

August 2007

*For the Children?
No, for the
Politicians!*

POLICY

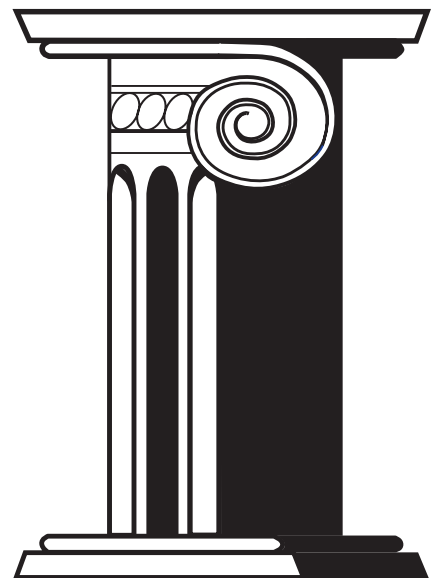
STUDY

No. 07-1

by

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PUBLIC INTEREST



I N S T I T U T E

POLICY STUDY

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**Dr. Don Racheter,
President**

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Executive Summary

One of the latest trends in education is that all children need some exposure to a pre-K educational program to be ready to learn when they enter Kindergarten. And not just any childcare will do, it must be “quality” education, as defined by elected officials and school administrators. Iowa Governor Chet Culver promised during his campaign last year to provide preschool for all four-year-olds in Iowa. The Democrat-controlled Legislature followed his lead and adopted a program, approved by the Governor, to create a massive government-run preschool program in Iowa.

Iowa’s government preschool program decrees that “quality” instruction can only be provided by employees of government school districts or those under contract with a school district in Iowa. This requirement implies that private providers of preschool in Iowa are providing sub-standard instruction to preschoolers. Requiring the new preschool program to be staffed by government employees or those contracted with government will provide a pool of potential new dues-paying members for the teachers’ union.

The cost of the expansion of government-provided preschool, which is predicted to balloon from \$15 million for FY 2008 to \$108.9 million in FY 2014, is also a concern. The state was already providing preschool to many low-income or at-risk children through the Community Empowerment program and Shared Visions program, as well as the federally-funded Head Start Program.

Rather than emulating states such as Georgia and Oklahoma that implemented pre-K programs in the past with little improvement in state test scores, Iowa should choose to duplicate programs such as the pre-K program in Florida. The Florida program uses vouchers to provide more children the opportunity to attend preschool, while still allowing families to choose a private preschool if they prefer it to a government-run preschool. Pennsylvania has also chosen to expand opportunities for four-year-olds, without expanding the government-run school system, by providing tax credits to companies that contribute to scholarship organizations. Iowa has a similar program for K-12 students that should be expanded to include pre-K students.

Does Iowa need a “free” government-run preschool program that is open to all four-year-olds in the state to improve the educational outcome of Iowa students? Supporters of such a program often say it is necessary to ensure that all children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. However, the majority of children are now starting school ready to learn.

Creating a government-run preschool program, rather than utilizing vouchers or scholarships to help those children who are in need or at risk, demonstrates that the program’s main beneficiary is not necessarily “the children” but “the politicians” who have created Iowa’s government-run preschool program to reward their loyal supporters.

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Introduction

One of the latest trends in education is that all children need some exposure to a pre-K educational program to be ready to learn when they enter Kindergarten. And not just any childcare will do, it must be “quality” education, as defined by elected officials and school administrators. In the 1960s, only 15 percent of our nation’s children attended a preschool; today that number is 65 percent.¹ It makes one wonder how our state and nation has survived if attending preschool is crucial to our future. As Darcy Olsen, President of the Goldwater Institute, ponders,

Our grandparents didn’t attend preschools, and neither did our parents. Chances are that most of us reading this [policy study] didn’t either. If we attended kindergarten, it was probably for just a few hours a day. Generations of Americans went to college, raised their families, and kept America growing, all without preschool. If preschool is a requirement for success, how did so many of us succeed without it?²

One of Governor Culver’s campaign promises was that the state would provide access to quality preschool for all

four-year-olds in Iowa. The Iowa Legislature took action to help the Governor fulfill that promise, by adopting legislation to provide “access to quality, affordable preschool”³ for nearly every four-year-old by the year 2011. Supporters of this plan claim that 28,000 of the state’s approximately 38,000 four-year-olds currently do not have access to a quality preschool education.⁴ The logical conclusion to be drawn from that statement is that many of the state’s four-year-olds are in preschools, daycares, or other child-care situations that the Governor and many members of the Legislature do not consider to be “quality.” The solution they see to providing access to “quality” preschool for all four-year-olds is, of course, to create a massive government-run preschool program in Iowa.

Problems with Iowa’s Government Preschool Program

The legislation to implement the Governor’s preschool plan would provide “a minimum of 10 hours per week of quality instruction in a variety of settings.”⁵ This quality instruction, however, cannot be conducted by those currently in the child-care business, unless they are willing to partner with the local school district, and welcome a teacher into their facility who meets the criteria established by the preschool

legislation. The teacher requirements for the state-run preschool program declare “a teacher in a preschool program must hold a bachelor’s degree in early childhood or a comparable degree and be licensed under Iowa Teacher licensing standards. The teacher must also be employed by the school district implementing the program or be under a contract agreement with the district.”⁶ Even if a current preschool provider has a bachelor’s degree or beyond in this field, they are not qualified to provide “quality” instruction unless they are an employee of or under contract with a school district in Iowa, and have a license and endorsement from the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners.

The cost of the expansion of government-provided preschool is also a concern. The budget approved by the Iowa Legislature provides \$15 million for Fiscal Year 2008 to begin implementing the program. By FY 2014, the Iowa Department of Education projects that total state funding for the state-run preschool program will be \$108.9 million.⁷ If the FY 2014 funding target of \$108.9 million is divided by 38,000 four-year-olds, the preschool program will cost \$2,866 per child. This per-child cost for the state to provide a minimum of ten hours per week of preschool instruction is more than half of the average annual fees paid

for full-time center care for four-year-olds in Iowa, which is \$5,513.⁸

The state was already providing preschool to many low-income or at-risk children. Iowa Representative Dave Heaton (R) of Mt. Pleasant writes,

Last year this Legislature invested \$10 million to provide scholarships to children of low-income families (\$32,000 or less) to help with tuition to preschool, with priority going to four-year-olds. Henry County Empowerment was able to honor all requests for four-year-olds and with the remaining monies was able to provide for three-year-olds. Henry County has shown a successful effort in promoting preschool, giving access to all who ask.⁹

In 1998 the Iowa Legislature established the Community Empowerment program “to create a partnership between communities and state government to improve the well being for children, prenatal through 5, and their families.”¹⁰ Including the Henry County Empowerment, “there are 58 Community Empowerment Areas statewide representing all 99 counties. Each area has a citizen-led board [comprised of] elected officials, [as well as]

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“Even if a current preschool provider has a bachelor’s degree or beyond in this field, they are not qualified to provide ‘quality’ instruction unless they are an employee of or under contract with a school district in Iowa.”

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consumers and representatives from business, faith, human services, education, and health.”¹¹ Community Empowerment – School Ready funding, which provides preschool and child care, parent support, family home visitation, and parent education services, has more than doubled from FY 2001 to FY 2007, as can be seen in Table 1.¹² The Community Empowerment program will continue to coexist with the new state preschool program, with a reduction of only \$5 million in funding for FY 2008.¹³

Additionally, “Iowa receives federal funds for Head Start Programs, and state funding is provided through Shared Visions,”¹⁴ a program that provides “family support

for high-risk children in approximately 15 counties.”¹⁵

Certainly, many parents in Iowa, of all income levels, would like the idea of a “free” preschool education for their four-year-old children. However, nothing is “free,” and a tax increase will probably be necessary to fund this program, particularly as costs reach \$108 million (or more) per year. The current Legislature has already increased state spending “more than \$550 million, or approximately 10%, in Fiscal Year 2008 compared to Fiscal Year 2007.”¹⁶ Fiscal Year 2008 funding for the preschool program is \$15 million. When the funding needs of the program expand, a tax increase is inevitable.

“However, nothing is ‘free,’ and a tax increase will probably be necessary to fund this program.”

Table 1. Community Empowerment School Ready Funding History

FY 01	\$15,400,001.00
FY 02	\$15,617,247.00
FY 03	\$14,677,958.00
FY 04	\$15,339,844.10
FY 05	\$15,267,490.00
FY 06	\$25,634,842.00
FY 07	\$38,434,846.08

Source: “Community Empowerment School Ready Funding History,” Fiscal Year 2001-2007, Office of Iowa Empowerment, Iowa Department of Management, <http://www.empowerment.state.ia.us/Common/pdf/annual_reports/2006/school_ready_funding_history.pdf>

Providing “free” preschool to all four-year-olds, regardless of family income, also exposes a basic unfairness inherent to a government-run program. This program shifts the burden of providing care from those who are parents of four-year-olds to all taxpayers, individuals and businesses alike. The state already provides subsidies for preschool for low-income families and at-risk children. If there are more children in need of such subsidies, even after the increase in funding provided last year by the Iowa Legislature, elected officials should consider increasing the funds for these programs rather than creating a huge new state-run preschool program.

There are problems with the implementation of this plan, as well. The legislation provides a minimum of ten hours of preschool instruction per week. However, most parents work at least 40 hours a week. Will the preschool teachers hired by the school district present their instruction in existing preschools and daycare centers, resulting in the government imposing its will on privately-owned businesses? And will those privately-owned preschools that do take part in the state-run preschool program be required to reduce the rates they charge parents for child care services, now that at least ten hours per week of instruction is supposed to be “free” under the state’s program?

There is also the question of private preschool providers being compelled to participate in this program, to avoid losing business to those preschools that do participate in the state-run program by partnering with government-run schools. This worry was expressed by daycare providers in a June 20, 2007 news report on KCRG-TV in Cedar Rapids. According to the news report, [Cedar Rapids School] “District leaders say the idea is to work together, not to take kids away from their programs.”¹⁷ However, the implication is, if you are not willing to work with the government-run school system, all bets are off.

If the ten hours per week of new preschool instruction occurs on school district property, this will require either parents or the school district to provide transportation between the location of the instruction and the location where the children spend the other 30+ hours each week. If it is up to the parents, how many will be able to leave their jobs twice each day to shuttle their preschooler back and forth to the state’s preschool program? If it is the latter, this will increase the cost of the program even further.

Preschool vs. Daycare

The “statewide voluntary preschool program” adopted by the Legislature and signed

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“If the ten hours per week of new preschool instruction occurs on school district property, this will require either parents or the school district to provide transportation between the location of the instruction and the location where the children spend the other 30+ hours each week.”

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“Employees at privately-owned preschools or day care centers more than likely are not union members.”

into law by Governor Culver provides \$15 million for the 2007-08 school year to “create high-quality early learning environments for four-year-old children.”¹⁸ Many of Iowa’s four-year-olds are already in some kind of child-care setting outside of their homes for at least part of the day, quite often from a private provider. However, the state’s program seems to imply that only state-run preschools or private preschools that partner with school districts can provide “quality early learning environments.”

The new statewide preschool program will be controlled by the state’s school districts, as the rules promulgated by the Iowa Board of Education state that “only public school districts in Iowa may apply for state funds”¹⁹ for the preschool program. The Board of Education rules indicate that “there is no requirement that the teacher be an employee of the applicant [school] district; the teacher may be employed by a private provider or other public agency with whom the district has entered into an agreement or contract.”²⁰ However, a “teacher,” as defined by the Board of Education rules, must be “an individual who holds a valid practitioner’s license issued by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners under Iowa Code chapter 272 and holds an endorsement from the Iowa Board of

Educational Examiners that includes prekindergarten or kindergarten.”²¹

Employees at privately-owned preschools or day care centers more than likely are not union members. According to the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics, “14 percent of workers in all industries combined ... are union members or are covered by union contracts.” For workers in child day-care services, only three percent of all workers are union members or are covered by union contracts. By contrast, “about 38 percent of workers in the educational services industry — the largest number being in elementary, middle, and secondary schools — are union members or are covered by union contracts.”²² In our state, the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA) indicates that “there are now nearly 32,000 education employees as part of ISEA’s education family. Most of our members are classroom teachers and other licensed professional staff.”²³ For the 2006-2007 school year, there were 36,368 full- and part-time teachers in Iowa government schools and Area Education Agencies.²⁴ Additionally, Iowa has 3,652 private school teachers.²⁵

In 2006, then-Governor Tom Vilsack signed an executive order allowing the state’s child-care workers to unionize. Perhaps the unions’ reach into

the child-care sector in our state has not proceeded quickly enough, so rather than wait for current child-care workers to unionize, Governor Culver's preschool plan will expand the workforce of school districts, most of whom are members of a union, and send those workers into the child-care sector.

It would obviously be to the benefit of the Iowa State Education Association and that union's supporters if the new preschool teachers are

school district employees and as such, are a pool of potential new dues-paying members for the teachers' union. The ISEA made contributions to candidates in 2006 and the first half of 2007, the overwhelming majority of which were given to Democrats. (See Table 2.)²⁶ Once the Democrats took control of the Iowa Legislature following the November 2006 election, the state-run preschool program legislation passed with the support of every Democrat in the Legislature, with the

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**Table 2. Contributions by the Iowa State Education Association PAC
January 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007**

	Democrat	Republican
State Political Party ^a	\$380,000	\$0
Candidates for State Legislature ^b	\$10,500	\$200
Candidates for Governor (Culver - D, Nussle - R)	\$70,000	\$0
Total	\$460,500	\$200
Percent	99.957 %	0.043 %

^a\$324,500 of the amount contributed to the Iowa Democratic Party was specified as going to the Iowa Senate Majority Fund or the House Truman Fund.

^bContributions to Rep. Dawn Pettengill are included in the Democrat column, as that was Rep. Pettengill's party affiliation when contributions were made.

Source: Information is from Disclosure Reports filed by the Iowa State Education Association Political Action Committee, filed with the Iowa Ethics and Campaign Disclosure Board. Reports were filed on May 15, 2006; July 18, 2006; October 18, 2006; January 15, 2007; and July 10, 2007.

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exception of Representative Ray Zirkelbach, who was serving in the Iowa Army National Guard in Iraq. (See Table 3.)²⁷ If the Iowa Legislature finds a way to adopt the so-called “Fair Share” legislation, gutting Iowa’s Right To Work laws – at the very least for public employees – all of those new preschool teachers (as well as all current government school teachers and other government employees) will be required to pay a portion of the union dues, even if they choose not to join the union. That would add to the sum of money that the union can hand out to its political supporters at election time.

Experience in Other States

Georgia was the first state in the nation to provide a voluntary Pre-K program that is open to all four-year-olds, regardless of family income. The state’s preschool program, previously provided for at-risk children only, was opened to all four-year-olds beginning with the 1995-1996 school year. Providers who participate in the state-run preschool program must provide a minimum of 6.5 hours of instruction each day for 180 days each year.²⁸ The Georgia program is funded through state lottery proceeds, and according to the Georgia Lottery Commission,

Table 3.
House Vote on the Legislation creating the State-Run Preschool Program (HF 877)

	Democrats ^{a,b}	Republicans
Yes	53	3
No	0	43

^aRep. Dawn Pettengill's vote is included in the Democrat column, as that was Rep. Pettengill's party affiliation when the vote was taken.

^bRep. Ray Zirkelbach (D) did not vote on this legislation, as he was serving in the Iowa Army National Guard in Iraq.

Senate Vote on the Legislation creating the State-Run Preschool Program (HF 877)

	Democrats	Republicans
Yes	30	6
No	0	14

Source: Vote information from the *Journal of the House*, March 28, 2007, pp. 1124-1125; and *Journal of the Senate*, April 18, 2007, pp. 1301-1302.

“more than \$3 billion has been appropriated to send more than 790,000 four-year-olds to Pre-K programs throughout the state.”²⁹ That is an average of \$250 million each year for the twelve years that Georgia’s preschool program has been open to all four-year-olds. According to the Georgia Governor’s Office of Student Achievement, for the 2005-2006 school year 72,902 four-year-olds, or 52 percent of the four-year-olds in Georgia, chose to participate in the state’s preschool program, known as the “Bright From the Start” program. Of those enrolled, 39,833 were considered at-risk children, or just over half of the children participating in the Bright From the Start program.³⁰

The Georgia Department of Education is required by state law to test all government school kindergarten students on their readiness to enter the first grade, and in 1990 the Department adopted the Georgia Kindergarten Assessment Program (GKAP) as the method of evaluation.³¹ Georgia State University researchers looked at the GKAP tests of children who had attended preschools in the state’s program compared to all students in the state during the kindergarten year. The University study found that “eighty-eight percent of the study sample scored a five on the capability item, compared to 85 percent of

all students across the state scoring similarly. Statistical tests indicate that overall these differences are not significant.”³² A Reason Foundation study evaluating the universal preschool program in Georgia indicated that “reports also show that GKAP scores are essentially the same as they were before Georgia adopted the universal preschool program. Linda Schrenko, then Georgia State School Superintendent, expressed the state’s disappointment, saying, ‘The only message you can get from it is that our kindergarten non-ready rate is the same, regardless of what we do.’”³³

Oklahoma was the second state to implement a statewide government-run preschool program. “Local school districts in Oklahoma have had the option of providing pre-K since 1998 to any 4-year-old wishing to attend,” and 93 percent of school districts offer a half-day (2.5 hours) or full-day (6 hours) of preschool, or both, five days a week during the academic school year.³⁴ In 2006 the state’s preschool program served 70 percent of Oklahoma four-year-olds, or over 33,000 children, with a spending level on the program of \$6,167 per child.³⁵

A Reason Foundation study evaluating the universal preschool program in Oklahoma looked at test scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress

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“None of the states in the top 10 best performers in terms of gains in fourth-grade reading on the NAEP between 1992 and 2005 had implemented universal preschool.”

(NAEP) to gauge the impact of Oklahoma’s preschool program, but was disappointed in the findings.

In Oklahoma 33 percent of fourth graders were below basic in reading in 1992. By 2005, 40 percent of Oklahoma fourth graders were scoring below basic. In 1992, 38 percent of Oklahoma fourth graders scored basic in reading. Again by 2005, only 35 percent of fourth graders could read at a basic level. Finally, in 1992, 25 percent of Oklahoma fourth graders were proficient in reading, and by 2005, only 21 percent of Oklahoma fourth graders were proficient in reading. One would expect that a large statewide investment in universal preschool, including highly paid, credentialed teachers and a high-quality curriculum would have a positive effect on fourth-grade reading scores. These scores declined, despite the fact that all of the children that took the 2005 NAEP reading test in ... Oklahoma were eligible for universal preschool. On the other hand, none of the states in the top 10 best

performers in terms of gains in fourth-grade reading on the NAEP between 1992 and 2005 had implemented universal preschool.³⁶

Ever-Expanding Reach of Government Educators

The age at which many educators and elected officials decide we must turn our children over to the government for an education – for the children’s own good, of course – has grown earlier and earlier over the years. Our grandparents had no pre-K or Kindergarten programs, while many young adults today may have attended a half-day kindergarten program. In 2006, 97.5 percent of public school districts in Iowa offered all-day, every-day kindergarten “as their predominant kindergarten program.”³⁷ More children in all-day kindergarten require more kindergarten teachers, thus more members for the teachers’ unions to recruit.

According to the supporters of the preschool program, by 2011, 90 percent of all Iowa four-year-olds will be attending at least ten hours of preschool education provided by Iowa’s school districts. That target seems unlikely to be met, unless the program becomes mandatory rather than voluntary. Just 52 percent of Georgia four-year-olds, where the program has been open to

all since 1995, and 70 percent of Oklahoma four-year-olds are participating in those state preschool programs.

It seems unlikely that the educational do-gooders in government will stop with merely ten hours of “free” preschool. Presumably if ten hours per week of government-approved preschool education is good, a program that provides such education all day, five days a week would be even better in their eyes. Education will likely be expanded to even younger students as well. Many of the same arguments being made today to demonstrate why four-year-old children need to attend preschool – to be ready to learn when they begin kindergarten – were used to demonstrate the need to expand education first to a half-day of kindergarten, then to a full day of kindergarten. Soon, we will need to send our three-year-olds to a state-run education program so they are ready to learn when they enter preschool as four-year-olds. In fact, Governor Brad Henry of Oklahoma has proposed expanding his state’s preschool program, which is now open to all four-year-olds, to cover all three-year-olds as well.

A Better Way: Helping the Consumers, Not the Providers, of Education

In 2002, Florida voters approved a Constitutional Amendment requiring a universal pre-K program open to all four-year-olds in that state. “But rather than create a costly new government infrastructure, then-Governor Bush proposed and secured passage of a voucher allowing families to choose public or private preschools.”³⁸ Private providers consist of “a licensed child-care facility, a licensed family day-care home, a licensed large-family child-care home, or a nonpublic school or faith-based child-care provider that is exempt from licensure.”³⁹ The program was implemented in the 2005-2006 school year. Over 114,000 children, or 50 percent of all Florida four-year-olds, were enrolled in Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) education program for the 2006-2007 school year.⁴⁰ As of June 2006, 83.4 percent of the children were attending a private center or private school. Another 2.8 percent of VPK providers were family child-care homes.⁴¹

Pennsylvania is another state that has chosen a different path, rather than expanding its government-run education system to include universal preschool. In 2003, the Pennsylvania Legislature expanded former Governor

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“Many of the same arguments being made today to demonstrate why four-year-old children need to attend preschool... were used to demonstrate the need to expand...to a full day of kindergarten.”

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“While a Pennsylvania-like scholarship tax-credit program would help more children in need to attend a preschool, it does not expand the state’s government teacher workforce or keep the preschool program under the control of government school districts.”

Tom Ridge’s Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program to include pre-K scholarships for children who need assistance to enroll in a pre-kindergarten program. The EITC program allows companies to contribute to scholarship organizations or educational improvement programs in exchange for tax credits. “The pre-K plan awards a corporation a 100 percent tax credit for its first \$10,000 in contributions to a nonprofit Pre-Kindergarten Scholarship Organization (PKSO) and up to a 90 percent credit for additional contributions up to \$100,000.”⁴² The Pennsylvania pre-K EITC program began awarding scholarships for the 2004-2005 school year, and as of January 2007, had raised a total of \$12,575,224 to award 10,935 scholarships.⁴³ The average size of a pre-K scholarship in Pennsylvania is \$1,150.

Iowa currently has a similar scholarship tax credit program for K-12 students. Last year, then-Governor Vilsack signed legislation into law creating the scholarship tax-credit program, establishing requirements for “school tuition organizations” to collect contributions and award scholarships for tuition costs at non-public schools. Contributors receive a personal income-tax credit for 65 percent of the amount of the contribution. The total approved tax credits were capped at \$2.5 million in

2006 and \$5 million for 2007. Governor Culver recently approved legislation to expand the total amount of tax credits to \$7.5 million for the 2008 tax year.

To help more Iowa four-year-olds attend a pre-K program, Iowa’s scholarship tax credit program could become more similar to the Pennsylvania EITC program. Iowa’s program provides personal income tax credits, while Pennsylvania’s program provides tax credits for corporate contributions, and also allows a more generous percent of the contribution as a tax credit. Pennsylvania’s program overall is much larger than Iowa’s program. Iowa’s scholarship tax-credit program for K-12 students is capped at \$5 million in donations this year. Pennsylvania has increased its caps to \$59 million per year – \$36 million for K-12 scholarship organizations, \$18 million for educational improvement programs, and \$5 million for pre-K scholarship organizations – with an average pre-K scholarship of approximately \$1,150 per child.⁴⁴ While a Pennsylvania-like scholarship tax-credit program would help more children in need to attend a preschool, it does not expand the state’s government teacher workforce or keep the preschool program under the control of government school districts, which seems to be a high priority for the Culver

Administration and the current Legislature, controlled by the Democrats who are close political allies of the ISEA and National Education Association (NEA).

Conclusion

Many parents may be enticed by the thought of “free” preschool, failing to realize that nothing the government provides is “free” – the bill must be paid by someone. Will parents who receive ten hours a week of “free” preschool be better off if their taxes must be raised to pay for this government program, as its price tag grows ever-larger? There is also the question of quality in a government-run program, a concern raised by many parents, rather than a private program that must provide quality care for children or risk going out of business, a fear not faced by most government-run programs. “I like the ‘state pay’ idea,” said Heather Miers of Ankeny, who runs a child-care service and is the mother [of two preschoolers]. “The only thing I would be concerned with is sometimes when you get the state-pay programs, you don’t always get the highest quality.”⁴⁵

Does Iowa need a “free” government-run preschool program that is open to all four-year-olds in the state to improve the educational

outcome of Iowa students? Supporters of such a program often say it is necessary to ensure that all children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten. However, the majority of children are now starting school ready to learn. “According to the Department of Education report *America’s Kindergartners*, U.S. kindergartners have a strong start. Upon kindergarten entry, 94 percent of children are proficient at recognizing numbers, shapes, and counting to ten; 92 percent are eager to learn; and, all but three percent are in good health. Such measures indicate that America’s flexible approach to early education is working.”⁴⁶

Even when measured against children in countries such as France, England, Spain, and Belgium, “where more than 90 percent of four-year-olds attend public preschool... International tests show that by age nine, when the benefits of preschool should be apparent, American children regularly outscore their European peers on tests of reading, math, and science.”⁴⁷ However, “fifty-three percent of high school graduates need remedial help in college,” according to the American Diploma Project.⁴⁸ Are we to believe that many American students are able to outpace their European peers in the fourth grade, but then need remedial help in college because of a lack of a universal government-run preschool

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program? The educational problems in our country lie more in our current educational system itself. Expanding that system to envelope children at a younger age will not be to the children's advantage if the system itself is broken.

Creating a government-run preschool program, rather than utilizing vouchers or scholarships to help those children who are in need or at risk, demonstrates that the program's main beneficiary is not "the children" but "the politicians" who have created Iowa's government-run preschool program to reward their loyal supporters.

"The program's main beneficiary is not 'the children' but 'the politicians.'"

Endnotes:

¹ Darcy Olsen, "Puffed up promise of preschool," *The Arizona Republic*, <<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/opinions/articles/1220olsen,darcy1.html>> (June 18, 2007).

² Ibid.

³ Dean Fiihr, "House Votes to Expand Access to Quality Preschool," Iowa Democratic Party press release, March 28, 2007.

⁴ Ibid, also Mike Glover, "Senate putting finishing touches on preschool plan," *Mt. Pleasant News*, April 18, 2007, p. 1. Estimate of Iowa's four-year-old population from the U.S. Census Bureau.

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⁶ Ibid.

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