

***Telling Our Stories: The  
Continuing Need to Advocate  
for Our Programs***

If we don't tell them they will not  
get told....

And what else may get told and  
heard.

Presentation by Maury Lyon November 2009  
Please contact me with your comments and ideas  
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**A Nation at Risk:  
The Imperative for Educational  
Reform**

A Report to the Nation  
and the Secretary of Education  
United States Department of Education  
by  
The National Commission on Excellence  
in Education  
April 1983

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**Our roots are in an mid 1980's  
reform act**

- We were in good company with
  - Reading improvement grant
  - Teacher and administrator competency tests
  - IGAP (predates ISAT)
  - Truants' Alternative grant
  - Administrators Academies
  - Teacher evaluation revision

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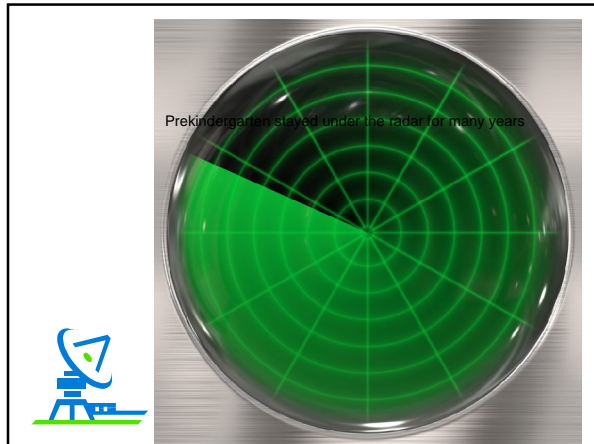
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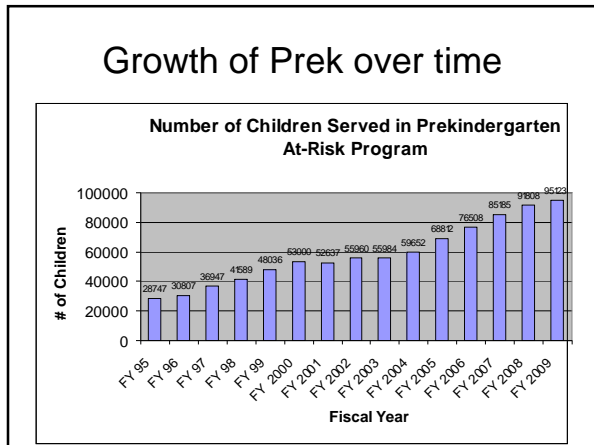
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### A Universal Good:

Expanding Voluntary, Early Learning Opportunities for Illinois' Young Children

The information included is very well written piece well articulated a desire to expand prekindergarten beyond the at risk population of Illinois.

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“Illinois Preschool programs will be community-based collaborations among existing and new preschool, Head Start, and child care providers. These collaborations will be overseen and funded by an Illinois Preschool Council under the direction of the Governor’s Office.”

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Universal Preschool Score of 2002

- We reacted
- We organized
- We held off the tiger
  
- For then.....

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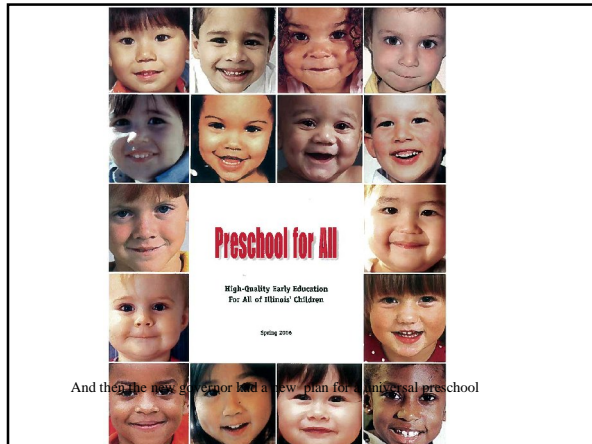
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### Preschool for All

- Involved a large group
- Early Learning Council and its committees
- Even the President liked it
  
- Diluted the focus on at risk children
- Diluted the resources
- Questionable sustainability

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### And now four years in...

- There has been growth of the children served
- There are accountability measures in place
- There has NOT been a answer to the question of financial sustainability
  
- We need to speak up for our programs!

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Well focused message is necessary

- The need to stay on message
- What is that message?

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Ounce of Prevention Legislative Priorities

- Early Care and Education
- Early Intervention
- Health
- Home Visiting
- Prenatal Maternal Health
- Preschool for All
- Professional Development
- Social and Emotional Health
- All are head noddors but when the resources are scarce we must focus on our children!

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Again what is our message?

- Funds do not exist at another level
- Districts have not funded preschool in the past
- Districts do not have funds to do so without state grant
- The needs are well documented and regrettably not going away



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1. Unless there are new revenue sources it is very possible that there could be at least a 50% cut in the early childhood block grant. If that was to happen there would be serious reductions in the number of children we could serve. We would have fewer classes and less teachers. Where would the unserved children go? How many would fall further behind? And that is at 50% cuts and I am not sure there is the state revenue to maintain that level.

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2. We are facing the greatest challenge to prekindergarten since we went down that road as a state in 1985. We have developed an infrastructure and draconian cuts would drive teachers away and it could be a permanent change. Without the dependability, people would only work in preschool until something more stable became available

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3. The communities have come to depend on the early childhood block grant programs as a permanent part of the local offering but have done so with state grant funds. Our communities do not have the local resources to continue the programs without the state effort. Local communities already support the program with space and other indirect expenses, but direct support was not part of their planning.

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## Resource Competition at ISBE

- Basic K-12 offering
- Other valuable education programs
- Other functions of state government
  - Prisons
  - Roads
  - Economic development

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## Policy attacks

- “A dynamic and visionary approach is available to our elected officials. Illinois can under-invest in a heavy-handed and suspect enterprise. Or, we can invest in families and markets. If preschool is going to truly be “Preschool for All,” it must be for all children, all families, all communities, and all educators- public and private.”
- *Illinois Policy Institute, A Better Approach to PFA*
  - Which would want it to be a voucher

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## So how to advocate?

- Share the problem
- Tell our stories
- Get our partners in line
- Keep the pressure on to keep IL serving the young children... don't waste twenty years of infrastructure

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### Actions need to be now

- Public education
- Issue education
- Policy education
- Voter/candidate education
- Organizing/mobilizing
- Direct lobbying

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### Actions need to be ongoing

- Regular contacts
- Regular reports
- Families need to keep telling their stories
- Be a Rolodex friend
- Send articles

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Carol H. Weiss

What affects decision making?

- Interest
- Information
- Ideology
  
- Institution

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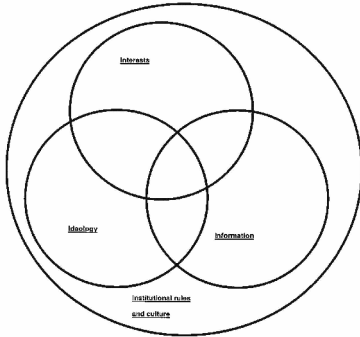
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But is the legislative fiscal decision making a rational process?



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Don't be Chicken Little



How do we share our concerns without sounding like whiners?  
The sky is not falling!

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*"All we want are the facts, ma'am."*



As Joe Friday tells us we need to keep to the facts.

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Let's all be community  
organizers  
*For Prek must stay!*

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