



Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) Education Reimbursement Initiative

Data Analysis Report 2021

Prepared by INCCRRA, January 2022



A diverse and qualified early childhood workforce continues to be a focus in Illinois. Through the Governor's Office for Early Childhood Development (GOECD) Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG-5), and in partnership with the Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), a program to address potential financial barriers to advancing or completing educational goals at accredited Illinois institutions of higher education was implemented.

The time-limited Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Education Reimbursement Initiative was identified as a way to support the early childhood workforce in Illinois. Program applications were made available in February 2021 and accepted until all funds were obligated. As a result, reimbursements totaling \$80,000 were distributed to nearly 150 early educators to alleviate financial barriers at accredited Illinois institutions of higher education.

Program Description

The Illinois early educator community has responded to similar programs with an overwhelming ask for support to reduce barriers to pursuing degree, certification, and credential completion. This program supplied a \$600 reimbursement directly to early educators as they attempted to address barriers such as tuition, fees, and outstanding student debt. This opportunity was made available statewide, with priority given to early educators either currently enrolled in coursework at an accredited Illinois institution of higher education, or blocked from future enrollment at an accredited Illinois institution of higher education because of an outstanding balance due.

At the conclusion of this program, an analysis of the data gathered was completed. In addition, early educators responded to survey questions, as part of the application, to share their perception of how the funds would assist them in continuing or completing formal education.

Data Collection

Data analyzed in this report was gathered through multiple sources. Applicants described their needs and provided supporting documentation to confirm. Applicants were asked to supply a program application and confirm or obtain a Gateways Registry Membership. In addition, documentation including paystubs, Internal Revenue Service W-9 form, and receipts of payment made to an accredited Illinois institution of higher education or proof of a current outstanding student debt owed was required.

Data Summary and Analysis

Demographic Information – All Applicants

Job Type Breakdown

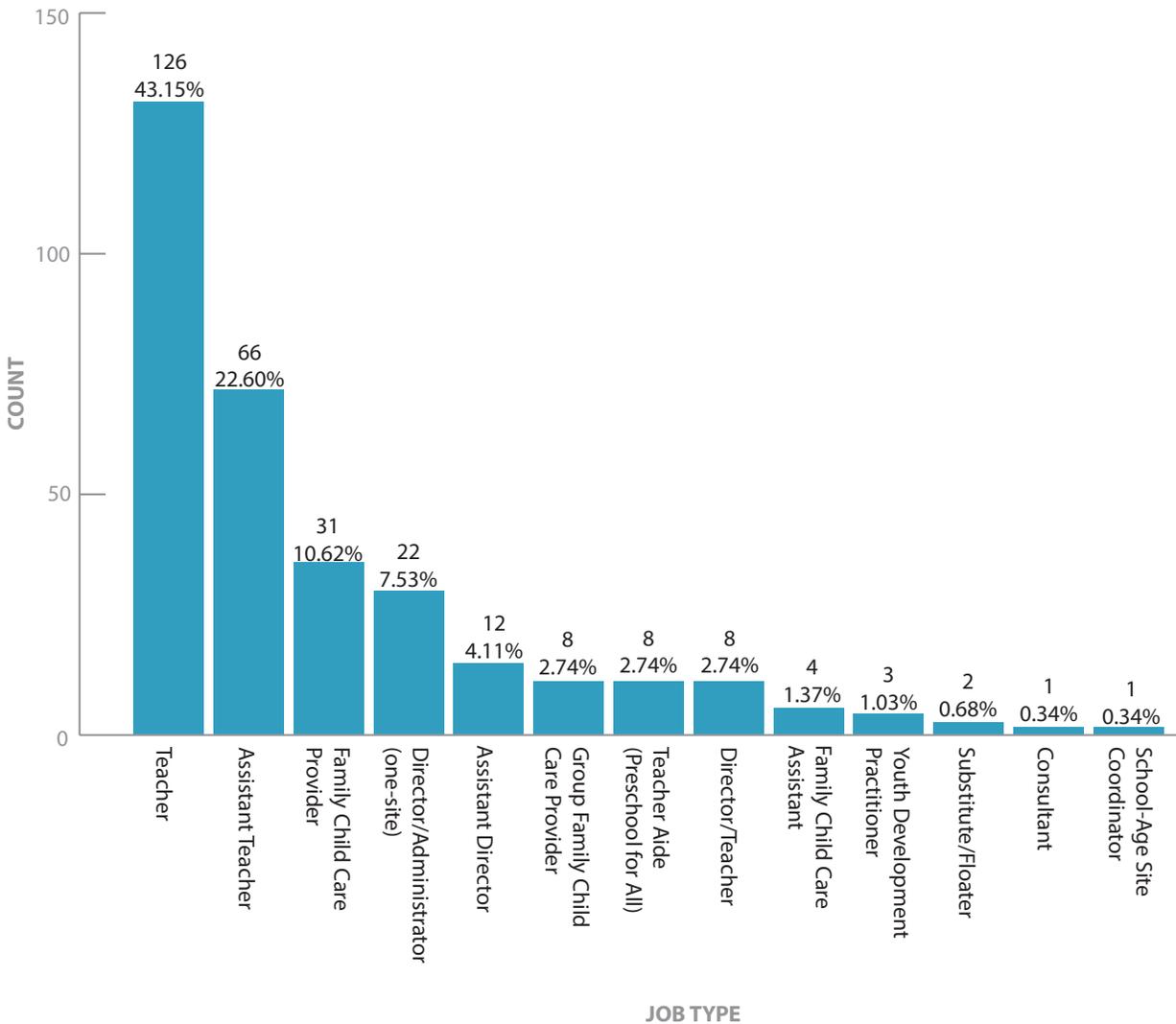
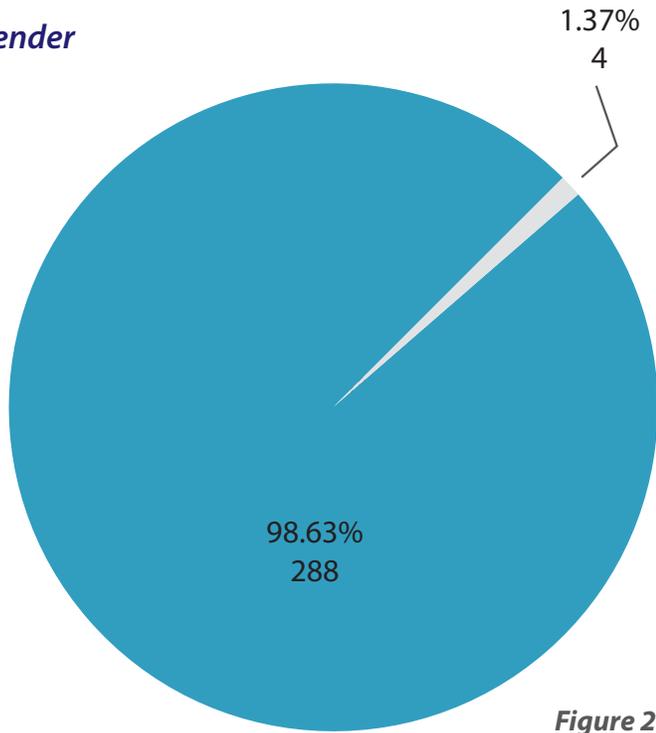


Figure 1

Applicants were most likely to be Teachers, representing 43.15 percent of applicants, followed by Assistant Teachers at 22.60 percent. Family Child Care Providers and Directors and/or Administrators were also more likely to be represented. (Figure 1)

Gender

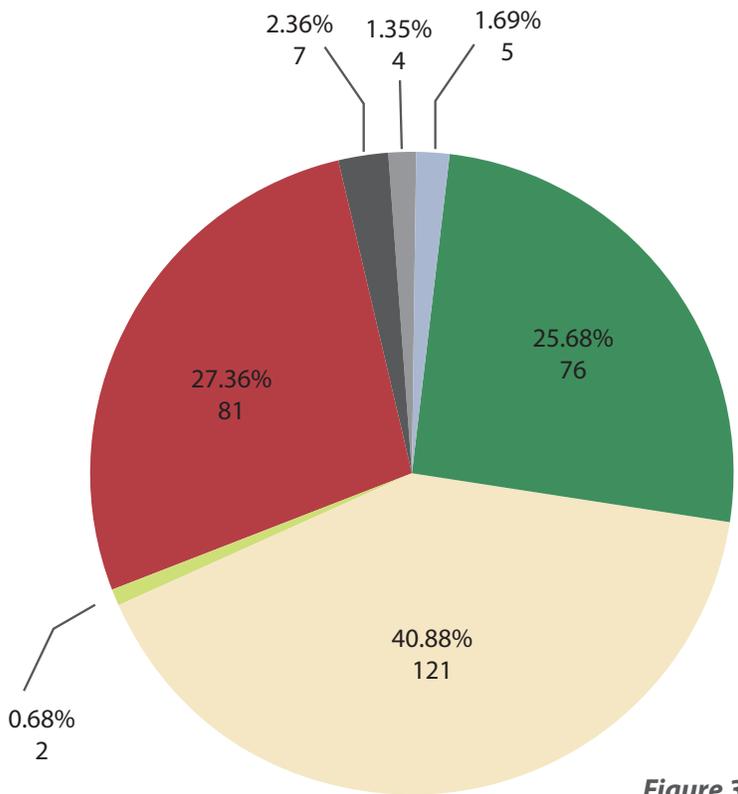


Most applicants were female, representing 98.63 percent of applicants. Men made up the remaining 1.37 percent of all applicants. (Figure 2)

Female Male

Figure 2

Race/Ethnicity



Applicants identifying as Caucasian/White were the most commonly represented race at 40.88 percent. This was closely followed by those identifying as Hispanic/Latino at 27.36 percent, and African American/Black at 25.68 percent. The least represented among applicants were those identifying as Asian at 0.68 percent and Pacific Islander at 1.35 percent. (Figure 3)

Did Not Respond
African American/Black
Caucasian/White
Native American/Alaskan
Asian
Hispanic/Latino
Pacific Islander
Multi-Racial
Other

Figure 3

Age of Applicants

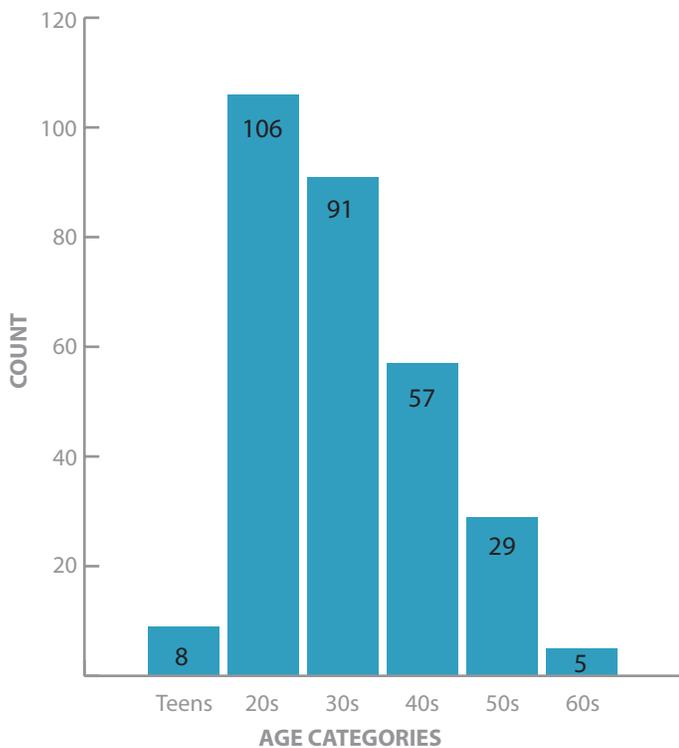


Figure 4

Among all applicants, a majority were from the ages of 20 to 29. This was followed by those in their 30s, then 40s, and 50s.

Applicant Pay Rate by Age

Age Categories	Hourly rate of pay	Amount to be paid to re-enroll, obtain official transcripts, etc.	Total amount being requested	Total amount owed/paid (per receipt/invoice)	Total amount owed/paid per capita
Teens	\$11.75	-	\$4,068.38	\$4,697.34	\$587.17
20s	\$13.30	\$1,591.47	\$63,459.30	\$197,195.45	\$1,860.33
30s	\$16.00	\$1,994.21	\$48,714.43	\$167,355.93	\$1,839.08
40s	\$15.30	\$2,730.00	\$31,800.00	\$89,338.05	\$1,567.33
50s	\$13.58	\$590.40	\$16,370.72	\$29,300.83	\$1,010.37
60s	\$13.80	-	\$2,934.93	\$9,154.93	\$1,830.99
Total	\$14.52	\$6,906.08	\$168,347.76	\$497,042.53	\$1,679.30

Table 1

Table 1 represents the median hourly pay among age groups. Wages peaked in the 30s with an hourly rate of pay at \$16.00 and were lowest among the Teens at \$11.75. The highest verifiable debt was among those in their 20s with a total of \$197,195.45, followed by those in their 30s with a total of \$167,355.93.

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Region

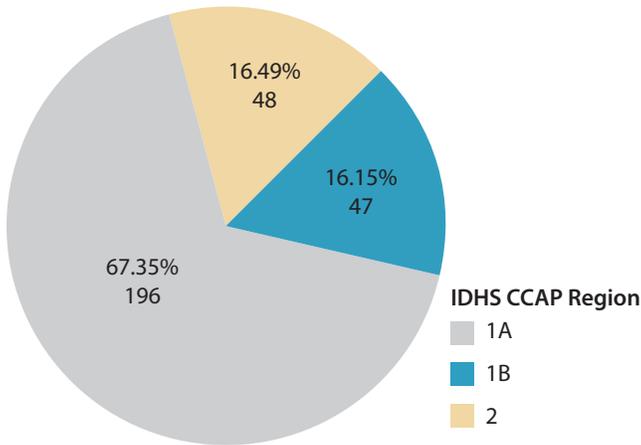


Figure 6

For the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Regions (Figure 5), 67.35 percent of all applicants were from Region 1A (Cook, DeKalb, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, and McHenry counties), 16.49 percent were from Region 2, which represents the remaining 79 counties in Illinois that are not in Regions 1A or 1B, and 16.15 percent were from Region 1B (Boone, Champaign, Kankakee, Madison, McLean, Monroe, Ogle, Peoria, Rock Island, Sangamon, St. Clair, Tazewell, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, and Woodford counties). (Figure 6)

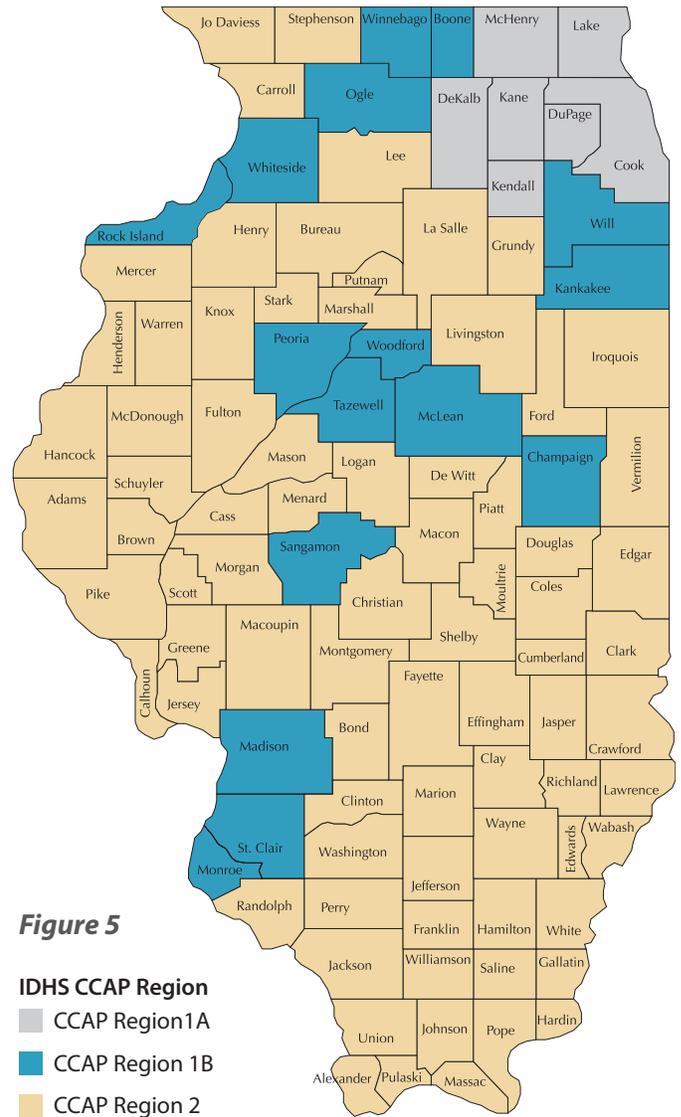
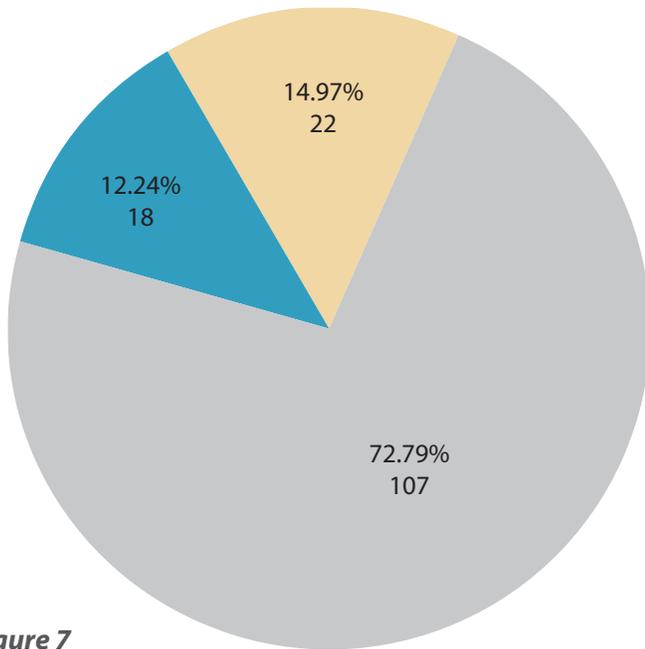


Figure 5

Eligible Applicants by Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Region



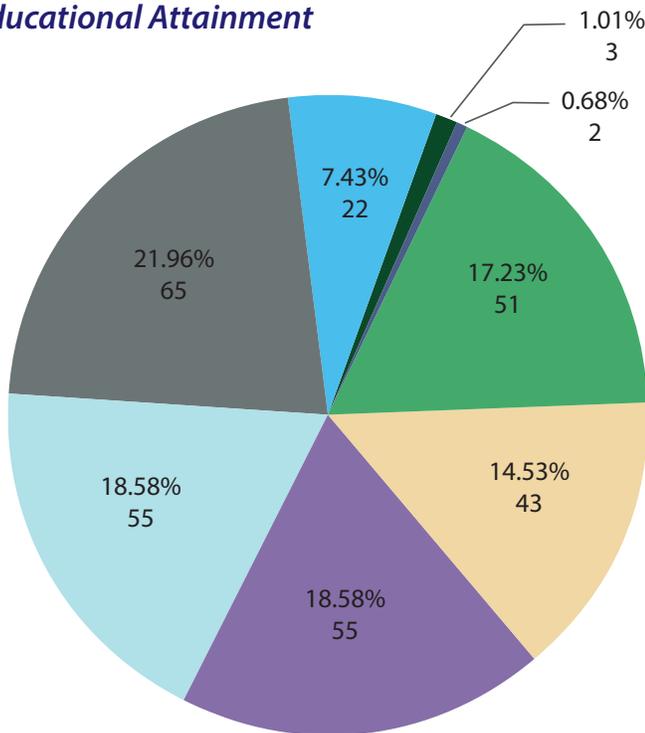
Among Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) Regions, 107 eligible applicants came from Region 1A (72.79 percent). This was followed by Region 2 with 22 applicants (14.97 percent) and Region 1B with 18 applicants (12.24 percent). (Figure 7)

IDHS CCAP Region

- 1A
- 1B
- 2

Figure 7

Educational Attainment



Among all applicants who submitted official transcripts or self-reported degree attainment, the highest degree earned was most often those with some Bachelor's level coursework at 21.96 percent. This was followed closely by a tie between those with some Associate's level coursework and those with Bachelor's degrees at 18.58 percent. The least often represented degree category was those who reported having no degree at 0.68 percent. (Figure 8)

Highest Degree Earned

- None
- High School/GED
- Associate's Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Post Graduate Degree
- Some associate's level coursework
- Some bachelor's level coursework
- Some master's level coursework
- Some post-graduate level coursework

Figure 8

Mean Rate of Pay

The application asked for confirmation of employment, including individual rate of pay in dollars per hour for all applicants. Of applicants who supplied income information, the mean hourly income was \$14.97, and the median income was \$14.52. (Table 2)

When income information was analyzed by job type, there were some differences. Assistant Directors had the highest mean hourly rate of pay at \$19.76. Family Child Care Providers had the lowest mean rate of pay at \$7.96. There was an exception to this, where the lone Consultant made \$26.72 per hour. (Table 3)

Statistics		
Hourly Rate of Pay		
N	Valid	283
	Missing	13
Mean		\$14.9728
Median		\$14.5200
Mode		\$14.00

Table 2

Job Type	Hourly Rate of Pay			
	Count	Minimum	Mean	Maximum
Total	292	\$0.11	\$14.97	\$31.00
Teacher	126	\$10.50	\$16.46	\$31.00
Assistant Teacher	66	\$8.25	\$13.54	\$20.00
Family Child Care Provider	31	\$0.11	\$7.96	\$28.84
Director and/or Administrator (one-site)	22	\$9.69	\$18.52	\$26.04
Assistant Director	12	\$12.00	\$19.76	\$27.40
Director/Teacher	8	\$12.50	\$15.45	\$18.22
Teacher Aide (Preschool for All)	8	\$11.25	\$14.54	\$20.66
Group Family Child Care Provider	8	\$1.20	\$9.46	\$20.00
Family Child Care Assistant	4	\$5.76	\$11.75	\$15.00
Youth Development Practitioner	3	\$13.26	\$17.34	\$21.43
Substitute/Floater	2	\$11.00	\$13.38	\$15.75
School-Age Site Coordinator	1	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$11.00
Consultant	1	\$26.72	\$26.72	\$26.72

Table 3

Perception of Education Reimbursement Benefits – All Applicants

Survey Responses

Most applicants responded to several survey questions indicating what they would be able to do if awarded an education reimbursement. Most reported that they would be able to (re)enroll in Early Childhood Education/Child Development coursework at a rate of 85.7 percent. This was closely followed by advancing Gateways Credentials at 78.3 percent and being able to complete a degree at an Illinois college or university at 75.2 percent. Being able to move up on the Great START Wage Supplement Scale was next at 67.8 percent. The least affirmative response came from those saying they would be able to (re)enroll in a community college at 49.3 percent. (Table 4)

		Count	Column N%
If you receive this reimbursement, will you be able to (re)enroll in ECE/CD coursework?	Yes	245	85.7%
	No	41	14.3%
At a community college?	Yes	141	49.3%
	No	145	50.7%
At a university?	Yes	164	57.3%
	No	122	42.7%
Be able to complete a degree at an Illinois college or university?	Yes	215	75.2%
	No	71	24.8%
Be able to advance your Gateways Credential?	Yes	224	78.3%
	No	62	21.7%
Be able to move up on the Great START Wage Supplement Scale?	Yes	194	67.8%
	No	92	32.2%
Be able to receive your official transcript?	Yes	187	65.4%
	No	99	34.6%

Table 4

Applicants were asked to indicate what type of degree they would complete with education reimbursement support. 40.87 percent of applicants who responded indicated that support would help with completion of either an Associate's Degree or a Bachelor's Degree. This was followed by a Graduate Degree at 18.26 percent. (Figure 9)

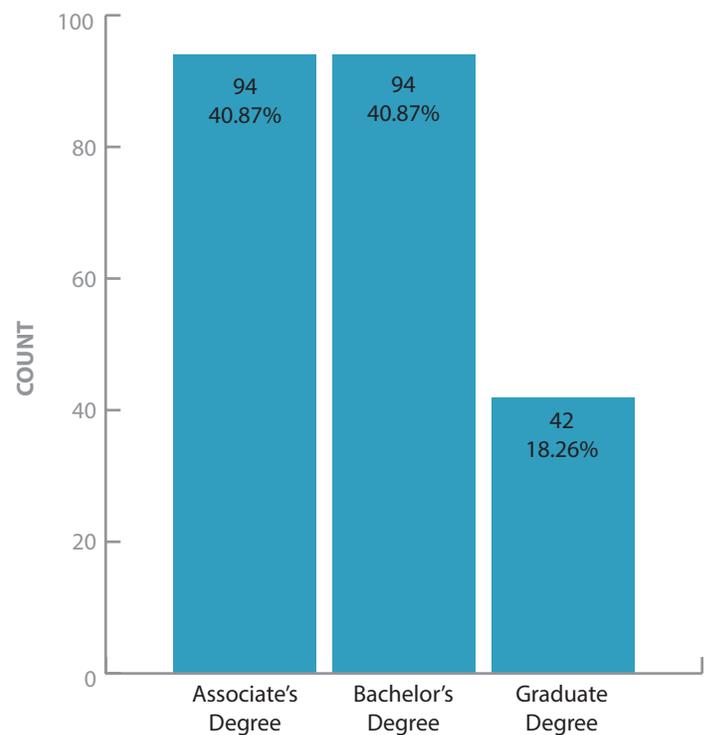


Figure 9 REASON FOR REQUESTING REIMBURSEMENT: DEGREE COMPLETION

Debt Analysis – All Applicants

Total Debt Represented Among All Applicant

Of the 296 total applicants (Table 5), the mean debt was \$1,787.92 and the median debt was \$978.50. The cumulative debt was \$497,042.53.

Debt Owed to Different Institutions Among All Applicants

Table 6 below lists the institutions or entities where applicant debt occurred. Along with their names, the count of applicants owing money, including the mean, median, and sum of debt among applicants is listed.

National Louis University, Western Illinois University, and McHenry County College are the institutions where the highest number of applicants incurred debt. The lowest number of applicants was represented by 27 institutions. The institutions that represented the highest amount of debt owed were to National Louis University (\$157,688.01), Navient (\$40,513.15), and Western Illinois University (\$32,654.83). The lowest measurable debts came from Heartland ECSI (\$186.80) and McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership (\$250.00).

Statistics

Total Amount Owed/Paid
(per receipt/invoice)

N	Valid	278
	Missing	18
Mean		\$1,787.9228
Median		\$978.5000
Sum		\$497,042.53

Table 5

Table 6

Total Amount Owed/Paid (per receipt/invoice)

Institution/Entity	Count	Mean	Median	Sum
Total	296	\$1,787.92	\$978.50	\$497,042.53
National Louis University	71	\$2,252.69	\$1,938.00	\$157,688.01
Unknown*	24	\$1,911.41	\$689.00	\$17,202.73
Western Illinois University	18	\$1,814.16	\$994.04	\$32,654.83
McHenry County College	16	\$227.99	\$0.00	\$3,647.89
City Colleges of Chicago	10	\$983.55	\$736.00	\$9,835.51
St. Augustine College	10	\$2,215.55	\$1,237.90	\$22,155.50
Oakton Community College	8	\$695.69	\$745.63	\$5,565.50
Joliet Junior College	7	\$623.40	\$525.04	\$4,363.80
Waubonsee Community College	7	\$627.31	\$585.00	\$4,391.20
Chicago State University	6	\$1,867.98	\$1,422.60	\$9,339.90
College of Lake County	6	\$442.62	\$389.86	\$2,655.71
Elgin Community College	6	\$652.75	\$798.00	\$3,916.51
Southwestern Illinois College	6	\$855.83	\$814.50	\$5,135.00
Rasmussen College	5	\$515.62	\$605.34	\$2,062.49
Concordia University Chicago	4	\$1,145.31	\$856.05	\$4,581.24
Moraine Valley Community College	4	\$1,385.00	\$901.50	\$5,540.00
Northeastern Illinois University	4	\$1,933.61	\$1,962.99	\$7,734.42
Rasmussen University	4	\$1,516.35	\$1,664.26	\$6,065.39
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	4	\$2,482.52	\$1,038.07	\$9,930.09
University of Illinois	4	\$1,227.28	\$642.75	\$4,909.11
Black Hawk College	3	\$1,568.75	\$1,891.48	\$4,706.24
College of DuPage	3	\$630.18	\$645.55	\$1,890.55
Eastern Illinois University	3	\$462.84	\$460.22	\$1,388.52
Erikson Institute	3	\$1,695.33	\$1,616.00	\$5,086.00
Heartland Community College	3	\$468.47	\$625.40	\$1,405.40
Illinois State University	3	\$2,266.37	\$2,473.22	\$6,799.12

Institution/Entity	Total Amount Owed/Paid (per receipt/invoice)			
	Count	Mean	Median	Sum
Lewis University	3	\$3,480.00	\$1,060.00	\$10,440.00
Navient	3	\$13,504.38	\$11,547.22	\$40,513.15
Triton College	3	\$971.97	\$855.40	\$2,915.90
Aurora University	2	\$2,925.00	\$2,925.00	\$5,850.00
Harper College	2	\$1,498.25	\$1,498.25	\$2,996.50
Lincoln Land Community College	2	\$603.00	\$603.00	\$1,206.00
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership	2	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$250.00
Morton College	2	\$869.00	\$869.00	\$1,738.00
Northern Illinois University	2	\$3,666.06	\$3,666.06	\$7,332.11
Prairie State College	2	\$562.00	\$562.00	\$1,124.00
Sauk Valley Community College	2	\$1,081.47	\$1,081.47	\$2,162.94
South Suburban College	2	\$485.88	\$485.88	\$971.75
Ashford University	1	\$4,066.50	\$4,066.50	\$4,066.50
Care Courses	1	\$270.00	\$270.00	\$270.00
Chicago School of Professional Psychology	1	\$4,890.50	\$4,890.50	\$4,890.50
DePaul University	1	\$301.00	\$301.00	\$301.00
Grand Canyon University	1	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00	\$1,400.00
Great Lakes Loans	1	\$6,789.28	\$6,789.28	\$6,789.28
Heartland ECSI	1	\$186.80	\$186.80	\$186.80
Highland Community College	1	\$647.21	\$647.21	\$647.21
Illinois Central College	1	\$1,206.95	\$1,206.95	\$1,206.95
Illinois Eastern Community Colleges	1	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00
John A. Logan College	1	\$453.00	\$453.00	\$453.00
Lake Land College	1	\$1,334.03	\$1,334.03	\$1,334.03
Loyola University Chicago	1	\$23,974.00	\$23,974.00	\$23,974.00
Mercy College of Ohio	1	\$295.00	\$295.00	\$295.00
Northwestern College	1	\$1,155.00	\$1,155.00	\$1,155.00
Parkland College	1	\$2,724.50	\$2,724.50	\$2,724.50
Quincy University	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Rend Lake College	1	\$977.00	\$977.00	\$977.00
Richland Community College	1	\$1,134.00	\$1,134.00	\$1,134.00
Rockford University	1	\$4,950.00	\$4,950.00	\$4,950.00
Spoon River College	1	\$980.00	\$980.00	\$980.00
University of Arizona	1	\$920.00	\$920.00	\$920.00
University of Arizona Global Campus	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
University of the Rockies	1	\$8,268.00	\$8,268.00	\$8,268.00
University of Wisconsin - Whitewater	1	\$8,450.75	\$8,450.75	\$8,450.75
Walden University	1	\$1,402.00	\$1,402.00	\$1,402.00
Washington University in St. Louis	1	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

*Applicants did not supply complete documentation that identified which institution or entity where student debt may have occurred.

Dollars Owed for Various Reasons

Applicants were asked to report how an education reimbursement would address their debt. The following table compiles responses and respective means, medians, and sums. Personal debt incurred from paying for coursework was listed by the highest number of applicants (123 applicants) with the highest sum of \$69,839.04, a mean of \$567.80, and a median of \$600.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed. This was followed by degree completion (114 applicants) with a sum of \$72,763.93, a mean of \$638.28, and a median of \$600.00.

Funding requested for other reasons (16 applicants) with a sum of \$9,631.64, a mean of \$601.98, and a median of \$394.50, was the least requested. Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Professional Educator Licensure (PEL) completion (17 applicants) with a debt sum of \$10,463.00, a mean of \$615.47 and a median debt of \$600.00 was also least requested. (Table 7)

		Statistics					
		Funding requested for degree completion	Funding requested for Gateways Credential completion	Funding requested for ISBE Professional Educator Licensure completion	Funding requested to obtain official transcripts	Funding requested to assist with personal debt incurred from paying for coursework	Funding requested for other specified reasons
N	Valid	114	19	17	26	123	16
	Missing	182	277	279	270	173	280
Mean		\$638.2801	\$463.3158	\$616.4706	\$481.4200	\$567.7971	\$601.9775
Median		\$600.0000	\$480.0000	\$600.0000	\$555.6050	\$600.0000	\$394.5000
Sum		\$72,763.93	\$8,803.00	\$10,463.00	\$12,516.92	\$69,839.04	\$9,631.64

Table 7

Amount Requested by All Applicants

As seen in Table 8, the mean amount requested among all applicants was \$584.54, while the median amount requested was \$600.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed. The total amount requested among all applicants was \$168,347.76.

		Statistics
		Total amount being requested
N	Valid	288
	Missing	17
Mean		\$584.5408
Median		\$600.0000
Sum		\$168,347.76

Table 8

Debt Analysis and Reimbursement Payment Information – Eligible Applicants

Total Debt Represented Among Eligible Applicants

A total of 148 applicants were awarded an education reimbursement through the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5). In this subgroup of applicants, the mean debt owed was \$1,604.06, and the median debt was \$1,012.00. The cumulative debt was \$237,400.00. (Table 9)

Statistics ^a		
Total Amount Owed/Paid (per receipt/invoice)		
N	Valid	148
	Missing	0
Mean		\$1,604.06
Median		\$1,012.00
Sum		\$237,400.00

Table 9

Amount Requested by Eligible Applicants

As seen in Table 10, the mean amount requested among all eligible applicants was \$592.14, while the median amount requested was \$600.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed. The total amount requested among eligible applicants was \$87,636.43.

Statistics ^a		
Total amount being requested		
N	Valid	148
	Missing	0
Mean		\$592.1380
Median		\$600.0000
Sum		\$87,636.43

Table 10

Reimbursement Paid to Eligible Applicants

As seen in Table 11, education reimbursements paid to eligible applicants totaled \$80,000.00. This represents 33.70 percent of cumulative debt for the 148 eligible applicants, and 16.10 percent of cumulative debt for all 296 applicants. The mean reimbursement paid to eligible applicants was \$540.54 and the median payment was \$600.00, the maximum education reimbursement allowed.

Statistics ^a		
Total amount being requested		
N	Valid	148
	Missing	0
Mean		\$540.5405
Median		\$600.0000
Sum		\$80,000.00

Table 11

^a Eligibility Status = Eligible

Debt Owed to Different Institutions Among Eligible Applicants

The following table (Table 12) represents institutional debt among eligible applicants. Listed are the total number of applicants per accredited Illinois institution of higher education, including the mean, median, and sum of debt. In addition, the sum of educational reimbursements and percent of total eligible applicant debt addressed is listed.

National Louis University, Western Illinois University, and Oakton Community College are the institutions where the highest number of eligible applicants incurred debt. The lowest number of applicants was represented by 16 institutions. The institutions that represented the highest amount of debt owed by eligible applicants were National Louis University (\$97,897.80) and Loyola University Chicago (\$23,974.00). The lowest came from DePaul University (\$507.00) and John A. Logan College (\$453.00)

Institutions with the highest debt coverage were Prairie State College, John A. Logan College, and DePaul University (100 percent), and South Suburban College (99.91 percent). Those with the lowest debt coverage were Loyola University Chicago (2.50 percent), Rockford University (12.12 percent), and Parkland College (22.02 percent).

Table 12

Institution	Total Amount Owed/Paid (per receipt/invoice)				Reimbursement Sum	Percent of Debt Covered by Reimbursement
	Count	Mean	Median	Sum		
Total	148	\$1,604.06	\$1,012.00	\$237,400.15	\$80,000.00	33.70%
National Louis University	47	\$2,082.93	\$1,541.00	\$97,897.80	\$27,108.00	27.69%
Western Illinois University	10	\$1,508.75	\$1,125.56	\$15,087.51	\$5,040.00	33.41%
Oakton Community College	7	\$795.07	\$1,002.50	\$5,565.50	\$3,426.00	61.56%
Waubensee Community College	6	\$591.87	\$536.70	\$3,551.20	\$2,656.00	74.79%
Elgin Community College	5	\$695.52	\$798.00	\$3,477.60	\$2,430.00	69.88%
McHenry County College	5	\$633.62	\$186.00	\$3,168.09	\$1,374.00	43.37%
St. Augustine College	5	\$2,235.64	\$1,347.00	\$11,178.20	\$2,990.00	26.75%
College of Lake County	4	\$495.37	\$416.86	\$1,981.46	\$1,719.00	86.75%
Concordia University Chicago	4	\$1,145.31	\$856.05	\$4,581.24	\$2,400.00	52.39%
City Colleges of Chicago	4	\$745.15	\$435.44	\$2,980.58	\$1,555.00	52.17%
Southwestern Illinois College	3	\$625.67	\$669.00	\$1,877.00	\$1,571.00	83.70%
Moraine Valley Community College	3	\$828.33	\$742.00	\$2,485.00	\$1,800.00	72.43%
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	3	\$905.78	\$781.00	\$2,717.33	\$1,800.00	66.24%
Black Hawk College	3	\$1,568.75	\$1,891.48	\$4,706.24	\$1,800.00	38.25%
University of Illinois	3	\$1,469.70	\$785.50	\$4,409.11	\$1,353.00	30.69%
Illinois State University	3	\$2,266.37	\$2,473.22	\$6,799.12	\$1,800.00	26.47%
Prairie State College	2	\$562.00	\$562.00	\$1,124.00	\$1,124.00	100.00%
Rasmussen College	2	\$735.25	\$735.25	\$1,470.49	\$1,200.00	81.61%
Lewis University	2	\$905.00	\$905.00	\$1,810.00	\$1,200.00	66.30%
Joliet Junior College	2	\$967.00	\$967.00	\$1,934.00	\$1,200.00	62.05%
Triton College	2	\$1,157.95	\$1,157.95	\$2,315.90	\$1,200.00	51.82%
Sauk Valley Community College	2	\$1,081.47	\$1,081.47	\$2,162.94	\$1,002.00	46.33%
Erikson Institute	2	\$1,735.00	\$1,735.00	\$3,470.00	\$1,200.00	34.58%
Northeastern Illinois University	2	\$1,962.99	\$1,962.99	\$3,925.97	\$1,200.00	30.57%
Chicago State University	2	\$2,227.30	\$2,227.30	\$4,454.60	\$1,200.00	26.94%
DePaul University	1	\$507.00	\$507.00	\$507.00	\$507.00	100.00%
Eastern Illinois University	1	\$4,167.00	\$4,167.00	\$4,167.00	\$600.00	14.40%

Institution	Total Amount Owed/Paid (per receipt/invoice)				Reimbursement Sum	Percent of Debt Covered by Reimbursement
	Count	Mean	Median	Sum		
John A. Logan College	1	\$453.00	\$453.00	\$453.00	\$453.00	100.00%
South Suburban College	1	\$583.50	\$583.50	\$583.50	\$583.00	99.91%
Heartland Community College	1	\$625.40	\$625.40	\$625.40	\$600.00	95.94%
Highland Community College	1	\$647.21	\$647.21	\$647.21	\$600.00	92.71%
Rasmussen University	1	\$891.94	\$891.94	\$891.94	\$600.00	67.27%
Rend Lake College	1	\$977.00	\$977.00	\$977.00	\$600.00	61.41%
Lincoln Land Community College	1	\$1,014.00	\$1,014.00	\$1,014.00	\$600.00	59.17%
Northwestern College	1	\$1,155.00	\$1,155.00	\$1,155.00	\$509.00	44.07%
Harper College	1	\$1,396.50	\$1,396.50	\$1,396.50	\$600.00	42.96%
Illinois Eastern Community Colleges	1	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00	\$2,116.00	\$600.00	28.36%
Parkland College	1	\$2,724.50	\$2,724.50	\$2,724.50	\$600.00	22.02%
Rockford University	1	\$4,950.00	\$4,950.00	\$4,950.00	\$600.00	12.12%
Loyola University Chicago	1	\$23,974.00	\$23,974.00	\$23,974.00	\$600.00	2.50%

Conclusion

In 2021, the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Education Reimbursement Initiative provided financial support to recipients as they pursued higher education at accredited Illinois institutions of higher education. Data shows that with a \$600 reimbursement, most recipients were able to pay down less than half of their debt, while a handful of others could eliminate their total debt owed.

While the initiative was successful in its ability to provide varying amounts of relief for recipients, recommendations for further supporting early educators and addressing their higher education barriers are needed for increased success in the future.

Recommendations

Data collected from nearly 150 people found eligible for an education reimbursement showed that they owed or paid just over \$237,000 to accredited Illinois institutions of higher education. The average of this debt is \$1,604.06 per person, far exceeding the education reimbursement maximum amount payable of \$600. The total program allotment of \$80,000 represents approximately 33% of the total amount of debt owed and payments made by this group.

Considering the above, recommendations regarding any future funding should include an increase to the maximum education reimbursement amount payable per person, in conjunction with availability of funding and target groups. Though elimination of debt is not reasonable, an increased reimbursement amount of up to \$1,500 could be more impactful to recipients and program outcomes. This increase could also allow for more forward movement in the workforce toward degree completion, attainment of official transcripts and additional professional development advancements, and assist with staff retention.

The survey data analyzed showed that over 85% of nearly 300 applicants indicated that receiving funding would assist in their efforts to re-enroll in Early Childhood/Child Development coursework. As these individuals continue to pursue higher education, it is likely that they will continue to encounter financial barriers and debt that make it difficult to reach their end goal of a degree.

Allowing continued funding across program years to address new debt and current enrollment at an accredited Illinois institution of higher education will help in removing modest roadblocks that individuals may encounter as they invest in their education. Data showed that out of nearly 150 people that received a reimbursement in 2021, over 30 also received funding in 2020. This group's continued debt represents over 23 percent of the total reimbursement funding awarded in 2021. In light of this data, it is recommended that anyone who received funding from previous years be allowed to apply across program years.

While many participants received funding for coursework, assisting with the cost of books and fees directly related to this coursework and degree completion, as well as fees associated with obtaining official transcripts is recommended. Assistance provided for these items could be limited to a percentage of the maximum reimbursement amount. Providing consideration for these items could help early educators with expenses that are not regularly covered by other financial aid, and assist with funding the final pieces of degree completion.



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