

Beshear Preschool Expansion Proposal

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Kentucky currently provides funding for 4-year-old children in families whose income is at or below 150 percent of poverty level to attend preschool, and fully funds preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds with certain disabilities. Gov. Beshear's budget proposal calls for raising that eligibility level for 4-year-olds to 160 percent of poverty level in the second year of the upcoming biennium, and he plans to raise it to 200 percent of poverty level by the end of his term as governor.

This expansion to 160 percent, at a cost of \$15 million, means that 4,430 more 4-year-olds will be served, an increase of 18 percent. Expanding to 200 percent of poverty level will add an additional 3,920 4-year-olds. The proposal does more than just prepare children for kindergarten – it builds a foundation for success throughout a child's educational career and adulthood.

Benefits of Preschool

Large Return on Investment. Experts say that every dollar spent on preschool programs carries a return on investment that ranges from \$2 to \$17.

Preschool Produces Better Educational Outcomes. According to a report by the Committee for Economic Development (CED), a national nonprofit, nonpartisan business-led public policy organization, high-quality preschool programs have long-lasting effects on student academic achievement into high school years, and one study showed participants were better at problem solving in early adulthood. The PEW Center on the States found that the positive effect of high-quality preschool “generates significant savings because children need fewer higher-priced interventions such as special education and grade retention.” High-quality preschool increases the likelihood of graduating from high school – one study found that dropout rates were reduced by 25 percent.

Preschool Improves Income and Employment. According to the Prichard Committee, children who attend high-quality preschool are more likely to be employed and have higher earnings as adults. In addition, CED found that participants in one long-term preschool study “performed better on other indicators of economic stability, such as owning a home, owning a car, maintaining a savings account, and being financially independent.”

Preschool Can Deter Crime, Reduce Drug Use. The Committee on Economic Development found that preschool was an effective crime deterrent, with participants less likely to be arrested as juveniles, less likely to become violent hardened criminals and less likely to be sentenced to prison or jail. In addition, one study showed reduced use of soft drugs.

Preschoolers Less Likely to Rely on Social Services, Have Better Health Outcomes.

According to the Prichard Committee, participants in high-quality preschool are less likely to depend on public assistance, become teenage parents or endanger their health by smoking. According to CED, they are less likely to receive welfare, family counseling, to smoke, and less likely to have stopped work because of health issues.