SUCCESS STARTS EARLY

INDIANA’S ROADMAP FOR PRE-K EXPANSION
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Indiana’s Roadmap for Pre-K Expansion

We are grateful to the Hoosier families, early care and education practitioners, community leaders and others who gave generously of their time to create this roadmap. We are particularly thankful for the participants at the large-group stakeholder meetings held on March 29, 2016, in Indianapolis and on June 8, 2015, in Muncie. The views shared in those forums substantially informed this roadmap.

Thanks are also due to Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) members for their engagement in informing this roadmap and the full committee for responding to draft findings. We also appreciate the time, expertise and endorsement of the Indiana Association of United Ways, United Way leaders from across the state, and the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children.
Executive Summary
Full Overview of Success Starts Early: Indiana's Roadmap for Pre-K Expansion

Indiana’s success starts early.
Recent evidence from pre-k programs, including in Indiana, shows that pre-k can help children prepare for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Hoosier families struggle to access pre-k.
Thousands of Indiana families are on a waiting list, because they need help and they lost out on the state’s pre-k lottery.

Indiana is ready.
A strong homegrown infrastructure and history of successful programs demonstrate that Indiana is prepared for pre-k expansion.

Recommendations
With four core principles, five essential quality components, and six effective implementation needs, key stakeholders share a vision of next steps.

A Call to Action
There is a groundswell of support for expanded pre-k. The next step is to move forward, helping more children get access to this valuable opportunity.
All IN 4 Pre-K is a campaign of Hoosier families, community advocates & business leaders working together to expand access to high-quality pre-k in Indiana.

Connect at www.AllIN4PreK.org today!
Dear Hoosier friends,

Indiana is at a historic turning point for our youngest children.

State-funded pre-k pilot programs have succeeded in serving many Hoosier children. New community coalitions are emerging to strengthen local systems of early care and education. Community leaders and lawmakers at the highest level are engaged in the debate about pre-k expansion. Yet, fewer than 4% of our four-year old children—not even 2,800—are enrolled in state-funded pre-k. And thousands of children are on waiting lists—denied entry by a lottery process.

The coming year presents an opportunity to act. Our statehouse will be developing a two-year budget that funds Hoosier priorities. We can give every young child in Indiana access to a pre-k education that prepares them for school. But how? For the past several months, Hoosier families, experts in the field of early care and education, and community leaders have weighed in and shared their perspectives. The roadmap you are reading reflects their views.

Most striking is the broad base of Hoosier support for a significant expansion of pre-k. Seven in 10 (71%) Indiana families and voters surveyed in a representative statewide poll support a bold expansion of pre-k to many more families.

The details of this roadmap reflect Hoosier common sense:
• Build up all types of high-quality pre-k programs including centers, schools, ministries and family homes;
• Allow parents to use scholarships among pre-k providers and program options of their choice, empowering families in the pre-k decision-making process; and
• Invest in pre-k programs that can support a wide range of outcomes that lead to school success, not just the academic, but also the social-emotional and interpersonal outcomes—curiosity and love of learning, among others.

There is an urgency to act. Fortunately, Indiana communities are ready. After decades of hard work, more high-quality programs exist than ever before. In fact, the number of high-quality programs has nearly doubled in the past five years.

It is possible to expand access to state-funded pre-k to all of our counties. But that is just step one. We have to plan and invest now to hit key milestones in pre-k enrollment that lead to an elimination of the pre-k access gap in our state.

Please enjoy reading these views from the field, from families, and from research. If what you read resonates, please take a moment to share your own story and join this movement to be “all IN” for our kids at www.AllIN4PreK.org. You know that Indiana’s future will depend on these little learners. Your voice can make this roadmap a reality.

Sincerely,
Karen Ruprecht, Ph.D
Director of Innovation in Early Education, Early Learning Indiana
Senior Advisor, All IN 4 Pre-K
Indiana is at a historic turning point for our youngest children. State-funded pre-k pilot programs have succeeded in serving many Hoosier children. Yet fewer than 4% of our four-year-old children are enrolled in state-funded pre-k programs. And thousands of children are on waiting lists—denied entry by a lottery process. In 2017, our statehouse will be developing a two-year budget that funds Hoosier priorities.

Success starts early.
Nearly every state invests in publicly funded pre-k programs as a way to address the growing achievement gap between low-income and middle-to-high-income children. Recent evidence from pre-k evaluations—including in Indiana—shows that high-quality pre-k programs help prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond (Conn-Powers, 2015; Barnett et al., 2016).

Hoosier families struggle to access pre-k and Hoosier voters support expansion.
In the 2015-2016 school year, only 2,800 Indiana children had the chance to attend high-quality pre-k programs supported by one of the state’s three pilot programs, On My Way Pre-K, Early Education Matching Grants and Indy Preschool Scholarship Program. Most Hoosiers want to see this number grow. More than seven out of every ten Hoosier voters believe pre-k programs are an important educational milestone for children (76%) and believe that Indiana should significantly expand access to high-quality pre-k through greater state funding (71%) (Hart Research, 2016).

There are compelling reasons to support expansion:
• Half of the Hoosier children under age five live below 200% of the federal poverty level.
• The expense of preschool education in Indiana falls primarily on family pocketbooks.
• Only 17% of Hoosier preschool children are enrolled in high-quality programs.

Indiana is ready for expansion.
Programs have worked hard to increase quality. Since 2011, the number of high-quality programs (those rated at Paths to QUALITY™ Level 3 or 4) has increased by 86%. On June 7, 2016, 550 participants representing nearly 50 counties gathered in Muncie, to learn how to strengthen local coalitions and connect early learning to economic development. Philanthropies and business leaders have stepped up to invest in our young children—an estimated $36 million in recent years (ELAC, 2015).

Hoosier families, experts and communities believe in four core principles to guide Indiana’s pre-k expansion.
1. All children should have access to high-quality pre-k.
2. Support high-quality pre-k providers of all types, including centers, schools, ministries and family homes.
3. Empower family choice, especially through scholarships.
4. Focus on holistic child outcomes, including academic, social-emotional and other skills, that come from high-quality pre-k participation.
Recommendations on Essential Quality Components

1. Broaden family eligibility criteria and consider risk factors.
   Any expansion of pre-k should broaden income eligibility to at least 200% of poverty or 85% of state median income. Children with risk factors, such as foster care status, could also be targeted.

2. Progressively increase teacher education requirements, skills and compensation.
   Currently, only one of the pre-k pilots, EEMG, requires lead teachers to have a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education or an equivalent. Degree requirements in Indiana would need to be phased-in and supported.

3. Develop meaningful family engagement and family support strategies.
   All three Indiana pre-k pilot programs focus on working with families to remove barriers to attendance and help with transitions to kindergarten; and a new ELAC toolkit is accelerating a statewide practice of family engagement.

4. Align care and education in the years before and after pre-k.
   Hoosier families surveyed assert that expansion of pre-k is a particularly good investment if programs focus on skills that lead to later school success, especially focusing on transitions between pre-k and kindergarten.

5. Layer funding sources to provide high-quality, full-day services for children and maximize cost-effectiveness of state pre-k.
   Stakeholders are eager to see how funding will materialize to pay the full cost of high-quality pre-k. Raising the per-child allocation can help. However, clarity is also needed on how CCDF, Title 1, Head Start, parent fees and other funds can work together.

Recommendations on Effective Implementation Needs

1. Expand capacity now in pre-k programs.
   Stakeholders reiterate how critical financial support for capacity building has been to early successes of the program. A significant down payment from the state will be necessary to meet capacity-building needs.

2. Intentionally build on proven pathways to reach more children.
   Indiana’s signature pre-k pilot programs offer two compelling pathways to quickly reach all urban, mid-size and rural counties. Both can grow and work in tandem to significantly expand high-quality pre-k access.

3. Eliminate match for all pre-k pilot programs.
   The matching requirements of Indiana’s pre-k pilot programs are burdensome and not sustainable. Continued matching requirements would slow-down efforts to reach more Hoosier children in need, especially those in rural communities.

4. Utilize developmentally appropriate curriculum.
   While stakeholders largely agree that pre-k programs should be able to choose their curricula, there is broad agreement on what curriculum should include. Pre-k curriculum should be based in research, be developmentally appropriate, and provide specific learning objectives and supportive activities for children.

5. Implement strong child assessment and program monitoring systems.
   Stakeholders strongly suggest that assessment should include both child assessment and program-level assessment. Programs are also looking at child-teacher interactions, which research has shown to be a strong indicator of child outcomes.

6. Provide intensive professional development support and coaching for pre-k teachers.
   There is strong evidence in the research that shows ongoing teacher training increases program quality and leads to better outcomes for children, particularly for curriculum support. Indiana’s early childhood coaching system is strong and well-regarded nationally and ready for additional investment.

If you support statewide pre-k expansion, please join this effort at www.AllIN4PreK.org.
Your voice matters for our youngest children.
Nearly every state invests in publicly funded pre-k programs as a way to address the growing achievement gap between low- and middle-to-high-income children. Recent evidence from pre-k evaluations—including from Indiana—shows that high-quality pre-k programs can help prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond (Conn-Powers, 2015; Barnett et al., 2016).

High-quality pre-k programs and state-supported pre-k systems work because they directly respond to what we know about how young children develop successfully. In fact, a wide range of rigorous studies, from neuroscience, to education, to economics, confirm the benefits of pre-k.

Neuroscience: Early Childhood is a Critical Developmental Window

Compelling evidence from neuroscience shows that brain development is incredibly rapid in the first five years of life. In fact, by age five, the vast majority of a child’s brain capacity is developed. During this timeframe, neural connections are formed and reinforced when young children interact with people in their environment. When those interactions are sensitive and responsive to the child’s needs, connections are formed that help build the child’s brain (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Nurturing early learning experiences in high-quality pre-k programs can literally help to positively shape the architecture of a child’s brain. Hand-in-hand with the benefits of healthy parent-child relationships, they can help to set the foundation for which all lifelong learning, behavior, and health depend (Center on the Developing Child, 2009).

Though it is clear that the first five years of life are critical for brain development, almost all public money we invest in American children—and here in Indiana—is focused on older age groups. Additionally, Indiana funds account for a very small part of overall early learning funding. According to a recent analysis of funding for early childhood programs and services in Indiana, only 6% of overall funding comes from state support (Early Learning Advisory Committee, 2015).
Education: High-Quality Early Learning Opens Doors to Academic Success

High-quality pre-k programs can prepare children for kindergarten with the skills needed for success in the elementary grades and beyond. An analysis (Yoshikawa et al., 2013) of 84 preschool program evaluations spanning several decades conducted by a non-partisan group of researchers found that:

- Quality preschool programs can have substantial impact on children’s early learning in language, math, and reading skills. Researchers found that children gain about one-third of a year of additional learning across language, reading, and math skills while attending quality preschool programs.

- Children who attend high-quality preschool programs continue to benefit in other areas such as lower rates of special education use, less grade retention, and higher high school graduation rates even when achievement scores between preschool participants and non-participants converge over time.

- Aligning preschool and early elementary instruction may help sustain the gains that children who attend high-quality preschool programs achieve during preschool.

Economics: Pre-K Offers a High Return on Investment

High-quality preschool programs are a smart state investment. Longitudinal studies, including the Perry Preschool Study and the Chicago Parent Centers, found the return on investment (ROI) is anywhere from $4 to $11 for every $1 invested (Center on the Developing Child, 2009; Karoly & Auger, 2016). Long-term economic benefits include reductions in high-school dropout rates, improved health behaviors, reduced abuse and neglect, and a reduced cost to the criminal justice system, as well as increased earning potential and tax payments from the participants (Karoly & Auger, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2011).

The most recent studies from Tulsa, Oklahoma, looking at three and four-year olds, show a return on investment for low- and moderate-income students between $2 to $4 (Karoly & Auger, 2016). The savings come from decreased rates of special education and grade retention (“being held back”), as well as increased graduation rates. According to the Indiana Department of Education, Indiana spends nearly $32 million a year on kindergarten remediation (Indiana Department of Education, 2016).

This wide range of scientific studies confirm what parents know intuitively and kindergarten teachers bear witness to every school year—nurturing interactions and high-quality early educational environments help children to thrive and start school ready to succeed.
In the last school year (2015-2016), only 2,800 Indiana children had the chance to attend high-quality pre-k programs supported by one of the state’s three signature programs—On My Way Pre-K, the Early Education Matching Grant or the Indy Preschool Scholarship program. Thousands of families are on a waiting list, because they cannot afford pre-k and lost out in the state’s pre-k lottery. Currently, access to good early education is based on luck and limited by the county which you call home or your ZIP code.

Most Hoosiers want to see this change. More than seven out of every ten Hoosier voters believe that pre-k programs are an important educational milestone for children (76%) and believe that Indiana should significantly expand access to high-quality pre-k through greater state funding (71%) (Hart Research, 2016). This support is deep and broad, cutting across age, income, family status, partisanship and other demographic fault lines in our society.

The facts that follow demonstrate many of the reasons that families with modest incomes have the greatest trouble accessing pre-k opportunities for their children—facts that help to drive support for pre-k expansion.

Fact: Nearly half of children in Indiana under the age of five live below 200% of the federal poverty level.

According to federal guidelines, for a family of three, that translates to $40,320 annually. Research suggests that low-income children can be 12 months behind their middle-income peers before they even start kindergarten, and these gaps likely continue into the early elementary grades (Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, & Norres, 2016). High-quality early care and education programs can help prepare children for kindergarten, and can lessen the achievement gap. However, many children, particularly low- and moderate-income children, lack access.

Fact: Only 17% of Hoosier preschool children are enrolled in high-quality early care and education programs.

Early learning programs are a necessity for Hoosier children and families. Nearly two-thirds (66%) of young Hoosier children require child care of some type because they live in families where all parents are in the labor force (ELAC, 2016; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2013). Yet Indiana’s 968 high-quality early childhood education programs serve only just under 29,000 preschool children ages 3-5 or about 17% of the total number of preschool children in Indiana. Fortunately, Indiana has made significant advances. In 2011, only 520 high-quality programs were available. There is much more room to grow, and some counties lack even one high-quality preschool provider.
Fact: The expense of preschool education in Indiana falls primarily on families’ pocketbooks.

The Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) Funding Streams Workgroup examined the federal, state, local, philanthropic, private (i.e., parent) and other funding sources used to pay for early care and education services in Indiana. They found that parents pay for 62% of the total through the fees they pay out of their family pocketbooks, while the state pays for just 6% (ELAC, 2015). The annual expense to a family for their child to attend a high-quality preschool in Indiana is comparable to a year of tuition at a major public university.

Early educators—most of whom are parents themselves—also pay a high cost for the lack of public investment in early learning programs. They pay in the form of low wages, which leave many struggling just to make ends meet. In a recent study of Indiana’s early care and education workforce, 53% of teachers reported a total annual family income of less than $30,000 (ELAC, 2015).

Fact: The state’s signature pre-k programs are far too small to meet demand and highly-constrained geographically.

In the last school year, the state’s three signature programs only were approved to serve up to 2,800 children, reflecting less than 4% of the estimated 85,000 Hoosier four-year olds. Approved enrollment was concentrated in On My Way Pre-K (1,585 four-year olds), with lower approved enrollment in the Indy Preschool Scholarship Program (715) and the Early Education Matching Grants (491) (Email Communication, Office of Early Childhood and Out of School Learning). Access is only expected to grow modestly in the 2016-2017 school year, to 3,145 children. Access to each of the programs is highly restricted due to funding limits and because of strict income eligibility requirements—most only serve families at or below just 127% of poverty.

Regardless, demand for the state’s signature five-county program, On My Way Pre-K, exceeded available slots. In the 2015-16 program year, 6,509 applications were received for both On My Way Pre-K and the Indy Preschool Scholarship Program (both programs use the same application process), and 2,307 children were offered scholarships. Nearly two out of three families who applied for an On My Way or Indy Preschool scholarship did not receive one.
INDIANA’S THREE SIGNATURE PRE-K EFFORTS

On My Way Pre-K
This family scholarship program serves children in five Indiana counties -- Allen, Jackson, Lake, Marion and Vanderburgh. Scholarships are targeted to children at or below 127% of poverty.

Early Education Matching Grants
These grants are awarded directly to pre-k providers. Awards facilitate capacity-building and tuition-free attendance for children at or below 100% of poverty.

Indy Preschool Scholarship Program
Supported by local funding, this Indianapolis family scholarship program that complements On My Way Pre-K. Eligibility requirements are the same as those for On My Way Pre-K, though three-year-old children are also eligible.

More information
All three programs limit eligible providers to those who are Level 3 or 4 on the state’s quality rating and improvement system, Paths to QUALITY™. Paths To QUALITY™ is a free resource that helps families make informed decisions and helps early care and education providers improve the quality of their programs.

It is noteworthy that in addition to these three signature state or city programs, thousands of children are served tuition-free or for only nominal fees through high-quality Head Start programs, programs that accept CCDF vouchers and Title I-funded school-based programs, among others.
Lessons & Limits of the Current Pilot Programs

*Indiana now has experience with three different pre-k pilot programs, yielding early lessons and limits of our state’s current approach.*

**Too few families and children have access.**

With three pre-k pilots, Indiana is only serving a fraction of the children and families that need high-quality pre-k. Fewer than 4% of eligible four-year olds are served via the three programs and the vast majority of Indiana counties have seen no investment.

**Participating counties and pre-k programs are burdened with raising required matching funds.**

Each of the programs requires a match, in one case, a dollar-for-dollar match. This has been difficult for counties and programs, particularly in rural communities. Access to pre-k should not hinge on ability to match, but be directed toward areas of need across our state.

**Supporting high-quality pre-k can only be accomplished if we invest in our early childhood workforce.** Pre-k teachers have a critically important job—to prepare children for kindergarten and to help them build the life skills that enable them to be productive adults. We know that teachers with formal training, especially a specialized degree in early childhood, are more likely to generate better child outcomes. Yet, two out of the three Indiana pre-k pilot programs do not require lead teachers to have a Bachelor’s degree. And teachers with relevant degrees, in most cases do not receive pay equitable to elementary school teachers. If Indiana is serious about supporting high-quality pre-k, strong consideration needs to be given toward expanding scholarship support for early educators and rewarding teachers for higher education achievement.
Indiana is ready for a statewide pre-k expansion. Over the past decade, our state has developed a strong infrastructure around early care and education and has implemented programs and initiatives to help Hoosier families make informed decisions about high-quality early learning.

Programs have worked hard to increase quality, and since 2011, the number of high-quality programs (those rated at Paths to QUALITY™ Level 3 or 4) has increased by 86%. Much of the increase in quality is due to the availability of federal stimulus and state funding and requirements—such as tiered reimbursement within the CCDF program—funding linked to quality improvements—and On My Way Pre-K. Access to teacher scholarship funds, including Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) funds, have been critical, as well.

Community leaders are ready for pre-k expansion.

 Communities all across the state have put expanding pre-k at or near the top of their “to-do” list. The Thriving Communities, Thriving State initiative from Indiana University’s Public Policy Institute (2016), found that all Indiana communities—no matter their size—said that expanding high-quality pre-k should be a top priority, as well as equipping early educators to facilitate Kindergarten readiness.

Local community coalitions are forming and moving to action around this interest in many Indiana counties. On June 7, 2016 in Muncie, Indiana, 550 participants representing nearly 50 counties gathered to learn how to strengthen their local coalitions and connect early learning to economic development.

Indiana’s Advancements Over Time

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>Paths to QUALITY™ launched statewide.</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>American Recovery and Reinvestment Act supported quality and capacity efforts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) established. Indiana General Assembly established the Early Education Matching Grants.</td>
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Coalitions are poised for impact in both rural and urban counties. In rural Jackson County, the Jackson County Education Coalition is a county-wide partnership of education, industry, and community leaders focused on aligning and integrating the county’s learning system with economic growth and a high quality of life. In urban St. Joseph County, the St. Joseph County Early Childhood Coalition includes educators, business leaders, parents and families, elected officials, data experts, and philanthropists, all dedicated to ensuring positive early childhood experiences.

United Ways across the state have been critical conveners and community partners—in Bloomington, Evansville, Ft. Wayne, Indianapolis, Lafayette and other communities. They have supported programs to move on and up Paths to QUALITY™, assisted with scholarship funding and made investments to strengthen our mixed-delivery system. Complementary programming, such as the 2-1-1 resource hotline for families, and research on income-constrained families have contributed to local interest and momentum for expanded early learning access from birth to five.

The June 2016 Indiana Summit for Economic Development via Early Learning Coalitions, presented by Muncie BY5, Early Learning Indiana and the Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee drew over 500 Hoosier community leaders to explore the value of birth to five education.
Indiana’s business and philanthropic sectors are ready for expansion.

From investments in scholarships for EEMG, On My Way Pre-K and Indy PSP to equipping classrooms and supporting teachers, philanthropies and business leaders have already stepped up to invest in our pre-k students—Indiana’s future leaders. An estimated $36 million in recent years has been invested in pre-k from the business and philanthropic community to provide scholarships to low-income children and to improve quality in these settings (ELAC, 2015).

However, the business and philanthropic community cannot be expected to continue to pay for scholarships and tuition for pre-k, much like we cannot ask them to pay for K-12 scholarships or match K-12 funding. Business and philanthropic support is best utilized to enhance quality and to support local capacity-building needs and supportive services.

Families are ready for—and need—pre-k expansion.

Families want high-quality pre-k experiences for their children. But the scholarships mean more than just good care and education for children. They also give families an opportunity to stay in or enter in the labor market. Research is clear—and businesses know—that employees who have peace of mind in their home life, are more stable employees and more productive in their work life. Indiana’s pre-k pilot programs serve many working families.

Roughly half of the families enrolled in the first year of the state’s EEMG grants were working parents. And, we know from ELAC research that two-thirds of families with young children have all parents in the household in the workforce.
Glenn & Chancellor’s Story

Glenn’s family is new to the Indianapolis area and his son, Chancellor, is enrolled in Day Early Learning’s Eastern Star church through an On My Way Pre-K scholarship. At Eastern Star, he says Chancellor has blossomed, joining other children in discussion and play, while before he preferred to be on his own, too shy to interact with others. Glenn is currently self-employed, taking jobs when and where he can, while searching for a permanent position. He values the extended hours Eastern Star offers, which allows for flexibility in work schedules.

Were it not for On My Way Pre-K, he says that Chancellor would probably be at home with Glenn’s mother because the family could not afford other options. Glenn feels strongly that On My Way Pre-K has impacted Chancellor’s life and his family takes every opportunity possible to “pay it forward” by participating in family engagement opportunities at the school.
Connie Bond Stuart, PNC Regional President, Central and Southern Indiana:

“As a key driver of economic mobility, high-quality early education helps to minimize the income disparities that influence a child’s chances of success. We can help create tomorrow’s skilled workforce and influence the future prosperity of Indiana and our country by making investments now to expand early learning opportunities for children.”

Kevin Brinegar, President and CEO of the Indiana Chamber:

“Every year, thousands of disadvantaged children arrive in Indiana kindergarten classrooms totally unprepared to learn. Schools work hard to help these kids catch up, but many fall behind; they become frustrated and even resigned to failure. The educational and societal costs of these failures are staggering. Ultimately what happens is these students then are often unprepared to support themselves as adults. That’s why we need to start these students along the proper education road as early as possible, in preschool with a quality experience. Substantially expanding the state’s preschool program for children from low-income Hoosier families will provide this much-needed quality start with education and also help Indiana’s graduation rates improve and the dropout rates decline. And it will cost our state far less in the long run.”

Michael Huber, President and CEO of the Indy Chamber:

“Indiana’s children are our greatest hope for the continuing success of our state, but they cannot succeed if we do not give them the tools necessary to excel from an early age. Expanding high-quality pre-k invests not only in our youngest learners, but also the future prosperity of Indiana.”
John Lechleiter, President and CEO of Eli Lilly and Company:

“The benefits of pre-k access are clear to families and supported by research. The value is obvious to me as well, and I believe that expanding pre-k is the best possible way to bring these benefits to greater numbers of students around our state. There is no reason not to pursue need-based pre-k with everything we’ve got!”

Mary Titsworth Chandler, Vice-President of Corporate Responsibility, Cummins Inc.:

“We hold children in a special trust. They do not choose their earliest experiences. Yet those experiences drive a complex and weighty array of outcomes in a child’s journey to productive maturity. A growing body of research demonstrates that investment in high-quality pre-k education yields substantial short and long term benefits for children, especially from low-income families, and communities. While pre-k is not a complete solution to complex community problems, the preponderance of current evidence is compelling. Let’s build a lasting legacy for the children of our state and invest in early childhood education.”
Over the past few months, Hoosier families, On My Way Pre-K pilot counties, key stakeholders representing the early care and education practitioner community, teachers, K-12 leaders, business leaders, faith leaders and philanthropic funders were asked for their opinions about pre-k expansion.

In addition to offering their articulation of why to expand pre-k (summarized earlier in this roadmap), they responded to several other key questions:

- What core principles should guide pre-k expansion?
- What are the essential quality components that should be part of any pre-k expansion?
- What are the needs on-the-ground—the effective implementation needs—that are of highest priority if we are to expand pre-k to more Hoosier communities?

Four core principles were articulated that should strongly inform any pre-k expansion effort. These four principles were referenced in different ways, but emerged consistently as deeply held beliefs that cut across most of the audiences:

**Principle 1:**

_**All children should have access to high-quality pre-k programs.**_

Among Hoosier families and voters, a full 65% indicated that all families should have access to pre-k, even if that would cost more in taxpayer funding. There was strong support in the field for expanding access to include a broader range of families and children with risk factors—who would benefit greatly from attendance, but may be left out if not specifically recruited.

Access to pre-k can be facilitated through a variety of programs, but a state pre-k program is an essential investment that, in other states, has commonly led to voluntary participation rates of between 20-40% of all four-year olds (Barnett et al., 2016). The conversations we held laid bare a basic sense of Hoosier fairness—that access to pre-k should not be based on the county in which one resides, the ZIP code one calls home or determined by a lottery. Indiana families and experts want a robust statewide pre-k program.
**Principle 2:**
*Support high-quality pre-k providers of all types, drawing on existing systems.*

Indiana has made a decades-long commitment to building up the capacity and quality of early childhood programs of all types including, child care centers, family child care homes, registered ministries, public and private school programs, and others. We heard clearly that a guiding principle for any expanded pre-k program should be continued support for a “mixed delivery” system. Indiana has already invested heavily into building capacity and strengthening the quality of this system through Paths to QUALITY™. Without specifically naming Paths to QUALITY™, stakeholders were clear, it makes strong fiscal and policy sense to continue to lean on existing quality systems and quality supports—such as coaching and incentives—that are open to all early learning programs and teachers.

**Principle 3:**
*Empower family choice.*

Two of Indiana’s three signature pre-k programs strongly empower family choice through a scholarship model. Stakeholders agreed that empowering family choice fits well with Indiana’s mixed-delivery system, offers unique opportunities for family engagement—for example education around program quality—that strengthen our early childhood system, and respects the voluntary nature of pre-k participation. It also builds on Paths to QUALITY™, itself a consumer-facing rating system designed to inform and educate parents. A family choice model gives parents opportunities to weigh the benefits, costs and fit of various program models, such as full-day or part-day programs, or school or community-based programs.

**Principle 4:**
*Focus on holistic child outcomes that come from high-quality pre-k participation.*

While the academic benefits of pre-k are pronounced and valued by Hoosiers, they similarly value the building of a holistic set of skills and assets in our youngest children, especially, social-emotional skills, curiosity and a love of learning, among others. In the statewide poll, 59% of voters said a “very convincing” reason to support pre-k expansion was the benefits to elementary school preparation, including, the ability to “follow teachers’ instructions, work and socialize better with other children” and developments in terms of maturity and self-confidence. We know from research and experience that many high-quality pre-k programs in Indiana are delivering on this bold pre-k promise.
FOUR CORE PRE-K PRINCIPLES, SHARED BY HOOSIERS

Indiana’s pre-k stakeholders, from educators working with young children to experts in higher education and beyond, agree that a successful expansion will rely on four core principles.

1 All children should have access to high-quality pre-k programs.

2 Support high-quality pre-k providers of all types, drawing on existing systems.

3 Empower family choice, knowing they are children’s first teachers.

4 Focus on holistic child outcomes that come from high-quality pre-k participation.
A full 65% of Hoosier families & voters say all families should have access to pre-k, even if it costs more in taxpayer funding.

Indiana spends nearly $32 million a year on kindergarten remediation.

Community Leaders Support Pre-K Expansion

“Pre-k is a sound investment in our children. In our community, the Indianapolis Preschool Scholarship Program is helping families lay a strong educational foundation for our children. Preparing for success in elementary school paves the way for lifelong opportunities, and we know that high-quality pre-k makes that possible. I’m excited to see thoughtful planning and ideas to expand that solid start to more Hoosier children.”

- Joe Hogsett, Mayor of Indianapolis

“The United Way of Central Indiana believes that 2017 is the year the Indiana General Assembly should support a significant expansion of high-quality pre-K for low-income four-year olds in Indiana.”

- Ann Murtlow, President and CEO of United Way of Central Indiana

“Children across the state are growing up in an increasingly demanding, competitive world, where their first steps set them on the path for success or failure. High-quality early childhood education programs and supports give our children the skills they need to reach their educational goals leading to a successful future.”

- Maureen Noe, President and CEO of the Indiana Association of United Ways
Recommendation 1: Broaden family eligibility criteria and consider risk factors.

Each of the state’s pre-k pilots have varying degrees of family eligibility standards, and an expanded pre-k program needs to consider what eligibility requirements would best serve families in need of high-quality pre-k services. Currently, each program uses a different federal poverty threshold—between 100 and 185% of poverty—but all have focused on serving families primarily at or below 127% of poverty. We heard that any expansion of pre-k should broaden income eligibility. Indiana data points to support for expanding eligibility to at least 200% of poverty or 85% of state median income.

Broadening eligibility offers many benefits for children—who benefit from being served in mixed-income classrooms—and communities, who would have a larger pool of families from which to draw. Broader eligibility also ensures that pre-k complements federally-funded programs that support access for low-income families, such as Head Start. It also aligns with emerging thinking and policy in Indiana’s Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) program, where families up to 85% of state median income are now eligible on a sliding fee scale.

Many stakeholders are also supportive of using risk factors to enroll children who could benefit the most from pre-k access. These risk factors include disability, homeless status, foster care status, incidence of child abuse or neglect and others. While some of these children may be served or receive priority under other income-based programs, many of our most vulnerable and at-risk children are not being served at all. A policy that prioritizes outreach and access for these families would reduce this access gap.

Recommendation 2: Progressively increase teacher education requirements, skills and compensation.

Currently, only one of the pre-k pilots, EEMG, requires lead teachers to have a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood education or an equivalent. A strong body of research exists, showing that teachers with a degree in early childhood education provide higher-impact interactions and richer learning opportunities for children, which both lead to better child outcomes (Whitebrook, 2003). National leaders and panels have called for all early childhood teachers to have a relevant Bachelor degree by 2025. Such a requirement in Indiana would need to be phased-in and supported. Currently, the field in Indiana lacks the number of degreed teachers just to meet current demand. Data from ELAC projects that by 2022 there will be a demand for 8,043 additional preschool teachers, just at the current rate of pre-k enrollment. Programs and
communities are accurately aware of the limited pool of qualified candidates in their regions—a topic that came up time and again in stakeholder conversations.

The issue of teacher requirements and compensation parity—pay equity with elementary school teachers for pre-k teachers—is a serious issue that requires serious attention. The majority (56%) of Hoosier voters surveyed believe in pay equity for early educators, on par with elementary school teachers, even if that would cost more in taxpayer funding. Some states have implemented requirements that pre-k teachers must have a Bachelor's degree in early childhood education and have paired this requirement with higher compensation. For example, New Jersey created an early childhood certification program within higher education and a complementary scholarship program. The state also worked to develop a long-term plan for phasing in bachelor's requirements for private community-based providers. Other states work with national organizations to develop wage supplement programs. Tax credits linked to professional development are another viable option. Indiana also has the existing T.E.A.C.H. scholarship program on which to build upon.

Stakeholders are also clear that degrees are not enough, and the research supports that the best pre-k teachers have opportunities for continuous reflection, lesson planning, skill-building trainings, and embedded and external mentoring and coaching. The recent revision of Indiana's core knowledge and competencies for early childhood educators by the Indiana Professional Development Network is a positive development. It now provides a clear direction to advance skills to develop in our early childhood teachers and leaders. See the next section of this roadmap for more discussion about the need for intensive, on-the-ground professional development.

**Recommendation 3: Develop meaningful family engagement and family support strategies.**

Family engagement is critical in high-quality pre-k programs. In the statewide survey of Hoosier families, when asked what years parent involvement is most important to a child’s development, nearly one-third (30%) of Hoosiers said “birth to preschool.” It is the number one choice among options presented, well ahead of “kindergarten and elementary school” at 16%.
Families are their child’s first and best teacher, and supportive partnerships with families can dramatically improve the impact of a pre-k program. The best programs help families support their children’s school readiness and long-term learning. Working in partnership with families must be a program priority, and staff training can maximize family engagement.

All three Indiana pre-k pilot programs require and have attempted to support stronger family engagement, with a particular focus on working with families to remove barriers to attendance and help with transitions to kindergarten. The development of a family engagement self-assessment tool for programs from ELAC and other efforts are accelerating a statewide practice of family engagement. These efforts will be best supported by embedding family engagement requirements and guidance within Paths to QUALITY™, state-funded pre-k and other early learning infrastructure.

Given the economic and health challenges facing many participating pre-k families, it is also critical to attend to family support. As one respondent said, it is difficult for families to fully focus on supporting their child’s learning if parents are worried about how to pay the rent, buy groceries, or go to the doctor. Some research indicates that early learning programs have the power to become community hubs, connecting parents to important community and peer supports. Even the system-level administration of pre-k programs can support such connections, by making eligible families aware at intake that they qualify for other supports such as Medicaid, job training programs, or food supports. Such innovations are already being undertaken at the state level in Indiana, as well as by local community partners.

Recommendation 4: Align care and education in the years before and after pre-k

Hoosier families surveyed assert that expansion of pre-k is a particularly good investment if programs focus on skills that lead to later school success. Some researchers have suggested that, in order for children to continue to benefit from the gains in high-quality pre-k programs, k-3 instruction needs to maintain

Engaging Parents Strengthens Pre-K Results

A pre-k family engagement effort supported by Serve Indiana, the state’s AmeriCorps agency, places passionate, full-time volunteers into On My Way Pre-K programs, where they interact regularly with parents in order to strengthen the child-parent-teacher partnership.

In Evansville, one AmeriCorps member recounted a parent who never smiled or spoke to teachers. She made a point of reaching out to her and the parent confided that she felt overwhelmed by the discipline challenges she was facing with her son, in part because one biological parent lived far away. The AmeriCorps member built a stronger bond with that child through regular interactions and worked to have him acknowledge his mother at pick-up. The Corps member also shared insights and celebrations with the mother about his progress. The mother is now more engaged in the center and the child has a visibly more positive attitude toward her.
the positive momentum children gained in pre-k (Farran & Lipsey, 2015). There is an especially critical need to strengthen transitions between pre-k and kindergarten, so that knowledge about a child’s early development and early learning experiences are shared with their new schools and teachers.

While pointing to pockets of success, stakeholders make clear that more work is needed in Indiana to ensure greater continuity in learning goals and approaches across pre-k and the early elementary years. An important recent contribution from the state Department of Education is an updated version of Indiana’s Early Learning Foundations, which are aligned with Indiana’s college and career ready standards for K-12. The recent federal revision to the nation’s signature education law—the Every Student Succeeds Act—has numerous provisions to encourage and incentivize collaboration across pre-k and K-12 settings.

To realize the full potential of pre-k, the state must similarly grapple with investments necessary to support our youngest children—in the prenatal and earliest years of life (birth to age three). New state investments in programs such as the Nurse Family Partnership and support for Early Head Start partnerships are important new contributions to Indiana’s infant and toddler landscape. Still, most young Hoosier children receive no formal early learning or skilled family support interventions in the first year of life. One of the costly drawbacks of this reality—in Indiana and across our nation—is a delay in identifying children with special health and education needs. As Indiana pre-k expands, it will be critical to ensure that community-based programs that serve infants and toddlers remain available to families.

**Recommendation 5: Layer funding sources to provide high-quality, full-day services for children and maximize cost-effectiveness of state pre-k.**

The true cost of full-day, high-quality pre-k provision, especially when factoring in emerging quality standards in PTQ and the need for degreed teachers with compensation parity, exceeds Indiana’s current $6,800 per-child pre-k allocation. While appreciative of the state’s pre-k pilot efforts, stakeholders are eager to see how this challenge would be dealt with as pre-k expands. They worry about not being able to meet future requirements—and serve children well—without sufficient resources.

Raising the per-child allocation can help to facilitate both quality and full-day pre-k services that respond to what pre-k families want and need. However, strategies to layer other funding sources are critical, as well. While Indiana has started to address some of these issues by providing guidance to programs, more work is needed to clarify how CCDF, Title 1, Head Start, parent fees and any state pre-k dollars can work together to efficiently maximize access and improve quality. Some states, such as Pennsylvania, Illinois, and New York, provide full cost allocation guides that provide examples of acceptable layered funding approaches in a mixed delivery system. In addition, Minnesota has multiple funding streams that support pre-k for different target populations. Indiana’s ELAC funding streams working group is currently researching how to best support layering in Indiana.
WORDS FROM THE FIELD

In the lead-up to a pre-k expansion convening of early care and education experts on March 29th in Indianapolis, stakeholders were surveyed on their views of Indiana’s current pre-k pilots and needs moving forward.

They were asked:
“What is working well?”

“Parent choice, in what works for them.”

“….more programs are now becoming full day, because they are seeing the need and especially the importance for those working families.”

“The Paths to QUALITY designation helps to ensure a quality experience for the kids. All options that then meet this criteria can then be eligible to provide services.”

“As for EEMG, I find the expectations for degrees for lead teachers to be a strong aspect of the program.”

They were asked:
“What has been most challenging?”

“… income eligibility should be higher than 127% of poverty, and perhaps on a sliding scale …”

“Finding the match for programs seems to be the biggest challenge for communities who really need high-quality care …”

“We need to focus on child outcomes and how we measure these effectively. Data collection is not uniform and not all agencies have the capacity currently to do this work.”

“Whatever the system looks like moving forward, we must consider and offer substantial support for compensation of teachers…”
Brains make the most rapid connections from birth to five years of age.

For every $1 spent by Indiana on pre-K now, at least $4 is saved in the long run on educational and social services and crime.

Early Education Leaders Support Pre-K Expansion

“We need to expand pre-k in Indiana to provide greater learning opportunities so children are better prepared to succeed in school. These critical foundations pave the way for them to become a viable workforce to support economic growth and sustainability.”

- Madeleine Baker, Chief Executive Officer of Early Childhood Alliance

“All young children in Indiana deserve a chance to start school ready to reach their full potential. High-quality preschool programs that include supports for families have a powerful and lasting impact on children as they progress through school and into adulthood. Every day that we delay is a day in the life of a child who could be benefiting from this valuable education. Indiana AEYC and the 2,200 members across the state stand in support and partnership to ensure that all Indiana children have a real chance to reach their full potential and contribute to a stronger state.”

- Dianna Wallace, Executive Director of the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children

“There is broad and bipartisan support across our state for expanding access to pre-K. And rightly so. It is an essential ingredient to the success of our children. If Indiana is a state that is to live up to its potential, we must invest in our children now. Success starts early and we need to as well.”

- Jennifer Young Dzwonar, Chairperson of Early Learning Indiana Board of Directors
Recommendation 1: Expand capacity now in early child care and education programs

Currently, Indiana only has 27,000 high-quality preschool seats available, as defined by Paths to QUALITY™. In the five On My Way Pre-K pilot counties, public investments in building capacity (i.e., adding more “seats” for children to enroll) were critical to serving more eligible children. Stakeholders reiterate how critical that support has been to early successes of the program. To expand high-quality pre-k to more communities, early care and education programs need to make structural improvements and enhancements to offer additional seats. For example, programs will need to upgrade structural features of their building in order to meet health and safety requirements, or may need to provide developmentally appropriate outdoor spaces for young children. In concert with physical upgrades, programs need assistance in equipping and staffing new classrooms.

A significant down payment from the state will be necessary to meet capacity-building needs. With the launch of On My Way Pre-K, a combination of $435,000 in public-private capacity-building funds, from the FSSA Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, Early Learning Indiana and United Way of Central Indiana, helped create an estimated 586 new high-quality seats in the targeted five pilot counties. Interest in capacity-building funds is high. A fall 2015 request for proposals from Early Learning Indiana generated nearly 40 applications across all program types.

As pre-k expands, Indiana can also explore other potential sources for capacity-building funds, such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) resources. CDBG resources have been used in San Francisco and West Sacramento to build pre-k capacity.

Recommendation 2: Intentionally build on proven pathways to reach more children

It is clear from the survey of Hoosier voters and conversations in the field that getting expansion right is a critical priority. The wide range of outcomes Hoosiers expect from high-quality pre-k programs require careful planning, coordination and investment. The rate of growth will vary based on a community’s readiness. However, every county in Indiana is ready for investment, in some measure. This is particularly true as supportive early learning and economic development community coalitions have sprung up across the state.

Indiana’s signature pre-k pilot programs offer two compelling pathways to quickly reach all urban, mid-size and rural counties. On My Way Pre-K and Indy Preschool Scholarship Program offer a county-wide approach, while EEMG allows for more targeted investments in ready programs. Both can grow and work in tandem to significantly expand pre-k access.
Whatever pathway Indiana chooses, it is critical to move forward with clarity and commitment. Stakeholders expressed anxiety that state pre-k funding could be taken away at any time. They indicated ongoing reluctance to put their full resources and attention into pre-k expansion without a clear, long-term commitment from our state legislature.

**Recommendation 3: Eliminate match for all pre-k pilot programs**

The matching requirements of Indiana’s pre-k pilot programs—all three require a match and in one case a dollar-for-dollar match at the provider level—are burdensome, not sustainable, and hamper expanding access to communities with high need, communities that may lack a deep philanthropic or business base. Most community leaders understand the initial need for matching funds in pilot programs, but clearly articulate the state’s responsibility to pay for scholarships and tuition—the only sustainable funding source to ensure that pre-k efforts do not dry up over time. Stakeholders note that a more full and stable investment by the state does not let local philanthropic or business funders off the hook, but rather, frees their limited resources to provide some of the seed funding and wrap-around funding necessary to improve classrooms, support professional development, fund local collaboration and partnerships, better serve at-risk families, and otherwise address county-specific needs in early learning.

Conversations with United Way agencies also laid bare the need for fuller state funding, so local resources can focus on meeting other human service needs that are ever-present in many communities, including around housing, food insecurity, and income supports.

The lack of broad state investment has hindered many programs from participating in existing pre-k programs. We would anticipate that continued matching requirements would slow-down efforts to reach more Hoosier children in need, especially those in rural communities.

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**Families Want More Options for Pre-K Access:**

“I tried so hard, but ran into road blocks. Head Start ran out of full-time spots and I didn’t know where to turn. Preschools around the city started, and my baby girl still wasn’t in school. I was lucky to get connected with a great school by someone in the education community. But what about those mothers and fathers who don’t stumble across a great preschool? Or those who also hear, ‘Sorry, but we’re full.’ There just aren’t a lot of options out there for parents who are facing financial challenges and we need to change that.”

- Krystale Massey, Stand for Children Parent Advocate
Recommendation 4: Utilize developmentally appropriate curriculum

While stakeholders largely agree that pre-k programs should be able to choose which curricula they use, there is broad agreement on what curriculum should include. Pre-k curriculum should be based in research, be developmentally appropriate, and provide specific learning objectives for children, as well as activities to support learning objectives (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). Curriculum should also be aligned to the state's early learning standards. Paths to QUALITY™ is a sound system in which to insert an even stronger focus on curriculum and teacher quality.

The importance of a developmentally appropriate curriculum is a critical aspect of a high-quality pre-k program. Simply put, children learn through play, which supports curiosity, social and emotional development, and emerging math and literacy. Substantial evidence in the research literature demonstrates that a well-implemented, developmentally appropriate curriculum can positively impact children’s learning. One recent pre-k study conducted in Boston found that, when teachers implemented the curriculum with fidelity, child outcomes were enhanced (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). High-quality curriculum can be implemented well across any pre-k program setting, with the right training, coaching and other supports.

Recommendation 5: Implement strong child assessment and program monitoring systems

Stakeholders strongly suggest that assessment should include both child assessment and program-level assessment. Currently, the pre-k pilot programs are using a combination of assessment tools to look at children's skills, covering five domain areas of child development. Programs are also looking at child-teacher interactions, which research has shown to be a strong indicator of child outcomes. One tool supported by the Indiana Department of Education called ISTAR-KR is mandated in the state's pre-k pilots. Stakeholders widely assert that the tool needs some content enhancement, as well as better methods for analyzing and communicating results so they are useful for both teachers and families. The Indiana Department of Education is currently working with stakeholders to improve the tool.

Additional program-level assessments—which look not at a child, but at whole program quality, such as program climate—are also suggested as an accountability measure for funders and policymakers to ensure that programs meet high quality standards and provide instructional methods and interactions that impact child outcomes.
Recommendation 6: Provide intensive professional development support and coaching for pre-k teachers

There is strong evidence in the research that shows ongoing teacher training increases preschool program quality and leads to better outcomes for children, particularly for curriculum support (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). In addition to training on curriculum, teachers need ongoing support to effectively address children’s social-emotional needs, particularly for children for whom pre-k is their first experience.

In some pre-k studies, professional development support for teachers is a critical aspect of the program to ensure fidelity to curriculum (Weiland & Yoshikawa, 2013). There are also lessons to learn from states that did not provide intensive professional development via coaching to its pre-k program. In Tennessee, researchers found that children in state-funded pre-k programs did not receive enough content-rich instruction, given the lack of teacher training and supports (Farran, Hofer, Lipsey, & Bilbrey, 2014).

Indiana’s early childhood coaching system is strong and well-regarded nationally. External coaches from local child care resource and referral agencies and the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, coach programs on quality standards through on-site observation, trainings and other supports. Coaching can also be embedded within programs through innovations such as “master teachers,” as well as activated through other external technical assistance providers or institutions of higher education. Many high-quality programs in Indiana have piloted such supports and suggest pathways to offer such professional development at greater scale. Early Learning Indiana is working with Ball State University, the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children, and others toward a January 2017 launch of a “master teacher” certificate and “master coach” credential that can advance local practice by offering a common base of knowledge and skills to guide coaching.

“Parents need and want the option to provide high-quality pre-k to their child. All children deserve the right to a good start in life and in school. A great pre-k experience can make a lasting difference and put a child on the road to success. Unfortunately, too few families have the ability to pay for a good pre-k program. It is time to step up and invest in our future.”

Ted Maple, Ph.D
Early Learning Indiana President & CEO
A Call To Action

There is a groundswell of support for statewide pre-k expansion from the Hoosier public, educators, community leaders, business leaders, faith leaders and the philanthropic community. Stakeholder outreach made clear that Indiana needs—and is ready for—significant additional public funds to support pre-k expansion, so many more Hoosier children can benefit from a pre-k education that prepares them for success in school.

Now is the time to act. Our state’s pre-k pilots have demonstrated success and yielded lessons learned. Demand for pre-k is high. Our lawmakers are about to propose a two-year budget that can honor taxpayers’ commitments. They have an opportunity to invest in our state’s future leaders by expanding pre-k, making a down payment on Indiana’s school readiness and future prosperity.

While the exact way forward can and should be debated in our legislature, the core principles that should guide expansion are now clearer. Expand access to many more children in all 92 counties. Support all types of high-quality programs within our mixed-delivery system. Empower parent choice and decision-making. Ensure that programs produce a wide range of academic, social-emotional and other beneficial outcomes for participating children.

If you support statewide pre-k expansion, please join this effort at www.AllIN4PreK.org. Your voice matters for our youngest children.
REFERENCES


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