate	Metro Atlanta Annual Rate	Zone 2 & 3 Weekly Rate	Zone 2 & 3 Annual Rate
Certified	\$91.68	\$3,300	\$83.00	\$2,988
Four-Year College Degree	\$82.67	\$2,976	\$73.99	\$2,664
Two-Year/ Vocational/ Montessori Degree/Diploma	\$77.23	\$2,780	\$68.55	\$2,468
CDA/CCP	\$71.78	\$2,584	\$63.10	\$2,272

Public School Sector Rates Per Child

	Weekly Rate	Annual Rate
Certified*	\$80.11	\$2,884
Four-Year College Degree	\$69.88	\$2,516
Two-Year/ Vocational/ Montessori Degree/Diploma	\$64.44	\$2,320
CDA/CCP	\$58.99	\$2,124

*Plus applicable training and experience per the 1998-99 state teacher salary schedule.

Funding rates reflect salary, benefits, and operating expenses for the core program. Additional funds are added for services to Category One (low-income) children.

The Georgia PreKindergarten Program Approved Curriculum Models

Office of School Readiness Quick Reference Sheet

Model	History	Characteristics	Training Provisions	Assessment
Bank Street For further information contact: 212-875-4400	Founded by Lucy Spague Mitchell in 1916. Influenced by educational techings of John Dewey and Jean Piaget. Emphasis on total child friendly environment.	Development of the whole child though active learning. Teachers use their trained expertise and observations of the child’s development to plan appropriate instructional activities.	Two year training in higher education setting. Training located at Bank Street College in New York.	Utilizes observation, recording and documentation of the child’s work over a period of time. Suggested examples provided for assessment tools.
Creative Curriculum For further information contact: 800-637-3552	Developed by Diane Trister Dodge in 1988. Utilizes Jean Piaget’s theories of how children think, learn and develop physically as a philosophical foundation.	Classrooms typically are arrange into ten interest areas to support age appropriate instructional practice and social competence.	Teachers learn through self-instruction or attend workshops provided by Teaching Strategies, Inc.	Utilizes observation, recording and documentation of the child’s work over a period of time. Suggested examples provided for assessment tools.
High Reach For further information contact: 800-729-9988	Developed by High Reach Learning, Inc. which has ben in business since 1966.	Theme based program that utilizes child directed enhancement and engagement literacy activities.	There is no formal training component. Teachers learn through self-instruction and utilization of a Program Overview Guide.	An ongoing checklist is used to observe children’s progress. A Developmental Skills Checklist is available for quality assessment.
High/Scope For further information contact: 313-485-2000	Developed in the 1950s and 1970s by the High/Scope Educational Research team led by David P. Weikart. Based on Jean Piaget’s theories of child development. Initial focus of working with disadvantaged children has been broadened to encompass all children in every type of early childhood setting.	Children are active learners in classrooms arranged with well-equipped interest areas. Adults challenge, guide and support children in academic learning activities. Children also plan, carry out and reflect their learning activities daily. Additionally children engage in smll and large group instructional activities.	A variety of training programs are available for infant/toddler, preschool, and K-3 programs. Additionally, training in the creation of safe playgrounds, working with special needs children, assessment, certification programs and professional development is available	Children’s actions are interpreted in terms of the High/Scope key experiences in child development.
Montessori For further information contact: 212-358-1250	Developed in 1906 by Italian physician Maria Montessori. Initial focus on working with disadvantaged children in the slums of San Lorenzo has been broadened to encompas all children in every type of early childhood setting.	The Montessori method utilizes the holistic approach to develop children’s senses, character, practical life skills and academic skills. Teachers prepre program settings, filling them with Montessori materials designed to encourage children to learn on their own. Initially teachers show children exactly how to utilize the materials and then let the children choose which ones to use.	Training is both on the job and college based.	Utilizes observation, recording and documentation of the child’s work over a period of time
Scholastic Workshop For further information contact: 919-266-7940	Created in 1996 by Rebecca Barrera, M.A., Elizabeth de la Ossa, PhD., Bibi Lobo Somyak and Louise Parks, M.Ed. Development originated from early childhood research which supports the concept that children learn most efficiently through a concrete, child-centered, play oriented approach.	Scholastic Workshop contains a curriculum framework with theme-based activities and integrated hands-on materials	Teachers learn through self instruction or attend workshops provided through Scholastic implementation services.	Pre and post theme assessments are provided.

FOUNDATIONFORCHILDDEVELOPMENT

295 Madison Avenue, 40th Floor
New York, NY 10017
(212) 867-5777 phone
(212) 867-5844 fax
www.fcd-us.org

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